University of Southern Queensland

An investigation of the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian tertiary education

A Dissertation Submitted by

Bassim Almansouri, B.Ed (English language), M Ed. (TESOL)

For the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

2014

Abstract

This research project addresses the social and academic experiences that Arabic international students (AIS) have in transitioning to tertiary study in Australia. This study investigated (1) how these students experienced studying in the Australian tertiary education system, (2) to what extent they integrated academically and socially, and (3) how they can be supported when they choose to study in Australia. The conceptual framework was built on sociocultural, social identity and Hofstede's (1980) four dimensions of culture (power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity) theories with the need for effective intercultural communication at the centre. A mixed methods design was used. Data were collected through a parallel survey of students (69) and teachers (32) across Australia and follow-up, in-depth interviews with sub-samples of six students and seven teachers. The statistical data analysis of the survey results compared students' and teachers' views about the challenges of studying in Australia. The qualitative data were analysed on the basis of emergent themes. The research findings highlighted the need for these students' journey to be conceptualised as a transitional pathway that begins in their home country, so that the different challenges at each stage of their journey can be clarified and so better supported. In raising the importance of both students and teachers becoming interculturally literate, the research illuminates students' English language difficulties in relation to cross-cultural communication, the nature of their culture shock, and the need to reconceptualise teaching and learning and the notion of being independent learners. The study makes a significant and original contribution to extending current theoretical knowledge with regards to the nature, scope and depth of intercultural literacy necessary to allow AIS to transit more smoothly into study in Western society. It highlights the significant social, cultural and pedagogical challenges they face, while trying to maintain their social identity and simultaneously acculturate into Australian society and the academic context. The study uncovers the complexity of the English language demands these students face, showing that in spite of meeting gate keeping test requirements they are challenged academically in the use of Standard Australian English, and the language and concepts required to learn through constructivist pedagogical approaches, including digital technologies as well as the Australian colloquial English to communicate locally.

Major challenges for AIS were found to be the need to reconceptualise their beliefs about teaching and learning and make a cognitive shift from the teacher-centred environment they experience in their home country to the student-centred approach at the centre of constructivist pedagogy found in Australian tertiary education contexts that requires independence in learning, and living in Australia with a completely different culture and language. To help AIS more effectively in this shift, the study provides advice to enable review of current policy and practice, making recommendations in the form of support keys for each stage of their journey that apply to both students and Australian tertiary educators to make these students' transitional pathways easier and more likely to enhance their academic success.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

The work submitted in this dissertation is original, except as acknowledged in the text. The material herein has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any other award at this or any other university except where acknowledged.

_____   16/07/2014
Signature of Candidate   Date

_____   16/07/2014
Signature of Principal Supervisor   Date

_____   16/7/14
Signature of Associate Supervisor   Date

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Introduction

An Overview

This chapter introduces the background of the study and presents the research purpose in studying the social and the academic experiences of AIS in the Australian tertiary education context. It also outlines the objectives of the study in its investigation of these students' experiences while studying in Australia. This chapter also presents the focus of the study and the research problem and outlines the research questions.

1.1 Background

As the competition to attract more international students (IS) to Western Universities increases, understanding students' motivations, aspirations, expectations and needs is of paramount importance to ensure high quality programs and students' positive experiences and success. Furthermore, research shows that moving to study in a different language and culture from one's own presents substantial challenges for both students and their education providers. Carroll and Ryan (2005) state that "the increased number of IS in Western Universities brings challenges for teachers and international students alike" (p.5). They note that most IS have some form of depression when studying abroad and this could be the result of the students' acculturation stress (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

International students' experiences could vary according to the amount of distance between their home country experience and that of the host country since, according to Daly and Brown (2005), "the level of cultural distance shapes the intercultural contact between students" (p. 10). Therefore, the greater the distance between the language, culture and pedagogy of a student's background and that of the host country, the greater the challenge involved. Similarly, Rosenthal, Russell and Thomson (2007) found that, the further the cultural distance between international students' culture and the host culture, the more difficulties would occur during their study overseas. AIS originate from the Arabic world, which has a relatively big cultural distance from the mainstream Australian culture (Hofstede, 1980). Consequently, these students would not have much contact and integration with students from the host country because they would tend to speak and communicate with their own ethnic group, as these ethnic groups " . . . can play an important role in supporting on-shore international students" (Colvin & Jaffar, 2007, p. 10). In a similar and recent study by Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, and Kommers (2012) it was found that international students are less integrated in universities compared with domestic students because they tend to integrate and pair with their same country people.

AIS are a group of IS who potentially share many problems (for example, linguistic and cultural) that are likely to affect all international students in Western Universities. However, there are also likely to be issues that specifically affect AIS, and there is a paucity of research about this specific group of IS in the context of Western Universities. According to the researcher's experience, as an Arabic background student in Australia, there is a large distance between the Arabic culture/language and the Australian culture/language. Thus, it can be argued that AIS are very likely to have problems with/in the Australian learning system and their learning experiences may be substantially different from those of many other IS whose cultures and languages are closer to those of Western nations. For example,

AIS have a need to meet their Islamic personal needs, including food (Halal meat) and maintaining other requirements/daily practices that form non-negotiable parts of their religion and culture. Furthermore, cultural differences between host and native countries may hinder students from being effective in their academic efforts and from developing their self-esteem (Abukhattala, 2004). Thus, there is a need to explore the challenges of how this specific group of IS cope with an unfamiliar learning system and adjust to the host culture.

In order to analyse the impact of this cultural difference, the following three theories have been utilised to form the pillars of this study. The first was the sociocultural theory pioneered by Vygotsky (1978). This theory asserts that learning is not teaching only but is also essentially social in nature. The second was social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), which provides a framework to analyse inter-group behaviour, and, for example, to explain why IS often have a tendency to integrate with co-nationals because they have similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The third was the four cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1980), which are utilised to show the difference between the Arab culture and the Australian culture. According to Hofstede (1980), the difference between cultures can be evaluated by assessing how the members of different cultures differ with regard to four values. Firstly, power distance describes the relationship between bosses and employees. Secondly, individualism/collectivism describes the difference between cultures where families generally prefer to live collectively versus individualism where the focus is primarily on the individual. Thirdly, masculinity/femininity refers to the role of gender in a society; in some societies, men have more roles or greater status and power than women do and roles are gender based (rarely the reverse) and in others, there is more equality and role sharing or overlap. Fourthly, uncertainty avoidance describes how the members of some cultures respond to feeling threatened when facing unknown situations.

According to Hofstede (1980), these four values are applicable to exploring how IS experience cultural change when they travel to study in host countries with different cultures. Hofstede's (1980) theory helps to explain why AIS would be under stress owing to the differences between the two different cultures, languages and learning systems that they experience in making the change. They may not be able to fulfil their daily needs, which they were used to doing in their native countries. They might also be unable to communicate with people in the host country owing to a language barrier, and they may struggle to understand the different culture, especially at the beginning of their arrival in the host country. Therefore, they often tend to make their networks of primary friends with co-national students (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). The reason behind their inclination to talk with their co-nationals is that they find that the host people have different cultural norms from their own (Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011). AIS are not the only group to deal with the above-mentioned issues as according to Haydon (2003) many IS face "social/cultural, personal/psychological, and environmental challenges and stresses" (p.11). Thus, Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis is applicable here. This hypothesis considered IS as sojourners who initially tend to consider their adjustment to starting their new life to be relatively easy. However, once they discover the difficulties of living abroad, depression starts to come in as they go about their daily lives. Similarly, Oberg's (1960/2006) cultural adaptation model is applied to this situation. This model has four stages where students initially experience the first

stage, a honeymoon stage where they are very excited when entering the host country. However, following this they typically experience new cultural values and customs. The crisis stage is where students begin to be affected by stress owing to unfamiliarity with the host culture and the new learning system. In the crisis stage, students need to go through a period of adjustment to the new culture and they often experience homesickness which in some cases may create a desire to go back home. However, in the next stage, the third stage, they recover since by this time they have some knowledge of the values of the host culture and are starting to shed some of their initial anxiety. In the fourth stage, sufficient adaptation has taken place so they feel happier about their new learning environment, which is typically after having spent a long period of substantial time in the new culture and the new system.

This research therefore intended to find solutions or at least to identify strategies to help to ease the problems that AIS students face while they are studying in Australia. It intended to explore in more depth through a mixed methodology the specific experiences of AIS to add to the body of research about this group in particular, in terms of their social and academic journeys. It is informed by socio cultural theory, social identity theory and Hofstede's (1980) cultural theory. It addresses the paucity of research into this group of students who come to learn in a very different language and culture and pedagogical approach and it includes the views of both students and their teachers. On this basis it makes a significant contribution to knowledge with regard to how the overall experience in Australia can be improved for such students at a time when they are on the increase. It is intended to inform both policy and practice and provide knowledge for the university sector and students themselves to allow them to make informed choices and help to ensure their journey is less stressful and they are able more effectively to reach their full capacity to learn abroad. The study makes a significant and original contribution to extending current theoretical knowledge with regards to the nature, scope and depth of intercultural literacy necessary to allow AIS to transition more smoothly into study in Western society and cope with the dramatic cultural and pedagogical challenges in a timely and positive manner that is able to preserve their cultural identity while facilitating a level of acculturation that can support their educational success and social well being. This contribution to knowledge highlights the need to consider the English language needs of these students in greater depth in that it is not a matter of passing a gate keeping test such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) since AIS have to contend with and learn Standard Australian English, Australian colloquial English and the language and concepts related to the constructivist approach to pedagogy and online learning.

The research focuses on students' situations during the beginning of their journey and when they are in the middle of the U-curve hypothesis (Lysgaard, 1955). As mentioned earlier and according to the U-curve hypothesis and Oberg's (1960/2006) model, students typically experience a period of depression, which provides a strong justification for this research. This study aimed to find ways to give voice to these students and thereby to provide the depth of advice to help them to prepare and meet their needs more effectively. This includes addressing barriers with the English language (even though some of them meet entry requirements, they still need to adapt to the language and cultural understandings in the learning and social groups of the host culture), the new culture and the new learning system, which are all quite different from their own. Huang (2011) indicated that when Chinese international

students come to study in the United Stated they find English language to be a substantial obstacle although they already have high TOEFL scores. The demands of adjusting to the new culture and the new learning environment placed these students under stress in contrast to the experience of local students or English speaking international students. These adjustment issues faced by AIS have been studied by several scholars in Western education settings (e.g., Abukhattala, 2004; Alqahtani, 2011; Mostafa, 2006), but as noted earlier there is a paucity of research into the Australian situation (bearing in mind that the influx of AIS to Australia only began approximately a decade ago). The majority of studies in Australia have focused on Asian students (e.g., Chen & Short, 2010; Islam, 2009; Park, 2006). Fewer studies have researched groups of AIS, such as Gauntlett's (2005) research into Omani students and Midgley's (2010) exploration of students from Saudi Arabia, but these studies have some limitations in scope. Although they highlighted the problem for some AIS in Australia, they did not explore it from a more inclusive perspective regarding students from across the Arab world or from across discipline areas Australia wide as the present study does. In addition, this study is more able to focus on the sociocultural theory and identity theory, as well as Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions and Oberg's (1960/2006) model to examine more broadly and deeply the nature of their experience.

While the studies of AIS in other Western education settings included groups of AIS who were studying in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, the experiences of AIS in Australia cannot be considered the same because of a range of potential influences such as geographic location, access to support services, the prevalence of populations of their culture and the host culture. The Australian studies identified here were limited because each focused on a different single group of AIS, Omani and Saudi students respectively, and each study was based in a different state of Australia (Victoria and Queensland respectively). A further limitation was that these both used a single data collection method. Further, a search of the literature could not find any single study about all AIS and Australia wide. Therefore, this study improved on this by utilising the strengths of a mixed methods approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, and its participants were drawn from all over Australia. Since there are many AIS from a range of Arabic countries studying in Australian universities, this study focuses on a cross-section of cases. According to the Australian Education International department data (AEI, 2011), there is a rather large number of other AIS who are from the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Libya in Australian universities.

To gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of AIS, this study covers a broader scope to include AIS representatives of Arabic countries because they mostly share a similar culture, formal language and religion in spite of their in-country sub-cultures and sub-dialects. Biadsy, Hirschberg, and Habash (2009) state that "the Arabic language is a collection of multiple variants, among which Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has a special status as the formal written standard language of the media, culture and education across the Arab world" (p. 53).

The experiences of studying in a country with a different culture and language can be applicable to the majority of AIS because the cultural distance is quite marked between the Arab world and Australia (Hofstede, 1980). The term "Arab world" is used in this research because the countries of that world (Appendix 9) broadly

exhibit a common culture, language and religion. The shared elements of the Arab world are cited by many researchers (e.g., Ahmed, 2011; Al-Zubaidi & Rechards, 2010; Barakat, 1993). Barakat (1993) note that, "given this context, I should begin by saying that I view the Arab world as a single, overarching society rather than a collection of several independent nation-states" (p. 2). Also, in a more recent study conducted by Al-Zubaidi and Rechards (2010) about Arab postgraduate students in Malaysia, they state:

> Although Arab students all speak Arabic and generally share the same linguistic background, there are slight differences in dialects. So, we can say they share the barriers of English acquisition but they belong to different academic cultural backgrounds due to the different educational systems of their countries. On the other hand, they share almost the same cultural background with slight differences in terms of many factors such as nationality, religion, standard of living, political system, etc. (p. 108)

Similarly, in a later study about the cultural issues in English curriculum in the Arab world, Ahmed (2011) states "language and cultural issues are now being addressed on the academic as well as the political level in the Arab world" (p. 123). Clearly, Arab peoples and others believe that Arabs exhibit a similar culture, language and religion, which is also reflected in terms such as "the Arab Spring." In addition, Western nations assisting in the Libyan and the Syrian uprisings depended on the overarching strategic view and actions of the Arab League, which is internationally recognised as representing the interests of the Arabic world. However, there is also great diversity inside the Arab world and even more within single countries. Therefore it is clear that "the Arab world" does consist of a wide range of different countries with different sub-cultures and geographical and regional influences with other languages and dialects, just as with any other group. For instance, Loch, Straub and Kamel (2003) clearly refer to the plural "Arab cultures" (p. 45) in the Arab world. Overall, then, Arab cultures are highly diverse, but there is a significant linguistic and cultural core that all these sub-cultures are familiar with and understand, both culturally and linguistically.

Globally, there are many opportunities for IS to travel abroad and study in English speaking countries. One of these sought after English speaking countries is Australia. Currently, there are many IS in Australian universities, including AIS. In 2011, there were more than 82,000 AIS enrolled in all Australian educational institutions (AEI, October 2011). AEI (January 2011) showed that IS in the Australian education sector can be considered as a good economic resource as they contributed $19.1 billion in export income to the Australian economy during 2009-2010. Further, a report prepared by Deloitte Access Economics (2011) state that "[i]nternational students make a very significant contribution to the Australian economy" (p.7). AIS bring benefits to the Australian economy since their total number in Australian tertiary institutions has increased significantly from 2005 to 2009 (AEI statistics, 2009). Similarly, according to the New Zealand's Ministry of Education (2013) Arabic student numbers have increased dramatically from approximately 2000 in 2006 to 6000 in 2011.

This study sought to uncover the challenging experiences of these students that may hinder their academic success while they are doing their studies in Australian universities.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research project was to reveal the students' and teachers' views regarding the experiences of AIS studying in Australian tertiary education institutions. As was mentioned in the previous section, there are limited studies about AIS and some are conducted through an etic perspective, rather than from an emic perspective to give an insider view. However, this current study contributes to a broader discussion of the future of this specific group of IS while they are studying in Australia. It includes the views of Australian teachers as well as students from a range of countries from the Arab world to gain a deeper understanding from the cultural and pedagogical perspectives.

This study investigated the social and academic experiences of AIS, and the level of help offered by Australian universities to IS in general and AIS in particular that impacts on their ability to settle into their studies and to progress academically. Although this study discussed and reviewed the differences between learner-centred and teacher-centred environments, the idea was to contribute to knowledge about the students' learning journey, specifically about AIS in an Australian context.

Based on the findings, the plan is to contribute to addressing the needs of this specific group of IS and to recommend a supportive approach to Australian teachers (for the purpose of this research, the term teacher/s will be used and it will refer to teachers, lecturers, and instructors) that would better address the needs of these students. It was hoped that the research would allow recommendations to be developed to advise AIS about how to cope better with the Australian learning system and context. Based on this plan, the following three objectives were formulated.

1.3 Objectives

1. To explore the AIS experience of studying in the Australian education system and learning environment.
2. To identify the extent to which AIS integrate academically and socially into Australian tertiary education.
3. To identify how Australian educators can better help these students to integrate into the Australian tertiary education, given their increasing numbers and the potential challenges involved when they are studying in a different language and culture, and a relatively new learning system.

1.4 Focus of the Study

Given the current influx of AIS seeking success in Australian higher education institutions, it is of particular interest to investigate this phenomenon from the point of view of ensuring and sustaining quality education services. It is also important to understand the potential challenges that may be involved for students and staff. Research in the United States and Canada about AIS found that these students face a range of new challenges in every aspect of their lives (Abukhattala, 2004; Mostafa, 2006). This research project has therefore intended to investigate the experiences of AIS currently studying in Australian tertiary education to explore whether they get any support from Australian tertiary institutions to help them to overcome the barriers that they face in Western settings, if any. Australia and the United States are seen by AIS as 'Western' societies, and Hofstede (1980) argues that, although

Australia is a multicultural society, the dominant culture is the Western culture. Similarly, Chater and Tsai (2008) emphasise that "Australia is a multicultural society yet its dominant ethical paradigm is firmly placed in the Western philosophical tradition" (p. 95). Thus, there are many problems that AIS may face when they move to study in a different language and culture, as well as a different education system (Mostafa, 2006).

Hellsten (2002), who argues "the fact that international students make up a large proportion of Australian universities today is becoming an expectancy rather than an exception" (p. 3). Some of these students have learnt some level of English in their native countries; however, they still seek to gain Australian tertiary qualifications and if necessary improve their English in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia to meet English language requirements. The native language of AIS students is Arabic, whereas the predominant language in Australia is English, and therefore there can be significant language difficulties. For instance, in Arabic, there are no vowel letters but there are marks instead, which can be used below or above the consonants to make changes to a word's meaning. For example, the word "كندا" "Canada" without the two small lines allocated above the Arabic word, which in the Arabic language are called "Fat-ha", would be pronounced "Cnda". In addition, the texts in Arabic are read and written from right to left and even lower case and upper case are not applicable as they are in English. These significant differences can be problematic for AIS studying in an English language environment. Furthermore, these students are from an Arabic culture, whereas Australian culture is primarily seen and known by these students as a Western culture, and there could be a need for some cultural adjustments owing to different beliefs and values between Australian and Arabic cultures. This study therefore examined the various significant elements within the experiences of these students such as language barriers, different cultures, different learning systems and their intercultural communication.

This research explored whether AIS are receiving enough support during their period of study in Australian universities. This support can be from institutions or student support centres to help students to cope with new learning systems and how to communicate with local students. Thus, it is vital that the tertiary education sector has access to evidence-based research to assist it to respond to the needs of AIS and potential strategies for enhancing their learning and cultural experiences and for ensuring that they are able to reach their potential in their academic studies in Australian universities. In doing so, it takes into consideration the theoretical basis of the study in terms of students' social identity and sociocultural theory as well as Hofstede's dimensions of culture to investigate how these theories apply in the case of AIS given the contrast in culture.

1.5 Research Problem

The internationalisation of education is important in Australia and an integral part of the Australian economy (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2011). Currently, there is competition around the world for universities to engage more IS, as they are full fee paying students. Moreover, there are some Australian education providers that rely on international education income to support their quality of education (ABS, 2011). In return, tertiary institutions need to address further the needs of AIS and to strive to understand better and to study the experiences of IS. When these

students decide to study overseas, it is not as easy a matter as it sounds. IS may face a range of social and academic experiences when they study in a country that requires a different culture and language from their own. In general, several studies have been undertaken about IS studying in Western education contexts (e.g., Chen & Short, 2010; Hatoss, 2006; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004). While research into IS in Australia has focused mostly on students from Asia (Islam, 2009; Lebcir, Wells, & Bond, 2008; Park, 2006), there is a dearth of research undertaken about AIS.

There might be many problems that students face during their study in a country with a different education system from that of their home countries. Such students are faced with learning in a language and a learning environment that is very different from their own. Even though they may have passed the English language requirement, the pedagogical approach in Western university studies is also quite different. In many Arabic countries, the classroom environment is teacher-centred. Al-Shehri (2001), who conducted a study in one of Saudi Arabia's colleges of medicine, states, "the traditional system is heavily teacher-centred. Our curriculum in the Saudi medical colleges is probably the same. The teacher is the centre of the educational process" (p. 321). By contrast, the Australian classroom is learner-centred (Islam & Borland, 2006). To support this view, an earlier study discussed that many IS from non-native English speaking (NNES) backgrounds are not familiar, and find it hard to cope, with the Western learning system with its expectation that learners are independent (Ringer, Volkov, & Bridson, 2010). Therefore AIS need to understand the principles underpinning their new learning experiences and their teachers' expectations. This also applies to their approaches to assessment and assignment demands. AIS bring their own expectations about teaching and learning, which are culture-bound and different. It is therefore not surprising that this makes them critical of the typical Western learning environment and its seemingly conflicting underpinning philosophy. This is reinforced by Crichton, Paige, Papademetre and Scarino (2004), who contend:

> If a university enrols students from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds then it is the university's duty to develop the knowledge and capabilities of these students in order for them to be able to respond effectively to the new cultural contexts in which they are studying. (p. 71)

University educators themselves may not be aware of the impact that cultural and linguistic differences may have on international students' learning experiences. Alternatively, course content may not be prepared with IS in mind and/or may not be culturally sensitive. For instance, a friend of the researcher who was doing his bachelor's degree at an Australian university recently states "I was browsing slides about identity and one of the slides was a lady with swimming clothes on the beach. I skipped the slide because it was inappropriate to my culture." Importantly, there needs to be cultural awareness on both sides if effective cross-cultural communication is to occur. Burke and Wyatt-Smith (1996) mention that, if there is an absence of cultural awareness on both sides, it will cause inadequate performances of students who struggle to adjust to Australian learning environments. In addition to cultural awareness, Bone and Reid (2013) mention that lecturers have difficulty understanding the accent of international students and similarly when students are discussing in the class. Thus, studying abroad for such IS may not be as easy as it sounds.

1.6 Research Questions

The study's research questions were as follows:

1. How do Arabic international students experience studying in the Australian tertiary education system?
2. To what extent do Arabic international students integrate academically and socially into Australian tertiary education?
3. How can tertiary education best provide assistance for Arabic international students who choose to study in Australia?

This chapter has provided a background to the study, an overview of the theories, which underpin this research purpose, the objectives of the study and the research questions. The general outline has been constructed carefully in order to give the reader a fuller understanding of the experiences of AIS during their study in Australian universities. The following chapter discusses the literature review and the theoretical framework that anchors the experiences of these students within the current studies and shows how the theories can be applied to the situation of AIS in Australia.

Chapter 2: The Research Conceptual Framework and the Review of the Literature

An Overview

This chapter presents the review of the literature in the field that pertains to the research problem and research questions as outlined in chapter one and includes the research conceptual framework, and the theoretical bases that underpin the research. Firstly, the conceptual framework for the study is presented and explained in relation to three theories that underpin the need for effective intercultural communication and the differences that AIS face when trying to settle and learn as IS in Australia. These theories relate to sociocultural theory, social identity theory and the Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory. Secondly, the review of the literature discusses the research that has investigated international students' experience in general, according to differing emphases on socialisation and acculturation, language issues and pedagogical issues. It outlines the experiences of IS and research on how they cope when studying in a country with a different culture and language from their own. Further, it reports on the research that has explored and attempted to explain how AIS, in particular, cope with learning environments where there is a substantial cultural distance between their home country and that of the host country.

Lastly, it provides a summary discussion of the emerging issues and implications for contemporary research, providing a justification for the present project and its design. Thus, this chapter provides the background to the present research, which is consistent with the research questions and focuses on the linkages to the area of the internationalisation of education.

2.1 The Research Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Bases

The main aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of AIS who speak English as a foreign language when they choose to study in Australian tertiary settings. The research conceptual framework, which is presented in Figure 2.1, is underpinned by three major theories: sociocultural theory, social identity theory and Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, which in turn encompasses the four dimensions of power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. The development of a research conceptual framework is recognised as essential when planning to conduct research. It provides the knowledge base for the present research and as Radhakrishna, Yoder, and Ewing (2007) state, "[a] theoretical framework usually tells the big picture [overview of the research and] . . . identifies the areas of literature for review, and directs the research objectives" (p. 692). Underpinning the research with an appropriate theoretical framework also contributes to its validity and what outcomes the study might achieve in order to contribute critically to the field of knowledge. Figure 2.1 shows how the three underpinning theories are all critical to the achievement of effective intercultural literacy, which is vital to international students' successful learning and acculturation into the host society. These theories act as a foundation for the study and assist in understanding how the research questions apply.
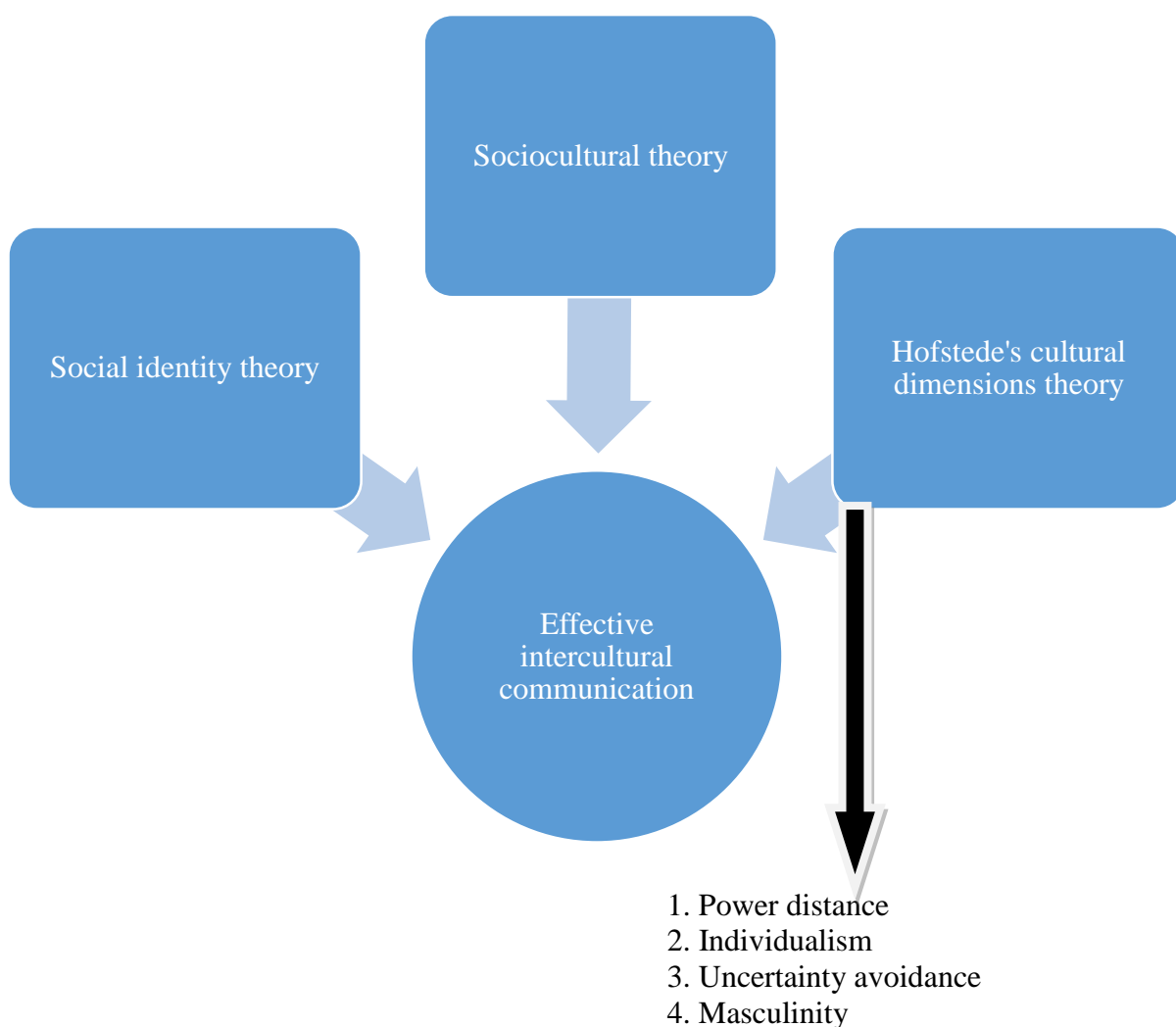
Figure 2.1: An overview of the research conceptual framework and the theoretical bases of the study

As is shown in Figure 2.1, the research is underpinned by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), and the theory of Hofstede's (1980) four dimensions of culture. These all relate to the provision of effective intercultural communication that is required for AIS to be successful in their academic and English language learning pursuits in Australia. The research problem relates to the difficulties that AIS experience as international students moving into learning in the Western context, including their need to communicate and integrate with the host nationals through their cultural interactions. Thus, Figure 2.1 refers to how AIS need to be able to engage successfully with the courses of learning in Western settings and participate in their new culture and create a network of communication as they become acculturated into Australian society. Intercultural communication is defined as "communication [that] takes place between interlocutors from two or more different cultures" (Islam, 2009, p. 32). For these interlocutors to make meaning successfully they need to be interculturally literate. Heyward (2002, p. 10) defined intercultural literacy as:

> The understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement . . . [where one] has the background required to effectively 'read' a second culture, to interpret its symbols and negotiate its meanings in a practical day-to-day context (as cited in O'Neill, 2008, p. 105).

2.1.1 Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is relevant to the research because it supports the argument that language learning in contemporary times is not just about teaching, but it is a matter of students being involved in socialising. When considered in this way it can be appreciated that learning is very much related to culture. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning involves two stages. The first is the interpsychological stage when the learner interacts with people. The second is the intrapsychological stage where the learner is involved in thinking inside him/herself. This theory is applicable to the situation of IS since they need to be in contact with people from the host culture in order to learn. The application of this theory to learning means teaching is conceptualised as a communicative social practice which may be described as a social constructivist approach, where NNES students, in this case, are expected to discuss and interact in the learning situation and (co-) construct new knowledge. In turn, the teaching involves teachers scaffolding students' learning in a way that guides and promotes the discussion. Students are therefore encouraged to discuss and talk and their teachers provide opportunities for them to do so. Lee and Ng (2010) state that, "without such an opportunity, reticence will be encouraged as the learners' wish to communicate is not stimulated" (p. 303). If teachers apply this theory, they will teach in a different way in comparison to the traditional approach (Chandler, 2001), which is seen as teachers merely transmitting information, whereby the learner's role is to remember the information and reproduce it.

Importantly, for this research, AIS in Australia will typically experience a more social constructivist approach to learning, which is seen as being learner-centred, setting up expectations that students will take some responsibility for their own learning. In addition, as Zhang, Fan, and Du (2013) point out, there is a relationship between sociocultural theory and the students' cognitive learning in that the social constructivist approach involves students interacting with texts and critically thinking about what they are reading and learning. Students are expected to be able to enhance their English language proficiency and cultural knowledge through their social interactions when immersed in the literacy and cultural practices of the host country both inside and outside the classroom. As is shown in Figure 2.2 the sociocultural approach conceptualises learning as involving interactions between the use of language to communicate and the associated cultural knowledge and, content and the thinking involved (cognitive and metacognitive processes).
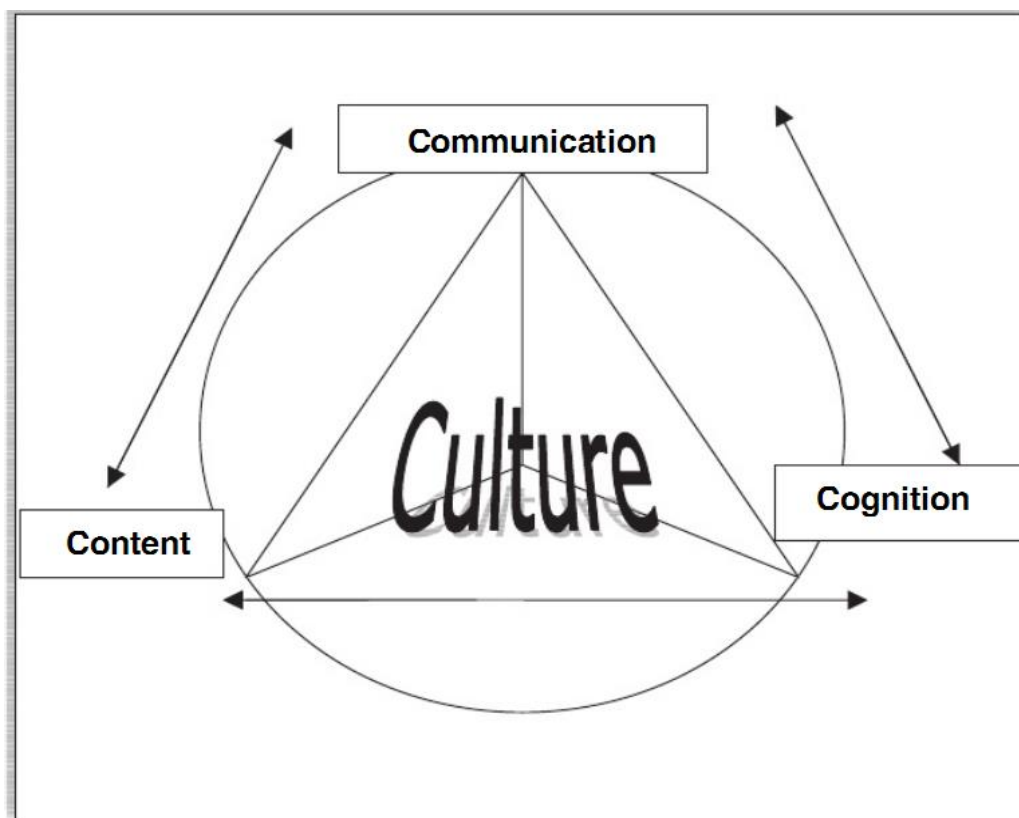
Figure 2.2: The connection between English language and culture
(Excerpt from Coyle, 2007, p. 551)

Moreover, consideration of Vygotsky's (1978) theory also draws attention to the applicability of his concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) to English language learners such as AIS. ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (as cited in Wertsch, 1985) as "the distance between a . . . [student's] independent problem-solving level and that obtained under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 67). When applied to AIS this means that teachers need to pitch their teaching at an appropriate level of difficulty for students so that students will be sufficiently challenged to gain and maintain their engagement. When teachers do not gauge students' ZPD they may pitch their teaching at too high a level, thereby making learning too difficult, or too easy if the pitch is below students' ZPD.

Therefore, the concept of ZPD can be applied to the situation of AIS while they are learning another language such as English and also when they are learning in their discipline studies. Vygotsky (1978) note that the involvement in social interactions in learning helps students to transit from their actual level to their potential level of development. Through the application of Vygotsky's theory to AIS who need to improve their English language proficiency, this approach to learning can be better understood since it clarifies that language acquisition and language learning are not a matter of memorising information, but rather as involving the use of language in a purposeful way to function in social and cultural activities. Vital to this language use is the recognition that such sociocultural interactions involve cognitive and metacognitive processing and require cultural understanding/intercultural literacy to communicate effectively across cultures.

It behoves Arabic international students' living in Australia to participate in the local community and have discussions with colleagues if they are to enhance their English language. Mostafa (2006) recommended that teachers need to encourage students to take part in debates and seminars to become used to the Western system. They need to communicate with native speakers of English as well as other IS, either in class and/or within society, e.g. the local area. This is supported by Sawir's (2005) research which found that many of the participating IS felt happy to learn English in an English speaking society as this gave them a chance for more linguistic input whether from the university or from their interaction in society. One of the participants in Sawir's study state that, "when we study in English speaking countries we always speak English and always think in English. But if we studied English in Japan we might still think in Japanese" (p. 576).

It appears from this statement that some IS are able to contend with cultural shock and language difficulties and there are often additional benefits and enjoyment which they encounter as they learn more about the host country. Yet Campbell and Li's (2008) study about Asian international students, conducted in a New Zealand university, found that 85% of IS in New Zealand were originally from Asia. This is confirmed by Budde-Sung (2011). A participant in Campbell and Li's study notes the difficulties for Chinese students attempting to socialise with locals. S/he said, *"when I'm talking to local students … we just don't have much common interest and this stops us from talking very much . . . and our values and beliefs are different"* (p. 385). It is quite evident that IS, generally, do not practice their English language skills with students from the host country, which may be a serious limitation to the opportunities to develop their English language proficiency. Thus, in keeping with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory in relation to English language learning, clearly, it involves much more than just reading or writing, since AIS need to use the language in a functional way to communicate with the native speakers in social activities in the surrounding environment. Similarly, this was reinforced in O'Neill and Hewagodage's (2010) study where they state, "deep learning is seen as occurring best as a cultural process rather than [as] instructional" (p. 27). Therefore, effective language learning is much more practising and speaking in a purposeful way as opposed to merely using a textbook and learning the rules of grammar.

Not only are the kinds of learning experiences AIS encounter in the host country important to investigate but also AIS bring with them their own traditions and culture from their home country and initially they may find they are lacking the intercultural literacy to communicate easily. Therefore, it is important in this study to discuss with students if they are learning the host culture's values during their language or discipline lessons and whether or how they manage to become acculturated, and understand the host culture. In keeping with sociocultural theory, according to Vygotsky (1978), students' English language proficiency will improve through their opportunities to interact, and they use language for authentic and functional purposes/social practices in class and the local community.

Since AIS typically come from a traditional learning system, it is likely that they will not be prepared for learning through the social constructivist approach that is

to be found in the West. For instance, Hellmundt and Ryan (2003) argue that, in relation to international students in Australian universities, "the prior learning experiences and academic traditions of countries from which IS are drawn can significantly impact on learning experiences and outcomes in new learning environments" (p. 2). This shows that when IS travel to other countries with different learning systems, they will filter their experience through their existing cultural perceptions. Wong's (2012) research also found that when Chinese students came to study in Australia, they experienced difficulties because their past learning experiences were more traditional compared with those of the Australian system, and they were unfamiliar with the Australian learning context. Thus, it seems that the shift between different learning systems for NNES international students in general may be a serious challenge, and that the need to respond to learning that is in keeping with the philosophy of social constructivism is an important issue to investigate. As well, opportunities for AIS to socialise in the host culture seem to be equally important in being able to maximise their communication with the host people in order to develop intercultural literacy and their language learning and discipline learning. Similarly, the use of English and the demand to communicate interculturally with local people and domestic students, may be minimised because of international students' tendency to speak with people who share the same native language.

2.1.2 Social Identity Theory

Secondly, social identity theory is highly relevant to the situation of AIS in Australia, since they do move from an Islamic culture with a different language and script and way of learning to a multicultural society with Christian values at its core. Tajfel and Turner (1986) showed in their discussion of social identity theory that people tend to speak and interact with people from the same culture with whom they share the same values and the same language. As a result, the people will have limited opportunity to interact with members from outside their circle or with members who have a different cultural background. So, typically IS prefer to speak with their home country students because they find that more comfortable and less challenging and stressful and this seems to be facilitated because their universities tend not to provide support that could encourage them to interact with English speakers (Chen & Chen, 2009). Thus, it is not surprising that Klomegah (2006) note that in the US "many international students have reported that because university officials rarely reach out to them, they had to rely on each other for support and advice on everything from academic issues to American culture" (p. 305). This will then delay the progress of their sociocultural adjustment with their host culture. Consequently, AIS, as a group of international students, will find themselves experiencing less communication with the local community, which is likely to have a serious impact on their development of English for academic and social purposes.

Tajfel (1982) also highlighted the importance of social identity in relation to IS and their wellbeing when studying abroad. He states that, "social identity is part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 2). The theory of social identity is relevant to the present research since it indicates the importance of communication and international students' feeling of belonging to a particular

social group or groups and its relevance to their wellbeing. However, since it is known that IS tend to avoid mixing with the local population because it protects them from culture shock, they do not position themselves to develop their knowledge of the host culture and so fail to develop the intercultural literacy necessary to communicate effectively. This is reinforced by Berry (1997), who mentions that people from different cultures tend to restrict their interactions to people who have the same values. Similarly, Rienties, Nanclares, Jindal-Snape, and Alcott (2012) assert that IS keep strong relationships and links with students who have the same cultural background.

As a result, IS will be motivated by people in their own group, and they are likely to see their group in the most favourable light because of the need to preserve their social identity (Li & Gasser, 2005). In addition, it is not easy for newcomers, from a different language and culture to acculturate quickly. Similarly, it cannot be assumed that members of the host country, either local communities or teachers, are interculturally literate to be able to communicate effectively with students from different language and cultural backgrounds either. Owing to students' limited interactions with locals, AIS as a group of IS ultimately lack the cultural knowledge and experiences to be able to begin to operate satisfactorily within the new host culture and so they lean towards their own cultural group to preserve their social identity.

2.1.3 Hofstede's (1980) Cultural Dimensions Theory

The third theory, which is applicable in order to gain a deeper understanding of the situation of AIS when living and studying in the Western context, is Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory (as detailed in Figures 2.1and 2.2). This is relevant to the research because Hofstede's work is seminal when it comes to the study of cultural differences.

Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions

Compare your home culture with your host culture

Home culture ...   **Arab World**
Host culture   ...   **Australia**

1. PDI   **Power Distance Index**
2. IDV   **Individualisation**
3. MAS   **Masculinity**
4. UAI   **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Arab World
Australia
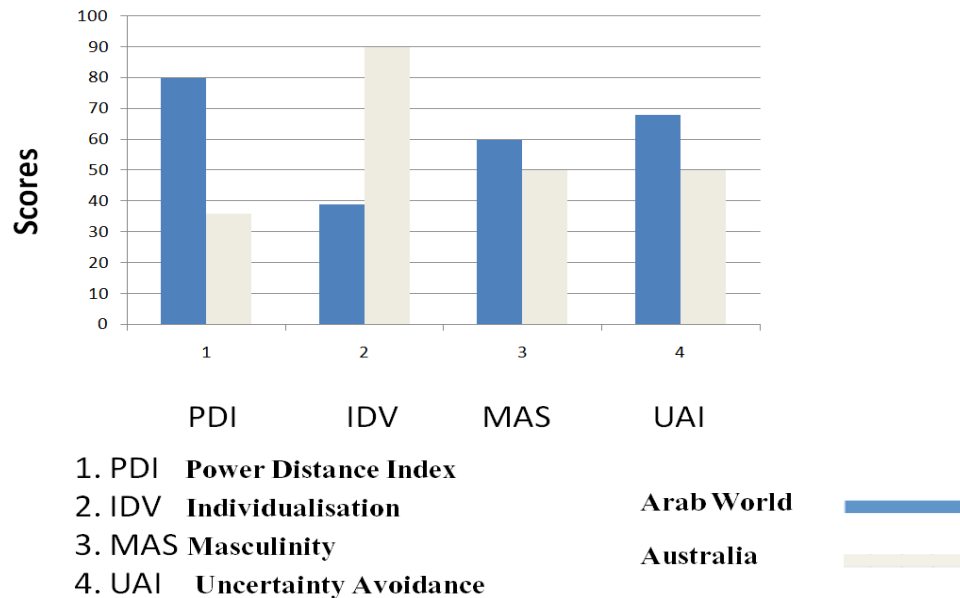
Figure 2.3: An overview of the cultural differences between the Arab world and Australia
(Excerpt from the Hofstede centre, n.d.)

Figure 2.3 presents an excerpt from Hofstede's website which represents the results of his global research into cultural differences. Table 2.1 shows additional excerpts from Hofstede's website in which he defines the four dimensions of culture that he applied.

Table 2.1: Definitions of Hofstede's (1980) four cultural dimensions

Index	Cultural dimension	Definition
PDI	Power distance index	The degree to which a society expects there to be differences in the levels of power. *A high score* suggests that there is an expectation that some individuals wield larger amounts of power than others. *A low score* reflects the view that all people should have equal rights.
IDV	Collectivism/ individualism	*Collectivism* is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. It means societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families. *Individualism* is the degree to which individuals' ties are loose, and everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family.
MAS	Masculinity/ femininity	The value placed on traditional male or female values.

UAI	Uncertainty/ avoidance	The extent to which a society accepts uncertainty and risk.

2.1.3.1 Power Distance

Hofstede's (1980) first dimension relates to power distance theory in which he identifies whether societies have high or low power distance relations between people. When there is less power distance, there is more equality between people in their society. This theory is important to this research because it helps to understand international students' cultural origins and the way they perceive power relations in their society. Students from a high power distance society such as the Arab world societies see their teacher as the authority in their classes, but students from more democratic societies such as Western societies see their teacher as a facilitator of learning, who is more approachable because of a low power distance. This is in keeping with the Australian learning system being seen as learner-centred (Harris, Spina, Ehrich, & Smeed, 2013; Islam & Borland, 2006).

In a recent study, Rienties, Heʹliot, and Jindal-Snape (2013) note a similar thing, that in keeping with the Western learning system teachers tend to give greater responsibilities to students and encourage them to be independent learners. By contrast, in many Arabic countries the learning system is teacher-centred and the teacher is the controller of the learning and the classroom (Al-Shehri, 2001). In addition, the concept of power distance refers to the differences between cultures from the perspective of whether the people accept inequality within the society or not. Hofstede (1980) noted that people from high power distance social relations happily accept inequality in their society. This is played out in Arab cultures where the teacher has the whole power of the class and students have to accept what the teacher says without question. In this case, this type of education does not encourage students' development of higher order thinking skills (Flateby, 2010; Marzano & Kendall, 2008) as they are not required to use such skills and are not able to discuss things with their teachers and express opinions. According to Hofstede's (1980) study of culture, the Arab world countries are described as having high power distance. As noted by O'Neill and Gish (2008),

> While an American student may enter into critical discussion with his or her teacher about the way the school is run [low power distance], a Japanese student may remain silent as a mark of respect for the authority of the teacher and the school system [high power distance]. (p. 22)

Similarly, Sawir (2005) argues that the pedagogies of English language teaching in Asian and Southeast Asian nations do not address the needs of the students in relation to oral communication. This is because in their classroom environments the students do not have any opportunity to use English to communicate or offer an opinion. As a result, it would be expected that students from Arabic countries have the same experience. The Australian tertiary education system would tend to be unfamiliar to them because teachers in Australia focus on oral communication rather than having students sit and just listen to their teachers. Islam and Borland (2006) also raised this issue when they contend that teachers in Australian universities adopted a learner-centred approach where students had to adapt to their implementation of a critical thinking method. By contrast, teachers in India and Pakistan adopted a teacher-centred approach where students needed to memorise information that teachers distributed about their subjects.

In addition, Hofstede (1980) mapped the Arab world countries as having a collectivist culture, which implies some similarities across their education system strategies. The results of another study conducted by Yue and Le (2009) supported the power distance theory and found that people from closed cultures would not face culture shock in the same was as people who came from more open cultures. To reinforce this, the same authors found that "British students studying in Australia would experience fewer difficulties than Chinese students studying in Australia" (p. 2). Therefore, it would be more difficult for AIS who are studying in Australian institutions owing to their Arabic language, which is very different from English and the Roman alphabet. This difference can be an obstacle to these students in learning the English language. This is similar to Asian students, when Yue and Le (2009) found that the majority of their participants said in their research that the greatest obstacle for them in Australia was language and culture.

It is clear from the above cultural dimension that the culture of international students can create seclusion from the host Western country for them, which consequently worsens their cultural adjustment. These two studies (O'Neil & Gish, 2008; Yue & Le, 2009) support the current study's assertion that Asian and Arabic students have different cultural values from those in Australia. Their cultural values are mostly Eastern and the Australian culture primarily has Western values as seen by these students. For instance, Hofstede (1980) found that the Arab countries scored 80% in terms of power distance, while Australia scored 36%. Thus, when AIS go to study in Australia they may have some challenges owing to the cultural differences between the two societies. Consequently, this will impact on the acceptance or non-acceptance of equality or inequality in the society and in the classroom.

2.1.3.2 The Individualism/Collectivism

The second dimension of culture identified by Hofstede (1980) refers to whether a society values individualism or collectivism. This dimension is applicable to understanding the present research problem because it demonstrates how cultures may differ greatly in this way. According to Hofstede, international students who come from different cultures will have to make cultural adjustments to fit in with living in the different host country culture. He makes the point that students from Europe who study in Western settings such as Australia will not have the same degree of culture shock as AIS when they come to study in Australia. This is because according to Hofstede's theory Europe and Australia are considered individualist as opposed to collectivist cultures. For example, an AIS coming from a collectivist society would "... hesitate to speak up in larger groups without a teacher present, especially if these are partly composed of relative strangers, or out-group members" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 61). However, in an individualistic society it would be customary that one would " . . .build up one's credibility, to articulate one's emotions, and to raise even objections if one disagrees with someone else's proposal" (Ting-Toomey, 1997, p. 8). It is difficult and stressful for AIS to change the behaviour they have been socialised into. Thus, depending on the degree of cultural distance IS may find the new culture difficult and challenging in addition to the usual adjustments people need to make for study purposes.

In this dimension of the theory, Hofstede (1980) categorises societies according to this dimension and describes how some societies prefer being conceptualised as a big family with many members, whereas others value family members becoming

independent and living away from the family. Thus, IS from collectivist societies may not appreciate the opposing values of Western society, which is typically individualistic. This has potential ramifications for IS who may bring their families with them overseas because of potential value conflict. With regard to Australia, while it may be close to Asia in its location, its culture is individualistic, and people tend to pursue their own interests and focus on their immediate family. It is significant that many IS who come to Australia are from the collectivist cultures of Asia and the Arab world, where they look out not only for their immediate family relations but also for their countrymen. According to Hofstede (1986), international students who come from individualist cultures like the Australian culture cope well with the way teachers teach in the Western culture since there is minimal change for them. However, Arabic students, who have been categorised by Hofstede (1986) as coming from collectivist cultures, see Australian culture and the approach to teaching as something new and different from what they have been used to in their home countries. Moreover, students from individualistic societies see that learning is a matter of gaining competence or becoming proficient in English, as this will encourage them to participate in class and speak confidently. However, students from collectivistic societies bring the view that getting a certificate is better than acquiring competence. Those students from collectivist societies would typically be involved in memorising their subjects to pass examinations and then look forward to being awarded their degree (Hofstede, 1986). This is reinforced by Mori's (2000) research, which found that international students in a United States college used to take notes in the classroom and then memorise them in order to prepare to pass future exams. In addition, such students from collectivistic societies see education as learning to do things and acquiring a certificate; by contrast, students from individualistic societies see education as learning how to learn and gaining experience (Hofstede, 1986).

2.1.3.3 Masculinity and Femininity

Hofstede's (1980) third dimension refers to masculinity/femininity, which is also relevant to the study of Arabic international students' experiences in learning in Western contexts. Hofstede (2008) studied the importance of gender differences between various societies in the world and found that in some societies males were in charge and females played a subordinate role: "men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, women on the quality of life" (p. 15). By contrast, in a feminine society, "both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and focused on the quality of life" (Hofstede, 2008, p. 15). Similarly, in a more recent study Rienties, Luchoomun, and Tempelaar (2013) state that, "[i]n masculine societies, emotional gender roles are rather distinct, whereas in feminine societies, these roles overlap" (p. 3).

In these circumstances, it can be appreciated that gender roles impact on learning and teaching as those who move between different cultures have their beliefs and expectations in this regard challenged. This dimension, therefore, helps to explain the way that gender roles and responsibilities might influence approaches to teaching and learning and associated classroom behaviours, and the social norms in classrooms. According to Hofstede (2008), in a male dominated society praise is perceived as being given only to good students; however, in a more feminine society praise is given to the weaker students to encourage them. In addition, Hofstede (2005) reveals that students from masculine societies are not encouraged to express their opinions

and be involved in critical discussions. This indicates that AIS may have difficulty in adapting to learning environments that require more participation and interaction.

When Hofstede (1980) conducted his global study, he categorised the Arab world under the masculinity category where students are not encouraged to discuss what the teacher is saying because it would be disrespectful to the teacher's authority. This situation would be expected to affect the way AIS would perceive the different social relations involved in the learning context in Australian institutions since they would be expected to be more outgoing and participate in discussions with their teacher and/or with peers in their class. In relation to this, Park's (2006) study of Asian students found that "Korean students could have difficulty in the discussion-based learning system in Australian undergraduate programs" (p. 46). When Hofstede's masculinity/femininity dimension is considered, it seems that AIS are moving from a masculine society to study and live in a more feminine society in Australia, which suggests they would require substantial adjustment.

2.1.3.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

The fourth and last dimension of Hofstede's (1980) theory is the uncertainty avoidance, which when applied to Arabic background students helps to provide additional insights into their potential acculturation in Australia. In terms of this dimension, members of a cultural group would either welcome the uncertainty of the new environment and change as a result of constructing it as a challenge or avoid it as a threat. Uncertainty avoidance is defined as "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations" (Hofstede, 2008, p. 10). This definition relevantly describes the situation of AIS when they come to study in Western culture since Hofstede's research shows that the Arab world has high levels of uncertainty avoidance. Again, this places AIS in a potential conflict situation in terms of their approach to learning and pedagogy. As noted, in Western pedagogical approaches emphasis is placed on becoming an independent learner and critical discussion is part of the pedagogy, whereas in the traditional pedagogical approach learning is guided and controlled by the teacher, through a focus on information transmission and an examination system. Thus, AIS would be expected to find it difficult to cope within a learning environment where the culture is one of weak uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede proposes that in weak uncertainty avoidance societies, students prefer group discussions and the pedagogy encourages them to do this. By contrast, students from strong uncertainty avoidance backgrounds prefer closed type questions that require a single direct answer, and they also avoid group discussions and having to express their personal opinions or provide critiques.

Such contrasts extend to non-verbal communication as was pointed out by O'Neill and Gish (2008): "people from societies in which the social norm is to avoid direct eye contact may be seen as shy and retiring by those from societies in which direct eye contact signals one is sincere and paying attention" (p. 22). Similarly, in a more recent study, Sirois, Darby, and Tolle (2013) note that in the United States eye contact is seen as a sign of good listening to the speaker; however, in Muslim culture direct and extended eye contact is a sign of having a sceptical view, especially with the opposite gender. This is another reason IS think that segregation helps them to avoid communicating with locals and keep to their first language (L1) groups. By

doing so, students think it keeps them away from culture and language problems/miscommunication or it prevents them having to expose their lack of intercultural literacy.

This dimension reflects the interpersonal aspects of people's behaviour. In fact, sometimes in Arab culture the avoiding eye contact is a sign of showing more respect, whilst in Australian culture it is expressing that the other person is not paying enough attention. Therefore, this dimension is important to show the subtleties of cross-cultural differences between AIS and Australian teachers and the need for intercultural literacy if effective learning is to take place.

2.1.4 Achieving Effective Intercultural Communication

Central to this research is intercultural communication which is defined by Dodd (1999, as cited in Aneas & Sandín, 2009) as "a scientific field whose object of interest is the interaction between individuals and groups from different cultures, and which examines the influence of culture on who people are, how they act, feel, think and, evidently, speak and listen" (para. 3). Zakaria and Cogburn (2010) define it as an "interaction between people of diverse cultural backgrounds with distinct communication patterns, preferences and styles" (p. 331). These statements suggest that the underpinning theories are relevant to this PhD study since they are discussing issues of communication and learning in the host country. Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) mention that IS experience different degrees of adjustment and culture shock owing to living in an unfamiliar environment with fewer friends and less communication in a different language. In an earlier study, Ting-Toomey (1997) notes that, when sojourners are coming to live in another culture, they should enact techniques to reduce the social and psychological stress brought on by the new complexities of adjusting to the host culture. However, these complexities that students might face in the new environment, should not last long. The longer students stay and live in the host culture, the more their cultural issues would decrease through developing intercultural communication. Hence, this research assumes that developing effective intercultural communication will have its impact on achieving the students' ability to understand, and live in, the host culture and in addition to develop the required language skills when communicating with nationals. If students were able to develop their intercultural communication literacy, this would allow them to avoid inappropriate communication in conversational contexts with the host people. Overall, studying the cultural issues of AIS and achieving intercultural communication are important factors in this present study to help students study and live more effectively in the Australian culture in order to enhance their academic success, and to have a more rewarding experience.

2.2 Summary of the Research Conceptual Framework and the Theoretical Bases

In a nutshell, consideration of the research conceptual framework and the theoretical bases shows up the depth and breadth of issues underpinning the research problem from a theoretical perspective. It is sociocultural theory, social identity theory, and Hofstede's cultural framework that together provide an avenue for understanding the challenges involved for AIS studying in Australia, since there is a cultural conflict when adapting to a different culture and language. The rationale of using these theories is to assist the reader in understanding the language and culture of these students and how they would cope with the Australian culture and language. It seems that if IS engage in social interaction within the society of the country, which they travel to, they will have fewer

cultural adjustment issues. Also, it may provide them with a deeper understanding about their host country and provide them with a greater sense of belonging, which will help them to focus more effectively on their studies (Li & Gasser, 2005). Finally, consideration of the theoretical framework provides abetter understanding of the cultural conflicts of AIS in the Australian tertiary institutions, which relates directly to the research questions.

The following section is the review of literature, which reports on the research findings to date on IS whose language and cultural background significantly contrast with those of their Western tertiary learning environments across the world, but with a particular focus on AIS students.

2.3 Literature Review

An Overview

The literature in this section reviews studies related to the experiences of IS in host countries while doing their studies overseas. The review takes into consideration the earlier studies, which are relevant to the research questions of this study and the research conceptual framework. Topics covered in this literature review are socialisation and acculturation, language issues, and pedagogical issues. A summary of this literature will support the design of an appropriate research methodology.

Although this study discusses the social and academic experiences of AIS, the literature reviewed a wide range of global studies handling the experiences of international students in various host countries. Over the past three decades, there has been much research into the experiences of IS studying in Western tertiary settings. However, there is a paucity of research into the educational systems of the Arabic world and particularly the experiences of AIS studying in Western tertiary education settings (Midgley, 2009). This literature review, therefore, explores research into the Western tertiary study experiences of IS from a range of language and cultural backgrounds, including AIS (Hellsten, 2002; Mostafa, 2006; Trice, 2007; Midgley, 2009). In doing so, it identifies the main research findings to date, which may be categorised in terms of the emerging issues to do with their socialisation and acculturation and intercultural communication. In addition, this review traverses the demands of using the English language, as well as pedagogical related concerns, all of which are elaborated in the subsections below to see how they impact on students' academic performance in the host country. The review also examines the research approaches involved and the results of the research with respect to recommendations for future research.

2.3.1 Socialisation and Acculturation

"International students are key stakeholders and contributors in the process of internationalisation of higher education" (Burkholder, 2010, p. 8). According to AEI data (2011), there are more than 82,000 AIS in Australia; however, research has shown that international students' tertiary success may be impeded because of difficulties with settling into a different culture. For instance, Saudi Arabian undergraduates who were studying nursing at an Australian university reported having difficulties trying to socialise (Midgley, 2009) with their Australians counterparts because of their different cultural values and aspects of their religion.

Another study argues that studying the social issues of IS would create good social support and would have a significant effect on their psychological health while they live and study in the host country (Burkholder, 2010). For example, the stress of studying in the host country, the coping strategies, and "the adaptive aspects of transition experience" (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2008, p. 72) can create psychological stress for such students. Rosenthal et al. (2008) further mention that IS are suffering from anxiety, which can be related to their academic performance stress. Furthermore, the stress of less social support and fewer close friends contacts could worsen the situation of IS significantly (Gareis, 2012). Therefore, intercultural communication and befriending the host nationals can help the sojourners with their coping strategies by familiarizing them with the host country's culture and the way of life.

Studying in Australia is a new experience for many IS because they need to "adjust to unfamiliar learning experiences [,] developing the skills and knowledge to manage everyday life in a very different cultural context" (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2011, p. 8). Sometimes learning in new environments could create some difficulties for IS which might lead to failure. In keeping with the masculinity and femininity dimension, failure is a disaster for many IS who are from masculinity cultures (Hofstede, 2008). Similarly, Park (2006) conducted a study about Korean students and found that, "the failure of an examinee is considered a disaster for their family" (p. 27). Therefore, if they failed or had difficulties in coping with the host country's environments, this would affect on their psychological situation. Al-Sheridah and Goe (1998) found that the development of relationships and social ties with local students helped IS to integrate into their host culture. Similarly, Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, and Ramia, (2008) state that, "[g]ood networks help students to feel supported and more in control" (p. 157). Creating social ties with students from different cultures can be included in the responsibility of the university through group assignments or celebrating cultural events. A study conducted by Volet and Ang (1998) also identified international students' socialisation difficulties. The aim of their article was to report on insights of the students about mixing with different cultures. Volet and Ang contend that Australian students at Murdoch University did not like to connect with NNES. At the same time, the NNES tended to connect more with their language natives. These authors further state that, " . . . many Asian students would prefer to team with other Asian students rather than with Australian students" (p. 8). The reason behind this preference was that both national and international students preferred to group with people from the same culture and language because they found it easy to cope with people who have same the cultural values and the same language. To support this view a participant in their paper state: "it is easy to communicate in our first language. We can use our first language. When you use your second language, sometimes you must choose the words to use, to avoid misunderstanding" (p. 12). This statement reinforces the importance of considering social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) in researching international students' experiences. Similarly, Rienties, He´liot, and Jindal-Snape (2013) reveal that international students tend to work and speak with students from the same background. Further, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) mention that foreign students who are attending Unites States universities encountered academic and social problems such as loneliness because they could not find people from the same culture and language to interact with. Likewise, they encountered problems with the Unites States customs and norms because they were unfamiliar with them. These authors made it clear at the end of the paper that IS were happier and more comfortable when they

connected with co-nationals and co-culturals. Being with people who mainly share the same values and cultural aspects such as cultural events, food, and the way of addressing others would make them feel happier.

Socialisation and acculturation issues therefore emerge as an important factor for many IS, especially if the host country has a different culture and language (Irungu, 2010; Li & Gasser, 2005; Trice, 2007). Li and Gasser (2005) examined the sociocultural adjustment of Asian international students in the United States and how these students cope with the host national students. The aim of their study was to examine the difficulties of these students such as their level of communication with the local students and how they work in social activities in the host country. The authors used two mediation models: psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment. In the first model, Li and Gasser assert that students will face problems in the host country such as social support and contact with the host nationals. In the second model, students need to know ways to cope with the new culture, as this will be influenced by cultural distance and their cultural awareness, which derives from their cultural training. Their paper focuses on the relationship of these students with locals and the resulting impact on their ethnic identity and sociocultural adjustment. Therefore, Li and Gasser propose, "sojourners' ethnic identity, cross-cultural self-efficacy, and contact with the hosts are important variables related to sociocultural adjustment" (p. 563). They found that Asian students maintain their own cultural identity while they are studying in a culture different from their home country, which is applicable to what they propose. They also noted that even if international students have relationships with nationals, they still keep their own ties to share their values and ideas with people from their culture.

More precisely, acculturation stress has been shown by Yuen and Le (2009) to be a major issue in students' lives in the host country. These authors found that the Chinese students at the University of Tasmania, Australia, were experiencing culture shock. Culture shock is defined as "an occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad" (Oberg, 1960/2006, p. 142). Yue and Le aimed to explore the acculturation stress of Asian students studying in Australia. In their data collection, they used three kinds of collection (interviews, direct observation, and written documents) with five Asian students from both genders. Yue and Le found that Asian students are having problems in Australia such as culture shock, different learning system, less social support, discrimination and racism, and ways of coping in Australia. Students in Yue and Le's study used some strategies to solve their problems such as acceptance, when they accept the problem thinking that may reduce its effect. Some students took actions such as reading more or preparing for the class before attending. Others sought social support from their friends as a coping strategy to overcome their problems in the host country. In conclusion, they agreed with the power distance dimension and said that Asian students confront more problems than other students with closer culture values and beliefs to Australia. It is clear from their paper that Chinese students experience culture shock because of the change in learning demands, combined with a lack of social support.

Social support "is buffering the stress associated with illness and life changing events thus helping the recipient of the support better cope with problems" (Handley, 2004,

p. 2). Social support also has been found to be particularly necessary for IS (Irungu, 2010).

Interacting and making strong social ties with nationals could be utilised as a source of social support to help IS feel that they are not separated from their native country friends (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Students are more likely to feel they are being supported socially when they are able to build interpersonal relationships with key members of the host community. For instance, this may be achieved through strategies of buddying them with locals, guiding them to their cultural food community places and ensuring accommodation and assistance with their studies. However, university support systems alone are insufficient since it has been shown that when IS are studying in a different culture they need to make both psychological and sociocultural adjustments (Li & Gasser, 2005). The former is necessary to socialise with the host culture and the latter relates to the need to acquire ways of coping with culture shock, since they initially experience cultural distance and may lack cultural awareness or intercultural literacy (Liddicoat, 2002). The lack of socialisation meant students maintained their own cultural identity, which reinforced their inability to acculturate to the host culture. Further, Liddicoat notes that even those who did socialise with members of the host country were found to maintain their own ties to share their values and ideas with people from their own language and culture.

International students need to develop their understanding of the host culture and develop their intercultural communication to a sufficient level to avoid cultural problems through interacting with local students (Tomich, McWhirter, & Darcy, 2003). Although opportunities to interact purposefully and integrate ultimately are important for IS, Trice (2007) reinforces the finding that they still "prefer to befriend those who [are] culturally similar to themselves" (p. 112). According to Mostafa (2006) cultural differences are the main cause of international students' isolation. Mostafa conducted a study about five Arab Muslim students doing their undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Alberta in Canada. The aim of Mostafa's study was to discover the experiences of these students in terms of cultural differences, language difficulties, and the differences in study systems. The author collected the data through semi-structured personal interviews to discuss the experiences of this specific group of IS. The article found that all respondents mentioned a huge difference between Canadian and their home learning systems, which eventually affected their academic progress because of differences in learning and teaching approaches such as learner and teacher-centred environments. The study also found that owing to the cultural differences, students are in isolation from the locals sometimes. A solution for international students' isolation was seen by Mostafa as developing strategies to promote more intercultural communication between IS and the university. Further, the author advocated strategies to help IS in a Canadian university like orientating students to the Canadian culture and urging IS to participate in group discussions with their Canadian counterparts. These strategies can help students to be active learners in their new learning environment. Mostafa's study is limited as all the participants were in scientific faculties, which may be different to students from social science faculties. In addition to that, the participants were only from one university in Canada, which can vary to difficulties in other universities.

Socialisation and enculturation issues have been found to impact on many international students' academic achievement because they have been transferred in their studies from

their familiar home context to the unfamiliar host context. Likewise it has been found that social support in the host country and facilitating their interactions with locals are very important matters to enhance international students' coping strategies, there remains a need to discover what strategies can help IS in general and AIS in particular while they are learning in the host culture.

2.3.2 Language Issues

Earlier studies have shown that English language difficulties have been an important factor in the adaptation of IS in Australian universities. IS are mainly NNES and studying in Australia where the first language is English, and this impacts on their adaptation to the learning system of the host country (Chen & Chen, 2009; Harman, 2003; Ngobia, 2011). Therefore, language difficulties can be a large problem for NNES, particularly during lectures and tutorials. Moreover, domestic English students find the university environment difficult sometimes because they need to adjust to new idioms (Chen & Chen, 2009). Similarly, Bone and Reid (2013) note that the first year learning experience at the university level is very different from the last year of high school and students need to transition to a new learning environment, the university environment.

The situation of IS would be worse owing to language difficulties and a new learning environment. International students who are NNES and are studying in an English environment are often at a disadvantage. Gresham and Clayton (2011) note that students for whom English is not their first language are likely to have difficulties when trying to demonstrate their English proficiency. Higgs, Merrick, Morrison, and Métais (2005) found that IS in a UK university fewer first class Honours degrees than did the UK students because many IS are NNES for whom their mother tongue is not English, while the majority of UK students were native English speakers. Similarly, Harman (2003) states that, "language problems sometimes adversely affect progress while a proportion of IS find it difficult when adjusting to a less deferential working arrangement with their supervisors and less structured research direction" (p. 349). Harman is not referring to all IS but rather to those from cultures in which the teacher is seen as the disseminator of knowledge. As the majority of IS are NNES, they have to sit an IELTS test or study an English language course in order to gain a sufficient English level to study at the university. However, this does not necessarily mean that IS who have passed the test are able to cope with the demands of studying and communicating for academic purposes in English in the host country. This applies specifically to those who have just arrived from a home country where English is a foreign language and have rarely or never spoken English at home as they need to do now in a native environment. An earlier study showed convincingly that although Korean students had passed the English language requirements, they still encountered problems in both their daily social life and in dealing with the academic demands of the university (Park, 2006, p. 41). Furthermore, a recent study conducted by Ngobia (2011) found that IS have a fear of their poor English language which prevents them from connecting with local students. This reinforces the point of uncertainty avoidance dimension, which indicates that people from different cultures tend to try to avoid something that is not clear to them. However, the university has many opportunities, such as cultural activities, to connect domestic and IS and let them share their cultural values (Leask, 2009).

Another study in the last decade was about IS who were doing the ELICOS in an Australian tertiary institution (Hatoss, 2006). Hatoss gathered the data via a survey in an Australian tertiary institution trying to identify the cultural needs and the learning experiences of these students. The participants were 71 students from different nationalities mainly from Asia. Half of the participants believed that their English language course was helping them to know the Australian culture but the other half asserted that learning cultural information is better done as an out of class activity. In keeping with sociocultural theory, the latter view supports the stance that learning the language is not just about reading and writing. Rather, it is more about social activities in which students learn about the host culture's values and even more, they would practice more English in cultural and social contexts. Participating in out of class activities will help the students' language development especially in their daily life. This is also noted by Irungu (2010) who states that, "international students have to learn the necessary classroom and out of class culture and have to fit into a new society" (p. 7). Moreover, out of class learning and activities such as sport games and participating in cultural events will help IS to adapt to the host society's language and culture. Similarly, Saad, Yunus, and Embi (2013) conducted their study about nine international postgraduate students in Malaysia and concluded that out of classroom activities helped English language learners to "practice the English outside of the classroom walls" (p. 139). Further, Hatoss (2006) states that, "[t]his combination of classroom practice with out of class activities will establish a better balance between passive versus active and cognitive versus experiential learning" (p. 59).

Conversely, integrating these students into the host society is not an easy matter as language is a great barrier to them (Nicholson, 2001). Nicholson conducted a study about the adaptation of Asian students in the United States culture. The aim of this article was to explore how Asian students in Western Michigan University adapted to American culture and life. Nicholson's study found that Asian students have problems with their academic language. For example, going shopping or using general English was not seen as a problem; however, they lacked confidence to stand in front of the class to do presentations or discuss things in tutorials. Similarly, DeVita (2000) recommends that language teachers should utilise visual aids and encourage students to read aloud in class in order to increase their confidence in English speaking. Nicholson also found that 60% of students mentioned that language and communication were their main concern in the university owing to their lack of English language proficiency.

Mori (2000) claims in a study conducted at a United States college that "the language barrier is probably the most prevalent and significant problem for most international students" (p. 137). In other words, many IS may lack the English skills to participate fully and engage with lectures and tutorials, as well as the social skills and cultural knowledge to communicate with the society in which they live, especially during the first period of their study in the host country. Further, Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010), note that non-native English international students generally experience English language barriers in the host country. This may lead to failure, which in some cultures, including Arabic cultures, and more so for males, can be extremely damaging, in the form of loss of face (Hofstede, 2005). Nicholson's study discovered one of their major problems, which is the lack of communication in Western Universities. In other words, they do not have enough English language to communicate with nationals and even those who do have English prefer to communicate with people from the same culture and

values. Nicholson concluded that students who have been there for a longer period could help the newcomer students through mentoring them while they do not yet have a social network in the host country. Similar to this, a recent study by Lindley, McCall, and Abu-Arab (2013)proposes strategies to help international students, for instance, a strategy called "peer support/buddy system" in which senior international students can help newly arrived international students by giving tips to assist them in adjusting to the host culture (p. 88).

Chen and Short (2010) reviewed the communicative barriers that Chinese IS face in an English native country, Australia. The study aimed to explore the barriers these students face and how they can overcome these barriers by utilising learning strategies in the new learning environment. These authors found that students experience various constraints, such as vocabulary, accent and slang, culture, confidence, and motivation in their learning in Australia. The researchers called these barriers road blockers, which diminished their motivation to socialise in the English learning society. However, students were found to have used compensation strategies to overcome the road blockers. These were referred to as propellers. Propellers included the use of gestures, finding alternative words to get the message across, and using body language to overcome a lack of vocabulary. Their study concluded that owing to the cultural distance between China and Australia, Chinese IS encountered numerous problems in their learning period in Australia.

It appears that English language difficulties have a strong effect on IS when they head to study in a country with different culture and language from home country (Bretag, Horrocks, & Smith, 2002; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Sawir, 2005). Robertson et al. (2000) studied the experiences of IS in an Australian university and found that English language difficulty was an important factor in their academic success. Students and teachers were included in the study and they both mentioned that English language was a hindrance in teaching and learning. Students were unable to understand their teachers owing to English language proficiency. Teachers were afraid of not being able to get these students to achieve academic success. This is similarly found by Bretag et al. (2002) and the participants in their study [the academic staff] mention that IS were incompetent in participating in classroom discussions and it was hard for them to understand the tutorial discussion. Hellsten and Prescott (2004) found in their study that undergraduate IS in an Australian university who have low levels of English language competence were impeded from participating in the classroom. For instance, a student in their study stated, "it's just hard and difficult. I don't know the feeling, the nuance, I don't know those in English so I … I am not a good English speaker at all. It's very uncomfortable when I talk with somebody" (as cited in Hellsten & Prescott, 2004, p. 346). The reason for the international students' low level of English could be their different previous studies in their home country. Sawir (2005) states that, ". . . English at school, the main pedagogical medium was reading and writing, rather than conversation. The main pedagogical style was didactic, in which students were positioned as largely passive learners" (p. 572). Sawir found that the previous English learning of IS was focused on grammar rules only and there was no focus on the communication activities in which students are able to express their opinions and can discuss these with their classmates. This is clearly stated by a participant from Vietnam in Sawir's study:

When I was in Vietnam my teachers just taught me they just taught me the grammar and writing but they I think they rarely let the students to have a chance to speak English to practise to give ideas on a topic for example they can rise a question and students can answer. I like that way rather than just answer the question first and then later discuss. (p. 527)

This didactic method of teaching is not only prevalent in Vietnam but also in Indonesia and an Indonesian student in Sawir's study stated that,

I think in school the teacher only in one way the teacher only explain the grammar and we just write it down and do the exercise I think just that it's no enough we have to try to speak and show our ability in English. We are just passive and just listen to the teacher. (p. 573)

Therefore, it would be important for Australian universities to conduct interesting communication activities to encourage IS to be active learners in the classroom.

The proceeding discussion has highlighted that English language challenges can negatively affect the progress of IS while they are doing their studies overseas. It is clear that English language combined with culture shock and the university demands all impact at the same time on the progress of these students. However, the researchers focused on the problems of English language rather than on the impact of needing English to socialise and integrate with the host culture. Therefore, this current study will focus in more depth on the language problems associated with acculturation and will consider the opinions of both students and their teachers, Australia wide.

2.3.3 Pedagogical Issues

The increasing number of IS in Western universities brings challenges not only for IS but also for many teachers are faced with unfamiliar students' characteristics and needs (Carroll & Ryan, 2005). From another angle, enhancing these students' success will generate strong economic benefits for the host country (Bergerhoff, Borghans, Seegers, & Van Veen, 2013). Moreover, international global education is contributing vitally to economic success of such nations (Hughes, 2008). However, the variations of teaching systems from one country to another can affect the situation of international students when pursuing their degrees in the host country. Carroll and Ryan (2005) reveal that IS face significant difficulties when studying abroad to be academically successful. It can be hard for IS, including AIS, when their culture and home country's learning systems are different to the learning system abroad. With reference to AIS, Hofstede (2008) notes in his power distance dimension that people from large power distance cultures such as the Arab world are teacher-centred; however, people from small power distance such as Europe and Australia are learner-centred. Therefore, according to Hofstede the situation of AIS might be influenced owing to the different learning systems between their home countries' learning system, which has a focus on rote learning, and the Australian learning system, which applies an independent learner environment. The encounters of IS with the new learning system can be referred back to their past learning system experiences which they might find to be inadequate if they follow the same learning methods in the new learning system. For instance, IS are used to taking their handouts from their teachers and they just follow what the teachers are saying in order to pass their final exams without writing any kind of essay. Similar to this, McMullen (2009) found that the Saudi students, as EFL [English foreign language] learners, had a

significant difficulty in writing because students were not used to practise writing skills. Further, Carroll (2005) argues that IS prefer handouts and pre-printed notes in order to memorise them because they are used to this kind of teaching in their home learning systems. Carroll further states that, "international students are frequently characterised as passive and silent in lectures" (p. 41).

To provide more detailed information, Table 2.2 shows the difference in teaching methods between learner-centred and the teacher-centred environments. If we look closely at point one in the teacher-centred paradigm, it reinforces exactly of what Carroll (2005) mentions in terms of IS being passive learners.

Table 2.2: Comparison between the teacher-centred and learner-centred pedagogical paradigms

Teacher-Centred Paradigm	Learner-Centred Paradigm
Knowledge is transmitted from professor to students	Students construct knowledge through gathering and synthesizing information and integrating it with the general skills of inquiry, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving and so on
Students passively receive information	Students are actively involved
The emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge outside the context in which it will be used	The emphasis is on using the communicating knowledge effectively to address enduring and emerging issues and problems in real life contexts
The professor's role is to be the primary information giver and the primary evaluator	The professor's role is to coach and facilitate The professor and students evaluate learning together
Teaching and assessing are separate	Teaching and assessing are intertwined
Assessment is used to monitor learning	Assessment is used to promote and diagnose learning
The emphasis is on right answers	The emphasis is on generating better questions and learning from errors
Desired learning is assessed indirectly through the use of objectively scored tests	Desired learning is assessed directly through papers, projects, performances, portfolios, and the like
The focus is on a single discipline	The approach is compatible with interdisciplinary investigation
Culture is competitive and individualistic	Culture is cooperative, collaborative, and supportive
Only students are viewed as learners	The professor and students learn together

(Adapted from Huba & Freed, 2000, p. 1)

Table 2.3 developed by Hofstede (2008, p. 12), to show the difference between large power distance (teacher-centred environment) and small power distance (learner-centred environment) and how this affects teaching and learning methods between the two learning environments.

Table 2.3: Comparison between the power distance of teacher-centred and student-centred learning environments

Large Power Distance	Small Power Distance
Students dependent on teachers	Teachers treat students as equals
Students treat teachers with respect	Students treat teachers as equals
Teacher-centred education	Student-centred education
Teachers initiate all communication in class	Students initiate some communication in class
Teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom	Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths

(Adapted from Hofstede, 2008, p. 12)

Hofstede's classification (1980) puts the Arab world in a situation where the teacher is the focus in the classroom and students are passive learners. This is similarly found in a recent study about language assessment of Arab students from the Gulf conducted by Al-Hamly and Coombe (2004) who state that "many students tend to be passive learners with the expectation that their teachers will be the 'providers' of knowledge" (p. 304). This means that students are passive learners in the Arab world and look for their teachers as knowledge feeders. "Thus it could be shocking for international students to adjust to professors who admit to not always knowing the right answers" (Chen & Chen, 2009, p. 53). According to Hofstede (1980) students are dependent on their teachers to present the lecture and they have to follow what their teachers are saying. Tatar (2005) conducted a study in the United States about Turkish international students. He found that students are suffering from teaching in the US learning system because their teaching system is learner-centred; however, the Turkish culture and its learning system is characterised by large power distance whereby the classroom environment is teacher-centred. This can be clearly seen in one of Tatar's participants who state that, "[I] don't like speaking in that class. I like listening. While I am learning something, I listen instead of speaking" (p. 345). In such cases, students in teacher-centred environments depend thoroughly on their teachers and they only memorise what they have been given by their teachers without necessarily criticizing or thinking about the subject. However, they are required to participate in group discussions and think independently when they study in host countries with different learning systems particularly in Western Universities, including Australia (Chen & Chen, 2009). This means that students who come from large power distance backgrounds to small power distance learning environments will have some pedagogical issues during their learning period and their academic performance will be potentially reduced.

In comparison to the Western learning systems, it can be argued that the Australian learning system is the same, which is learner-centred (Islam & Borland, 2006). By contrast, in many Arabic countries the learning system is more traditional and teacher-centred (Rabab'ah, 2005). A recent study conducted by Alhazmi and Nyland (2010) notes that Saudi international students found their existence in Australia to be a new experience and they had not been exposed to such a learner-centred learning system before. Classroom participation is important in Australian universities, for example, in tutorials or through electronic means such as blogs. However, in some Arabic countries' tertiary education systems, the classroom is predominantly teacher-centred where students normally do not have a chance to discuss, question and critique in their communication and learning. In support of this view Rabab'ah (2005) states "Arab

learners find it difficult to communicate freely in the target language. This may be due to the methods of language teaching" (p. 182). Students cannot participate until specifically asked by the teacher to interact in the classroom.

Therefore, AIS may face this problem in the Australian education system. Islam and Borland (2006) report that teachers in Australian universities adopt a learner-centred approach and many IS find this a new learning system. Many IS are used to being told what to do in an information transmission approach (Pincas, 2001). Owing to their prior learning being through a different learning system with greater dependency on their teachers, they are placed in a more challenging situation when they have to cope with learning in English as well as a new pedagogical approach (Sawir, 2005). Sawir conducted a study about the pedagogical problems of IS in Australia with 12 Asian students. The study was aimed at discovering the relationship between their learning in their home and their existence in a native learning environment, and how their exposure to native speakers might help them to more effectively develop their English. It found that the weakness of their prior learning approaches placed them in a difficult situation to learn English in Australia because of the need to change to learner-centred learning requirements. Participants reported that the only method of teaching they were used to was didactic in which students were passive learners. Similarly, Tran (2013) found that Asian students are passive in their learning and are hesitant to ask questions in the classroom owing to their learning system requirements and the culture they stem from as well. To help support Asian students in Western contexts, Sawir's study emphasises that it is the responsibility of the Western academics to understand the prior learning experiences of IS in order to enhance their selection of compensatory resources. Further, Sawir asserts that a learner-centred approach is helpful to students since they can discuss with their peers and with their teachers to develop their cultural awareness and their English conversational skills too. This situation is applicable to AIS, since the Australian pedagogical system is different to the learning systems in some Arabic countries, which would cause AIS to face pedagogical issues concerning their studies in Australia. Similar to this issue, Gauntlett (2005) found that, "in the gulf states both syllabus and pedagogical approach differ substantially from those experienced by most secondary students in Australia" (p. 12).

The pedagogical differences and the consequent problems for IS have been discussed by Li (2003) in a New Zealand tertiary institution with 40 Asian international students. Li found that the teaching methods used by New Zealand teachers were culturally incompatible with Asian students' expectations. Asian students are used to teacher-centred where the teacher is the dominant person in the class; however, the teaching method in New Zealand is learner-centred where the teacher is the facilitator of the class and the students are independent in their learning. All in all, students did not enjoy the way of teaching because the majority of them were used to follow what the teacher says in their home countries; however, in the new learning system (New Zealand) they were supposed to be independent. Therefore, "[t]hinking independently might be a new experience for some IS who are accustomed to relying on the professor as the ultimate authority on the course subject" (Chen & Chen, 2009, p. 53).
From another angle, Ryan and Hellmundt (2003) collected their data from IS and Australian teachers. Their participants [the teachers] reported that they felt ill equipped and untrained to teach IS. Students revealed that their learning needs were

not well met by their teachers and they felt like they were undervalued. This paper also found that there was a lack of awareness amongst the teachers in relation to international students' academic and social issues. Ryan and Hellmundt's paper suggests that teachers who are teaching IS need to consider the previous teaching role and traditions of these students in order to meet their learning requirements. Marlina (2009) conducted a study about Asian international students in Australia. Marlina's study concluded with some suggested strategies such as thinking critically, reflecting on the lecture, listening to voices that teachers may consider in order to make IS active learners in tutorials in the Australian learning system. Because AIS students are a group of IS in Australia, it would be reasonable and possible to say that they would share similar problems with other IS.

However, not all the academic and the university administration staff are aware of the needs of IS. For instance, as found by Asmar, Proude, and Inge (2004),"[i]t is clear from the responses of students in this survey that an institution's failure to provide adequate facilities and services for prayer will negatively affect on Muslim students' sense of belonging and of being valued within the university community" (p. 60). It seems that many IS are unhappy about these issues because they need to cope with the host country's culture as well as adjust to the academic environment. Therefore, such family issues would affect their immersion in their studies as well as their academic adjustment.

Gauntlett (2005) reviewed the challenges faced by Arabic Gulf international students doing their undergraduate programs in Australia. They were 12 Omani students interviewed in Oman prior to their departure and then again after they reached Australia. The research found that students anticipated difficulties such as language barriers and an independent lifestyle, as well as the challenge of different teaching and learning methods. It also found that the Omani pedagogical approach was quite different from that of the Australian tertiary education system so it was not surprising that the change would cause AIS students to have difficulties in understanding and coping with the Australian learning system.

In the previous decade, Fergany, El Hamed, and Hunaidi (2002) discuss the development in the Arab world note that there are some Arabic countries that still have low literacy levels, low levels of qualified teachers, and the more important issue which is at the core of this chapter: that the Arab world still has outmoded pedagogical practices in their nations. Furthermore, there is very limited information and communication technologies (ICTs) usage in the learning contexts in many Arabic countries (AL-Mekhlafi, 2004), indicating that teachers are using only traditional methods with text books being their main resource in teaching their students. Similarly, a recent study by Sawsaa, Lu, and Meng (2012) indicates that technology is not yet applied in many Arabic countries. Based on what these studies discuss, AIS would face pedagogical problems when they come to study in Western settings. Therefore, this current study is intending to fill the gaps in earlier studies. For instance, Gauntlett focuses only on a group of Arabic students from one country, even though the title refers to the Arabic Gulf students, which would comprise five countries including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (El-Haddad, 2003).

Teaching in the Arab world universities mainly focuses on teaching grammar and their learning systems lack teaching communicative English (Rabab'ah, 2005). Therefore,

when AIS come to study in the Western world, they may find it so unfamiliar that they have difficulty progressing in their academic journeys (Mostafa, 2006). This problem could also happen with many IS because they also come from countries where their learning of the English language does not provide them with experience in communicative English which is used mainly in Western Universities. Similarly, Lebcir, Wells, and Bond (2008) conducted a study in a United Kingdom university that investigated factors that may affect the performance of international students. These authors found that the style of teaching, the way the English language was used, and issues to do with communication affected the performance of the participating international students. They also found that these students relied heavily on the teacher's skills in presenting the lecture material rather than being proactive in their learning, which reflected the students' past experience and reliance on the teacher in a teacher-centred classroom environment. Therefore, it was recommended that teachers needed to be aware of this situation so they could be better prepared to address the needs of IS, including the ability to present clear and simple language according to the level of the learners. It was concluded that further research was needed to explore the experiences of international students across UK universities and also within the different faculties within universities.

2.4 Summary Discussion

By and large, from the above literature review, international students travel to Western countries to further their education from many different parts of the world, however there is a paucity of research into the experiences of AIS. While this may relate to the fact that their numbers have only grown in relatively recent times, particularly in Australia the need for such research is very important given the current insights in the field and the fact that AIS move into a distinctively different language and culture. More particularly, based on this literature review, there is a need to study the experiences of AIS in Australia, since most previous studies have focused on international students from the Asian region.

In addition, considerations of the research design in the reported studies shows that any new research should ensure data is collected that will allow deeper study of the language and pedagogical issues to gauge not just the views of a single stakeholder group but rather the views of at least the students themselves and their teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to study Arabic international students' situations in the host country of study and moreover utilise a mixed methodology. In the case of the present research it would also be important to include AIS and teachers who have experience in teaching AIS across Australia to take into account as far as possible the geographical differences. Importantly, some AIS will be studying in Australian state capital cities and others in rural/regional areas, which could have an influence on their experiences and views.

The existing body of literature is heavily weighted towards the study of the experiences of Asian students in Western countries (Budde-Sung, 2011; Swami, Arteche, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham, 2010; Yue & Le, 2009). There is a need to address the paucity of research into Arabic international students' education experiences in Western countries and particularly in Australia. The needs to be addressed are not only to improve pedagogy and learning but to inform federal government policy as well. For instance, COAG (2010) reported in its international student strategy for Australia (2010-2014) that "[i]nternational education in Australia

has its origins in the 1950 Colombo Plan, which is best remembered for sponsoring thousands of Asian students to study or train in Australian tertiary institutions" (p. 5). The need for the present research is also reinforced by Shepherd (2010), who calls for "rigorous research examining the rapidly growing Arabic international student cohort in Australia." Moreover:

> Despite current, rigorous research that examines Muslims in Australia generally (Rane et al, 2010) across diverse topics such as social integration and experiences of racism or alienation; cross-cultural studies; educational background; and employment; the rapidly expanding Arabic student cohort continues to be poorly researched. A lone voice has made the call in Saudi Arabia for further robust research in the field of ESL teaching and curriculum development (McMullen, 2009). (Shepherd, 2010, p. 1)

Examining the need for this research also highlights that there are some weaknesses in past research designs for the study of international students' educational experiences. For instance, most of the studies utilised either survey or interview in their data collection with very few collecting both qualitative and quantitative data required for a mixed methods approach. In addition to this, even when a mixed method approach was adopted the participants in the research were either students or teachers, rather than both. In other studies the focus was on only one university, whereas the experiences of other universities could be different. As noted earlier, for example, students who were studying in regional universities could have different social and academic experiences from students who are studying in urban universities. Thus, this adds to the imbalance of attention paid to AIS in Australia such that there is a need for deeper research to study the transition and acculturation processes of these students when they come to study in Australia, in order to address more effectively their needs, which might lead to advice on policy and practice for them to achieve better academic success. Owing to the fact that Arabic international students' social and academic experiences have not as yet been studied Australia wide, new research would demystify the situation and particularly if it was able to consider students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, besides seeking the views of Australian teachers from different education settings/universities in Australia. The present research sets out to do this in order to provide a balanced view from both teachers and students to bridge the gap in previous studies.

This literature review chapter has discussed the research problem and the importance and need for the present research. It identifies the research conceptual framework and justifies why these theories are relevant to this research. It is concluded that there is a need to explore further how the pedagogical issues combined with language demands for learning and acculturation of AIS contribute to the way they experience learning in Australian tertiary institutions. The literature review has examined research on international students in general from non-Western cultural backgrounds studying in Western Universities, including Australia with regard to social, language, and pedagogical issues. In summary, it has highlighted the major considerations related to students' difficulties in being able to mix with the host culture and use the English language to participate in learning and engage within the university-learning context and in the community. It seems from the studies cited that coping with the new learning system and socialisation and acculturation issues are a central influence on the students' problems and their academic progress.

The next chapter (Chapter three) describes the methodology for this research that aimed to explore the views of AIS and their teachers to understand the problems of this growing group of students in greater depth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

An Overview

This chapter describes the research methodology of the study. It is divided into seven sections. The first section shows an overview of the chapter. The second section explains and justifies the research paradigm adopted for the study. Section three describes the design of the study utilised in this research. Section four gives details of the study's participants and the sampling process. The fifth section outlines the stages of data collection and analysis. Section six discusses the validity and the reliability of the research and the last section explains the ethics and ethical considerations.

3.1 The Pragmatic Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is defined by Chung, Barnett, Kim, and Lackaff (2013) as "a general theory that informs the most scholarship on the operation and outcomes of any particular system of thought and action" (p. 1000). In this present study, the research paradigm is pragmatism. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) specify that it is the best paradigm for mixed methods research. Migiro and Magangi (2011, p. 3758) state that it "is a set of ideas articulated by many people, from historical figures such as Dewey, James and Pierce to contemporaries such as Murphy, Rorty and West," citing Cherryholmes (1992) as pointing out that it includes "using 'what works', using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge." Further, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) who formally linked pragmatism and mixed methods argued that both qualitative and quantitative research data may be used in a single study and that there should not be a forced-choice dichotomy between post-positivism and constructivism. Therefore, this research adopted a pragmatic approach based on practicality in the collection of data to address the research questions. A multiple stances axiology including both biased and unbiased perspectives was included and both formal and informal rhetoric were utilised (Creswell, 2011). Further, this kind of paradigm is utilised because " . . . it can be argued that the pragmatic paradigm can be adopted for the purpose of social and management research endeavours as this is congruent with the mixed quantitative and qualitative approach" (Armitage & Keeble-Allen, 2007, p. 31). In addition, Creswell (2003) asserts that the pragmatic paradigm involves collecting data in mixed methods from both quantitative and qualitative data sources sequentially. In a more recent study conducted by Best (2012) it was state that, "[a] mixed method approach to social science research is rooted in pragmatism" (p. 267), which can work well owing to the utilisation of qualitative and quantitative data together. The pragmatic paradigm is undoubtedly applicable in this study, since the data collection is sequential, starting with quantitative data collection and analysis and then the qualitative. Further, Creswell (2003) notes that the quantitative approach is linked with post-positivistic paradigm, which employs, for instance, a survey inquiry resulting in numeric data. On the other hand, the qualitative approach is associated with constructivist paradigm, which employs, for instance, conducting interviews which resulting in open-ended texts. The mixed methods is associated with the pragmatic paradigm which collects data in simultaneous or sequential utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods which is the best way for addressing the research questions.

3.2 The Research Methodology

An Overview

The design in this study is mixed methods, which focused on two steps. The first step involved quantitative data collection through the administration of an 'online survey', and the second step comprised follow-up qualitative data collection through 'semi-structured interviews'. The quantitative method was utilised to collect numerical data from AIS and Australian teachers about the social and academic experiences of AIS during their study in Australia. The qualitative method was utilised with both AIS and Australian teachers to explore in more depth the students' attitudes and experiences and "to understand more fully the respondent's own perspective" (Best, 2012, p. 78), regarding the students' social and academic situation in the host country of Australia. The richness of mixed data in one single study highlighted in this research was also asserted by Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) who state:

> A qualitative data collection approach, can provide depth in a research inquiry by allowing researchers to gain deep insights from rich narratives, and surveys, a quantitative data collection approach, can bring breadth to a study by helping researchers gather data about different aspects of a phenomenon from many participants. Together, these two data collection approaches can help IS [information system] researchers make better and more accurate inferences. (p. 26)

3.2.1 The Mixed Methods Design

A mixed methods approach was adopted where data were collected through an online survey and interviews with AIS and Australian teachers. This design was in keeping with the stance of Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) who state that, "[s]uch work can help develop rich insights into various phenomena of interest that cannot be fully understood using only a quantitative or a qualitative method" (p. 21). Again, because all methods have drawbacks, by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods into the present research study, it may be argued that this helped to reduce any weaknesses that might have resulted from utilising only one method (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). These authors further claim that using both methods enables the researcher to answer the research questions more fully, as opposed to the possible limitations of using only one method. Similarly, Hussein (2009) asserts that using multiple methods of data collection in the same study increases the credibility of the study (p. 1).

This was also argued by Creswell (2007) who notes that a combination of these methods utilised together provides a better understanding of a research problem than either approach alone because it better enables participants' voices to be heard (p. 40). Again, in a more recent study, Migiro and Magangi (2011) they state that, "[m]ixed methods research encourages researchers to use multiple approaches to collecting and analysing data within a single study, recognising the limitations of using a single method" (p. 3757). In addition, Frechtling and Sharp (1997) specify that using mixed methods will achieve more reliable and valid findings with richer information. Therefore, the mixed methods of data collection was utilised in order to obtain data not only in numerical form but also from a descriptive viewpoint.

The researcher used an explanatory design by applying the Taxonomy Development Model (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). In this model, the quantitative phase in the

form of a survey was conducted first. Then the qualitative phase in the form of interviews followed and was guided by the results of the quantitative data analysis. By doing so, this explanatory design was applied in the second phase (the interviews), which helped the researcher to explain in detail the research problem that was initiated during the first phase of the survey (Creswell, 2012). The following Figure shows the modified model of the present study in two phases.
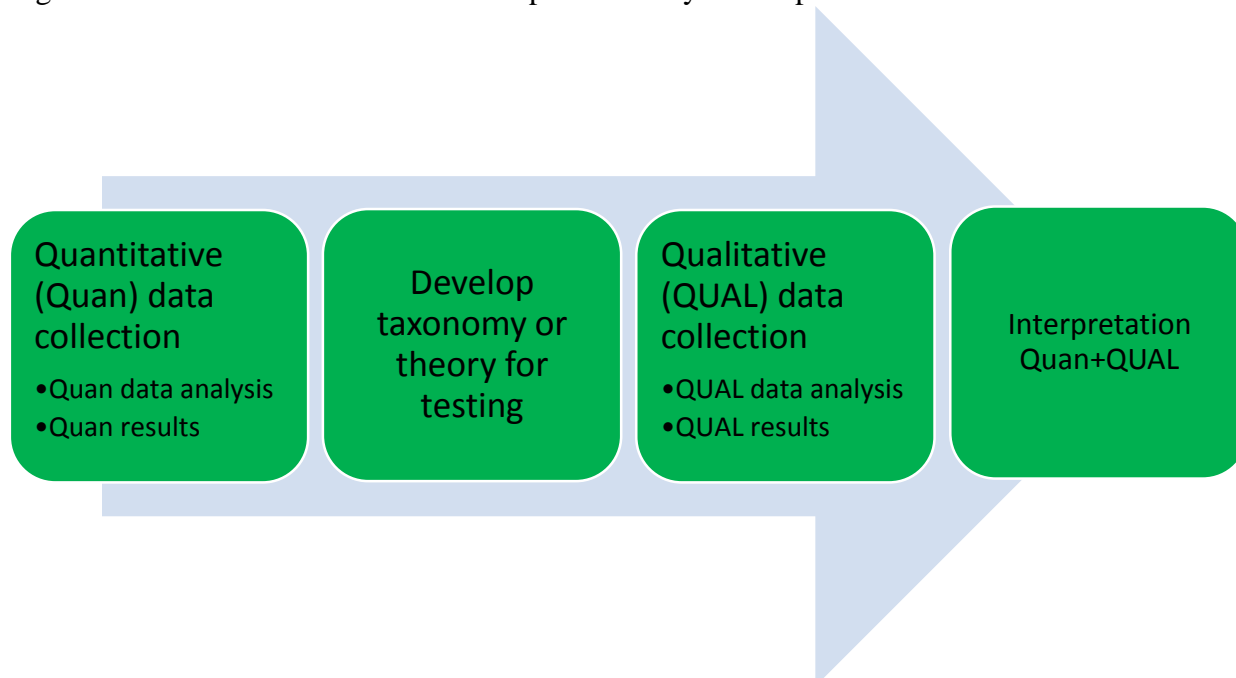
Figure 3.1: Explanatory design: Taxonomy Development Model (QUAL emphasised)
(Adapted from Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007, p. 73)

The researcher in this study decided to put the weight on the qualitative method because the reporting of the descriptive results of students' views was seen as being better able to "capture essential aspects of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants" (Curry, Nembhard, & Bradley, 2009, p. 1143). In addition, the results in this model were qualitative emphasised because the paradigm of the current research was pragmatic, which "calls for either equal or unequal weighting, depending on the research question" (Creswell, 2006, p. 82). The choice of priority decision and weighting refers to the purpose of the research. To reinforce the choice of priority, Creswell (2006) notes that the researcher can have the weight on qualitative or quantitative and that this depends on the researcher's feeling about whichever is the best way to answer the research questions. Therefore, the weighting was put on the qualitative because it assisted the researcher to investigate in detail any" . . . unexpected results [that may] arise from the quantitative study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 211). In addition, the researcher's feeling of the best way to investigate the quantitative results further was the qualitative method. Therefore, this was another reason for putting weight on the qualitative method, as it allowed the interviewer to go deeply into the research problem in a relaxed manner where the interviewees were given enough time to talk in an informal way about their experiences. To reinforce this, Creswell (2003) state that, "[a] priority for one type of data or the other depends on the interests of the researcher" (p. 212).

As was shown in Figure3.1, this explanatory design was most appropriate for the present study because the analysis of the initial predominantly quantitative data,

collected through surveying students and teachers facilitated the development of theory that was subsequently tested through in-depth interviews and the collection of qualitative data. Thus, the study's final interpretation of results benefited greatly from the use of both methods. It also included the perspectives of both students and teachers to help to achieve a balanced view (Myles & Cheng, 2003). This was designed to help to guard against any possible bias that might occur if only one of these groups was the major source of data as has been the case in previous studies. For instance, Trice (2007) focused on teachers only as did Li and Gasser (2005), and the work of Mostafa (2006) and Volet and Ang (1998) studied students only, and the present research project therefore aimed to extend the existing research in the field. As was noted earlier using the mixed methods design in this study enable more valid and reliable data to be elicited. As was found by Migiro and Magangi (2011) there are three important advantages of this method:

> (1) A researcher can use strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses in another method by using both in a research study; (2) Mixed method research can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings; (3) Mixed method research can add insight and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used. (p. 3763)

In summary, then, an explanatory design was adopted because of its potential to provide rich data through the conduct of two research methods sequentially. The first method (survey) was administered, analysed, explained and compared between students' and teachers' views and the resulting data were used to guide the structure of the second method of interviews with both groups.

3.3 Participants and Sampling Techniques

The participants in this study were undergraduate and postgraduate Arabic international students studying at Australian educational institutions including Australian universities and private companies as tertiary preparatory providers, and local teachers with experience in teaching such students. Their recruitment came in two phases and was Australia wide. Phase one involved administration of the online survey to students and teachers through the snowball technique. In phase two, interviews were conducted with both students and teachers through purposive sampling. The participants in the survey were both males and females. However, only males were involved in the student interviews because of cultural and religious sensitivities where the researcher as a male was not able to interview female Arabic students. The researcher had considered the importance of Arabic females' voices in this research; but it was not possible to recruit a suitably skilled female from an Arabic background to conduct interviews with female participants. It is generally known that the interview process needs specific techniques to extract data from interviewees. In addition, the researcher did not have any funds to provide training and/or to pay someone for her time and work collecting data by interview. Nevertheless, female AIS did participate in the survey so that to that extent their viewpoints were included. Taking into account the growing numbers of AIS in Australia, the difficulties in identifying them and the feasibility of data collection across Australia, the targeted sample sizes were set between 65 and 150 for students. Considering that the study was to be descriptive in the main, although a survey was to be completed by teachers which produced descriptive statistics, because of the difficulties of identifying tertiary teachers who were experienced in teaching AIS it

was decided to target a minimum sample of 30 teachers through snowball technique. This sample size was based on the findings of Mason (2010) who found that 31 was the mean sample size of 560 studies that adopted qualitative approaches. This is based on the theory of saturation. He cites Ritchie et al. (2003) as outlining seven factors that might affect the potential size of a sample:

> The heterogeneity of the population; the number of selection criteria; the extent to which 'nesting' of criteria is needed; groups of special interest that require intensive study; multiple samples within one study; types of data collection methods use; and the budget and resources available. (p. 84)

3.3.1 Quantitative Sampling

In the absence of a direct method of identifying members of these target populations across Australian educational institutions, the non-probability sampling snowball technique was used to locate both students and teachers. This technique "works on the assumption that members of a population of interest are typically able to identify one another via shared relations" (Wig et al., 2013, para. 4).

The technique began with potential participants known to the researcher's personal contacts and these contacts were then asked through email to distribute the survey link to any Arabic international student in Australia as well as Australian teachers who were teaching NNES students, but particularly AIS. The adoption of this process reflected the snowball process. This technique allowed the researcher to make contact with a range of the AIS and Australian teacher populations in Australia. Castillo (2009, p. 1) found that this technique allows the researcher to recruit a sufficient number of participants because it works as chain referral, which would not be possible otherwise. It was seen as an appropriate technique because students themselves are in the best position to know other students from the same language and cultural background as themselves. It also provided a cheap and cost-efficient method of sampling. Similarly, contacting teachers started through personal contacts and the researcher asked these contacts to distribute the survey link to others to ensure that this sample was selected Australia wide. These sample sizes reached 69 for students (34 male and 20 female) and 32 for teachers. The duration of the snowball technique was from January 2012 to November 2012, providing a reasonable timeframe to exhaust the process, while keeping the research project timeline on track.

3.3.2 Qualitative Sampling

As was mentioned above, in order to make the data richer the research involved semi-structured interviews with a subsample of both students and teachers. The selection of participants for these interviews used purposive sampling, choosing approximately six students and seven teachers, who were accessible and who best represented a cross-section of each group. This number allowed some attrition, although all 13 remained in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select interviewees because it allowed the researcher to choose purposefully participants who were experienced in the topic (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

The researcher was able to interview students from all over Australia through the use of Skype as well as some face-to-face interviews, connecting interstate to include Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney. This approach ensured some representation of experiences across Australia as well as capturing the views of those from urban

settings compared with rural. For instance, the experiences of University of Southern Queensland students and English teachers at a regional university may be different from the experiences of those studying in Australia's 'big eight' state capital city settings like the University of Queensland and the University of Melbourne.

3.4 The Process of Data Collection Stages

The data collection process was sequential which meant collecting the data in stages. "In the sequential approach, the quantitative or qualitative data is collected first" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007, p. 116). The sequential process in this project collected the quantitative numeric data first, followed by the descriptive data, which was qualitative. The reason that this process was adapted was in order to help to explain and elaborate the quantitative results, which emerged from the first phase. This was clearly mentioned in Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick (2006):

> The rationale for this [sequential] approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth. (p. 5)

During the survey data collection, participants were informed about the consent form, which was attached to the survey link to sign and to send back to the researcher. Their participation was completely voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without any duress. For the interviews, both teachers and students were asked to sign the consent form and were also informed about their voluntary participation, and the fact that they do not have to answer if they did not like to do so. During the interview process, an audio device was used to record the actual conversation for later transcription and analysis and to review when updating the findings, which were related back to the study's literature review. The data collection process involved two stages as is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: An overview of the research stages and the data collection plan

Stages	Stage1Snowball Technique		Stage 2Interviews	
Data Collection Instruments	**1.1. Student Survey n = />65-150**	**1.2. Staff Parallel Survey n = />30**	**2.1. Students' n= 6**	**2.2. Staff n= 7**
Approach to data analysis	Statistical analysis Thematic analysis	Statistical analysis Thematic analysis	Thematic analysis	Thematic analysis
Research questions ↓				
Q1. How do Arabic international students experience studying in the Australian tertiary education system?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Q2. To what extent do Arabic international students	✓		✓	✓

integrate academically and socially into Australian tertiary education?				
Q3. How can tertiary education best provide assistance for Arabic international students who choose to study in Australia?		✓		✓

In stage one, the researcher administered the online parallel surveys to AIS and teachers via the snowball technique. In the case of AIS, this applied to those who were in the same situation studying in Australian tertiary education and they were asked to send the invitation link to their friends. In the case of teachers, they were asked to distribute the invitation to participate to other Australian staff members who they thought were teaching AIS or who had recent experience of teaching English as second language (ESL) students including AIS. The invitation to participate, details of the study and ethics approval were specified in the introductory email and at the beginning of the survey to make it clear to participants. The introduction also explained the nature of the study, gave the researcher's contact details and stated the reasons for doing this research (Burton, 2000). Participants were informed of the confidentiality of their data and their rights to anonymity. In case of any enquiry about the research to the university, the contact details of the Office of Research and the researcher's principal supervisor's details were provided.

3.4.1 Surveys Development and Trial

The two parallel surveys of students and teachers underwent a development process and trial before their administration through Survey Monkey online. This was to ensure that the survey questions and content could be understood by the intended participants. The surveys contained 113 Likert-scale items for both groups, developed from the issues emerging from the review of existing research and structured according to the components of the research conceptual framework, namely: sociocultural theory, social identity, and Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of culture and intercultural communication. For AIS, the first part asked them about their demographic information, for instance, their country of origin, their gender, the state in which they were currently living in Australia, their length of being in Australia, the type of institution they studied in Australia, and the kind of course they were pursuing in Australia. The second part collected data about the nature of the education system in their native countries. The third part asked them about their views about the nature of learning in the Australian education system. The fourth part sought information about the level of support that their tertiary learning had offered them when they first came to Australia to settle. The fifth part posed questions regarding their living situation in the host country. The sixth part asked about their views about the Australian learning system when they first started learning in Australia. The seventh part explored their experience in living and

learning while being away from their home country, and investigated their level of communication with Australian people and the extent to which they felt they had integrated into Australian society. The last part consisted of four open-ended questions to allow respondents to express their own views about the subject matter of the research.

As a parallel survey, the design for teachers followed the same structure. The content remained parallel except for demographic information, students' arrival experiences, and students' views about being away from home. Thus, the demographic information asked teachers about their background, their teaching level, and the length of time that they had been teaching. The second part asked teachers about their views about the experience of teaching AIS in the Australian education system. As with the survey to students, questions in this part asked them about their experiences and perceptions of learning in Australia. The third part surveyed teachers about their views regarding the living situation of AIS in Australia. The fourth part asked teachers about how they saw their students' situation when they first came to Australia, and how they viewed their students' ability to cope with the Australian learning system. The last part consisted of four open-ended questions to allow the teachers to express their personal opinions or to comment in relation to the survey topic should they feel that they had something to add or that something had been missed in the preceding parts.

During stage two, the researcher conducted two individual interviews (one preliminary followed by one follow-up with each member of the subsample of students and teachers. The initial interview began with set of "getting to know/building rapport" questions that were followed by a set of core questions regarding the students' experiences of studying in Australia. In addition to the survey, the interviews were utilised in this study to ensure that the researcher "included the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Therefore, in order to let the interviewees focus on the questions before starting the interviews, they were informed clearly about the objectives of the study and how the anticipated outcomes were intended to benefit the future of AIS and Australian teachers. The questions used in the interviews were open-ended to help the participants feel more confident about expressing their opinions. Punch (1998) emphasised that ethical issues tend to be more important when using a qualitative study since the researcher is dealing with sensitive issues of the participants' personal experiences. Compared with a survey, interviews involve deeper interactions with participants and constitute a face-to-face mode where informants are encouraged to express their own views in a relaxing atmosphere, unlike interacting with a computer by clicking on the survey answers or keyboarding. In addition to that, Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011) state that "[i]n-depth interviews are most appropriate for situations in which you want to ask open-ended questions" (p. 1). The researcher was able to build rapport with the participants by paying high attention to cultural and/or religious matters as appropriate, which was important when researching the lives of Muslim students. Interviews with teachers were also informal and semi-structured and the focus was on following up on the survey results to explore the issues that emerged from both teachers' and students' perspectives.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2008) state that, "[w]ithout rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility" (p. 14). Therefore, to ensure the rigour of the present research the researcher paid high attention to ensure the issues of validity and reliability were addressed, particularly in relation to the research process, instrument development and data collection and analysis. Validity and reliability are important pillars in research because the researcher needs to convince the reader that the findings of the study are worthy of attention. These terms have been defined by Campbell and Fisk (1959, as cited in Winter, 2000) who state that validity is "[a]n agreement between two efforts to measure the same thing with different methods", and reliability is "[a]n agreement between two efforts to measure the same thing with the same methods" (p. 2). Further, Zohrabi (2013) note that utilising different types of data collection will increase the validity and reliability of the data of a research project, hence, the existing research utilised mixed methodology. However, there were other strategies that the researcher employed to help ensure the validity and reliability of the research and in relation to the qualitative data, its authenticity and trustworthiness. As Seale and Silverman (1997) specify there are a range of strategies that can assist in arguing the rigour and validity of qualitative research. These may include:

> Ensuring representativeness of cases, including the use of combined qualitative and quantitative methods to support generalisations . . . selection of cases according to theoretical criteria . . . using computer programs to assist qualitative data analysis . . . [to] ensure systematic analysis of representative instances of data, . . . recording data objectively and comprehensively, including use of audiotapes . . .. (p. 380)

The sections below discuss these issues and explain the steps taken by the researcher to ensure the present study's validity and reliability.

3.5.1 Validity

In order to ensure the validity of this study, firstly, the research utilised multiple sources of data in its adoption of a "mixed method" approach, thus providing more evidence from multiple sources. This is an important factor of validity (Best, 2012). Secondly, the researcher considered the issue of validity in relation to sample selection and the size of the samples. Use of the snowball technique to select participants provided the best way to identify participants from across Australia, given the difficulties associated with identifying the total populations of potential participants. The initial samples were selected and then the sub-samples were selected on the basis of purposiveness to ensure these participants were representative of the larger group. After this, the researcher paid attention to the development of the data collection instruments, including their trial and the analysis of the comparative survey data using SPSS (Cronbach's Alpha) and the qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo. This is explained in the following subsections.

3.5.1.2 Survey Validity

To make sure that the data compiled for the study were as valid as possible, the researcher implemented the survey validation process through inviting scrutiny from an experienced reference group who were specialized in cross-cultural communication and research methods. The validation process was conducted over a period of 28 days to allow the scrutinisation of the appropriateness of the survey items and questions to prepare for its trial. This reference group gave feedback to the researcher on the appropriateness of the:

1. Survey Likert-scale design
2. Language and terms used in the survey
3. Quality and scope of items
4. Construction of questions asked to maximise participants' opportunity to respond
5. Language in relation to cultural understanding

After the critical reference group had reviewed the survey questions and provided feedback about the language and concepts, and the appropriateness of the formation of questions to extract the best quality information, taking account of cultural issues and sensitivities, the questions were edited and prepared for implementation in a trial. Based on the feedback, and before the actual implementation of the survey, the researcher modified some questions to clarify and improve the validity of the survey design. For example, in part two of the survey, as a result of the feedback, question four was changed from "used ICT in your study" to "used computer and Internet to assist you in your study needs." Another example, the reference group suggested having the items that asked about students' experience of being away from home in a separate section. Therefore, the researcher edited this and made it a complete section, which became part seven to extract more information. The reference group also suggested, for instance, in part five, where item six said "get your traditional food", to change it to "get your traditional food in the area where you live", to make the item more explicit in its meaning.

The final step involved the researcher editing the questions that the reference group suggested to change and arrange the survey sections to distribute to teachers and students for a trial.

Survey Trial
After the feedback was received from teachers regarding the construction of the survey items, the researcher trialled the survey with both students and teachers to verify the item difficulty, and investigate reliability and validity issues. The total number of students who trialled the survey was 19, and 14 teachers. During the trial, the researcher distributed the survey as a hard copy. The sampling was purposeful sampling starting with contacts that were known to the researcher Australia wide and from different universities. During the distribution of the survey trial, reply-paid mail was used. In the trial, the researcher asked participants not to participate in the actual survey, if they received the link, to make sure that the participants in the trial and actual research samples were different.

3.5.1.3 Interview Validity
Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011) state that, "[v]alidity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain" (p. 1). In order to ensure the interview schedule is suitable to investigate the academic and social issues of AIS, issues of the rigour of qualitative questions and the validity were considered by the researcher. The way to ensure the validity was to gain feedback from a reference group through a trial run. During the interview validity process, it took approximately a month for the reference group, who were specialists in cross-cultural communication and TESOL teachers teaching ESL students, to scrutinise, discuss and respond. This reference group returned the interview questions with feedback on the following:

1. Editing some linguistic expressions in the interview questions.
2. Restructuring some questions to make them clearer and more understandable for students.
3. Reorganizing some questions to make them more appropriate for the interview aims.
4. Adding and deleting some parts of questions in order to make them more comprehensible by students since the reference group was experienced in teaching ESL and assessment methods.

For example, one question was changed from "Did you speak with Australians when you came to Australia?" to "How was the speaking and communication with Australians when you first arrived compared with after a period of time." The reference group changed this question in order to make it fit linguistically and to extract more information especially in face-to-face interviews. In addition to the reference group feedback, the researcher continuously revised the interview questions to ensure they fitted with the research framework and answered the research questions. After that, the researcher responded to the reference group and arranged the interview questions and sections for implementation with students and teachers.

3.5.2 Reliability

The concept of reliability differs between qualitative and quantitative research. During the quantitative research, reliability is dealing more with "the consistency and explicability over time, over instrument and over groups of respondents" (Cohen & Manion, 2003, p. 117). In relation to the quantitative data, before and after the actual distribution of the survey, the researcher ensured the reliability of the data. Before with the reference group and after the data was collected, SPSS software (Cronbach's Alpha analysis) was utilised because Alpha is "an important concept in the evaluation of assessments and questionnaires" (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, p. 54) and to measure the consistency of the items. To reinforce this, Fink (2002) notes that Cronbach's Alpha should be used if the researcher conducts a Likert-scale of more than two options. For the qualitative part, the preparation of data analysis concerns the reliability standards. Therefore, the researcher ensured the reliability of the data before the actual interviews through a group reference check to see if the questions could extract more in-depth information. Then, during the actual interviews process, the researcher carefully recorded all the interviews digitally and replayed them continuously to listen as much as possible during the transcription in order not to miss any parts of the participants' views. The following two sections explain the steps taken by the researcher to best ensure the reliability of the data.

3.5.2.1 Survey Reliability

Before the actual data collection, to ensure the reliability of the survey, the researcher's involvement of a reference group in the development of the survey questions and the subsequent trial of the survey with a small sample of Arabic students to check its accuracy and to get trial answers made a major contribution to both the validity and reliability of the items. The modification of questions helped to improve their clarity and in turn, the reliability of the data collected from students by ensuring their understanding. Thus, the survey questions were carefully edited and phrased clearly and unambiguously to make sure they met the standards of reliability as outlined by Kuh (2001). The AIS involved in the trial were also very similar to

those in the actual survey, thus contributing to the survey reliability. On this basis, it was decided that the survey did not need to be in Arabic although during the interviews some Arabic was used as necessary since the researcher is bilingual in Arabic and English. In addition, during both surveys, participants were asked about their personal experiences from their real world. Students were asked about their experience in their home countries compared with their Australian experience and teachers about their recent and current experience teaching AIS. This contributed to decreasing errors and increasing accuracy (Kuh et al., 2001). Then, in relation to the reliability of the survey in its actual implementation, the researcher applied Cronbach's Alpha, which showed a high degree of reliability of 0.92 for students and 0.86 for teachers. Hence, the reliability of survey items was relatively high, since according to Bland and Altman (1997), for good reliability Cronbach's Alpha should be between 0.70-0.90.

3.5.2.2 Interview Reliability

To make the interview reliable in this research, the researcher initially trialled the interview questions with two reference groups. The first reference group involved English language teachers who were TESOL teaching staff at an Australian university. The second reference group comprised experienced PhD students in the last stage of their study, who provided a check on the cultural issues to prove its consistency and to acquire more in-depth information. Again, these two reference groups indicated that failure to tape record or take notes during the interviews would lead to less reliable results and random errors. To avoid these errors, the researcher tape-recorded all the interviews with the first permission from the University of Southern Queensland's Ethics Committee and secondly permission from the interviewees. The participants were all over 18 years of age; therefore, the responses were able to be considered reasonably reliable owing to the ability of the participants to give valid responses in relation to their studying experiences in Australia and the researcher having accurate records of the interview dialogue as a basis for analysis. The researcher then employed the NVivo software, which added to the reliability of the data analysis through the consistent identification of codes and themes and compilation and analysis of the ensuing data.

In summary, the reliability of the research was addressed through mixed methods design and a research process that involved the initial sampling approach, the use of reference groups as sounding boards for the instrument design, the trial of the survey instruments, and data analysis procedures for both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. In keeping with Zohrabi's (2013) advice, this research project involved "collecting varied types of information through different sources [which he argues] can enhance the reliability of the data and the results" (p. 269).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Respecting and protecting the confidentiality of the participants in this research is highly taken into consideration. Therefore, prior to undertaking the survey method, and later for interviews, the researcher applied for and obtained ethical clearance with the approval number (H11REA208.1), which is required by the policy of the university and the Australian standards for the conduct of research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The term 'ethics' means instructions or guidelines for distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong (Resnik, 2011). In the application, the researcher explained to the university committee how the anonymity and

confidentiality of the participants would be assured and how the research would be of minimal risk to participants. Afterwards, ethical clearance was obtained through the University of Southern Queensland's Ethics Committee prior to the conduct of the research. In keeping with the regulations, the present study ensured the use of secure computing facilities to store data resulting from the study. Their participation was voluntary and they were advised that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time without duress. They were able to gain a full understanding of the requirements of the research project through the provision of written information along with the consent form. The consent form conveyed to participants information on their complete rights according to the code of ethics. All participants provided their consent prior to voluntary completion of the online survey. Therefore, the researcher could not collect the data without their consent to participate in the study. Then the study asked the participants to read and sign a consent form to ensure their understanding of their participation and send it back to the researcher via email. In their consent form, the details are clearly mentioned in order to make it easy for participants to understand the process of participation. Sensitive personal or cultural data were not collected. Participants were given pseudonyms in order to hide their actual names and to maintain their confidentiality in any reporting. The targeted participants in this recruitment were mainly students who had studied for a period of time in their home countries, followed by their current study in Australia, which meant they had experienced studying in two different learning systems. The second targeted participants were the Australian teachers who had experience teaching ESL students. This enabled the researcher to study the experiences of AIS when they were studying in the learning system of Australia.

The chapter described the methods utilised in this research to fully answer the research questions and reap rich data from the application of a mixed methods design. The data were collected sequentially through survey and through follow-up interviews in an explanatory study. The recruitment of participants applied a non-probability sampling technique via snowball sampling for the survey. Purposive sampling was then used to select a subsample of the survey participants for follow-up in-depth interviews. The next chapter describes the results of the research.

3.7 Researcher Stance

The researcher's personal interest in this research is a result of his educational experiences in his homeland of Iraq and more recently in Australia. His experiences as an Arabic speaking background student at USQ have encouraged him to investigate the situation of AIS who are undertaking their study in Australian learning institutions. The cultural background of the researcher provides him with a unique perspective, the emic perspective, concerning the situation of AIS and how they encounter the experiences of studying overseas.

The author's interest in this thesis is in seeing how these students cope with a very different culture to that of their own and to examine the factors, which may affect on their academic studies. The decision to travel overseas and study in another country is not one taken lightly; although most of the participants in this study were receiving their governments' scholarship, and moving their home base can be quite expensive. In addition, there are numerous factors that can affect international students' ability to engage effectively in their studies. The researcher's purpose in this study is to provide a realistic account of what AIS face when they come to study at an

Australian university and what areas Australian international education policy makers need to consider in helping improve AIS academic success and transition to the host culture. Investigating such factors may alleviate some of the problems these students might face in Australia. The review of the previous studies in chapter two 'the literature review chapter' indicated that most research in this area has been designed from the etic perspective and the conduct of the present research from the emic perspective, therefore, has the potential to add to the field and contribute to a more balanced view of the situation. In keeping with Berry (1999) such an approach can strengthen the research as in this case the researcher is from the same cultural background as the participants and therefore should bring a deeper understanding of the local AIS cultural terms and the culturally based meanings. It is also clear from a very early study conducted by Hofstede (1980) that culture can be understood and studied experimentally when researchers have the emic perspective in which they are considered as having a native's point of view about the studied culture. In such a case, a member of the same background and a researcher at the same time is expected to be able to better explain values and behaviours of the targeted culture, which in this case is the culture of AIS. In the meantime, the researcher was not a participant but was using the insider position 'emic view' in which he used his experiences to help trigger the interviewees to fully explain their social and academic experiences while doing their studies in Australia.

However, the researcher also took certain precautions to avoid personal bias in the research data collection, analysis and interpretation by including a reference group in the development of survey items and trial of the survey. As well he applied NVivo to analyse the open-ended question responses and also to the interview data. The thematic analyses were also shared with and explained to an independent reference person. Summary of interviewees' responses were also fed back to respondents where possible.

Chapter 4: Results of Parallel Survey to Arabic International Students and Teachers

An Overview

In line with the research aim, the target of this chapter is to report on the results of the collected data of 69 Arabic international students and 32 Australian teachers through a survey that utilised the snowball technique. It consists of five sections: the first section gives this overview of the chapter; the second section details the students' survey results of closed questions and reports on the associated statistical analyses; the third section explains the students' views through their responses to open-ended questions, utilising a thematic analysis; the fourth section describes the teachers' survey results of closed questions and reports the statistical analyses; and the fifth section reports on the teachers' views through the thematic analysis of their responses to the survey's open-ended questions.

The data in this chapter describe the social and academic experiences of AIS while they were studying in Australian universities in both postgraduate and undergraduate programs as well as English preparation programs, including some in private education institutions, Australia wide. Before the parallel survey's administration, it was trialled with small samples of both students and teachers. As noted in the methodology, its development involved seeking feedback from two critical reference groups to increase its validity and prove that the language used in the survey questions would be meaningful to the participants, ensuring the questions were easy to understand and culturally acceptable. The survey was distributed to both students and teachers giving time for the snowball technique to be exhausted during the period January to November 2012. This allowed fundamental data on students' experiences to be collected while they were living and studying in the host country, Australia.

4.1 An Overview of Parallel Survey to Students and Teachers

The survey was structured as a comparative data collection in order to compare the opinions of both Australian teachers and AIS on a range of common areas and issues. The start of the survey distribution through the snowball technique began with personal contacts and then respondents were asked to distribute the survey link to their friends. Confidentiality was assured because there were no questions asking about their personal identification details. The surveys are divided into main questions and under each main question, there are items. The next sections detail the surveys of the two groups of participants, students and teachers.

4.2 The Students' Survey Structure

The survey to students (Appendix 5) consisted of eight parts (see Table 4.1). Part one collected demographic information, and part two investigated students' views about the learning system in their home countries (the Arab world countries). Part three sought students' views about the nature of the learning system they experienced in Australia; Part four asked students about the kind of support offered by their universities during their arrival regarding their social needs and airport needs, such as the airport pick up service; and part five investigated their living situation in Australia. Part six reports on their learning and academic needs in the Australian tertiary education when they first arrived. Part seven reports on their experiences associated with being away from their home country and the last part provided an opportunity for students to express their own views in relation to their experiences

and difficulties, which they might have had in Australia, but that the survey might not have addressed. This last part was also designed to allow the students to self-report about (a) their views about the most difficult problems that they have faced in Australia, (b) the most important facilities they think that their tertiary institutions need to help them with while settling in Australia, (c) the strategies that students use to help them cope in Australia, and (d) their views about the most effective ways their Australian teachers could help them to learn better in Australia. These parts are listed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The structure of the survey to AIS

Part	Topic
1	Demographic information
2	The learning system in their home countries
3	Airport arrival support
4	The learning system in Australia
5	Students' experiences upon arrival in Australia
6	Students' experiences living in Australia
7	Students' experiences being away from their home country
8	Students' self-report on their learning and settlement (4 questions)

4.2.1 Students' Demographic Information

This section reports on the AIS participants' demographic information. It considers their responses to six questions regarding: (1) their country of origin, (2) gender, (3) the Australian state in which they were living and studying at the time of the survey, (4) their length of stay in Australia, (5) the type of institution in which they were studying in Australia, and (6) the current course they were undertaking in Australia. Students' responses to these questions are detailed in the figures below.

4.2.1.1 Students' Country of Origin

The research targeted AIS, and it was important to collect data from students from different countries across the Arab world so as part of the demographic information students identified their country of origin. A total of 53 (77%) out of the total 69 answered this question. The results of this question show that the sample of students was representative of ten different Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Oman, Libya, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Iraq, Bahrain, Algeria and United Arab Emirates, as detailed in Figure 4.1.
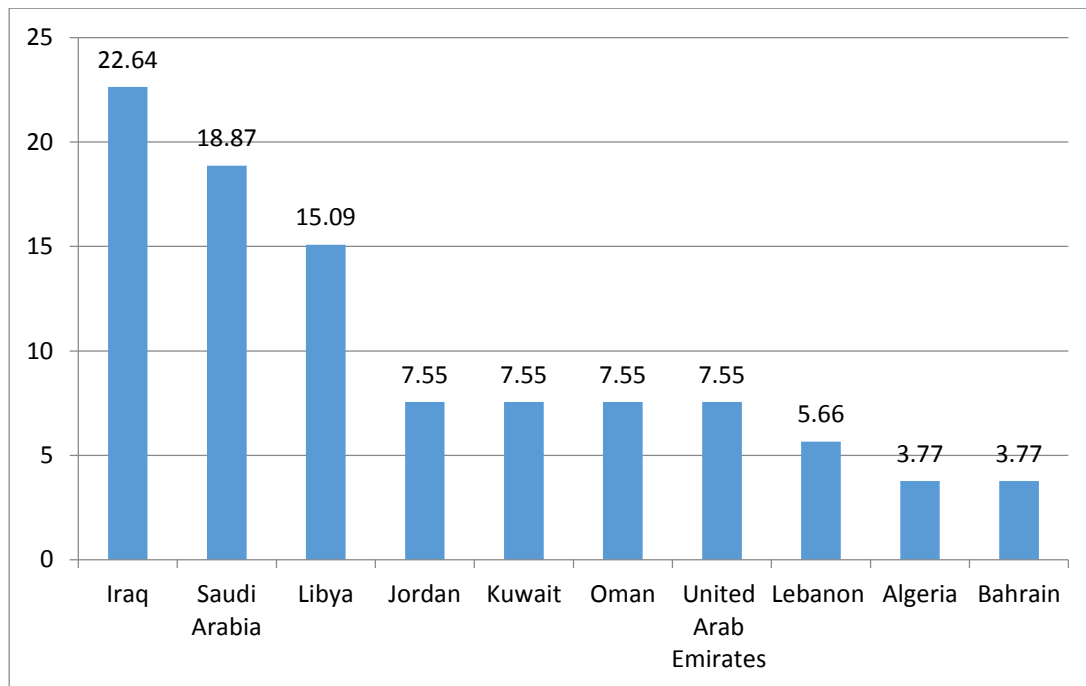
Figure 4.1: Arabic international students' country of origin

This Figure shows that the students originated from a wide range of countries in the Arab world. Most students, almost a quarter, came from Iraq (22.64%; 12). This was not surprising since the researcher is from Iraq and began the snowball technique by distributing the survey to his immediate colleagues. The next highest group, almost a fifth, were from Saudi Arabia (18.87%; 10) with almost as many from Libya (15.09%; 8). The remainder comprised equal groups of students from Kuwait, Jordan, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (7.55%; 4, in each case), three students (5.66%) from Lebanon and two students (3.77%) from Bahrain and Algeria respectively. The results show that in this sample, Iraqi and Saudi students were the largest groups to participate in this survey. The higher proportion of Saudi students was in keeping with the AEI data (2011), which as discussed in chapter two, shows an increasing trend of Saudi students coming to Australia. This Figure adds to the validity of the data since it indicates that the survey participants represent a wide range of different Arab world countries.

4.2.1.2 Students' Gender

The survey posed a question about the student participants' gender. The Figure below describes their results. Out of the total 69 participants who returned the survey, 53 (77%) students answered this demographic question.
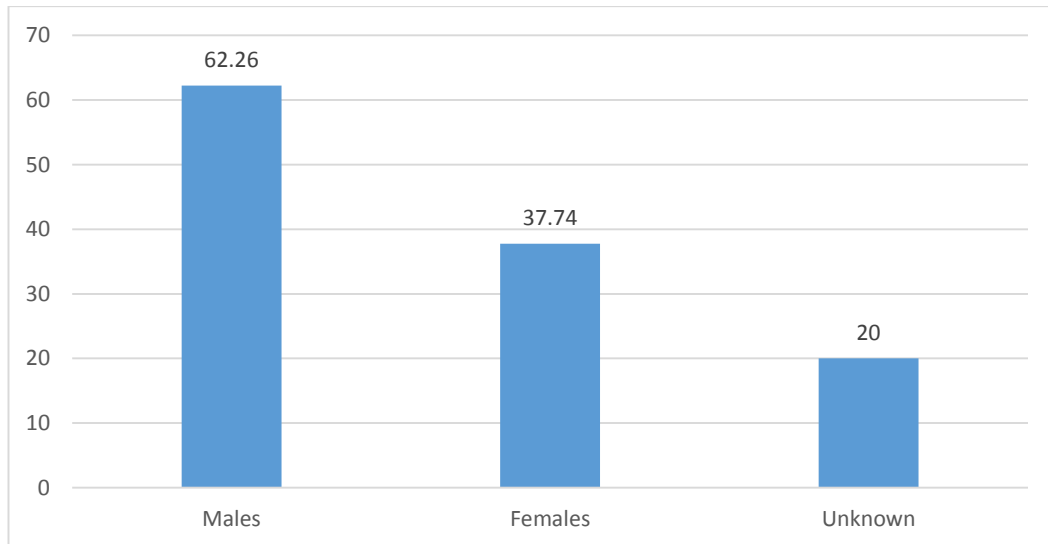
Figure 4.2: Participating students' gender

Figure 4.2 shows that at least 50% of the participating students were male (34) and almost 30% (19) were female with the remaining 20%, 16 students, not completing the question. The results reflect the fact that most students are from masculinity society where males are dominant. Therefore, males have more opportunities to get jobs and study overseas in comparison to females.

4.2.1.3 Students' State of Residence in Australia

The following Figure (Figure 4.3) shows the distribution of participating students in relation to their residence at the time of the research. Out of the total 69 participants who participated in this survey, only 53 (77%) answered this question about their Australian place of residence.
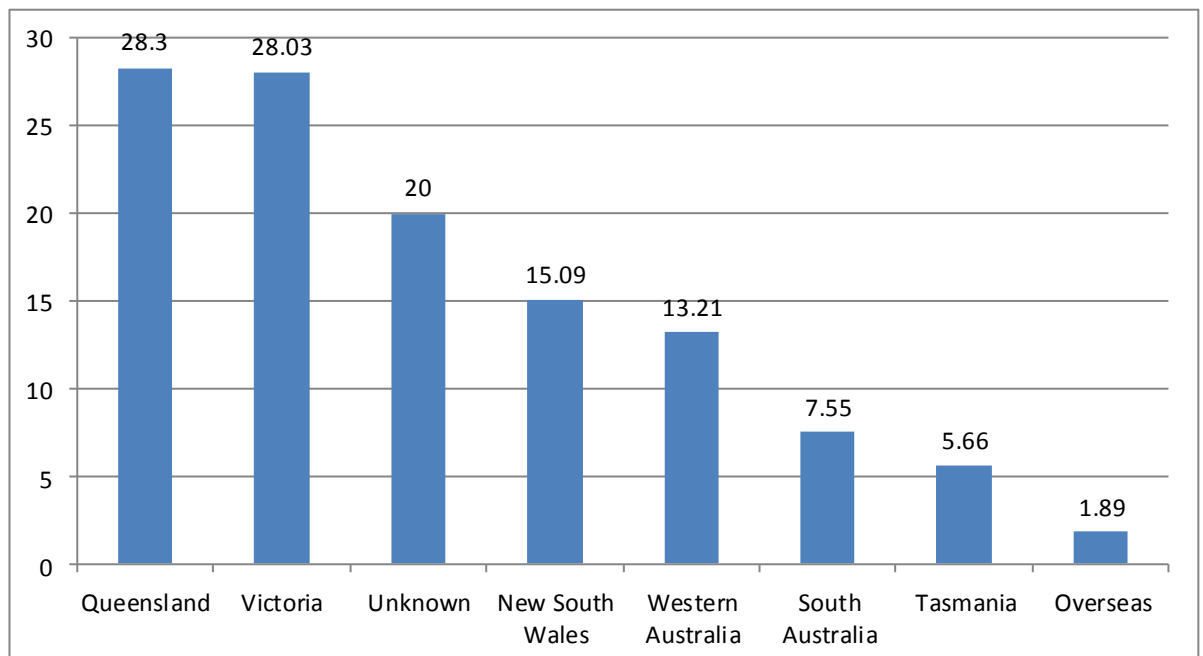
Figure 4.3: Arabic international students' place of residence at the time of the research

The survey investigated the students' home locations while they were studying in Australia or if they were abroad at the time of the research the category of "overseas" was included. The goal of this question was to gather data on the way the survey was

distributed across Australia. The results show that most of the students (28.30%; 15) came from the state of Queensland. This was not surprising since the researcher had studied at two universities in Queensland and the snowball technique began with invitations to immediate colleagues.

Victoria was second (28.3%; 15) and 20% were unknown students who could not answer this demographic question; then New South Wales had (15.09%; 8) from different Arabic countries. Seven students (13.21%) were living in Western Australia and four of them were living in South Australia, while three (5.66%) were living in Tasmania. Only one student indicated that he was living overseas and he had recently finished his study in Australia. The results of this demographic question reveal that the sample of students who answered the survey were studying and living in different places in Australia, hence these respondents can reasonably provide generalised results for all AIS in Australia.

4.2.1.4 Length of Students' Stay in Australia

The survey identifies details of students' length of stay in Australia. Out of the total 69 participants in this survey, 53 (77%) answered this demographic question. The following Figure (Figure 4.4) shows the survey results in terms of the number of years the participating students had spent studying in Australia.
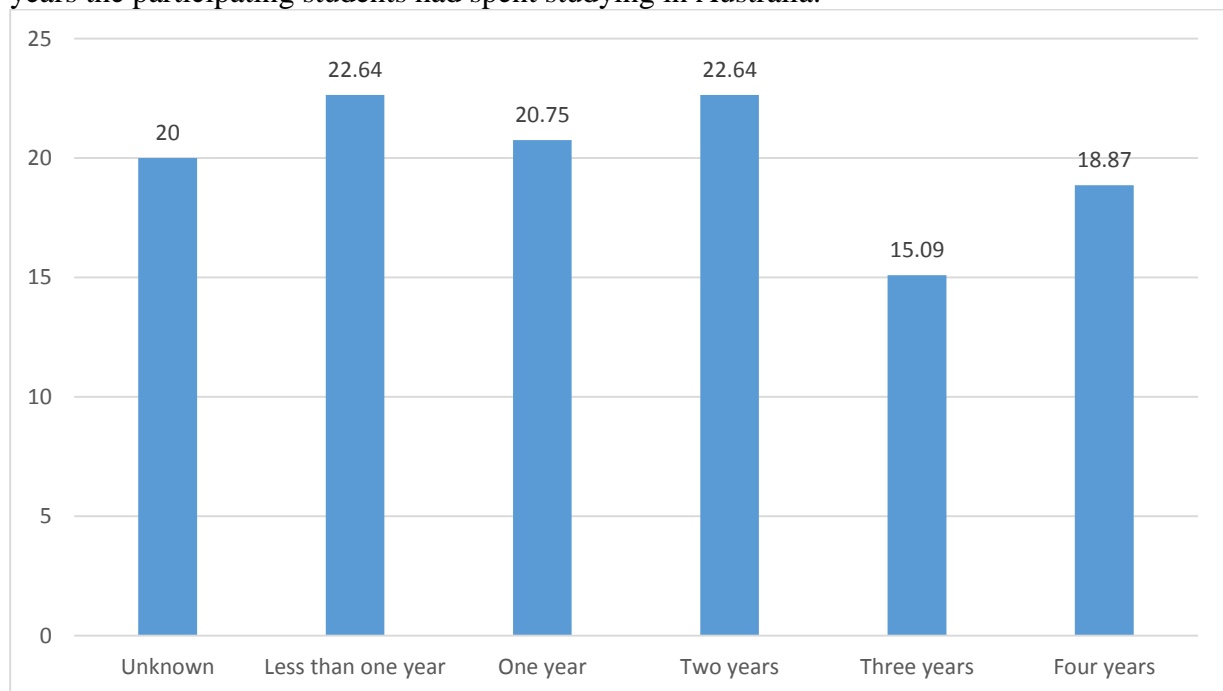
Figure 4.4: An Overview of time survey students spent studying in Australia

The survey provided choices ranging from "Less than a year", "One year", "Two years", "Three years", or "Four years". 20% of students did not answer this question and nearly a quarter of students (22.64%; 12) indicated that they were living in Australia for less than a year and the same indicated for two years. The percentage of students being in Australia for one year was 20.75% (11). 18.87% (10) of students were in Australia for four years. Being in Australia for three years constituted the lowest percentage in this Figure (15.09%; 8). The results show that the participating students' length of stay in Australia varied between less than a year through to up to four years, which adds to the validity of the findings in terms of ensuring a lack of bias, for instance, if all participants had been in the early stage of their study or at the

latter stage of study. It also suggests that the survey captured students whose courses of study differed in terms of length.

4.2.1.5 Type of Institution of Study

The survey posed a question about the type of institution, which students were currently attending in Australia (or had recently attended in the case of the student who had returned home). In this question, the survey sought to identify the students' different learning experiences while they were studying in different Australian tertiary institutions.

The results from this demographic question indicate that most students (78%; 42) were studying at the university level. Students also indicated that they were studying in other levels. 22% (12) were studying in other places where they could develop English language skills and 20% of students did not answer this question. Therefore, a total of 53 students answered this question out of the total 69 who participated in the survey. For other places, students indicated that they were studying in institutions, which could be private institutions to prepare them for tertiary admission or IELTS preparation. The fact that a substantial proportion of students were learning English and preparing to get into university, as well as the majority being at university, adds to the richness of the data and captures the views of students who have different purposes for studying in Australia.

4.2.1.6 Students' Uptake of Courses in Australia

The last question in the demographic section asked students about the kind of course they were currently undertaking in Australia. Again, a total of 53 (77%) out of the total 69 answered this question. The proportion of students studying in different discipline areas is shown in Figure 4.5.
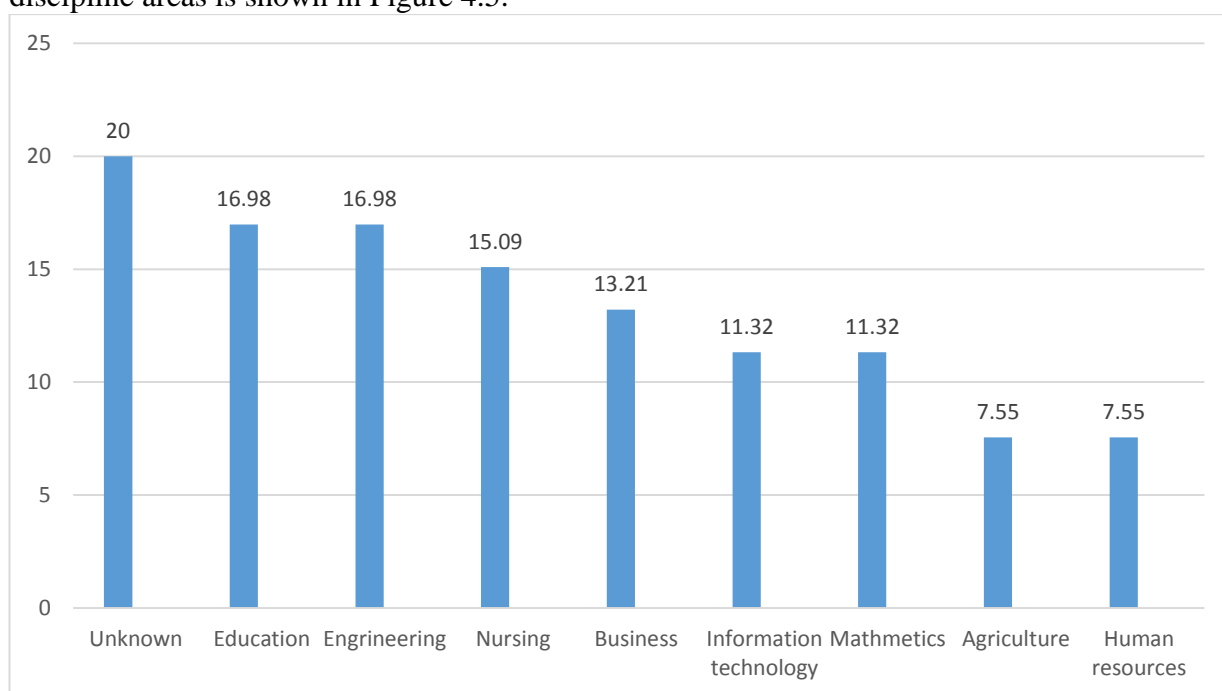
Figure 4.5: Students' uptake of courses in Australia

This Figure shows that the participating students were studying in a range of discipline areas. These included Education, Engineering, Nursing, Business, Information technology, Mathematics, Agriculture, and Human resources. 20% (18)

did not answer this question and were identified as unknown. The discipline areas that most participants were studying were education and engineering, both being studied by 16.98% of students (9 in each area). Almost as many students were studying nursing (15.09%; 8) closely followed by those studying business (13.21%; 7). Of the remaining students, 11.32% (6) were studying mathematics with the same Figure for information technology, while the lowest percentage of students were studying Human resources and agricultural studies (7.55%; 4 in each case). This further validates the representativeness of the group of students in terms of the range of discipline areas being studied.

The demographic information in the above section indicates that AIS who participated in the survey were from a range of different Arabic countries. The survey was distributed through the snowball technique starting with both male and female; however, the results show that approximately 20% more male AIS participated, which is representative of the Arabic international students' population in Australia. This is because male AIS are likely to have more opportunity to travel abroad to study since their societies are generally more geared towards females taking the role of homemaker rather than having a career path. In summary, this demographic information reveals that the student sample for the survey involved students living and studying in six different Australian states for a variety of different purposes that involved universities, technical and further education colleges and English language learning centres (both government run and private). Furthermore, the survey was distributed Australia wide and covered a range of different purposes for study and students from different discipline areas who had spent variable times learning in the Australian context. For instance, some PhD students would typically have been in Australia for nearly four years and the ones who started their English preparation course had been in Australia for less than a year. Most students (78%; 41) indicated in their demographic information that they were university students studying in different faculties and different courses. Therefore, the survey reached students from different backgrounds from the Arabic countries and different age levels at the tertiary levels and they covered most of the Australian education landscape.

4.2.2 Students' Experiences with their Home Learning Systems

Part two of the survey consisted of 10 items asking AIS about their opinions with regard to learning in their home countries before coming to Australia. Table 4.2 shows students' ratings of each of the items on the very little/very great Likert-scale, ordered in terms of their overall percentage of positive ratings. While there were 69 AIS who responded to the survey not all responded to every item in this part of the survey; the number that responded to each item is displayed in the last column.

Table 4.2: Students' experience learning English in their home countries

Thinking about learning in your native country. Choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you:	%+	N
2.a. Were taught English as grammar in your native country.	73	67
5.d. Were taught about reading skills.	58.5	65
1.b. Studied English in your native country as a foreign language.	54	59
5.b. Were taught about writing skills.	45.3	64
1.a. Studied English in your native country as a second language.	37.6	64

5.a. Were taught about speaking skills.	27.5	62
3. Listened to videos and audios during English lessons.	26	68
4. Used computer and Internet to assist you in your study needs.	26	67
2.b. Were taught English as communication activities in your native country.	25.9	58
5.c. Were taught about listening skills.	23.7	63

Perusal of Table 4.2 shows that almost three quarters of the AIS (73%; 49) had experienced a focus on grammar when learning English in their home countries compared with the other strategies. The second major focus was shown to be reading with almost 60% (38) showing this to be the case for them. The majority of AIS (54%; 32) also rated their English language learning as 'studying English as a foreign language' rather than as a second language where the latter would be seen as a more communicative experience compared with the former's focus on grammar, reading and perhaps traditionally translation. Only 37.6% (24) of AIS indicated that they had learnt English as a second language and only approximately one quarter saw their home country experience as English being taught as communicative activities.

The Arabic international students' ratings of the remaining three-macro skills (writing, speaking and listening) do not show a strong focus, even though they are seen as productive skills. While 45% of AIS rated writing skills as being taught, only approximately a quarter of students reported an emphasis on speaking and listening. Finally, these ratings show that 'listening to videos and audio files during English lessons and using computer and Internet to assist in their study needs was limited to a quarter of the students.

Table 4.3: Students' rating on the pedagogical approach experienced in their home countries

Thinking about learning in your native country. Choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you:	%+	N
11.b. Felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are good.	72.2	61
14. Been required to follow all the teacher' instructions in the class.	69.6	66
12.b. Worked on projects and assignments as an independent learner.	65	63
7.b. Been taught through memorisation.	63	65
8.b. Learnt English as a formal language.	60	63
10.b. Found your teacher to be a controller of learning.	50	63
10.a. Found your teacher to be a facilitator of learning.	35.9	64
6. Able to say your opinion and debate freely in the classroom.	25	64
7.b. Been taught through critical thinking.	23.3	60
12.a. Worked on projects and assignments as part of a team.	23.8	63
8.b. Learnt English as a casual language.	18.7	59
11.a. Felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are weak.	18.7	64
13. Found the way of exams being conducted in your native country to be the same as in Australia.	17.5	63
9. Found Australian methods of teaching to be the same as in your native country.	13.8	65

Table 4.3 shows Arabic international students' percentages of positive ratings on 14 items that refer to their perceptions of their pedagogical experience in their home countries. For six of these items, their percentage positive ratings ranged between 50% and 75%, with the remainder being between 14% and 25%, apart from one at 36%. Specifically, almost three quarters (72.2%; 44) of AIS were of the opinion that *teachers in their home countries usually gave praise and encouragement to students who are good* while 70% (46) rated the pedagogy as requiring students *to follow all the teacher's instructions in the class*. Almost the same proportion of AIS (65%; 41) were of the view that their learning experiences at home involved *working on projects and assignments as an independent learner*. Similarly, 63% of AIS (15) saw the pedagogy at home involving them being *taught through memorisation* and *learning English as a formal language (*60%; 38); while half of the students viewed the teacher as *controller of learning* compared with only 36% (23) seeing the teacher as *a facilitator of learning*.

Only a quarter or close to a quarter of AIS were of the view that they were *able to say their opinion and debate freely in the classroom* or were *being taught through critical thinking* or the pedagogy involved them *working on projects and assignments as part of a team*. Less than 20% of AIS rated the pedagogical experiences in their home country as involving learning English as a casual language (19%; 11), having teachers who *usually gave praise and encouragement to students who were weak* (19%; 12) or *the way of exams being conducted the same as in Australia* (18%; 11) or methods of teaching being the same as in Australia (14%; 9).

The results of section two, students' views about their home countries' learning systems, reveal that AIS come from learning systems different to the Australian learning system in many ways, such as exams method, freedom of choosing materials or voicing their opinions in the classroom. Therefore, these students would find the Australian system different since the results indicated that they came from rote learning systems and the Australian learning system is in stark contrast to theirs. Hence, they were having adjustment issues in relation to their studying in the Australian learning system.

4.2.3 Students' Views of the Australian Learning System

Part three of the survey consisted of 12 items that asked students about their views regarding the Australian learning system. The items of this part asked students about the nature of their learning and the pedagogy experienced during their study in Australia. 66 (96%) students out of the total 69 participants answered this section. The analysis and the structure of tables are similar to those in part two.

Table 4.4: Students' experience of English learning in Australia

Thinking about learning in Australia. Choose a point between the two descriptors below that shows the extent to which you:	%+	N
5.c. Were taught about listening skills.	92.4	63
5.b. Were taught about writing skills.	91	65
5.a. Were taught about speaking skills.	89.4	66
3. Listened to videos and audios during English lessons.	89	65
5.d. Were taught about reading skills.	89	63
2.b. Were taught English as communication activities in Australia.	88.7	60
4. Used computer and Internet to assist you in your study needs.	88	66

1.a. Studied English in Australia as a second language.	81.5	65
2.a. Were taught English as grammar in Australia.	61.6	66
1.b. Studied English in Australia as a foreign language.	50	60

Table 4.4 shows Arabic international students' percentage ratings on a Likert type very little/very great scale with regard to various features of their English language learning experiences while studying in Australia. It also shows their percentage positive ratings that is the proportion of AIS that selected the positive side of the scale.

These results show that students' English language learning in Australia involved high emphasis on the four-macro skills of listening, writing, speaking and reading with all of them receiving percentage positive ratings of around 90% (58). Similarly, these results saw that close to 90% of students very greatly rated that their English language learning in Australia involved *listening to videos and audio files during English lessons* and using computers and Internet to assist them in their study needs as well as *being taught English as communication activities* with a focus on grammar; however, the focus on communication showed a higher percentage than the focus on grammar.

More than three quarters (81.5%; 53) showed they were learning English in Australia as a second language. However, only (50%; 30) indicated they were learning English as a foreign language. This means students were being immersed in language and were quite heavily using English language in Australia, since it is the official language Australia wide and the ESL students were required to get a high enough level of English to do their studies in Australia.

Table 4.5: Students' ratings on the pedagogical approaches experienced in Australia

Thinking about learning in Australia. Choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you:	%+	N
6. Able to say your opinion and debate freely in the classroom.	91	64
7.b. Been taught through critical thinking.	87.4	63
11.a.Worked on projects and assignments as part of a team.	84	64
9.a. Found your teacher to be a facilitator of learning.	83	64
11.b.Worked on projects and assignments as an independent learner.	82.3	62
8.a. Learnt English as a formal language.	73	66
10.a. Felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are good.	72	62
10.b. Felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are weak.	66	65
8.b. Learnt English as a casual language.	64	61
12. Been required to follow all the teacher's instructions in the class.	56	66
9.b. Found your teacher to be a controller of learning.	48	60
7.a. Been taught through memorisation.	32.2	62

The positive ratings of AIS to the above items showed that 91% (58) believed they were *able to say their opinion and debate freely in the classroom* in Australia and 87.4% (55) reported that they *had been taught through critical thinking*. The majority of AIS (82%-84%) also rated very highly that the pedagogy experienced in Australia involved them *working on projects and assignments as part of a team* as

well as *perceiving their teacher as a facilitator of learning*. As well, these percentage positive ratings showed that the majority of students (83%; 53) found their teacher to be a facilitator of learning and reported that they *worked on projects and assignments as an independent learner* (82.3%; 51).

In addition, almost three quarters of AIS reported that they *learnt English as a formal language* (73%; 48) and they *felt that praise and encouragement were usually given to students who were good* (72%; 45) when studying in Australia. As well their ratings showed that approximately 65% (43) very highly rated that in Australia they *felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are wea*k and that they *learnt English as a casual language*. Students' ratings also showed that just over half of students experienced the *requirement to follow all the teacher's instructions in the class* and approximately half *found their teacher to be a controller of learning*. However, only a third of AIS reported that they were *being taught through memorisation.*

Part three, which reported students' views about the Australian learning system, found that the Australian learning system was unfamiliar to students because they moved from familiar (their home countries' learning systems) to unfamiliar (the Australian learning system). Students found that the Australian learning system was using cognitive learning and they needed to be independent in their learning; however, in their home countries they were depending on their teachers in their learning. Hence, the items in this part indicated that students were transitioning from rote to cognitive learning, or rather from a familiar to an unfamiliar learning environment. Therefore, they need time to adapt to the host country's system.

4.2.4 The Nature of Support Offered to Students by their Australian Tertiary Institutions

This part of the survey (Part 4) consisted of six items in which students were asked about their views in relation to the assistance offered to them by their tertiary institutions when they first arrived to Australia. The total answers of the items in this part were 65 (94%) out of the total participants 69. Their percentage positive ratings are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Students' ratings of the nature of assistance provided by Australian Tertiary Institutions

Thinking about your arrival in Australia. To what extent did your Australian tertiary institution support you with:	%+	N
1. At the airport upon arrival.	52.3	65
3. To deal with meeting Islamic personal needs.	46	63
4. Upon arriving in the Faculty.	43	65
5. To locate your cultural celebrations.	36	64
2. To find accommodation.	35.3	65
6. Finding a mentor to help you settle and connect to the host community	25	64

The first item in this part asked students about the airport arrival assistance - if any was offered by their institutions. From Table 4.6, it seems that these students received limited support from their Australian tertiary institutions when they arrived with only just over half (52.3%; 34) rating this highly. Moreover, less than half reported that their institutions were concerned with making sure AIS were able to deal with meeting Islamic personal needs and assist them when they first arrived in

the Faculty. Around (30%; 19) of students agreed that their institutions were providing assistance to *find accommodation* or *for helping them to meet* or to *locate their cultural celebrations*, and *find a mentor to help them settle in and connect to the host community* where they can communicate and make a network of friends.

Students' responses in section four reflect an idea that the majority of students did not receive enough support when they first arrived to Australia. They were in need of more help such as workshops or settling in the host community to help them locate their cultural needs, and finding accommodation to settle. Therefore, this perception of little help being offered might affect students' academic achievement.

4.2.5 Students' Experience of Living in Australia

In this part, Part 6, there were six items that asked students about their living situation in Australia. Table 4.7 shows students' ratings of each of the items on the Likert-scale. The total number of answers is different in each item as shown in the below Table.

Table 4.7: shows students' living situations in Australia

Thinking about living in Australia. To what extent do you:	%+	N
4. Think you cope with life in Australia.	47.7	65
1. Speak and communicate with the Australian people in your daily life	38	66
3. Find it easy to understand Australian culture.	38	66
6. Get your traditional food in the area where you live.	38	66
2. Meet and talk with Australian local students.	29	66
5. Understand Australian slang.	27.3	66

All of the parentages in this Table were less than 50%, so it seems that students found the living situation in Australia to be complex. The highest percentage (47.7%; 31) thought they could *cope with life in Australia,* but only approximately a quarter of them (29%; 19) indicated they could talk and meet with local Australian students. In addition, the low percentage (38%; 25) reflects that students felt they could not communicate with the Australian people in their off campus life. Only (38%; 25) of AIS found it easy to *understand Australian culture* customs and values and just over a quarter of them (27.3; 18) showed they could understand Australian slang when they had the chance to communicate with Australian people. In addition, they could not easily locate their traditional food, where only (38%; 25) of them rated that they could find and buy their cultural and traditional food in their area of living.

The total positive percentages in Table 4.7 did not reach 50%, which reflects the idea that students found the way of life in Australia confronting. Section five concludes that students might find it hard to cope with Australian life, since they found Australian life to be unfamiliar to them and they did not find it easy to understand the local slang or locate their traditional food.

4.2.6 Students' Experience of their Academic Situation in Australia

Part six consisted of nine items in which the focus was on the students' academic situations when they first started their learning journey in Australian tertiary institutions. The survey posed these questions to see how these students were coping with the new learning system when they first started their studies in the new Australian learning environment.

Table 4.8: Students' views of their early experience of learning in Australia

Thinking about learning in an Australian educational institution when you first arrived. To what extent is it easy to:	%+	N
8. Feel motivated with the Australian learning system.	58.4	65
3. Communicate in English for your everyday needs.	51	66
5. Move from your native country learning system to the Australian learning system.	48.5	66
6. Express your ideas in spoken English.	48.5	66
2. Ask questions in your classes.	48.4	66
4. Write in English academic writing style.	45.5	66
7. Understand the Australian teaching strategies.	42.8	66
1. Deal with the university and its system on arrival.	38	66
9. Join out of class cultural occasions to help your language.	36.3	66

Table 4.8 shows the students' total positive ratings in relation to nine items, which asked them about their early experience of learning in the Australian learning system. 50% (33) of them felt that they were motivated with the Australian learning system. However, the rest of the items were nearly all 50% or below. Only 51% (34) of them felt they could communicate in English when dealing on a daily basis in the host country and only 48.5% (32) of students could voice their ideas in English owing to their low level of English language. 48% (32) of students found it easy to move from their home country and start learning in new system. The close rate applied to asking questions in the Australian classroom and only (45.5%; 30) found Australian academic writing to be easy. In addition, only (42.8%; 28) could understand he Australian teaching strategies and cope with the new system requirements and less than this percentage (38%; 25) could deal with the university and its system or arrival. The lowest percentage (36.3%; 24) of students felt they could join extra-curricular activities and talk in English.

The total positive percentages in this part came in below 50%, which reveals that students found their early experience in Australia difficult. These low percentages show that students did not find it easy to achieve academically in Australia since they faced new learning system requirements. Therefore, this implies that Australian universities should offer more support.

4.2.7 Students' Experience of Being Away from Home

Part seven of the survey involved six items that investigated Arabic international students' situations while being away from home and studying in the host country, Australia. These questions were asked to understand the students' social situation; whether they had their families with them or not and whether they felt being away

from home affected their studies since they would have less friends and sometimes no family close by.

Table 4.9: Students' experiences of living away from family members

Thinking about studying away from your native country, to what extent do you prefer to:	%+	N
1. Live with family members while you are studying abroad.	70	66
4. Study in a country with a different culture from your own.	66.6	66
2. Be away from your native country to study.	60.6	66
6. Mix with your people from your country	54	65
3. Engage with Australian society to make new friends.	53	66
5. Mix with Australians	49.3	65

According to Table 4.9, nearly three quarters of students (70%; 47) preferred to live with family members while studying overseas and 60% (40) preferred to be away and study abroad. It was interesting to see that 66.6% (44) of them preferred to study in a country with a culture different from their own and only approximately half of them (49.3%; 32) preferred to mix with Australians. More than half of students (54%; 35) preferred to mix with people from the same culture and language in the host country.

It seems from the results of part seven that students prefer to live in the host country with their family members. Students wanted to mix and integrate with the Australian people; however, they felt they could not do that easily because they have a completely different language and different culture to Australians. Therefore, they tended to mix up with people with the same cultural values and norms and the same language in order to communicate easily and have cultural understanding.

AIS came from different Arabic countries and are currently studying in different Australian tertiary institutions, Australia wide. The results indicated that all students were adults and doing different degree levels. The discussed sections above give an idea that students found the Australian learning system difficult because it presents a different learning environment from their own. Moreover, students felt they received little support from the Australian tertiary institutions and this could affect their integration into the host culture. In addition, the students' social situation in the host country, Australia, was difficult since they could not easily cope with Australian life. The outcomes indicate that students were having less communication with Australians, and this secluded them from the community and consequently this could affect their social network and their academic achievement.

4.3 Students' Self-reported Experience Settling and Learning in Australia

This section reports the results of the last part of the students' survey, which consisted of four open-ended questions. These questions provided participants with an opportunity to self-report on their personal perceptions of their social and academic experiences in Australia. The outcomes of these questions along with the results of the survey in general were utilised to establish a base line to structure the subsequent interview questions and later make recommendations to both students and Australian teachers about how to better support these students to achieve better

academically. The responses below, along with the issues arising out of the survey in general, helped the researcher to later design and conduct interviews with students and staff to explore more deeply the research problem and address the research questions. The analysis utilised in this section was a thematic analysis where the participants' responses were codified thematically using the Survey Monkey tool. Students were asked to express their opinions about the following four issues:

 (1) Most difficult problems they had faced in Australia
 (2) Most important facilities, which their learning institutions should have to help them settle in Australia
 (3) Most important strategies they had used to help themselves cope in Australia
 (4) Most effective ways that their teachers could help them learn better in Australia

The Survey Monkey theme analysis tool was used to analyse the students' responses from which emerged a total of five major themes. Each theme was based on issues that were raised by at least eight percent of the respondent group. This section reports on the frequency count for issues contributing to each theme and describes students' perceptions in relation to the four open-ended questions by giving examples of their written responses. In some cases the same issue arose in relation to different questions but this was acceptable because the contexts for the respective emergent themes were different. For example, the emergent theme "culture" used in Table 4.10 theme three referred to *the difference between the Australian and culture and theirs* and was also used in Table 4.12 theme three which referred to *Understanding the Australian culture.*

4.3.1 Students' Five Most Difficult Problems Faced in Australia

In this question, the survey asked students to: *Please list the five most difficult problems you have faced in Australia*. A total of 57 (83%) participants out of the total 69 answered this question. The most difficult problems that the participants mentioned were: the difficulty of getting appropriate food in the area they live, comprehending Australia in relation daily language usage, the difference between the Australian culture and theirs, the difficulty of finding accommodation, and language difficulty. These problems were coded into themes, which are detailed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Students' self-reported most difficult problems faced in Australia

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%AIS who raised an issue N=57	f
1	The difficulty of getting food in the area of living	28	16
2	Comprehending Australia in relation daily language usage	26	15
3	The difference between the Australian culture and theirs	24	13
4	The difficulty of finding accommodation	19	11
5	Language difficulty	16	9

The greatest difficulty in this question that students faced in Australia had to do with "the difficulty of getting food in the area of living", with more than a quarter 28%

(16) of students raising this issue. Investigation of their responses indicates that they experienced problems in locating culturally appropriate food while studying in Australia. For instance, student 44 stated *finding Halal food* as one of the difficulties in Australia. Student 13 stated *No multicultural food.* This difficulty relates to the fact that the participants, who were all from Muslim countries, were required to eat only Halal food. This food was not easy to access because the animals need to be slaughtered according to Islamic regulations. Thus, these students were having difficulty with satisfying their very basic needs by having to worry about not breaking their cultural rules, in addition to their preference for eating in their traditional way.

Issues to do with "comprehending Australia in relation to daily language usage" were the second theme that emerged from 26% (15) of students. For instance, students 51, 45, and 37 stated *Australian slang* as difficult to understand when talking with the Australian people. Other students 52, 50, 43, 31, and 11 found had difficulties *Understanding the Australian accent*. It appears from these statements that students found it hard to understand and cope with the Australian slang and accent. Not understanding the accent would affect their academic achievement. Another student 33 found that *mixing with Australians* was difficult for international students when studying in Australia. Their responses suggest that these students found it difficult to mix with Australians because of their inability or lack of confidence to communicate socially when the English language was used in a more colloquial way.

"The difference between the Australian culture and theirs" was the third theme that emerged from students' views about the difficulties they faced while they were doing their studies in Australia. 24% (13) of students found the Australian culture different to theirs and they also found themselves in a complex situation living in this culture. For instance, student 63 said *cultural differences* were difficult for international students when living in the host culture. Students also found Australian culture unfamiliar (e.g., student 3). Thus, AIS were having difficulties when dealing with the Australian people and their culture owing to the fact they were from an Arab culture with different values and customs. Australia is very well known by the Muslim people as a Western country with a Western culture.

Another difficulty, which students had faced in Australia, was "the difficulty of finding accommodation." 19% (11) of students out of the total 57 raised the fact that accommodation and finding a house to settle was difficult for them in Australia. Generally, international students were struggling to get appropriate accommodation. For instance, student 38 stated *Finding a healthy (with no carpet) affordable accommodation was a struggle*. Another student (10) found it hard to get accommodation and this seems difficult in Australia especially at the beginning of their journey. The reason could be owing to the unfamiliar renting system in Australia which always needs a 100-point credit check from students to make sure that they can pay their rent. Another requirement of getting accommodation in Australia is to have a residential history which students cannot provide as they have just arrived in this country.

Last but not least, students raised issues with "language difficulty." 16% (9) out of the total 57 commented about language difficulty in Australia. For example, student 39 said *the English language especially speaking with multicultural people here*,

Language and accent. Students were often unable to understand the other international students' accents when both studying in the same classroom. Sometimes, students will be given a group assignment, so it would be hard for international students to understand each other without direct facilitation from the teacher. Also, student 52 stated *language and accent* as a problem for international students in understanding the Australian language. The above statements show that AIS were confronted by the difficulty of the language especially in Australia because it is a very multicultural society. Multicultural people have their native tongue accents, which would affect their talking in English. Consequently, AIS found it hard to understand the accents and English language in Australia. This is a very important matter, since the English language is the official language in Australia and is needed for communication, listening to teachers, and presenting in classrooms.

From the results of the first question, it seems that students were having issues when studying in Australia. If Students could not at least locate their cultural food in Australia, it would make them in general feel happy. Moreover, from the students' views in the above analysis, it seems that AIS were segregated from the Australian community and found it difficult to mix into the society owing to the daily language spoken by some Australians. Again, students have different accommodation systems in their home countries and they have a lack in their English language levels, hence they found the accommodation applications and how to find a place to settle extremely difficult in Australia. Facing such difficulties would likely affect their study in Australia.

4.3.2 Students Identification of the Five Most Important Facilities that can be offered to assist with Settling to Study in Australia

In this question, the survey asked students: *please list the five most important facilities you think your learning institution should have to help you settle in Australia*. A total of 51 (74%) participants out of the total 69 answered this question. The five most important facilities that the participants suggested to help them to settle in Australia were: other students' involvement, help in finding accommodation, cultural awareness, experienced teachers, and academic support. These facilities were coded into themes, which are detailed in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Students' self-reported most important facilities to help them settle in Australia.

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%AIS who raised an issue N=51	f
1	Students' involvement	29	15
2	Help finding accommodation	20	10
3	Cultural awareness	13	7
4	To get experienced teachers	13	7
5	Academic support	12	6

The first facility which students mentioned to help them in Australia was "other students' involvement." 29% (15) of students suggested this facility. To do with this facility, students commented different views such as: mixing with other students, supporting students, and assisting students to get accommodation. For example, student 65 mentioned *student cultural club, which* means that students want to have a club where they can meet and share their cultural values with other students. This

statement is supported by the sericultural theory in which Vygotsky notes that learning is not only reading and writing; rather, it is more about social activities. At the same time, student 44 commented *student support team,* which indicates that AIS were in need of a team specialized in supporting international students for example in the form of a mentoring program. The support could also be Visa requirements and how to deal with Visa issues especially for new students. Another important facility was suggested by student 41, who said *Make some communities between Australian students and international students*. It seems that there was a lack of communication between international and domestic students. Therefore, student 41 suggested a communication facility to help AIS enhance their cultural understanding of the Australian culture. Students' views about this theme reflect that AIS were in need of help, which would result in supporting them to achieve better academically in Australia.

Students' responses showed that they mentioned "help finding accommodation" for the second time in addition to their usage in the first question as a much-needed facility in Australia. However, they used it in different contexts in this question. In question two, 20% (10) of students out of the total 51 suggested this as a facility that their learning institutions can help them with. The following students' views illustrate the necessity of this theme to them.

- *Help in accommodation.* Student 51
- *Provide an accommodation nearby.* Student 38
- *By building student accommodation close to university.* Student 13

Students suggested that accommodation was an important facility to help them settle in Australia. They also referred to having accommodation close to the university. They found it difficult using public transport to come to the university. This could be owing to their English level as a result of which they cannot easily ask if they miss a bus or train and where to go if they get lost. Thus, this theme was very important to international students because when they first come, they would be in need of accommodation to help them settle before starting their actual study.

13% (7) mentioned "cultural awareness" as a facility to assist them to lessen their cultural stress in the host country's culture. Participants raised this theme again even though they had already mentioned it in question one. However, the second use of this theme includes different statements and opinions about culture. Mentioning the same issue (culture) in two sections obviously means that students found it important. For example, student 54 stated *understanding our background culture.* It appears that students want their teachers to understand their background needs. It seems that AIS want the Australian teachers who are teaching them to understand the students' culture to avoid any misunderstanding, which could happen in multicultural classrooms. Another student 24 said *highlighting the cultural needs for students* as one of the facilities that their teachers need to consider when teaching these students. The fact is that these students were from Muslim countries and thus a completely different culture from Australia, which is culturally primarily Western. It would be valuable for teachers to understand international students' cultures.

The above statements were reflecting the students' opinions about culture and their relationship to it. It seems that they need help from their learning institutions to cope with the Australian culture and understand it. Student 5 said *teach us about Australia culture*. This student needs help with understanding the Australian culture, which might enhance the students' cultural awareness. This statement reveals that students were lacking information about the Australian culture and its norms and they were hoping that these suggested facilities might help them to understand Australian culture and what the best ways were to deal with it. Understanding the Australian culture will benefit AIS in how to deal with the university staff and their Australian classmates as they do have group assignments with their multicultural peers.

Another emerged theme came from students' views about "experienced teachers". Students raised this theme as another facility to help them to achieve better academically in Australia. 13% (7) of students indicated that they need their teachers to have more experience in their teaching skills. Sometimes students may find it hard to cope with the way of teaching when Western teachers deliver the lecture. The reason could be owing to the difference between teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches. For instance, they expressed their views to have the university helping them by providing teachers with good academic experience. For example, student 10 stated *teachers with good experience*. This student tried to convey a message that AIS were unfamiliar with the way of teaching in Australia since the learner-centred approach was applied. Another excerpt by student 5 said *have good experience teachers*. In addition to these two statements, student 23 stated *qualify teachers*. This indicates that students were requiring teachers with good experience as a facility to help them to overcome their study barriers in Australia. However, teachers could be qualified, but students may not have been used to the learner-centred approach where they were required to be independent in their learning and be active learners. Therefore, they could see their teachers as unexperienced. Student 4 said *meet teachers regularly* means they feel they need more help from the teacher which might be because this student was experiencing a new learning system. Thus, it seems that students were unfamiliar and stressed with the way of teaching in Australia.

The last facility students raised, and which was codified as a theme, was "academic support," 12% (6) said they need academic help to overcome their study barriers in Australia. For example, student 10 indicated *academic help specially writing.* This student conveyed a message to the Australian tertiary institutions that students need assistance to improve their academic language skills, since they were required to have enough language ability to get admission to the university. Also, three students (3, 8, and 9) mentioned *academic help*. Another important statement was raised by student 3, who referred to *research academic workshops*. This suggests that students need academic workshops about topics such as finding resources, dealing with the university system, and writing academically, to be offered to international students to achieve better. There was a clear indication in the above statements about the importance of academic writing to international students to help them in their academic success.

The facilities question concludes that students were in need of support to help them achieve more success in studying for their academic degrees in the host country. Themes in this section found that students when they first came would be in most need of settling and getting accommodation in an unfamiliar environment. Students mentioned culture as another factor that affected their understanding and coping with a new classroom environment, since the Australian classroom is a multicultural one. In addition to the different classroom cultures, the discussed themes above reflected that students found the Australian learning system difficult because they were transferring from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred system. Briefly, students were in need of academic and social support from their institution to help them settle and study in Australia.

4.3.3 Students' Identification of the Five Most Important Strategies that they have followed to assist them in Settling to Study in Australia

In this question, students were asked about: *the five most important strategies you use to help you cope in Australia*. 49 (71%) participants out of the total 69 answered this question. The five most important strategies which students used to help them cope in Australia were: integration with the same language people, asking for assistance from the same country people, understanding the Australian culture, integrating into the Australian customs, and developing and improving English as a strategy. These strategies were coded into themes, which are detailed in Table 4.12 with students' comments.

Table 4.12: Students' self-reported most important strategies they have used to support themselves while studying in Australia

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%AIS who raised an issue N=49	f
1	Integration with the same language people	26	13
2	Ask for assistance from the same country people	24	12
3	Understanding the Australian culture	24	12
4	Integrate into the Australian customs	16	8
5	Develop and improve the English as a strategy	8	4

The first important strategy that students used was "integration with the same language people". 26% (13) of students used language as a strategy to help them in Australia while they were doing their study overseas. This theme seems very important for students since they used it in questions 1, 2, and 3. It seems that students were trying to mix with co-nationals owing to their low levels of English language. However, they needed to develop their English in order to cope with the new learning environment. Students identified that they looked for friends from the same culture and language, as this would help them to reduce the stress of their acculturation while being in the host culture. For example, student 43 stated *Look for friends of the same language and your religion*. Another student (3) said *asking friends especially from the same language*. From these statements, it appears that AIS were communicating with people from the same language and religion in Australia. Students used the language as a facility to help them to cope in Australia

to overcome their loneliness in the host culture with fewer friends and sometimes no family members.

Regarding the theme "ask for assistance from the same country people", 24% (12) of students raised this issue as they were asking people from their language and culture and even sometimes Australians to help them while studying in Australia. This reflects the fact that owing to the unfamiliar Australian environment, students used the asking strategy to help them find their way when they were in need to. For instance, student 50 stated *Ask assistance from people who arrived before me*. This indicates that when students first came, they found it hard to cope until they became used to the Australian way of life. Therefore, they tended to mix with and seek help from their people. Student 9 said *ask friends from my culture* to show how AIS are inclined to communicate and ask friends from the same culture, language, and religion. However, not all students were asking co-national friends. Others were asking Australians, owing to the fact that they have a good level of communication skills in English. For example, student 5 noted *ask Australians, improve language; try to mix with natives*. From the views, it appears that the majority of students were asking co-nationals to get assistance. Students used asking as a strategy to help them develop their language skills and to find their way to become familiar and cope with the Australian environment.

Again, students used the theme "understanding the Australian culture" for the third time after using it in section one and two. 24% (12) of students raised this theme as a facility to cope and study in Australia. Students used this theme in questions 1, 2, and 3 but in different contexts to emphasise how important the culture issues are to them. In this theme, students showed that they were trying to understand the Australian culture and to use it as a bridge to assist them to cope in the host country's living environment. For example, student 41 said *Understand the culture of Australian people* and student 3 identified *know the Australian culture*. In these statements, students were trying to convey a message that understanding and studying the host culture might enhance their experience about how to deal with people from different cultures to theirs. This was clearly identified by student 7: *Ask about their traditions and culture*. Their responses showed that they have cultural anxiety while being in the host country. Therefore, they followed this strategy to break down intercultural barriers and build effective cross-cultural communication.

Issues to do with "integrating into the Australian customs" as a theme emerged from 16% (8) students. They used this theme more than once to indicate its importance to their situation in Australia. Examples from students' statements explaining this are:
- *Talking to Australian natives.* Student 68
- *Eat Australian food.* Student 53
- *Create Australian friends.* Student 52

Students had shown in the statements above that they want to talk and mix with Australians and even eat some Australian food to have a feeling of belonging. They also were trying to show that they made a contact with Australian friends and the Australian wider community to enhance their English language skills and their cultural understanding. In the preceding themes, students showed that they were inclined to mix with co-nationals; however, in this theme, they were trying to mix with Australians. This suggests that at the beginning of their overseas journey,

students wanted to mix with co-nationals and after a period of time, they will want to mix with Australians. The reason could be their English language impeded them from mixing and talking with Australians initially.

The last theme students raised was "develop and improve English as a strategy". 16% (8) of students mentioned that they were improving their English language as a strategy of assisting them in their study in the host country. Students identified that they sometimes used their own money to buy English language help software. For example, student 46 mentioned *purchasing a special online program to improve my listening and writing.* Another student (Student 11) stated *improve the English language.* These statements reflect that they followed this strategy of improving their English language as a key source of their academic success in Australia.

In summary, AIS used different strategies to help them cope with the Australian learning system and the host culture. According to students' views and strategies, they found living and studying in Australia hard; however, they used different strategies and they felt that after a while, they could cope with the new environment of living and studying, sometimes with their friends' support.

4.3.4 Students' Suggestions of the Most Effective Ways that Teachers Could Help them Learn Better in Australia

The fourth question asked students to: *Please list the five most effective ways that teachers could help you learn better in Australia.* Issues emerged from students' responses to this question, although only 42 (61%) out of the total 69 participants responded to this question. These themes were: students' encouragement, frequent classroom discussion, group assignments, frequent speaking strategy, and informative feedback about academic work. Students' responses in relation to their suggested effective ways were coded into themes by using the Survey Monkey tool with the students' comments.

Table 4.13: Students' self-report on the most effective ways their teachers might help them learn better in their study in Australia.

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%AIS who raised an issue N=42	*f*
1	Students' encouragement	36	15
2	Frequent classroom discussion	19	8
3	Group assignments	17	7
4	Frequent speaking strategy	14	6
5	Informative feedback about the academic work	10	4

Suggestions related to the emergent theme of "students' encouragement" were raised by 36% (15) of AIS in relation to the most effective way that teachers could help them with their learning and study. The fifteen responses indicated that students like their teachers and peers to be in touch with them in a social way of communication rather than just always teaching in classroom. For instance, student 58 said *to be in touch with the students in an informal way.* They also mentioned that if their teachers

encouraged them more in their learning, then their confidence would be increased to speak English. It was quite clear from another student (43) who stated *support the students to become more confident by themselves*. Student 41 said the same thing about confidence: *Giving the student the confident in himself*. Therefore, students revealed that confidence was a key factor to develop their English in the host country. Others want their teachers to involve them with native students to improve their English language skills, and handle subjects regarding the Australian culture such as watching TV, or Australian films. The following comments are showing the students' views about their involvement.

- *Community between the native and others.* Student 40

- *Watch TV to know more about Australia.* Student 39

- *Trying to connect the learning with the current events in the society. For example current news in the media and motivating students to discuss it or analyse it.* Student 4

The statements above suggest that students like to be involved during their lessons with Australian cultural activities to make them familiar with the new culture. These statements reinforce the sociocultural theory idea, which asserts that learning is mixing with people in social activities not only reading and writing.

The other theme that students suggested was to have "frequent classroom discussion" as an effective way to help them learn better in Australia. 19% (8) of students identified that they like their teachers to help them in having classroom discussion sessions where they can meet and talk with their peers. For instance, student 64 suggested having *maintenance of frequent discussion sessions*. Another student (41) said *discuss with the student in the main problem in his study*. This reflects that students have different learning levels, so it would be beneficial if the Australian teachers assess and know the students' levels before setting up their learning lesson and have appropriate activities. Others, for instance student 40, said *discussion with students*, and student five stated, *group discussion to help my language*. In these statements, students showed that they wanted to have communication with students to become more literate in English. Having group discussions might help AIS exchange their ideas and experiences with other international students who might have different learning experiences. The students' views above suggest that they need to communicate with their peers from different cultures to develop their English.

The third effective way that students suggested to help them learn better in Australia was "group assignments". 17% (7) of students identified that grouping and communicating with native students would help their English. For example, student 51 said *work with group on assignment*. Having group assignments will encourage international students to speak and develop their language with other students, especially when they mix with peers from the same levels. By doing so, international students would not feel hesitant because they feel that their English was not too low, as most students would be at the same level of learning English. Students suggested that their teachers should integrate them with peers in the classroom to enhance their English language skills.

The other effective way that AIS suggested they would learn better in Australia was "frequent speaking strategy"; however, the speaking theme in this section was used in different contexts. 14% (6) of students identified that to have them speak and express their views in the classroom would help them learn better in Australia. For instance, student 52 stated *Allow students to speak and express about their ideas* to have confidence in themselves about their speaking skills and to increase their discussion ability as well. They also mentioned that they sometimes could not understand their teachers; therefore, student 37 said *teachers speak slowly* because they had problems in understanding their teachers owing to their English language levels. Again, AIS emphasised that they wanted to mix and speak with native students to help their language and exchange their culture. For example, student 34 said *lets we have speaking classes with native Australian student each week at least*. Students' beliefs reflect the idea that they like their teachers to give them an opportunity to speak in the classroom and mix with native students in order to develop their English language levels, which was a key factor in their learning in Australia.

The last effective way of better learning that students suggested was "informative feedback about the academic work". 10% (4) of students raised that getting good and informative feedback on their assignments would encourage them and they would learn better. For instance, statements from their beliefs are:

- *Very useful feedback.* Student 61

- *The way to give feedback was effective (underlining). Focusing on writing (academic style).* Student 38

- *Give us good feedback in the assignment.* Student 11

- *Provide academic feedback with good information.* Student 3

When students finish their assignment, they expect their teachers to give them feedback so they can follow their teacher's advice. Giving papers back to students with good feedback might encourage them to study better and achieve in their assignments with the hope that they would be coping with the Australian method of teaching. Students' views reflect that they are in need of feedback to find if their work is on the right track and whether they are coping or not with the Australian system. In the statements above, students were trying to convey a message that detailed and informative feedback was an important issue in their academic success because it develops their English level.

The emerged themes in students' open-ended questions suggest that they have some identical issues such as developing their language, knowing the Australian culture, and communicating with native speakers at the beginning of their study in Australia. However, other issues such as speaking with natives, and having experienced teachers were different because they have different levels of English proficiency. They have different views about their study in Australia and these views emerge from their individual variances. However, there is a general trend that AIS have similar academic and social issues while studying in the host country, Australia. The social issues relate to understanding the host culture and mixing with native students in order to develop their cultural awareness and English language as well. The

academic issues students face relate to a new learning system which seems different from their past learning experiences.

4.4 The Teachers' Survey Structure

The survey for teachers (see Appendix 6) consisted of five parts. These focused on the collection of (1) demographic information, (2) the way teachers conducted their teaching of AIS, (3) teachers' opinions about Arabic international students living in Australia, and (4) their opinions about the academic situation of AIS when they first arrived and started their learning in Australia. The last part (5) consisted of four open-ended questions that allowed teachers to self-report about (a) their views on the strategies they used to teach AIS, (b) the strategies they thought might work well with AIS, (c) teachers' advice about improving the social situation of AIS, and (d) the most important strategies that they thought could work well in their teaching to help international students and particularly AIS to improve their experiences while studying in Australia. These parts are listed in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: The structure of the survey to Australian teachers

Part	Topic
1	**Demographic information**
2	**Teachers' views of teaching AIS**
3	**Teachers' views about Arabic international students' living situation in Australia**
4	**Teachers' views about Arabic international students' academic situation in Australia**
5	**Teachers' self-report on students learning and settlement (4 questions)**

4.4.1 Teachers' Demographic Information

Part one of the survey gathered demographic information about the participating Australian teachers in terms of five areas. These included their length of time teaching, their major academic role, their language background, their education sector, and the country in which they were teaching at the time of the survey. Teachers' responses to demographic questions are reported and explained below.

4.4.1.1 Teachers' Length of Teaching in Australia

The survey identifies the teachers' length of teaching international students in Australia. A total of 30 (95%) out of the total 32 answered this question. The results are shown in Figure 4.6.
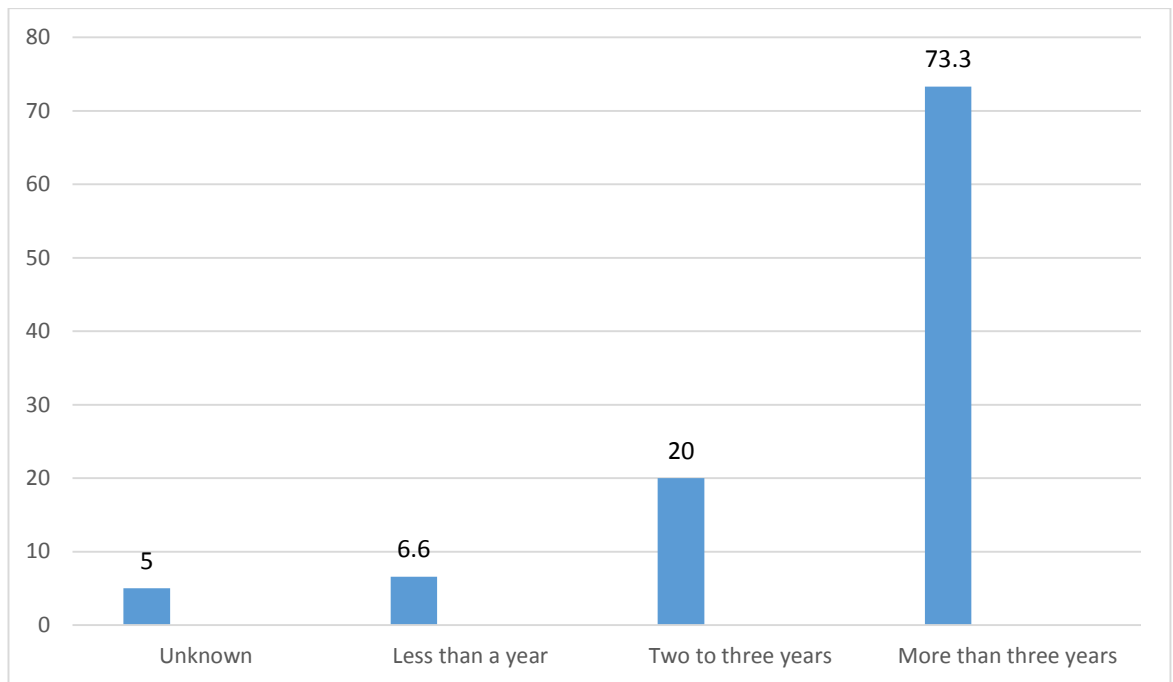
Figure 4.6 shows the teachers' period of teaching

The survey asked the teachers about their period of teaching and gave choices on a Likert-scale ranging from "Less than a year", "Two to Three years", "More than Three years". 5% of teachers did not answer this question and they were identified as unknown. 6.6% (2) indicated that they have been teaching international students in Australia for less than a year. Nearly a quarter of teachers (20%; 6) showed that they have been teaching international students for nearly three years in Australia and the highest percentage was (73.3%; 22) which was nearly three quarters of teachers were teaching more than three years in Australia. The percentages in this Table show that the period of teaching for teachers varied from less than a year to more than four years. This variation of the teaching length of teachers adds to the validity of research in terms of ensuring that not all participants were in the same level of teaching.

Teachers were asked about their major role of teaching in the Australian tertiary institutions. 26 (81%) of teachers answered this question. Figure 4.7 shows the details, which consist of seven major roles.
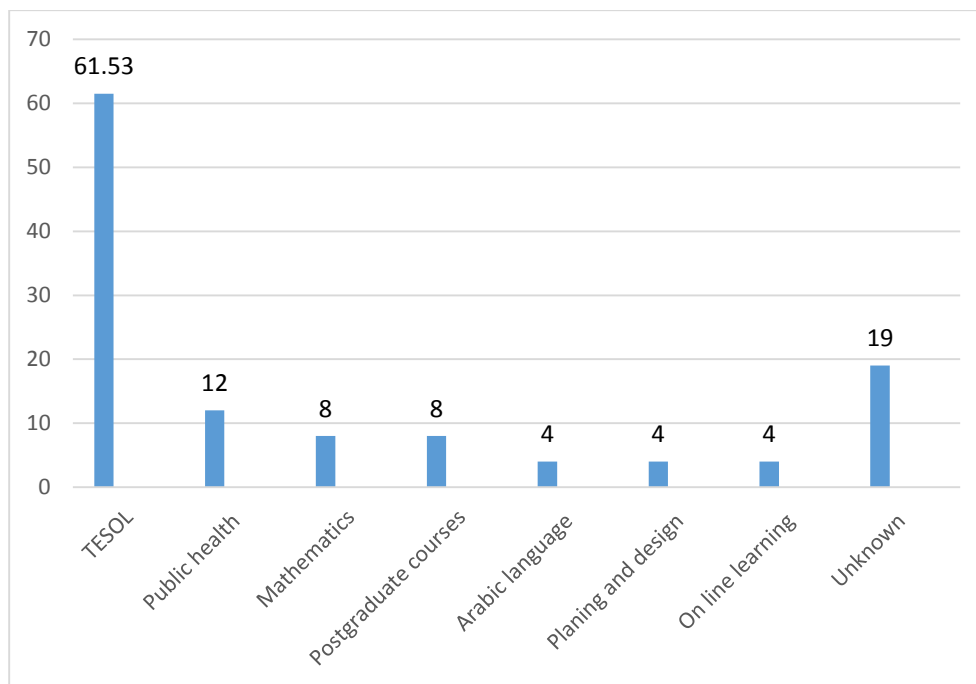
Figure 4.7: Teachers' major teaching areas

Results indicated that seven major roles were carried out among the teachers in the study. As shown in Figure 4.7, these were related to TESOL, Public health, Mathematics, Postgraduate courses, Arabic language, planning design, Online learning, and Unknown.

The majority of teachers (61.53%; 16) were working in TESOL – teaching English to speakers of other languages, which was an unsurprising percentage since the researcher is in the TESOL area. By contrast, only 4% (1 in each) reported they were teaching in each of the areas of Arabic language, online teaching and planning and design. The remaining teaching focus involved 12% (3) lecturing in public health and 8% (2) teaching in each of the areas of postgraduate studies and mathematics. The last percentage (19%; 5) consists of those who did not answer this question and this was identified as unknown.

4.4.1.2 Teachers' Language Background

Teachers' responses to Question 3 showed that of those who responded (32=29; 91% of the survey sample) approximately half were native speakers of English and half came from non-English speaking backgrounds. Thus, those who taught Arabic background students English in Australia were well represented in the sample of teachers in terms of both English as a second language and English as a first language.

Education Sector of Teaching

Question four asked the teachers about the education sector in which they were teaching. 32 respondents (94% of the sample) reported that they had been teaching in the different education sectors of university and TAFE as well as providers of ELICOS. The percentages of teachers in each sector are shown in Figure 4.8.
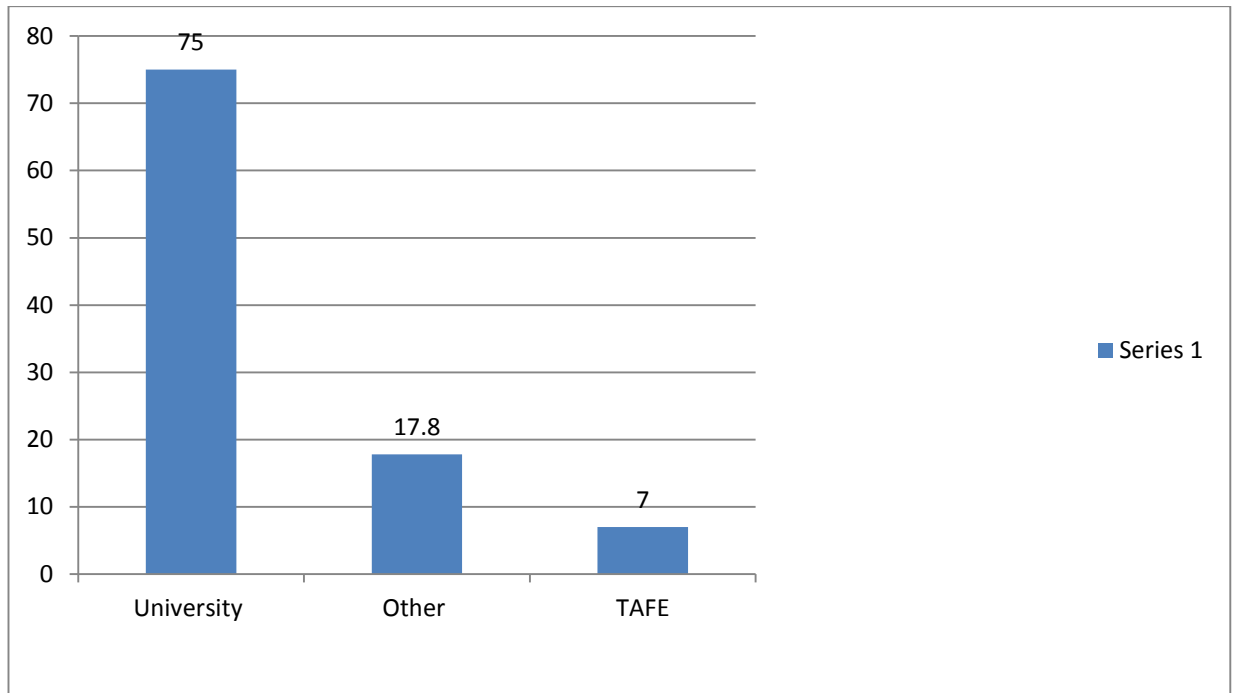
Figure 4.8: Percentage of sample of teachers across education providers

From the teachers' responses, it appears that three quarters of teachers (75%; 23) were teaching at the university level. 17.8% (5) of teachers indicated that they were teaching at other levels. Other levels in this survey refer to private English teaching companies and trade teaching companies to international students. Only 7% (2) of teachers were teaching at TAFE level. Teaching at TAFE could be English teaching to newly arrived families of international students. The results indicate that students were learning in different educational institutions in Australia.

4.4.1.3 Country of Teaching

The last question of the demographic section asked participants about the country in which they were teaching currently. The returned responses (22; 68%) out of the total 32 answered this question. The details are discussed in Figure 4.9 below.
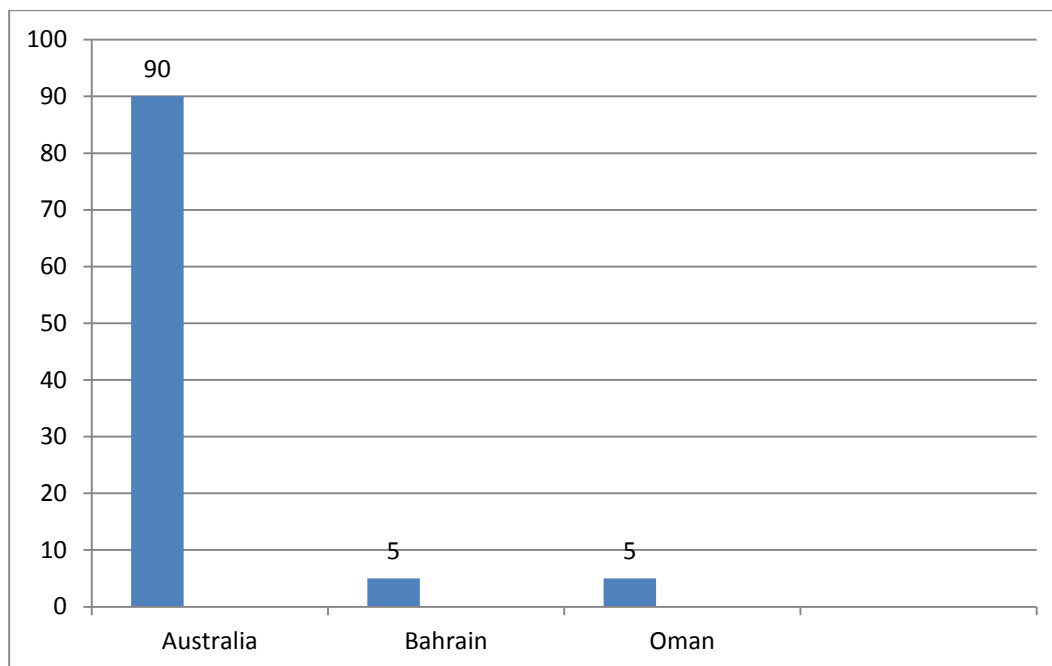
Figure 4.9: shows the country of teaching

It was very clear that nearly all of the participants (90%; 19) were teaching in Australia. Only 5% (1 in each) of teachers were teaching in Oman and the same percentage in Bahrain. It appears from the results that the teachers' responses were very informative because they have good experience in Australia while teaching AIS as ESL learners and they also have experience of teaching in the Arabic world.

The demographic section concludes that teachers had long service of teaching international students in Australia. These teachers were teaching different subjects in Australia and overseas and most of them had taught TESOL in different tertiary institutions in Australia and off shore. The background information determines that half of the teachers were English native speakers and the rest were non-natives.

4.4.2 Teachers' Views about Teaching AIS

This part consisted of 11 items which asked the teachers about their opinions with regard to their teaching AIS in Australia. Table 4.15 shows teachers' ratings of each of the items on the very little/very great Likert-scale ordered in terms of their overall percentage positive ratings. A total of 31 (97%) teachers out of the total 32 answered these items; however, each item has a different total number of answers. The last column in Table 4.15 shows the different total number of answers.

Table 4.15: Teachers' experience with AIS learning English in Australia

Thinking about teaching international students, choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you:	%+	N
1.b. Taught English as communication activities in Australia.	85.2	27
3. Used computer and Internet to assist you in your teaching needs.	90.3	31
4.b. Taught about writing skills.	83.9	31
4.d. Taught about reading skills.	74.2	31
2. Used videos and audios during English lessons.	77.5	31
4.c. Taught about listening skills.	71	31

4.a. Taught about speaking skills.	71	31
1.a. Taught English as grammar in Australia.	29	31

Table 4.15 shows percentage ratings on a Likert type very little/very great scale in relation to various features of their English language teaching to international students. It also shows their positive percentage ratings, which refers to the proportion of teachers who selected the very great scale side. The results in this Table show that teachers involved in English language teaching in Australia focused highly on communication activities (85.2%; 23) when teaching international students and closer to this percentage (90.3%; 28) of teachers indicated they were using the computer and Internet in their teaching needs. In addition, teachers highly agreed (77.55; 24) that they were using videos and audio files in the Australian classrooms. The majority of teachers rated that they were emphasising the four-macro skills of listening, writing, speaking and reading, all receiving percentage positive ratings of around 75% (23). The lowest percentage (29%; 9) of teachers was for teaching grammar in the Australian learning system. This big contrast in percentages, with communication activities as the highest and grammar as the lowest, conveys a message that students were learning critical thinking where they need to discuss with their peers and look for information by themselves and learn as independent learners in the Australian learning system.

Table 4.16: Teachers' ratings on the pedagogical approach they use with AIS in Australia

Thinking about teaching international students, choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you:	%+	N
5. Allowed your students to say their opinions freely in the classroom.	100	31
6.b. Taught through critical thinking.	93.3	30
10.a. Gave work to students on projects and assignments as part of a team.	83.9	31
8.a. Was a facilitator of learning in the classroom.	96.7	30
10.b. Gave work to students on projects and assignments as an independent learner.	96.8	31
7.a. Taught English as a formal language.	67.8	31
9.b. Praised and encouraging students who are usually good.	90.3	31
9.a. Praised and encouraging students who are usually weak.	96.8	31
7.b. Taught English as a casual language.	58	31
11. Required your students to follow all your instructions in the classroom.	51.7	31
8.b. Was a controller of learning in the classroom.	26.7	30
6.a. Taught through memorisation.	3.2	31

Perusal to Table 4.16, the Australian teachers highly rated (100%) that they were a*llowing their students to voice their opinions freely in the classroom,* and again another high percentage (93.3%; 28) rated critical thinking teaching. In contrast to this, teachers rated teaching memorisation in the Australian learning system the lowest (3.2%; 1). The majority of teachers (90%; 28) indicated that the pedagogy of teaching in Australia required students to work in their assignments as part of a team and teachers were positioned in the classroom as facilitators; moreover, they were giving assignments to students as independent learners. 67.8% (21) of teachers showed that they were *teaching English as a formal language* in the Australian classroom and a lesser percentage (58%; 18) rated casual language usage when teaching international students.

Just over half of the teachers indicated that they *required their students to follow all their instructions in the classroom* and approximately a quarter of them were *a controller of learning in the classroom.*

The results of this section provide a hint that the Australian learning system is different from the Arabic world learning systems with regards to classroom democracy and the way of teaching inside the classroom. In such a case, AIS need to make a major transition from their home countries' teacher-centred systems to the Australian learner-centred system.

4.4.3 Teachers' Views about the Living Situation of AIS in Australia

This part consisted of six items in which the survey asked the teachers to reveal their opinions about the living situation of AIS while they were studying in Australia. All of the teachers 32 (100%) answered this part.

Table 4.17: teachers' views about the living situation of AIS in Australia.

Thinking about international students while they live in Australia. To what extent do you think international students are:	%+	N
4. Coping with life in Australia	40.6	32
1. Speaking and communicating with the Australian people	28.2	32
6. Getting the traditional food in the area where they live	21.9	32
2. Meeting and talking with Australian local students	21.8	32
3. Finding it easy to understand the Australian culture	18.8	32
5. Understanding the Australian slang	3.1	32

In Table 4.17, teachers did not rate any item over half, and it seems that the living situation AIS was complex in Australia. The highest percentage (40.6%; 13) showed that AIS could cope with Australian life, where only (18.8%; 6) of teachers rated that AIS *found it easy to understand the Australian culture*. A quarter of teachers (25%; 8) indicated in three items that their students could *speak and communicate with the Australian people* and found that their students could *get the traditional food in the area where they live;* they also found that AIS *meet and talk with Australian local students.* The lowest percentage (3.1%; 1) of teachers rated that AIS could understand the Australian colloquial language.

Not one item in this part came over half, and this suggests that students were facing barriers when studying in Australia and that the perception is that they cannot integrate themselves with host country people owing to their unfamiliarity of the Australian culture and their level of English, unless they were being helped by their learning institutions to cope with the new life and the new learning environment.

4.4.4 Teachers' Views about the Academic Situation of AIS in Australia

Part four consisted of eight items in which the survey asked the teachers about views in regard to the academic situation of AIS when they first arrived and started their learning journey in Australia. Out of the total 32, all of the teachers (100%) answered this part of the survey. The Table below with teachers' views shows the details.

Table 4.18: Teachers' views about the students' early experience of learning in Australia

Thinking about international students' learning in an Australian educational institution when they first arrive. To what extent is it easy for them to:	%+	N
3. Communicate in English for everyday needs	28.2	32
7. Feel motivated with Australian learning system	25.1	32
5. Express their ideas in spoken English	18.8	32
6. Understand the Australian teaching strategies	15.6	32
2. Ask questions in the classroom	9.4	32
8. Join out of class cultural occasions to help their language	6.3	32
4. Write in English academic writing style	3.1	32
1. Deal with the university and its system on arrival	3.1	32

Table 4.18 shows the teachers' total positive ratings of eight items in relation to the early learning experience of AIS in the Australian learning system. It was surprising that there was almost a quarter or less of the teachers who indicated that students were not having a good learning experience when starting their learning journey in Australia. 25% (8) of teachers rated that students *were not feeling motivated*, and they could not *communicate in English for everyday needs,* as well as they could not understand and/or talk in English. Therefore, because students did not have enough English, they could not ask questions in the classroom and 6.3% (2) of teachers showed that students could not join out of class communication activities. In addition, only 15.6% (5) of teachers indicated that AIS could understand and cope with the Australian teaching strategies. The lowest percentage (3.1%; 1) was for the ability of students in writing in academic style and the same percentage was for *dealing with the university and its system on arrival.*

The teachers' views in this part convey that AIS were unfamiliar with the Australian learning system and they were less motivated in the host country. It also seems that AIS were seldom joining and talking with English native people during the off campus activities.

4.5 Teachers' Self-reported Experience about Arabic International Students' Settling and Learning in Australia

This section reports on the results of open-ended questions of teachers in which they were able to express their views in a relaxed manner. It consisted of four questions. These four questions gave the participants the opportunity to self-report on their teaching experiences when teaching international students including AIS. The results of these questions together with the survey results in general helped to structure subsequent interview questions with both students and teachers. The results below assisted the present study to deeply explore the research problem. The analysis utilised in this section was a thematic analysis where the participants' answers were codified thematically using the Survey Monkey tool. The open-ended questions asked the teachers for their views about the five most:

(1) Effective strategies to teach international students

(2) Important strategies that work best for the teaching of international students

(3) Comments or advice for improving learning and social experiences of international students specifically Arabic international students if they were in their class during the students' study in Australia

(4) Effective strategies that teachers' use to help international students learn better
More than five themes have been identified by teachers; however, only the top four themes that were raised by more than 7% of the respondent group were reported, and in question one, the respondents did only raise three issues. Each theme was based on issues that were raised by teachers. Themes were reported from greatest to least percentage in terms of frequency. In some questions, the same theme title arose; however, teachers used different contexts and views. For example, In Table 4.19, theme number four *Teach students the Australian culture and values* referred to Australian slang and how students can improve that to develop their communication levels, and theme number four in Table 4.21 referred to teaching students about Australian cultural values and customs to develop their cultural knowledge about Australia.

4.5.1 Teachers' Identification of the Most Effective Strategies to Teach International Students

In this question, the survey asked teachers to: *Please list the five most effective strategies to teach international students.* A total of 27 (84%) teachers out of the total 32 answered this question. The four most effective strategies that teachers were using to teach international students were: engage students in activities, constructivist learning, mix international students with local students, and teach students the Australian culture and values. These strategies were coded into themes and are detailed with teachers' comments below.

Table 4.19: Teachers' self-report on five most effective strategies of teaching international students

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%Teachers who raised an issue N=27	*f*
1	Engage students in activities	29	8
2	Constructivist learning	29	8
3	Mix international students with local students	25	7
4	Teach students the Australian culture and values	25	7

Table 4.19 identifies that teachers were using "engage students in activities" as the most common strategy, which works better when teaching international students. 29% (8) of teachers raised that they were using activities such as social activities as an effective strategy to help international students to better cope with the Australian learning system. For example, teacher 18 said, *encourage participation in class activities* to help the students' speaking and listening skills. Another teacher 13 said *Participation in social activities outside uni [university]* to assist these students to speak and to know the Australian culture while they were engaged with the local students in social activities. This suggests that encouraging students to participate in the classroom would usually have positive effects on their learning skills and increase their confidence in using English.

Issues to do with "constructivist learning" were the second theme that emerged from 29% (8) of the teachers. For instance, teacher 21 stated *Develop language learning as*

critical skill, instead of English as a language on its own. An effective strategy suggested here is teaching international students critical thinking skills. However, these students might find it difficult since they had indicated in the statistical analysis that they were used to memorisation and rote learning where they were required to follow the teachers' instructions. Teachers used the active learning methods to stimulate the students' minds and to get used to the Australian way of teaching. For example, teacher 14 *used active learning strategies* to enhance the students' academic success especially when they had group assignments with local students. Teacher 20 said *Group work to stimulate peer and social learning* in order to mix international students with their peers where they can practice English in addition to their group assignment through which they can benefit by learning academic writing from locals. The statements above suggest that teachers use different active learning strategies to enhance the students' learning.

Teachers raised another strategy ("mix international students with local students") when teaching international students. 25% (7) of teachers used this strategy to mix international students with locals in order to allow international students to get used to the way of teaching in Australia. For example, teacher 25 stated *Asking Australian local students to undertake and demonstrate tasks first in tutorial, so that international students get to see how the task is performed and presented*. This statement suggests that international students were hesitant to speak in English and communicate in the classroom. The hesitation could result from their unfamiliarity with the Australian learning system or their language levels. It appears that teachers were very similar in their statements when teaching international students, for example, teacher 17 said *Get along with native local students*. Another teacher (1) commented about *interacting with local students*. It seems from the statements in this theme that teachers were mainly using the strategy mixing with local students in order to let international students benefit from locals' experience about the Australian culture and learning system.

A quarter 25% (7) of teachers identified that they used the strategy "teach students the Australian culture and values" to better teach international students. Australia here refers to the Australian culture, Australian language, and Australian accent. For example, teacher 21 indicated *teaching English as Australian English*. Another teacher (10) identified *understanding the Australian culture*. Teachers indicated that they used the Australian local expressions and teaching Australian local stories to get students used to the way of communicating with the Australian people and to have knowledge about the Australian culture. Communicating with the Australian community will undoubtedly assist international students to better cope with the host culture and reduce the sociocultural stress. Teacher 3 raised a very important issue and stated *helping them to know the learning strategies, Australian culture*. Helping students would make them familiar with the Australian learning system and how to achieve their academic success according to the requirements of the Australian learning system.

The strategies discussed above assisted the Australian teachers to address the needs of IS in the host country. It seems that IS were facing a new learning environment, therefore, they used the above strategies to help IS in achieving their academic degrees.

4.5.2 Teachers' Views about the Most Important Strategies that Worked Best for Teaching International Students

In this question, the survey asked teachers to: *Please list the five most important strategies that work best for your teaching of international students*. 27 (84%) out of the total32 answered this question. The most important strategies that teachers utilised to better teach international students were: encourage students to talk about familiar things, link learning to their real world, and praise students. These important strategies were coded into themes and are detailed with teachers' comments below.

Table 4.20 Teachers' self-report about most important strategies to better teach international students.

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%Teachers who raised an issue N=27	f
1	Encourage students to talk about familiar things	37	10
2	Link learning to their real world	14	4
3	Praise students	14	4

Table 4.20 shows that teachers "encourage students to talk about familiar things" as a strategy in order to better assist them in their study in an unfamiliar environment. 37% (10) of teachers showed that they encouraged students to talk in the classroom to build up their confidence. For example, teacher 27 stated *get them to work in pairs before asking them to respond to the teacher use real life experiences and relate it to their lives*. Working in pairs will help low level English learners to practise their English with their peers. The discussion with their peers would deeply assist students to talk about their real life experiences, as they already know the story. By doing so, students would be encouraged to talk and be better assisted by their teachers. For example, teacher 17 said *Talking about successful cases and stories* worked as an important strategy to better teach international students. This teacher wanted to reveal that encouraging students to talk inside the classroom would be an important strategy to assist them in their learning. Other teachers (8, 6, and 5) emphasised the same point when they said *get the students talking*, which indicates that these teachers follow the talking strategy when teaching English to ESL students. It seems that the talking strategy was working better, hence, most of teachers used it in the same context with IS.

Regarding the other strategy "link learning to their real world", 14% (4) of the teachers used kinds of learning such as peer and cooperative learning as a strategy to better address the needs of students. Teachers utilised the peer learning and/or giving examples from the real world to discuss in the classroom and enhance students' learning. For instance, teacher 28 stated *Cooperative learning-linking learning with real life* to encourage students to better understand when they were talking and learning things about their real life and/or link their stories to their daily life. Another teacher 12 commented *Diagnose learning difficulties*, which means getting to know students and their levels before giving them the real materials of study. Teacher 12 meant in the above statement that 'learning' was an important strategy to better teach

international students so as to assess and teach them according to what was relevant to their levels. By doing so, students would be encouraged to study and be familiar with the environment of their study in the host country. In this theme, teachers showed that they used real life examples and knowing the past learning experiences of students in order to make the Australian learning environment easier and more understandable to them.

With regards to "praise students" strategy, 14% (4) of teachers utilised this strategy to encourage students to cope and move forward with their study materials. Many times when students come to study in an unfamiliar environment, they will be confused and hesitant; therefore, teacher 15 said *Engaging them Encourage Praise Motivate* in order to cope with the new learning system. From teacher 12's statement, it appears that s/he worked in the Arab world and indicated that *praise is important,* as this would show them that the teacher cared about their success. Teacher 7 raised an important point when saying: *praise them if they answer well specially the weak ones.* This statement reinforced Hofstede's point about teachers encouraging weak students in Western settings; however, teachers tend to encourage only the good students in the Arabic learning systems. Teachers found that praise is an important strategy in assisting IS students in their studies in the host country.

The most important strategies from Table 4.20 that the Australian teachers used included teachers talking with students and encouraging them to seek good academic support which will help them in their academic success.

4.5.3 Teachers' Suggestions and Advice for Improving the Learning and Social Experiences of International Students

Question three asked teachers: *Please note any other comments or advice for improving learning and social experiences of international students specifically Arabic international students if you have any in your class during their study in Australia.* Three quarters (75%; 24) of teachers out of the total 32 answered this question. The advice that teachers offered to improve the learning experiences of AIS were: help students socially, understand the Arabic background of students, support students in their academic learning, talk about the Australian customs. The teachers' advice is detailed and coded into themes in the below Table.

Table 4.21: Teachers' self-report about the advice of improving learning and social experiences of international students.

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%Teachers who raised an issue N=24	f
1	Help students socially	33	8
2	Understand the Arabic background of students	29	7
3	Support students in their academic learning	29	7
4	Talk about the Australian customs	25	6

The first advice that teachers offered had to do with "helping students socially". 33% (8) of teachers out of the total 24 raised this issue. For instance, teacher 28 commented *I think that the most important area that teachers should focus on is the*

psychological area of students in order to support students in case they face a challenge. Supporting students psychologically would result in feeling social support as they were in the host country with fewer friends and relatives. In addition to psychological assistance, a good welcome would also help students to feel that they were not lost in an unfamiliar environment. This was clearly mentioned by teacher 23 when stating *Promote a welcoming environment to international students among native students* to let them feel that their teachers can assist them socially, not only academically, by mixing them with the native students. Again teacher 15 reinforced the idea of mixing IS with local students: *mixing with Australian students*. Statements in this section indicate that teachers can see lessening the psychological stress of international students would positively affect their academic success.

The other advice that teachers provided was "understand the Arabic background of students". 29% (7) of teachers referred to the word Arabic that in turn referred to understanding the background of AIS as a way to help them in their study journey in Australia. Teachers indicated that it would be better to know about the Arabic culture and to learn Arabic phrases when teaching AIS. Usually, when calling an Arabic person with an Arabic word, s/he would pay more attention. Therefore, some teachers already have some experience about how to deal with these students. So, we can see teacher 27 stated *Understand the Arabic and Muslim culture and learn some useful phrases* to make it easier when dealing with Arabic students. Again, teacher nine said something similar when stated *talk about Arabic things* in order to make AIS feel engaged in the classroom when the teacher was talking about something which was close to their culture. This relates to the fact that Arabic people tend to feel happy when talking about their culture or when talking in their mother tongue. It seems that knowing the students' culture and background would help teachers to better address the needs of AIS in the host country.

The other emerged advice was "support students in their academic learning". 29% (7) of teachers showed that supporting students in their learning would result in better academic achievement. Statements in this theme show that if the Australian teachers helped AIS, they would then be more motivated in the Australian learning system. However, not all AIS have the same motivation for learning owing to individual variances when learning. For instance, teacher 21 indicated that *not all have the same characteristics towards learning*. Therefore, teachers need to know how to deal with students individually and what affects their learning needs. In addition to that, teacher 7 said *academic learning strategies* would also help students to improve their academic journey. However, this teacher did not mention any specific strategy in her/his comment. The teachers' advice in this theme suggests that engaging students in the host country's culture and helping them to overcome their challenges would assist them in improving their language skills and their social experiences.

Another theme emerged: "talk about the Australian customs". Under this theme the Australian teachers' views about factors such as culture, learning system, and slang emerged to show how to improve the learning levels of AIS. For example, teacher 17 raised the advice that *the understanding of academic contexts used in Australian university education would be prioritized* to let the students adapt to the way of learning in Australia. By doing so, students would be used to the learner-centred system when they have come from a teacher-centred system. Another teacher (16)

raised advice about being *prepared to talk about key differences in Australia* to enhance the students' awareness of the host country's culture and how to deal with this culture while they study overseas. Teachers want to talk to students about the Australian culture and daily language terms to let AIS adapt to the Australian norms. Teacher four advised using *talk about the Australian culture and slang*, for instance, about the way of communicating, or how to say some daily words in slang as this would enhance the students' knowledge about the host culture and language. Thus, it would be helpful to teach students the colloquial language of the host country in order to increase their awareness of the cross-cultural communication.

In this open-ended question, teachers made some suggestions about helping AIS in their studies in Australia. This advice would definitely help AIS to overcome their barriers when studying in the host country. It seems that some teachers have good experiences with Arabic students since some of them indicated that they worked in the Arabic world culture. Themes in this section of the survey indicated that knowing the students' culture and background, integrating students in the host country community, and increasing their cross-cultural awareness would benefit them in their academic achievement overseas.

4.5.4 Teachers Identification of the Most Effective Strategies that They Used to Help International Students Learn Better

In this question, the survey asked teachers to*: Please list the five most effective strategies that you use to help international students learn better.* A total of 24 (75%) out of the total 32 teachers answered this question. Teachers indicated the most effective strategies that they used to help international students to learn better in Australia. The strategies that teachers used to help teach international students were: offer training to teachers and more academic support to students, apply communicative learning, students' pair up, and academic learning strategies. These strategies were coded into themes with the teachers' views below.

Table 4.22: Teachers self-report about the most effective strategies that they used to help international students learn better

Theme number	Emergent common themes	%Teachers who raised an issue N=24	f
1	Offer training to teachers and more academic support to students	33	8
2	Apply communicative learning	29	7
3	Students' pair up	29	7
4	Academic learning strategies	29	7

The first strategy that teachers used was "offer training to teachers and more academic support to students". 33% (8) of teachers out of the total 24 raised this issue to help students learn better in the Australian learning system. Teachers used this strategy with different statements and opinions. For instance, teacher 20 said *Adequate academic learning support* is needed to better teach international students in the host country. According to students' views in the open-ended questions, they do have academic and social challenges. Therefore, inevitably, academic support will lead to better academic achievements. In addition to academic challenges, AIS have a limited knowledge about the academic support offered by the university such as

learning centres, which sometimes assist students in their assignments and to improve their academic writing skills. The same thing was raised by teacher 15: *Make use of the university support systems*, which reflects that this teacher was assisting IS to attend the academic support workshops which are normally run by the university staff to enhance the academic skills levels of students. The support in this theme, which was offered by teachers, was not enough for students. Therefore, teacher 13 stated *I think academics need professional development to help them better support international students*. This statement by teacher 13 shows that there were some teachers in need of training about how to be professional in cross-cultural communication when teaching IS from different cultural backgrounds. The above statements suggest that students are in need of academic support and teachers are in need of training and support when dealing with IS.

Another strategy "apply communicative learning" was raised by teachers to help IS learn better. This strategy includes different ways of learning statements to assist AIS in their academic and social needs while they are doing their studies overseas. Usually in teacher-centred classrooms in the Arab world, rote learning was the dominant way of teaching and with very limited freedom for discussion. Therefore, students need to adapt to a learner-centred environment in which more technology is used and they are expected to be more independent in their learning. For this reason, we can see teacher 28 used this as a strategy to assist IS: *Provide them with audio and visual materials to improve their learning*. By doing so, students will enhance their academic learning and will become used to technology gradually since it has become a core concept in learning and ICTs are important in the current Australian learning system. Again teacher 25 raised an important matter about rote learning: *making explicit the cognitive steps that are often performed subconsciously and often difficult to learn by those from educational systems more reliant on rote learning*. AIS tend to be used to rote learning, so they need to adapt to the cognitive learning system. Therefore, some teachers found it a good strategy to do this step by step and change the learning minds of these students from rote to cognitive learning in a staged approach.

Strategies include the "students' pair up" strategy, and teachers showed how to deal with IS in different ways to improve their learning. For example, teacher 27 said *let them make choices* and the same teacher stated *Develop a strong rapport with the students*. This teacher was trying to deliver a message of improving students' learning since they were studying in a cognitive learning system. In addition to making choices, teacher 26 used this strategy to improve the students' learning: *Pair them up with native speakers or other international students* to talk and enhance their communication skills when talking with natives. Talking with natives would enhance the second language learners' ability in English particularly in terms of listening and speaking skills. During their discussion, they would be able to know why they were having this discussion and what the benefits would be. Therefore, teacher 22 added: *Ensure that all students know what is expected from the teaching*. By doing so, these strategies would result in improving the students' learning levels.

The last theme that teachers raised was "academic learning strategies" as a strategy to develop the learning of IS, but in different contexts from the previous questions. The theme 'academic' reflects many strategies that teachers were using to meet the students' needs during their learning. Teacher four mentioned *academic activities* to

develop the academic skills of these students. At the same time, it seems from teacher eight's statement: *academic learning strategies tutorials always* that he/she was using the tutorials to assist these students to get used to the Australian learning requirements and to adapt to the new learning system. When students would get assistance, they would then improve and overcome their learning either in terms of their social or their academic impediments.

Teachers indicated that they used strategies such as supporting the students academically, teaching them cognitively, pairing them up with local native students in order to make contacts and develop their networks to help better support their English language development. It seems that teachers used different strategies to help AIS cope and adapt to the Australian learning system.

According to the teachers' views in the open-ended questions, it appears that students had many problems while they were doing their studies in Australia. However, the teachers helped students socially and academically to improve their learning experiences. Some teachers' statements indicated that they taught in the Middle East, therefore, they stated actual coping strategies to best help AIS. Briefly, the Australian teachers used different strategies to better help AIS cope with the Australian system and better achieve their academic success.

4.6 Comparison of Students' and Teachers' Views on English and Pedagogical Approach Used in Australia

This chapter focuses on a comparison between Arabic international students' and Australian teachers' views, which have been discussed in the previous sections regarding the teaching and learning of AIS in Australia. It reports on the results of the analysis of a parallel survey, which allowed the two groups' views to be compared in terms of English language and the pedagogical approach of learning and teaching in the Australian learning system. Table 4.23 compares the English language experiences and Table 4.24 compares the pedagogical experiences of AIS and the Australian teachers when teaching ESL students.

Table 4.23: Comparison of students' and teachers' views of Arabic international students' English language learning experiences in Australia

Item	%+ (S)	%+ (L)
5.c./4.c. Were taught about listening skills.	92.4	71
5.b./4.b. Were taught about writing skills.	91	83.9
5.a./4.a. Were taught about speaking skills.	89.4	71
3./2. Listened to videos and audios during English lessons.	89	77.5
5.d./4.d. Were taught about reading skills.	89	74.2
2.b./1.b. Were taught English as communication activities in Australia.	88.7	90.3
4./3. Used computer and study needs.	88	88
2.a./1.a. Were taught English as grammar in Australia.	61.6	29

S: Students   L: Teachers

The results in Table 4.23 show that the majority of AIS by around (90%) were taught heavily the English four-macro skills of listening, writing, speaking and reading in

Australia, where the highest focus was on listening. In the meantime, nearly three quarters (75%) of teachers agreed that they were using the English four-macro skills quite a lot, where the highest focus was on academic writing. Similarly, the results of both, students and teachers were high in relation to listening to videos and audio files in the Australian teaching approach. 90% of students indicated that they were listening to videos and audio files in the Australian learning system. More than three quarters of teachers (77.5%) indicated that they were using videos and audio files when teaching international students in Australia. Concerning using computer and browsing the Internet, both teachers and students agreed to the same percentage (88%) of the Internet being used in the Australian learning system. The technology usage was not only referring to the Internet but also to use of projectors in tutorials to help teachers present their daily subject materials by utilising power point slides. Thus, this requires the university to run workshops and appoint staff to help ESL students with technology illiteracy to cope with a more digitalized learning system in Australia.

Table 4.23clearly indicates that the majority of AIS were doing a lot of communication activities in Australia. In a direct similarity to this, 90.3% of teachers rated the key approach to teaching English in Australia as communicative. In relation to grammar teaching to ESL students in Australia, 61.6% of AIS rated that they were using grammar as part of the Australian pedagogical approach. In contrast to this, 29% of Australian teachers rated that they were teaching grammar to international students. This contrast suggests that AIS would find the Australian method of learning unfamiliar to them, particularly since the Australia teachers focus on using the communication activities in their teaching to IS. Therefore, students need to cope with a different system for learning English where there is a focus on being able to use the English language to communicate as opposed to being grammatically correct.

Table 4.24: Comparison of students' and teachers' views on the pedagogical approach used with AIS in Australia

Item Students/Teachers	%+ (S)	%+ (L)
6./5. Able to say your opinion and debate freely in the classroom.	91	100
7.b./6.b. Been taught through critical thinking.	87.4	93.3
11.a./10.a. Giving work to students on projects and assignments as part of a team.	84	83.9
9.a./8.a. Found your teacher to be a facilitator of learning.	83	96.7
11.b./10.b. Giving work to students on projects and assignments as an independent learner.	82.3	96.8
8.a./7.a. Teaching English as a formal language.	73	67.8
10.a./9.b. Praising and encouraging students who are usually good.	72	90.3
10.b./9.a. Praising and encouraging students who are usually weak.	66	96.8
8.b./7.b. Teaching English as a casual language.	64	58
12./11. Been required to follow all the teacher's instructions in the class.	56	51.7
9.b./8.b. Found your teacher to be a controller of learning.	48	26.7
7.a./6.a. Been taught through memorisation.	32.2	3.2

S: Students   L: Teachers

In relation to classroom discussion and debate in the Australia learning system, a high majority of students (91%) indicated that they were able to discuss and debate in the classroom. In comparison to this, their Australian teachers' percentages were amazing because all of them (100%) indicated that they were using debate in their teaching to ESL students in Australia. The results indicate that students would face an adaptation process when coming to study in the Australian learning system. In addition to that, there was a clear difference between both survey groups regarding memorisation and critical thinking teaching. Teachers revealed that only 3% of them were using memorisation in their teaching methodology in Australia and a big number of them (93%) were using critical thinking in the classroom when teaching ESL students. This compares to students' views and more than three quarters of them (87.4%) rated very highly that they were learning critical thinking and constructivist learning in Australia.

In relation to teaching and learning casual and formal language in Australia, it seems there was a similarity in the percentages between the two groups, teachers and students in relation to casual and formal English usage in the classroom. Approximately 70%, which was almost three quarters of both groups, indicated that they were using casual language in the Australian classroom where some Australian idiom was used in their teaching and this could be difficult for AIS to understand. Again, the same percentage (70%) was rated by students and teachers about the usage of formal English in the classroom. The close percentage reflects that students would not have problems when teachers were using formal language in the classroom. The results in Table 4.24 show that almost all of the Australian teachers (97%) saw their role in the Australian learning system as facilitators, which means they allow their students to be independent in their learning. A similar percentage (83%) was rated by students in relation to classroom facilitation in Australia. In contrast, 26% of Australian teachers indicated their teaching role in Australia was as controllers in the classroom and nearly half of the students indicated that they saw their Australian teachers as controlling the classroom. Therefore, it seems there is a difference in the Arabic and the Australian learning environments regarding the students' freedom of talk and the teachers' role, which would put AIS in a complex situation to which they need to adjust, as in this new learning system they need to be independent and active learners.

As Table 4.24 shows, weak students were getting a high level of encouragement in the Australian learning system. Nearly three quarters (72%) of AIS indicated that the encouragement was going to good students and 90% of teachers indicated that the encouragement was going to good ones in Australia. In contrast, almost all (97%) of the Australian teachers said they were encouraging the weak students, and 66% of students indicated that they were encouraged by their Australian teachers. This reflects an idea that Australian teachers were encouraging both good and weak students evenly and more encouragement was going to the weak ones. Therefore, AIS who were weak would find that the Australian learning system was motivating them to achieve their academic success more so than in their home country even if their learning level was not very high. The results here reinforce the theory of Hofstede's 'the femininity theory' in which teachers in learner-centred classroom such as in the Australian learning system encourage both weak and good students.

The comparison results in Table 4.24 show that AIS were working in groups and as independent learners in the Australian classroom. 84% of Australian teachers were applying group work in their TESOL teaching. Most of teachers in Australia indicated that they were using group discussions and group assignments in their classrooms and the same percentage of students mentioned this in relation to using group work in the Australian learning system. In addition, a higher percentage (97%) of teachers was allowing their students to work independently and gave them assignments to achieve on their own and work as independent learners. Similarly, a higher percentage of students (82.3%) revealed that they were studying in Australia as independent learners. 'Independent learners' means that students were not practising group learning; instead, they were always doing their exams by themselves where they were using pen and paper only. In addition, students were memorising their work given by their teachers and working independently to pass their exams. This is unlike the Australian learning system in which students were required to think critically and look for external resources to achieve their assignments. 56% of students revealed that they needed to follow their teachers in their learning, compared to only half 51.7% of teachers reporting that they needed their students to follow their talk and subject materials. The total positive percentage gained from items about group work, and following teachers' opinions revealed that there was a similarity in students' and teachers' views. This similarity in percentages suggests that AIS found the Australian system not easy to study and cope with because in the previous sections of this chapter, they indicated that they did not experience group work and they were not used to sharing their knowledge with their teachers in their countries. Hence, the start of their study journey in Australia might place them in a perplexed situation.

A number of issues have emerged from the comparative section of students' and teachers' views regarding the Arabic international students' study journey in Australia. Students are encouraged to be independent and be active learners and they need to think critically. However, in the previous section about their home country systems, students indicated that they were used to learning by memorisation and with very little focus on critical thinking. It was also found that students are transplanted into a learning system with more technology utilisation in every aspect of their learning. The comparison of views shows that students could not fully understand the teachers because they sometimes speak in everyday language with some Australian slang; however, students were mostly used to learning in formal language in their home countries. To sum up, AIS find the Australian learning system unfamiliar to them and they are moving into a new host culture, which is different from their own, and therefore takes time to get them accustomed.

The next chapter (Chapter five) will discuss the interview findings that aim to explore the views of AIS and their teachers to understand the problems of this increasing group of students in greater depth, as it builds upon the findings of the surveys.

Chapter 5: Results of Interviews with Arabic International Students and Teachers

An Overview

Data analysis is an approach, which researchers use for the purpose of drawing conclusions about the information they have gathered. As with this research, the use of a number of data analysis techniques adds to the rigour of the research because it can provide more than one perspective on the topic (Bouma, 2000). This chapter reports on the results of interviews with AIS and teachers. These interviews were designed to follow-up on the issues and themes that emerged from the initial parallel survey with AIS and teachers though with different participants.

The analysis of interviews with AIS and teachers was thematic. Themes and patterns were sought in the data and each participant's responses were analysed under categories of themes which "focused on identifiable themes and patterns in the study" (Aronson, 1994, p. 1). The responses from the interviews were "coded into the data . . . dividing the text into small units and then assigning a label to each unit. This label can come from the exact words of the participants [in NVivo coding]" (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007, p.131). Creswell (2013) notes that in thematic analysis, the researchers can have themes as families and then sub-themes as the children, which belong to that family. Therefore, the analysis in this chapter consists of overarching themes and under each theme; there are sub-themes to detail the interviewees' views about the social and academic experiences of AIS in Australia.

The Interviews

Before commencing the in-depth interviews, some steps were taken into consideration. First, the researcher ensured that the interviewees were from different tertiary institutions, Australia wide. Second, questions were carefully structured and were shown to critical reference groups to check if they were well documented to extract enough information and to improve the validity. Third, the researcher made sure that the qualitative data collection process followed the USQ research committee policies. Fourth, the questions were continuously checked and updated in order to make them more relevant to the study aims. Two interviews were conducted after the survey analysis was complete because the research utilised the explanatory design of the survey first and interviews as a follow-up to explain any issues that emerged from the surveys. Both teachers and AIS were selected for interviews through the purposive sampling technique. Thus, the questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were structured in accordance with the questions and answers of the surveys of both students and teachers. In addition, the qualitative research instrumentation (interview schedules) was important for the researcher to be able to explain in greater depth the issues and themes arising out of the survey analysis in order to fully answer the research questions. Conducting interviews is seen as " . . . useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in-depth" (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). Thus, these interviews offered the researcher a means of completing the picture of what AIS students experienced while they were doing their study in Australia from their point of view and that of teachers. They also provided the study with much more detailed data, which cannot be accessed in any other data collection method because it allows the interviewees to feel more comfortable during the data collection process. However, there was a limitation to using this qualitative process, as it is very time-

intensive. This point is clearly reinforced by Boyce and Neale (2003) who state that, "[i]nterviews can be a time-intensive evaluation activity because of the time it takes to conduct interviews, transcribe them, and analyse the results" (p. 3).

The following subsections report on the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews firstly with students and secondly with teachers regarding Arabic international students' social and academic experiences in the Australian learning system.

The interview process took nearly an hour and a half for each participant whether AIS or teacher. Forty-five minutes was the duration of the first interview, which was followed, by another interview of approximately the same timeframe but several days later. Prior to the start of the interviews, both interviewees were informed about the nature and the importance of the study. The interviews took place face-to-face when it was easy for the researcher to reach the participants (3 AIS and 4 teachers) and some were held through Skype videoconference because the participants were Australia wide (3 AIS and 3 teachers). Each individual interviewee did not show any sign of concern since the researcher had openly discussed the project and they were prepared to answer the questions. They in fact reported that they felt very relaxed and happy to express their opinions since the researcher spent most of the time listening to them rather than needing to ask many questions. The face-to-face interviews were recorded through a specific recording device and later transferred to a computer. The Skype interviews were recorded through an add-on to the Skype video recording facility and later downloaded to a computer. Both interviews were transcribed through specific transcription software called "Wreally Transcribe".

The following subsections are views and statements of both teachers and students regarding the social and academic experiences of AIS in Australia. All interviewees are coded with numbers to keep their privacy confidential and anonymous and to adhere to the university's ethics rules regarding confidentiality.

5.1 Students' Interviews Thematic Analysis

The results of the thematic analyses of interviews with students saw the emergence of seven main themes with four of these involving sub-themes. These themes are displayed in Figure 5.1. The first theme was the challenge of students' communication when studying in Australia with its different learning system and language. The second theme related to the issues that impact on Arabic international students' learning journey and experiences in the Australian classroom. The third theme highlighted the students' situation in relation to their need to relocate and participate in cultural activities in Australia. The fourth theme identified the importance of students' motivation when studying in the Australian learning system. The fifth theme related to the experiences of Arabic international students' use of ICTs while studying in Australia. The sixth theme raised the importance of students' friends and the Australian university support offered to AIS to help them settle in the host country to take up study. The final theme, theme seven highlighted the extent of Arabic international students' understanding of the Australian culture and its relationship to studying and settling in the host country's learning environment and local community. The participants were AIS studying in Australian postgraduate and undergraduate programs and Australian teachers teaching in Australia, and some of them who have taught for many years in different Arab countries. The following

sections are students' views regarding their study experience in both Australia and their home countries.
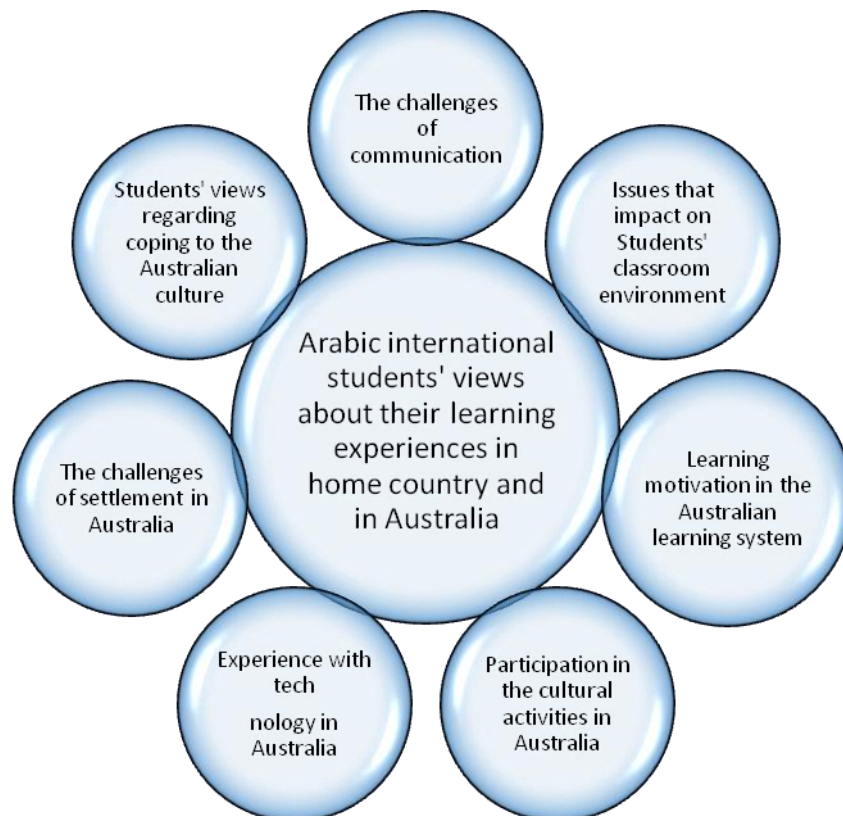
Figure 5. 1: Emergent themes: Arabic international students' views about their learning experiences in home country and in Australia

5.1.1 The Overarching Theme "The Challenges of Communication"

This overarching theme discussed the issues that emerged through the data coding and picked up the students' views in relation to their communication in Australia. Three sub-themes emerged under this main theme. The first one was the language issues theme in which students talked about the English language level and how the language helped them in their communication in the host country. The second sub-theme was social constructivism, which highlighted the students' views about the environment of the Australian classroom and how they communicate with their classmates in the new learning environment. The third sub-theme in this section was communication and integration of students in the host country, Australia.

5.1.1.1 Language Issues

In this sub-theme, the interviewer asked students about the English language and how they viewed teaching English in Australia. Already in the survey results, students indicated they are having issues with casual English language; therefore, the interviews are showing a deeper investigation of these issues. Students indicated for example:

- *.. . actually when they speak in standard language it would be easy to understand but I think the problem is the accent the Aussie accent which sometimes they speak the casual or slang English which is not easy to understand.* Student 1
- *You know each country has its slang so the one [the Australian slang] was very hard to understand, it was difficult to understand because I have*

learnt English in my country as formal and
now I am hearing Aussies speaking their accent and it's not formal so would
be hard. Student 3

The common idea in the above statements was that they could not understand the Australian accent and slang. In the meantime, as already indicated by earlier studies in the literature review chapter it was found that students were used to hearing formal language from non-native English speaker teachers whose pedagogical approach did not involve communicative/interactive language learning experiences, therefore, they could not understand Australian colloquialisms when teachers used them sometimes in their tutorials.

The researcher carried out another interview with student two, two weeks later, and he indicated that because of the Australian language, he could not easily understand Australian people when communicating with them. The language issue caused problems for him: *"Also language is important when you want to use the public transport or if you have problems with transport staff so you have to have a language."* This statement conveyed the idea that people from ESL backgrounds, when they come to study in Australia, do not have a sufficient phrase bank of English, thus creating communication problems. However, even ESL students with higher levels of English face difficulties in understanding the local English speaking people when they travel overseas. This was quite clear when student three said:

- *When I first arrived I had some words and some English teaching experience because I was a teacher in my country so if we talk about general English I have some level of English but if we talk about academic language and the slang language it is hard.* Student 3

This student revealed the idea that AIS were learning different English in their home countries to the Australian English, which is very much influenced by the Australian local expressions. When they came to study in Australia, they saw sometimes that the host people were using casual language; however, students were used to using formal English language in their countries. Therefore, they had difficulties in understanding the host country people when communicating with them. On the other hand, over time, it was found that the students were better able to cope, as they developed their listening skills, and became used to the Australian accent, as student 1 noted: *"However day by day I became used to the Aussie accent."*

This sub-theme shows how upon arrival AIS may have achieved the level of English required to pass a test but they do not have the type of English language and communicative experience necessary to understand the language in everyday use by Australian. AIS have generally experienced English taught as a foreign language in their home countries.

5.1.1.2 Social Constructivism

In this sub-theme, the researcher asked students about the Australian classroom teaching approach. This question investigated their participation and their classroom communication either with their classmates or with their teachers. The following comments were made:

- *When we are talking about English teaching the main focus is on grammar a lot in my country and there is no communication in any sense . . . But in Australia mainly teachers focus on communication activities where there is*

very little usage of grammar. Generally everything is different in English teaching between home country and Australia. Student 2

When student two was interviewed, he explained that in his home country, teachers were always teaching grammar and there was no opportunity for them to discuss with their teachers or practise any kind of communication or debate. Therefore, he found that the Australian learning system was quite difficult for him, specifically at the beginning of his learning journey, since Australian teachers were reported to mainly focus on communicative activities and classroom debates, where students needed to be either in groups for learning and discussion or in online discussion forums debating and discussing with their classmates. Similarly, student six reported:

- *Here mostly is communication activities, for example, we have a group discussion in the classroom or in tutorials. We use grammar but very little not like my home country where the focus is only on grammar because the teachers still follow the old system of teaching. In Australia there is good learning system where the teacher giving us subjects to talk about and discuss in the classroom, about cultural things.* Student 6

Student six saw the Australian way of teaching as better than the learning system in his home country. He used to learn only grammar in his class at home; however, he found that Australian teachers were using a communication system where students are required to be active in the classroom and debate in either in groups or with their teachers, which consequently can help them to build their confidence in their English language use when speaking with other people from different cultures. In keeping with AIS survey results, where it was indicated that their learning system in their home countries was focusing quite a lot on grammar and the teacher was the whole authority in the classroom when talking in the class, student 2 stated: *"In my home country we call it feed up system."* In this statement, student two tried to indicate that their teacher at home was 'feeding' them their materials and they did not get a chance to talk and discuss cultural issues or communicate with their classmates. The students' views in this sub-theme agreed with Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance where AIS are stemming from strong uncertainty societies in which the teacher is the whole authority in the classroom.

5.1.1.3 Communication and Integration

During the interviews, the researcher asked a question about the social integration of AIS in the host country. This question was referring back to social identity theory, which indicates that international students tend to mix and group themselves with people from the same language and culture. The following comments were made:

- *The first week was embarrassed and you do not understand the other cultures and this stopped me from speaking and communicating with other cultures and upon that tried to be close to my culture people so I basically speak with people who are Arabic but later and by time I could communicate with people from different cultures and we have group assignment and having classroom discussion together but the beginning was hard.* Student 1
- *After my being for a while here in Australia if I found Aussies that they like to speak then I will speak with them because I need to practice with them the English language but if not then I will speak with my people because it's easy to understand and I can communicate with full of communication and understanding.* Student 4

The above statements reflect the students' opinions regarding communicating and integration with people from other cultures. It seems that when students first came to the host country, they found it hard to be in touch with the host people, partly owing to getting used to a society with different norms and behaviours, from their own cultural values. This reflects an image that students tried to group with their own people since they speak the same language and they come from the same background. However, it was also found that studying and living with the host people enhanced their cultural experience, and they learnt how to be in touch with people from different cultures. In the meantime, some AIS indicated that they sometimes tried to speak and amalgamate themselves with native speakers in the community to practice their English; but they noted that some Australians do not like to be in touch with people from international backgrounds. For instance, student four stated *"also got home stay with natives but did not work as well because Aussies especially natives do not like to speak with students from different countries."* This reveals that this student had tried to live in shared accommodation in order to seize the opportunity to develop their English language; however, they were shocked when some of the Australians did not like to be in touch with sojourners. Concerning this issue, student five experienced the same idea: " *. . . I try to speak with Aussies when I have time to do so; I try to speak with others when I meet them on the street . . . but the younger do not seem to speak so I speak to older people many times."* It seems that this student found it sometimes difficult to get in touch with younger Australians [students at the university, on campus]; and it suggests that it could be easier to speak with older people to learn to understand the culture and practise English at the same time.

5.1.2 The Overarching Theme "Issues Impacting on Classroom Learning"

This theme discussed issues, which impacted, on the learning of AIS in the Australian classroom. In this section, there are three sub-themes regarding interviewees' learning in the Australian system. The first sub-theme is group discussion in which students reveal their views in relation to the group discussion approach in Australia. The second sub-theme is about the nature of exams in the Australian learning system. The third sub-theme handles the views of AIS in relation to the Australian teacher's role and how these students see the Australian teacher in the Australian system compared to their home system.

5.1.2.1 Group Discussion

Regarding this sub-theme, during the interview process, the researcher discussed with students how they view discussions in the Australian classroom. The interviewer intended to investigate how AIS viewed group discussions in the Australian learning system. This question was asked because students in the earlier stage, in the survey, indicated that they were unfamiliar with the group discussion approach in Australia. Their statements were indicated below:

- *We honestly do not use classroom discussion in my country because the class size it too big and teachers do not have time to do that. However, I have found the group discussion is great resource of learning with classmates from different cultures but sometimes I have seen teachers they just waste time*

> *during group discussion and sometimes give us group discussion subject, which is not flexibly to discuss.* Student 2

- *It is amazing because each student has an idea so we share our cultures during the group discussion but at the beginning was very hard to cope and do the discussion. You know my language was very poor when I first come so I cannot speak with many people and now I am better I can speak because it have got experience.* Student 6

From students' statements above, it seems that they found group discussion in the Australian classroom an interesting way of developing their English and getting to know other cultures. However, they had issues when they started their study with this kind of learning. The reason behind this was that their home learning systems are not applying the communicative approach in the classroom and their teachers in their home countries were following a traditional approach and curriculum that does not allow students to debate in the classroom: *"In my country teacher is teacher and not friend and we do not have discussion with students."* (Student 5). This reflects that students were not used to having group discussions or debates in the classroom; therefore, they found it difficult when they started their study in Australia. Similarly, student four reported that, *"when I first started to use it [group discussion], I found it very difficult to cope with."* This reveals the contrast between the English language demands in the home country (passive) and those of the host country that are active. Therefore, it seems that these AIS encountered an unfamiliar environment when they started their learning journey in Australia. However, they reported that day by day, they became used to this more linguistically and culturally demanding environment [group discussion and debate] and found it helpful to practice their English language with people from different cultures. Moreover, students indicated that they were not used to classroom discussions and the other barrier was their English language level, which they reported impeded them from keeping the communication going.

5.1.2.2 The Use of Exams

In the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer asked a question about the use of exams in students' home countries and how do they view the exam system in Australia. It seems from the below statements that AIS found the Australian exam system completely different from their home countries. For instance, students stated that,

- *In my country is completely different we have the final exam only but here mainly they are focusing on assignments and you have to do two assignment at least in one subject and I had some problems here and they way of evaluation that teachers follow because I thought it will be the same to my home country but I have the different thing here.* Student 1

This student reported that he found the Australian system of assessing and evaluating students' comprehension is different to his home country. He came from a learning system where there is a final exam only and there is no focus on assignments during the semester. Teachers in Australia were assessing students within the semester when giving students a subject to discuss and they need to search for information about that subject. By doing so, students were encouraged to be independent in their learning to search and to get resources in order to finish their assignments according to the assignment's requirements where most of the times they are required to look for literature from different sources; however, in their home countries, students had

to follow one set of rules for all exams and they all sat for the final exam. Another student conveyed the same idea when indicated that:

- *The way of exam is different because we have assignment in Australia and in my home country we final have exams only sometimes we have on line exams in Australia or I can say quizzes but nothing like this kind of exam in my country as we do not have Internet culture at all. All of our home country exams are written exams using pen and paper.* Student 2

Student two confirmed later that the exam system in his country is different to the Australian one. Earlier, in his country, he was doing only the pen and paper exam, in which students were memorising their materials and doing the end of semester exam. However, student four said something different when stated that,

- *It is similar and different. Similar we have final exams and sometimes in Australia we sit for exams and its different because we have final exams only and no assignments in my country but in Australia we have assignments many times and all through the semester.* Student 4

The comment above presented the emphasis of student four on the fact that AIS in their home countries did not use the assignment system, whereas in Australia most of their assessment criteria are met within the semester assignments. This student found that sometimes the Australian exam system is similar to his home country when he sat for final exams.

It appears that in the Australian learning system, there is a lot of emphasis on group assignments and students indicated that they were having group assignments with their classmates from different cultures. AIS students found this method of assessment unfamiliar to them; however, over time, they adjusted and they could share their experiences and ideas unlike the individual assignment or the end of semester exam.

5.1.2.3 The Role of the Teacher

During the survey results, students showed that the teacher's role was different from their home countries. Therefore, in the second phase of the interviews, the interviewer discussed further the difference in the teacher's role and how students are experiencing this difference. Students reflected their views as follows:

- *Teachers in Australia are a very great help and teachers make you feel as you are friend not just study and even sometimes not just academic help.* Student 2
- *There is big difference between my home country teacher and my Aussie teacher where the teacher like friend here but in my country the teacher is very firm with students and he or she is controlling everything he is the only opinion in the classroom. Also in Australia teachers showing a lot of respect and encouraging us always to talk and debate with others unlike in the home country.* Student 6

Overall, the common theme of the above students' views was the Australian teachers were very helpful and they were not controlling the class unlike what their teachers do at home. Teachers seem very friendly to international students and they [students] felt they were able to discuss and express their opinions in the classroom. However, in their home countries, teachers are very firm and they only want their students to

listen to their instruction without any kind of classroom discussion. So, when students came to Australia, they found their teachers were always encouraging them to voice their opinions freely and have discussions with their classmates as the Australian learning system is following the learner-centred way of teaching. *"Here teachers encourage students to be in groups and to have discussion group and work in teams and this good thing to know other cultures" (S1).* It seems that students preferred the Australian system because they could improve their English language skills by speaking with people from other cultures. However, they found this system to be unfamiliar to them specifically at the beginning of their study. Students' views here confirm the results of the survey when they highly rated that their teachers in their home countries were controlling the classroom. Again student one said that:

- *Teachers in my country still they used the old textbooks and old materials and teachers are not creative . . . also the role of teacher is the only source and he is knowledge feeder without . . . any group discussion. So teacher is controlling everything in my country. While in Australia . . . they [teachers] accept the student's opinions and they encourage students to do so.* Student 1

During the interview with this student, he revealed that teachers in his country were using an old method of teaching where they only followed old textbooks, which were provided, to them by their education department. However, in Australia, he saw the Australian teachers were able to use their materials, which address their students' needs in a cognitive way. By doing so, Australian teachers were motivating students to be active learners in the classroom; by contrast, in their home country, teachers were following an old fashioned way of learning that makes their students passive learners and they just need to listen to what the teacher is saying without using discussion either with their peers or with their teachers.

5.1.3 The Overarching Theme "Students' Motivation to Learn in the Australian Learning System"

This theme emerged when students talked about the issues that encourage them in the Australian learning system. There are two sub-themes under this overarching theme. Sub-theme one discusses how students feel encouraged when studying in the classroom. This relates to the Australian teachers when dealing with students and they were encouraged because they were studying English. The second sub-theme relates to their home background and how it is different to the Australian system.

5.1.3.1 Issues that Encourage/Discourage Students' Learning in the Australian System

During the semi-structured interviews, students were asked about the issues, which encourage and/or discourage them when studying in Australia. The following comments were made.

- *Teachers are friendly and encourage us to participate and also group discussion encourage me as well because we every day learn something new from other international students. What discourage me sometimes students and teachers speak casual language, which I am not used to it, and generally English language is very hard to communicate not like my native language.* Student 4

Student four suggested that Australian teachers dealt with them as if they were their friends. They were encouraged in the Australian learning system to study and enjoy

the classroom environment because they have seen their Australian teachers were dealing with them in a friendly manner. Australian teachers were also often using group discussions with students from different cultures, especially in English preparation courses. This helped AIS to mix and share their cultural experiences with people who are different to their own culture. However, this student indicates that, sometimes, teachers speak casual language in the classroom, which is difficult for them to understand. This is considered by AIS as a discouraging factor when studying in Australia. The usage of casual language, which AIS mentioned earlier, indicated that students could not cope easily because at home they were used to hearing formal English from their teachers in the classroom. So, students found the usage of casual language is a barrier to their learning in Australia. Another view by student one indicated:

- *I am actually studying English in Australia so the most encouraging for me because English is an international language in Australia . . . also facilities are available anywhere to me find resources and get Internet access anywhere on campus in addition to that teachers are really helpful. Discourage me Australia is very away and cost of living is very high in Australia and everything you have to do yourself and you to pay for almost everything so nothing is really cheap. For example power bills and transport costs.* Student 1

Student one revealed that the most encouraging thing for them in their study in Australia is the English language, since English is considered as an international language around the world. In addition to that, he found there were many facilities at the university, for instance, Internet availability any time and learning resources as encouraging factors to help them keep on with their study. Conversely, he also found discouraging things when he came to study in Australia. He reported that the cost of living in Australia is very high and some students could not afford to live and study. For instance, the transport is very costly and usually international students use public transport daily to go to the university. It appears that Australian teachers were approaching international students and creating a friendly classroom environment to motivate students to focus on their studies in Australia. However, there were issues such as the transport and/or community communication issues which distracted students from focusing on their studies. Consequently, this might affect their academic success.

5.1.3.2 The Impact of Arabic Students' Home Country System

In regard to the students' home learning system, during the interview process, they were asked about the background of their home system to see if it impacted on their motivation when studying in Australia. Students described their system with the following comments.

- *Honestly the learning system is completely different from my country learning system we do not have assignment and we do not have writing that much like here so when I came here the first was difficult time.* Student 1
- *It is completely different and my system in the home country is easier than the Australian one. Because we depend on the teacher and then he or she talking to us and we just listen and later we need to memorise what the teacher has said because we have end of study exam.* Student 4

Students found the Australian learning system different from their own. For instance, there was no focus on academic writing in their home countries; however, they found in Australia that teachers used writing skills intensively especially when they started at the tertiary level in order to get admission to university or pass the English language test (IELTS). They were just obliged to obey and listen to what the teacher is saying in order to memorise the materials that they were given in order to pass the final exam. Students' views in this sub-theme explain the results of the survey in more depth, which indicated that students in their home country were always memorising their subject materials. Another view about the difference between the Australian and their home learning system was raised by students five and six when they said:

- *It is not the same in my country, the system of learning in Australia is more development more improvement than to my country learning system and is different for example like the teacher skills.* Student 5
- *In my country the learning system is old learning system but in Australia is a more modern system where every teacher uses new technology like the Internet and computer while it is hard for me to use the computer but it is good because developed system.* Student 6

The above students revealed that the Australian learning system is more developed than their countries' system. For example, in Australia teachers always encourage students and were friendly with them in order to encourage them to talk and develop their self-efficacy in their speaking and listening skills. Moreover, teachers in Australia use technology in their teaching, for instance, they use Internet and computers in their classroom to present their tutorials and lectures. However, some students indicated that they have low levels of ICTs literacy. So overall, they face an unfamiliar learning system in which they need to cope and study in Australia.

It seems that students did notice that the Australian system is completely different from their own which sometimes discouraged them from being interested in studying; however, the Australian teachers were always encouraging them to focus on their studies in a friendly manner.

5.1.4 Students' Participation in Cultural Activities

In relation to students' integration and participation in the cultural activities, they were asked about their level of participation when some cultural activities happen off campus. During the analysis only one theme emerged regarding their participation in cultural activities. For instance, students indicated that:

- *I actually do not hear from my uni about the cultural activities but I heard that there is a Harmony Day. There are some announcements about them but the uni to tell students about such I never hear about them and I did not participate in such activities. I normally participate in sport activities with friends from my culture, which normally happen off campus.* Student 1

Student one explained that the university did not tell him about the cultural activities that were happening off campus. He saw some announcements about some occasions, but the university did not tell students in detail about such activities, through which they might be able to create social network with people from different cultures. He further said that there were sports activities, which happened, and he was a member of a sports team, but unfortunately the play and the communication were only with his country's friends because it was easier for him to communicate

with people with his own mother tongue. Another student (four) reported that he did not like to participate in off campus activities because the time is limited when he is studying in Australia.

- *I did not participate in such things but actually the university ran them sometimes they travel to beach or bush walking. I remember that I participated in one of the activities and I integrated myself with my people and with Aussies and we had fun. You know the time is very limited because most of the time is to study in the host country because we have pressure from our government to finish on time.* Student 4

It seems that student four, above, did not have time to participate in such activities; however, he participated in one of them, and he found it interesting because he could practice his English with Australians and also get more social contact with his country's friends. Therefore, the off campus activities can create an environment in which students are able to break cultural barriers and locate members of their country's people in order to seek help and address their needs in the host country. Likewise, student five showed that he is does not have time to go and participate in cultural activities either. However, he went once and found that:

- *Sometimes I participate in the cultural activities but it depends on the time I have, as I am a student I am very busy . . . You know I went once but I cannot speak with other people because I feel they speak with their people only and they do not speak with international students.* Student 5

Student five spent some time in a cultural activity; however, he could not enjoy it because he found Australians prefer to be in touch and talk with their own people. So, he could not practice his English. Therefore, some students did not like to go to such activities because they could not practice English. However, it seems that, this is the international students' main opportunity in which they can practice English and develop social networks. Student two, who tried to participate in every cultural activity, noted a similar situation; however, he found it hard to be in touch with people from different countries.

- *I tried to participate with any party or any cultural activity either on or off campus because I tried to know the other cultures . . . But sometimes for the Chinese people their English accent related to their home language so it would be hard to understand them so they talk English through the Chinese and even with Indian English . . . however during the time and I got used to their accent so I can cope and communicate when we have communicated.* Student 2

Student two went to some cultural occasions or parties and met some Chinese and Indian students. He could not maintain his communication with them because he found that they speak a difficult accent. Chinese people speak English, but their accent is very much influenced by their mother tongue. Therefore, he could not cope and did not enjoy participating in such occasions. In the meantime, he became used to other people's accents when he met them regularly. This suggests that international students face difficulties such as communication in English at the beginning of their study; however, these difficulties ease when they begin to cope and become used to the new environment.

5.1.5 Students' Experiences with Technology

During the interview, the researcher asked a question about ICTs usage in the Australian system. This question was asked because in the survey results, students showed that they were facing difficulties with technology and Internet usage when studying in Australia. The following comments were made:

- *I rarely use it in my home country and for learning situation I never use it to study or contact the teacher like in here in Australia but in Australia we use it a lot as very developed situation everything with technology for example you need to submit with computer and on line stuff. Make meetings with teachers all on line. We use Internet and computer too much in Australia.* Student 1

- *As a system in my home country there is no email at all there is no email even for my personal life and even there is no website for the university. In addition staff do not have emails because there is no email culture in my home teaching system . . . So our communication with the teacher is only face-to-face . . . In Australia mainly the communication by email or even we can call the teacher by phone . . . teacher using email to give feedback which very good service where we get answers from teacher in very fast response. So everything different because there is more technology using computer and Internet in Australia and it is hard to use it at the first time.* Student 2

The common theme presented by students one and two revealed that they did not see or use ICTs in their home countries. They indicated they never used the Internet and email to contact their teachers because only face-to-face communication was widely used. Further, these students showed that the technology culture is not recognised by the teaching staff in their home countries. However, when they came to Australia, they found that ICTs are highly and daily used, and nearly in every part in their study. They found it very interesting when technology is used as part of their lives. They were able to contact the teacher without coming to class, through online contact either by email or through phone calls. In the meantime, they found using ICTs, when they first came, was not easy because they did not practice the Internet and the technology in their home countries. Another student (six) indicated the same thing when he was asked about the ICTs experience either in his country or in Australia. He stated that:

- *When I first came here it was very hard honestly but later and by the time I became better. I have seen here the technology everywhere and I need to use it every day. It was hard but of course I asked my friends and the university library to help me but still sometimes I needed help especially when browsing to get articles or something like that or with specific software such as SPSS software.* Student 6

When student six started studying in Australia, he found it complicated to cope with ICTs. However, he had to use technology and the Internet in everyday activities when studying in Australia; therefore, he became used to it over time. To overcome the barrier of no experience in technology, he went to seek help from his friends and the university library staff. Student six revealed that he gained experience, but was still in need of getting help to master specific software, for example, analysis software (SPSS). In such a case, it is the university's responsibility to help international students to master specific software that might help them achieve academic success.

The above three interviewees showed that they did not have any computer and technology practice in their home countries. Their views here linked back to the survey results by confirming that students did rate using the technology in their countries. Therefore, when they came to study in Australia, they could not easily cope with using ICTs in every aspect of their study. However, it seems over time and by seeking help, they became used to this technology and found it interesting to communicate with their teachers and cope with this new phenomenon.

5.1.6 The Overarching Theme "The Challenges of Settling in Australia in Order to Study"

This overarching theme discusses the issues, which face AIS when they first start their life in Australia. During the interviews students indicated that they faced a range of issues such as the lack of availability of assistance, the challenges of finding accommodation during the initial stage of settlement, and the importance of friends/university support to help them settle. Their views below show how they faced these challenges and where they got support. Students' challenges discussed below are counted as sub-themes.

5.1.6.1 The Availability of Assistance

In relation to this sub-theme, the interviewer asked students about the assistance they were getting if they faced issues during their study in Australia and where they got support from in case they needed help. They indicated that:

- *First help is from friends from the same country then support comes from teachers who are very helpful; they tried many times to simplify the learning situation and they tried to help me when I asked them.* Student 1
- *Honestly the university picked us from the airport and took us to the residential colleges and that is it. For any help or in need of any support I normally ask my friends about that. Then by time, I normally support myself and find things that I need by myself.* Student 4

Students showed that they were getting their main support from their friends who were from the same country. For instance, student one said that he sought help from his friends and from his teachers as well. He further indicated that his Australian teachers were very helpful when he needed to overcome a problem. However, student two reported that his university helped him only when he needed a pick up from the airport and after that, he depended on his friends to support him. This indicates that the main source of supporting international students is their friends. Student six reported that:

- *Nothing like this service from the university. I did not know about the Uni services because they did not tell me about them I did not know about the learning centre service, workshops, I went to my friends to tell me about such services, I went to my friends because easy to understand and they have been here for long period so they have experience.* Student 6

Student six's experience conveyed an idea that students were not being directed by the university orientation or mentor program about these services. Therefore, he went seeking help from his friends who were already in Australia.

All three interviewees reflect an idea that AIS were not getting enough support from their universities to help them settle in Australia. Therefore, they sought help from

their friends. It seems that if students were coming to study in the host country without friends, they would then be in a difficult situation.

5.1.6.2 The Challenges of Finding Accommodation

This sub-theme discusses the situation of AIS with regards to a different real estate system and different renting laws. When the survey asked students in the open-ended questions, they indicated that getting accommodation was not easy in Australia. Therefore, in the semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked the interviewees about the accommodation issues in more details and they commented:

- *. . . to get accommodation I have to search over the Internet while I am not used to do that. I have to get residential history while it's the first time without history I have been here so I could say it's completely different to my home country.* Student 1
- *I found it at that time the accommodation process very hard because I am not used to it. You need to have bank account and you need to 100 point check which something never seen before in my country because we normally get property in my country by social contact with friends. But by the time I got experience and I had got some English and knew the way of application I was still asking friends about to help me in some case because everything is new to me still sometimes.* Student 4

It is very clear from students one and four that getting accommodation in Australia to settle and study was very unfamiliar to them because the Australian system is different to that in their home countries. They both have friends and they went to seek help from them [their friends] to get to know the property rent application system. When these students tried to apply for a residential place, they found it completely different to their home countries. In their home, they can rent a residential place through their social contacts and ties; however, in Australia it should be through a real estate agent with conditions to meet. For instance, students have to have a bank account, and 100 points credit check such as a driver's license, Medicare or Visa card. They found it unfamiliar and therefore difficult to easily get accommodation in Australia. Consequently, this would affect their study when starting in the host country as this may attract their attention away from the required academic work.

5.1.6.3 The Importance of Friends'/University's Help in Settlement

In this sub-theme, students raised an issue regarding the support, which was offered to them in the host country by their friends and/or their universities. The interviewees were asked about the help they were having access to in Australia, and they made the following comments.

- *They [his friends] welcomed me a lot and helped me a lot and when they were over their welcome they continued to help me and they even picked me from the airport.* Student 2
- *It was difficult to find some Islamic personal needs however my friends here before me they told me where to get it, so if I want to get Islamic clothes or Halal food I would ask them where to get these things.* Student 3

In both cases, it seems that students have friends who helped them to meet their needs in Australia. Student two was in touch with his friends before coming to Australia; therefore, they welcomed him at the airport and picked him up to drive

them to their residential place. Student three reported the kind of support offered to him by his friends. He depended on his friends when he wanted to get his personal needs met such as locating a Halal food shop or buying Islamic clothes for his family. Again, this student noted that his friends helped him a lot to meet his needs when stated *"To be honest the first helper to me are my country friends."* The common theme of these two statements is that students were getting support from their friends more than from their universities. However, while the interview process was flowing, the researcher asked students about the kind of support they received from their universities and they indicated:

- *At the same time I have got help from the students centre at the university but not like my friends help.* Student 1

Student one revealed that he went to the student service centre at the university to seek help; but he did not get the expected help or similar help to what he was asking his friends. The reason could be that the communication in English was not easy for them, since students were still at the beginning of their life in Australia. After being for a while in Australia, student one knew where to locate the support sources. Therefore, he received support from the university such as workshops to help students cope with the new learning system. For example, he noted, *"the APA reference workshop and for assignment academic writing."* The interviewer asked another student if he obtained support from his university regarding locating a prayer room or the community multi-faith room, and he replied that:

- *Also for my praying times I tried to find the place by myself because when I asked the student administration and the university they did not tell me about that as they said this is something personal.* Student 3

Thus, university staff was not being able to advise him where to find the prayer room. This indicates that the teaching staffs were not aware of the multicultural students' background needs. If students went to their praying place, they would then meet their community members who might help them in discussing their experiences in Australia, as this would lessen students' homesickness. Another interviewee, five, indicated that he got great help from his university.

- *Yes have got much help from the uni and they sent a taxi to the airport then they picked me up from the airport and took me to the accommodation place.* Student 5

The university of this student arranged a taxi service to pick him up from the airport to take him to his residential place. This means that the university recognises how important it is for international students from ESL backgrounds to communicate at the airport and find their correct transport to come to the university or the intended city to live in. This sub-theme suggests that all students received support from either their friends or the university when settling in Australia. However, students' views indicated that they are getting more support from their friends. This reveals that some universities were not offering enough support to international students, which ultimately might affect their study.

It seems that students were challenged in locating assistance they needed. They also found that the accommodation process in Australia was quite complex because the real estate system and laws were in stark contrast to their home system. However,

some students did receive support from their universities and the majority of them were receiving support from their friends.

5.1.7 Students' Experiences with the Australian Culture

During the survey open-ended questions, teachers indicated that students were having issues coping with the Australian culture. Therefore, the researcher asked students about their experiences with the Australian culture while they were studying and living in the host country. The students made the following comments:

- *Every culture has its own unique features so Australians have their own culture and it is different from Arabic culture so basically there is misunderstanding and face problems when we want to understand it either we misunderstand them or they misunderstand our culture. So in the first year I found conflict of understanding the Australian culture and I was very hesitated to speak and deal with Aussies so there are some cultural issues.* Student 1

- *Culture impede me as well because when I want to have conversation with them many times I am hesitant because I think in my mind they have culture different to me. This happened to me at the beginning of my life here.* Student 5

Students one and five reflected that during the first year of their study in Australia, they faced problems when they tried to be in touch with Australians. They further indicated that there was a hesitation to talk to Australians because they were thinking that they have different cultural norms and behaviours, which might be sensitive when they want to communicate with the host people. Students seem to have less experience with cross-cultural communication when coming to study in Australia. Therefore, the university might be able to run workshops about raising the cultural awareness of the multicultural ESL students. Interestingly, student two, indicating a different thing, raised a contradicting statement:

- *To understand the Australian culture was not that difficult because the language preparation course they taught us about the culture not only the language so they taught us about the culture too, for example they always tell us be nice with people from different culture and not say things that people do not like. For example, do not ask about their salary.* Student 2

From student two's experience, it seems that the cultural programs, which are taught to international students, could be different from one university to another. Therefore, he revealed that it was not difficult to be in touch with Australians and understand their culture because he got some cultural lessons which might have provided him with experience in coping with the Australian culture and to have intercultural literacy. There is a clear indication that some Australian universities do not run cultural bridging programs to international students. Consequently, some students will lack intercultural literacy and how to communicate with people from different cultures.

Student four, commented differently from students two and five:

- *Of course it is a different culture from my culture because of the different things I have seen right now in Australia . . . They also speak very little with international students but in my culture when we see international people we say hello and we try to speak with them not like here they just speak between themselves only.* Student 4

This student was not hesitant to talk to Australians and understand their culture; however, he found they did not like to be in touch with international students. He further reflected on his home experience in that people in his culture liked to be in touch with international people when they meet them in their country. Therefore, he had a degree of culture shock when he saw some Australians preferred to befriend and communicate with their own people [Australians] only.

From all the four students' comments it appears that they were having issues with the Australian culture, which prevented them from establishing a local network, which would lessen their homesickness. In addition to that, if they talked with native English speakers, their English would be better developed and they could engage more in the community. As a consequence of engaging in the community, they reported they were more likely to recommend their friends to choose Australia as their destination of study.

5.2 Teachers' Interviews Thematic Analysis

The unique experience of the teachers who taught in the Arabic world added informative data to the qualitative phase because they had a teaching experience with both the Australian and the Arabic learning systems. The total number of targeted teachers was seven; all of them could be reached by the researcher, and they were able to express their views. The sampling was purposive sampling and the researcher found it easy to recruit participants from Australia wide. Their views emerged in seven main themes. Theme one reported the challenges of communication that AIS had in the Australian learning system or off campus in the community. Theme two discussed the issues that impacted on AIS in the classroom such as teacher's role, and group assignments that might be part of a different learning experience from their home country. Theme three explained the challenges that AIS had when trying to locate their cultural or Halal food in Australia. Theme four showed students' motivation in the Australian learning system. Theme five described students' participation in off campus activities where they were able to meet people from other cultures and practice their English. The last theme reported on the teachers' views regarding the students' understanding of the Australian culture and how they would cope with this culture. The following sections report the views of the Australian teachers while teaching international students in the Australian learning system.
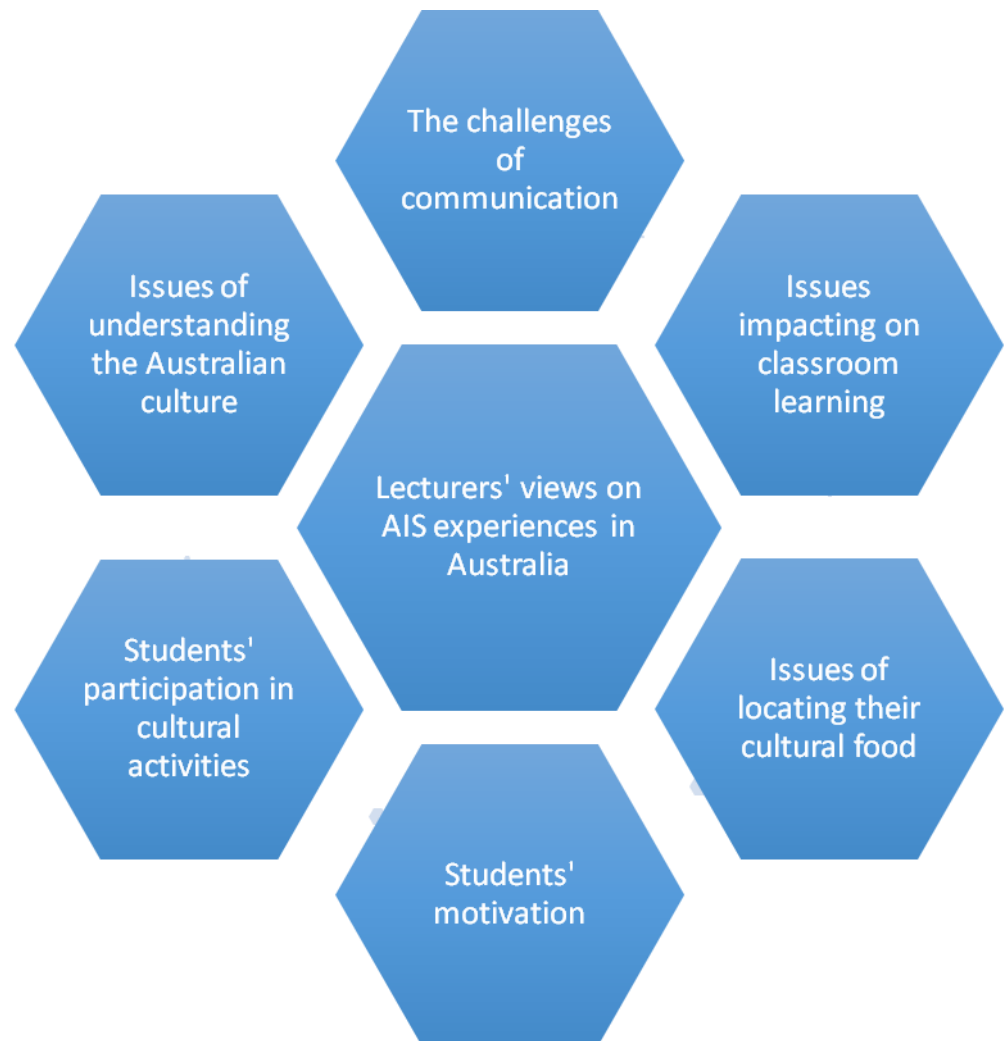
Figure 5.2: Emergent themes: Teachers' views about Arabic international students' experiences in home country and in Australia

5.2.1 The Overarching Theme "The Challenges of Communication" with AIS

This overarching theme consisted of four sub-themes. During the interviews, participants mentioned some issues and these issues were grouped as sub-themes. The first sub-theme discusses the usage of casual and formal language that teachers use in the Australian classroom. Sub-theme two reports teachers' views regarding the constructivism and critical thinking that teachers utilise in their materials when teaching ESL in Australia. Sub-theme three explains how teachers were using communication in the classroom with ESL students. The last sub-theme about students' integration reports on what teachers commented with regards to Arabic international students' integration and communication with the society. The teachers' views are reported in the following sections.

5.2.1.1 Casual and Formal Language

In terms of teaching English as a second language to international students at the Australian universities, the interviewer asked the teachers a question about the kind of English language they were using in the classroom. Six interviewees answered this question and said that they would sometimes use casual English and sometimes formal language. The comments below are showing the way that teachers were teaching international students the English language in the Australian classroom.

- *I actually use both casual and formal language but sometimes when I speak in casual language I need to alter my words for them to fully understand me when I am speaking in casual language. So it would be easy for me as teacher to use formal language to save time and to make sure that my international students understand well.* Teacher 1
- *I have used both casual and formal language; when I use the formal language they seem to be very happy and do not look anxious but using the casual language then many times I need to paraphrase what I have said.* Teacher 2

Teachers use both formal and casual language. However, the casual language usage seems higher than the formal language usage. In the meantime, teachers need to sometimes paraphrase their words in formal English in order to make sure that students can fully understand their speech. Further, interviewees indicated that they might waste their time in the classroom when they used more casual language; therefore, they shifted many times to formal English in order to make their speech understandable for international students. Teachers confirm what the survey found: that participants were using casual language in addition to the formal language. However, one of the participants showed that he was using more formal language than casual when talking with these students.

- *I am pretty formal in the classroom because the students have been hearing formal only from their Arabic native teachers when they teach them English, therefore I have to use the formal only sometimes I slip to casual language but then they found it hard to cope and understand me.* Teacher 3

This teacher taught in the Arab world and knew that Arabic students were learning English in their home learning institutions as formal language from their Arabic native teachers. Therefore, he kept using formal language, thinking that this would save time in classroom teaching and to make his students more engaged since they fully understand his English. Another teacher raised an issue that students needed to use casual language because when they engaged with the Australian community, they would hear this kind of language.

- *. . . for example when I first said "hefta" which means "have to" they never understood it without me telling them the formal pronunciation of that expression.* Teacher 5

This section reflects an idea that there should be cultural programs teaching students about communicating with native English speakers in the host country.

5.2.1.2 Critical Thinking

Another sub-theme emerged when teachers talked about constructivist teaching in Australian classrooms. Students indicated in the survey's results that they were using rote learning in their home countries. Therefore, the interview questions emphasised this issue to check how the teachers would teach international students while they [students] were used to memorisation-based learning in their original home countries. Statements below show how Australian teachers teach critical thinking in Australia.

- *we do not use the memorisation method; we are more encouraged to use critical teaching were the students need to build their own ideas and be creative. So no parrot fashion in the classroom in any way.* Teacher 1

Teacher one revealed that she is teaching international students with a cognitive thinking approach where students are able to discuss and ask their teacher questions if they need to. By doing so, students do not use any kind of memorisation in the Australian classroom setting. However, they indicated in the survey that they were using memorisation learning in their home countries. This conveys a message that students need to cope with this kind of learning in Australia. Teacher three raised an important issue since she had a good experience teaching AIS.

- *I would never make my students to learn by heart If I am teaching in Australia but when I taught in the Arabic world I sometime did it with some specific subjects because of two reasons first I have to follow the curriculum and second students are very much used to it so I had to use memorisation sometimes. However, I do not prefer to use this method of learning in my class.* Teacher 3

This teacher taught in the Arabic world and she is now teaching in Australia. She reported in the above statement that when she taught in the Arab world she used memorisation sometimes because she found that students would better cope with her teaching approach and she was in compliance with the country's curriculum. In addition, this indicates that the teacher saw that the learning system in the Arabic country is didactic and based around rote learning. However, the Australian learning system is based on constructivist learning where teachers allow their students to debate and make their own decisions and be independent learners. Therefore, there is a clear indication that the Australian learning system is more learner-centred.

One of the participants [Teacher four] indicated that her role was like a facilitator in the classroom. She was using activities that encourage students to work by themselves and she only watched the classroom and helped students when they were working in groups to motivate them to use their own ideas in their learning. The participant stated:

- *I believe that students need to learn by themselves, but the teacher needs to trigger activities and stimulate their learning.* Teacher 4

Teacher four in the above excerpt tried to convey a message to the audience that teachers in Australia were using more stimulative activities. In such a learning environment, students were more encouraged to use communication in the classroom with their classmates. Therefore, this kind of teaching would affect international students who come from countries where they only listen to their teachers. As indicated earlier by students' views, they were used to follow their teachers who were "the knowledge feeders" in the classroom without any associated debate.

Consequently, the student's way of communicating with their teachers and classmates would be affected because they were not used to classroom debates and in class communicative activities. Another interviewee revealed that he is not teaching with memorisation at all in Australia. He is trying to allow his students to be independent and take their own decisions when learning. The excerpt below shows that:

- *I do not use memorisation at all. I need to teach them cognitive thinking only. To teach this type of teaching, I normally give them articles and I want them to analyse it and ask themselves questions why we write this instead of that.* Teacher 7

This excerpt conveys an image that Australian teachers do not use rote learning. However, students are always encouraged by their teachers to be independent learners so they can discuss and have debates with their classmates. Since students are used to rote learning, this approach of teaching 'critical thinking' makes AIS face a new learning system in which they are often encouraged to discuss and communicate in the classroom.

5.2.1.3 Usage of Classroom Discussion

Students indicated in the survey's results that they were not used to classroom discussion and debate in their home countries. Therefore, during the interviews, the researcher asked about the discussion environment in Australia. Teachers in this section reported on how students felt about their situation of communication in an unfamiliar learning environment. The interview posed a question about classroom teaching methods, and all teachers indicated that they used classroom debate and they allowed their students to communicate in the Australian classroom. The excerpt below is by teacher one:

- *Yes, I can tell you we are using the debate method many times in the classroom and we are allowing students to be independent in their learning . . . in the meantime Arabic students are not asking questions in the classroom and always they are just listening and I have seen them they like to get direct answers from me as a teacher . . . I think its hard learning process for them owing to their shifting from their learning system into the Australian one.* Teacher 1

This teacher wanted to convey a message that Australian teachers were encouraging international students to use a communicative approach in the classroom; however, students found it unfamiliar to do so. This relates to their learning backgrounds. As AIS indicated in the previous sections that there was no usage of communication in their home countries, therefore, they faced a new learning system where communication skills were one of its success factors. Another interviewee who taught in the Arabic world indicated that the classroom discussion is applied sometimes in that world. This Teacher stated:

- *We were given instructions that students need to be taught the group discussion like in Australia, it actually sometimes work and sometimes not because students like to hear from their teachers and they do not like to be active and creative students. At the same time I have seen students they do not have the motivation to be active learners.* Teacher 3

This statement showed that instructions were given to teachers as expatriates to apply the Australian curriculum, or in other words have a communicative approach or be learner-centred when teaching in the Arabic world. However, this teacher found it difficult to apply this approach because Arabic students themselves were used to be passive learners. In addition, students do not have built-in motivation to be active learners in the classroom. This could be owing to the early years curriculum [the primary schools curriculum] that their country follows.

Again, the same teacher (L3) stated "*. . . Another thing the teacher cannot use his/her own materials because we need to stick to the curriculum of the ministry of education.*" This teacher reflected on her experience when she taught in the Arabic world and she noted that the teacher cannot use her/his own materials and activities like teachers do in Australia. It seems that teachers in the Arabic world have to follow the textbook when teaching. Therefore, AIS would be surprised by the activities that the Australian teachers follow in their teaching. Thus, this situation would affect their academic progress in Australia. The teachers below indicated that they were using discussion and communication in the classroom. Teacher five taught in Australia and teacher six taught in the Arabic world. Their comments were:

- *Actually it is very individual thing some students are debating some are not what I usually do, I try to give them a topic to talk about and they have background of what the topic is about.* Teacher 5
- *I should give them a topic from something cultural and it should be about their culture in order to have them talking and have opinions to talk about.* Teacher 6

The common theme from these teachers' comments was that if teachers gave students a familiar subject to talk about, then students might debate this in the classroom and some students would feel happy with that. For instance, they would use subjects relevant to their culture because it encourages them to talk, as they have background knowledge and they have information to bring to the discussion. The above statements are different to the previous statements about when teachers taught in the Arabic world; they found that students do not like communication in the classroom. Also, it seems there are variations in the students' ability to have discussions which relate to their past experience and their English level.

In regard to the situation of AIS in the classroom and how they cope with the Australian classroom environment, teacher seven reported that AIS were regularly shy when they started their study in Australia.

- *Arabic students are different because they are very shy at the beginning of their study and they do not like to volunteer and talk in the classroom and need their teacher to talk to them.* Teacher 7

This view reflected that AIS were quite shy and hesitant to talk in the classroom. This is similar to what teacher three said that when she taught in the Arabic world, and she found her students were not active learners. Passive learning, the past experience, and the learning environment would have an impact on AIS when they come to Australia. Therefore, students have communication challenges when studying in Australia.

5.2.1.4 Students' Mix and Integration

This sub-theme describes the situation of AIS when mixing and integrating themselves in the host county. During the interviews, some teachers offered their views about the Arabic international students' integration in Australia.

- *I can say that many Arabic students are introvert and they group themselves with their friends from the same culture. It could be the language barrier or culture difference I do not know.* Teacher 1
- *I can see that their communication with Australians is less than their grouping and communication with their country friends. So I think they usually gather with people from their countries. However, some students they like to mix with Australian students because they like to practice their language.* Teacher 2

It seems teachers wanted to convey an idea that AIS group themselves with people from their culture and language. As teacher one said this might be *"the language barrier."* This would not be helpful for international students when they live in the host country because their cultural knowledge about the other culture will be limited. However, we can see the other teacher indicated that there were some students who would like to be in touch with native English speakers because they like to develop their English language. These statements indicate that Australian universities could offer programs geared towards mixing and integrating international students with their Australian counterparts.

By contrast, another teacher (four), showed and reflected her experience when she taught in the Arabic world. She stated that, " . . . *when I was in the Arabic country I tried to practice my Arabic but many times I live and mix with expatriates in the Arabic country."* When she was teaching overseas, she was inclined to talk with westerners in the Arabic country. She further mentioned that even the Western expatriates group spent time together because of their culture and language as it is easier to understand one's own people. On the other hand, teachers four and five, later in the interview process, indicated that,

- . . . *however we have students they always say we like to speak and mix with Australians only.* Teacher 4
- *It actually depends on students some of them speak very well and some not but mainly Arabic students are quiet in the classroom. Some also join sport clubs so they can mix and communicate with people. Also I have seen some of them prefer to rent share accommodation where they can speak and communicate with natives.* Teacher 5

From the teachers' experiences, it seems there were individual variances with international students where they sometimes try to mix with English natives and not only with their friends. Mixing international with domestic students will help international students to practice their English and break down the cultural differences among them. The students' preference to share accommodation with native people conveys an idea that they were after sharing their cultural values with people from different cultures. In addition to that, they wanted to develop their English language, even if shared accommodation is more expensive than the students' university village accommodation. This reveals that students were getting a higher English level after being in Australia for a while; they then tried to look for shared accommodation to live with native people.

5.2.2 The Overarching Theme "Issues Impacting on Classroom Learning"

According to the semi-structured interview questions, another theme emerged in which teachers indicated that there were issues, which impacted on international students learning in Australia. The first issue was "gender" in which teachers discussed mixing issues with males and females. The second issue was the "teacher's role" where teachers commented about the students' moving from familiar to unfamiliar learning systems. They were moving from their home countries system in which the teacher was the classroom controller into the Australian system in which the teacher was facilitating the classroom only, and this might affect their learning. The third issue that teachers raised was "direct answers" in which students do not like to be active learners and are not interested in searching for information by themselves. The other issue was "group assignments" which reports on how teachers commented on giving students group assignments, in spite of them not being used to this type of learning. The last issue in this theme was the difficulties AIS experienced with the "communicative approach" of the constructivist, student-centred classroom since their past experience in their home country required a passive response. Teachers' views showed that they were aware of how the communicative learning activities of the Australian classroom challenged AIS.

5.2.2.1 Gender

During the interviews, almost all of the participants mentioned how the gender issue with AIS affected classroom teaching. The following comments were made:

- *By the way female Arab students are very introvert and they do not like to speak in the classroom even when they have good level of English language because they are a bit shy.* Teacher 1
- *It can happen with females they never utter when there are males in their group. And even with males they are very shy when there are females in their group.* Teacher 3
- *However we have another difficulty as Western teachers mix female and male students as they were quite separated in their home country where they discussed in the same gender group.* Teacher 4

The common theme of the three teachers' comments was that they found the gender issue with AIS quite difficult since the Australian learning system includes group learning and group assignments. For instance, teacher three indicated that it was a hard job to teach AIS. This teacher taught in the Arabic world and reflected on what was happening in Arab classrooms. It seems that some Arabic females cannot normally conduct group work with males in the classroom, therefore, when these students are coming to Australia they need to adapt to the Australian culture and classroom environment. These statements indicated that teachers, as well as students, found the gender issue affecting the teaching and learning environment. Therefore, teachers might need time to allow students to adjust to this new learning system.

5.2.2.2 Teacher's Role

In this sub-theme, teachers disclosed their roles as teachers in the classrooms. The interviewer asked a question about the teacher's role in the Australian classroom. During the initial data collection (the survey data), students indicated that their teachers overseas were controlling the classroom and students needed to just listen to

them. However, the Australian teachers said the opposite about the Australian classrooms when they stated:

- *In the Australian learning system we are more facilitators . . . we let them to do it by themselves. As facilitator we actually sometimes find it hard with most international students because they have not been exposed to such system before, I mean in their home countries.* Teacher 1
- *I was actually challenged a lot at first to train them how to be independent learners . . . I firstly started as controller and then I start working completely as facilitator. I have seen them they are challenging but I am always telling them that they need to learn and they have to work by themselves . . . although I have seen that they feel very happy when I give them direct answers and I teach as controller.* Teacher 7

This emphasises how the teachers viewed their position as facilitators in the classroom and they were just helping students because their students were studying in a teacher-centred environment in which they [students] needed to be independent in their learning. For example, teacher one clearly indicated "*then let them to do it by theme selves.*" This reflected how the Australian teachers were positioning their roles in the Australian classroom when teaching international students. However, we can see a clear view when teacher seven said "*I firstly start as controller.*" This teacher conveyed a message that international students come from a teacher-centred classroom, therefore, she/he starts as 'controller' because students are bringing their past experience. In such a case, students need time to shift to the new learning philosophy, and to a learner-centred classroom. It seems that there was a challenge for teachers to teach international students when they start their learning journey in Australia. The teachers seem to resolve this to some extent by practising the pedagogy they are familiar with, controlling the classroom, such that overtime they bring students along to the idea that they need to be more independent in their learning.

5.2.2.3 Getting Direct Answers

During the analysis of the Australian teachers' views about Arabic international students' ability to debate issues and communicate in the Australian classrooms, the "getting direct answers" issue emerged. During the interviews, all the teachers mentioned that AIS wanted to get direct answers from them as teachers, whether in Australia or in their home countries. Teacher1, below, reflected on her Australian teaching experience and said that:

- *Arabic students are not asking questions in the classroom and always they are just listening and I have seen that they like to get direct answers from me as a teacher, however I do tell them many times that they need to be active learners and they need to debate and discuss in the classroom. I think it's a hard learning process for them owing to them shifting from their learning system into the Australian one.* Teacher 1

When the researcher asked the interviewee about the situation of AIS in the Australian classroom, she declared that these students kept silent in the classroom and they preferred to be passive learners. On the other hand, this teacher tried to tell students that they needed to participate in the classroom and be active learners as that is required to learn in the Australian system. However, shifting from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one is not as easy as it sounds. Teacher six mentioned a

similar experience, but this was in an Arabic country and noted that Arabic students wanted to hear the answer from him directly, without having to investigate and/or look for the answers themselves. The following comment was made:

- *Nearly always at the beginning of my job in the Arabic world, Arabic students wanted me to tell them the information and they wanted to know my option about their essay topic or general statement about their assignment. However I kept telling them that they needed to think critically and find it for themselves and only ask for my advice.* Teacher 6

This comment revealed that AIS were used to getting direct answers from their teachers and they were not used to a critical thinking approach. This was clear from the teacher's statement when he started his job in the Arabic country. This teacher was trying to apply the Western learning strategy, which was a critical thinking approach, where students were able to be independent in their learning and the teacher advises them only.

It seems that eventually AIS transfer into the Australian learning system. However, it also seems that they were transferring their past experiences from their home countries to some extent. Hence, they could not easily cope with the Australia learning system.

5.2.2.4 Group Assignments

From the survey results, it seems in the Australian teaching system that group assignments and group discussions are used often by teachers in the classroom. However, AIS indicated in the survey that there were no group assignments in their countries. So, in the interviews the researcher decided to ask the Australian teachers about ways of assessing students. Teacher two said that:

- *I used to use group assignments and make them work in teams. However many Arabic students found it hard to cope at the beginning. At the same time, I have used an individual assignment in addition to a group one because some good students sometimes think that it is unfair to have group assignments with weaker ones. Generally the group assignment caused a big problem with students because they were not used to being part of group work before.* Teacher 2

It was apparent that this teacher was using group assignments in his teaching in Australia and even when he taught in the Arab world. However, at the beginning of his teaching period in an Arabic country, he noticed that AIS were finding it difficult to do their assignment in groups. The reason could be that AIS were not exposed before to group assignments where they need to discuss and cooperate with their classmates, and exchange their experiences. They clearly indicated in the survey that they always had individual assignments in their home countries. Similarly, teachers four and seven revealed their Australian and their Arabic teaching experience and said that:

- *Their learning system mainly has end of semester exams, which are weighted 70%. I was always telling my students that we need to achieve the 30% during the semester through the group assignment but students were unhappy to do so because they liked the individual assignment at the end of semester one.* Teacher 4

- *As part of our teaching requirement that we need to give students group assignments however found this a shock to Arabic students since some of them have never seen this kind of assignment in their learning life . . . It appears that these students have summative exams only and there is no assignment in their learning systems.* Teacher 7

From the above teachers' views, it seems that AIS were facing a new learning environment in which they needed to cooperate and achieve their assignments in groups. Students found that the Australian way of assessment was a shock to them because they had not been used to this kind of assessment in their home countries. They preferred the single examination at the end of the semester. This reveals that AIS were rarely exposed to assignments during the semester period like in the Australian teaching system. Therefore, it might be good if the Australian teachers tell AIS about the way assessments are designed in Australia and why, before teaching them and teach the skills required for cooperative learning.

5.2.2.5 Communicative Approach

The survey results showed that students in their home countries were focusing quite a lot on grammar usage in their learning system. Therefore, in the interviews, the researcher tried to ascertain from the Australian teachers if they focused on grammar or on a communicative approach in the Australian learning system. The following comments were made:

- *I teach grammar but in indirect way. I teach grammar within activities but there are no straight teaching activities about grammar. I am doing this because I want students to be able to communicate and think not only grammar. Actually applying this at the first when I taught in an Arabic country I found it stressful because they did it like I said, they like direct answers without thinking or communicating.* Teacher 4

Teacher four showed that she taught in the Arabic world and in Australia too and she is an Australian native teacher. It seems that in Australia, teachers teach grammar but not in a direct way; rather, they teach grammar within other activities. In the meantime, this teacher focused directly on grammar when she taught in the Arabic world because Arabic students found that a familiar way of learning; but the teacher found it stressful. Another teacher indicated that:

- *They were sitting for many hours just listening to the grammar lesson without any opportunity to have any kind of activity at that time [in their previous schooling years].* Teacher 6

Teacher six taught in an Arabic country and reflected on his experience. He saw that Arabic students were very much familiar with grammar. It appears that this teacher found it stressful when he tried to teach these students the Australian way of learning. However, he found that these students were being taught many hours with grammar only during their previous years. He later revealed that his aim was to make students become used to the Western learning system when he stated:

- *Because if they want to come in future to study in Australia or any English speaking country they would not suffer from the host country learning system which is obviously using a lot of activities in the classroom setting.* Teacher 6

Days later, in another interview with this teacher, he showed that he had been in a conversation with AIS about their system and he stated that " . . . *they told me about their learning system that their main teaching is in grammar."* This teacher was trying to understand the students' home countries' teaching systems and found that their learning was rarely using the communicative approach where students are able to be in debate and are involved in classroom discussions. Therefore, this teacher said, *"They feel very happy when teaching them grammar."* It seems that students would find it difficult when studying in Australia because they face a new learning system in which they need to think critically and there is no space for memorisation like in their own countries.

5.2.3 Locating Their Cultural Food

In this theme, there were no sub-themes as in previous sections. This section deals with the Muslim students' Halal food and how and where they can locate this specific kind of food. During the semi-structured interview, teachers were asked questions to see how easy it was for AIS to get their cultural or Halal food. This question was asked because students during their interviews indicated that they found in some cities where they live it was sometimes very rare to be able to get, for instance, Halal meat. The idea of this question was to see if the university helped the AIS to locate their cultural needs, as this can be an encouragement factor for them to study in Australia. The teachers' views were as follows:

- *Sometimes students mention that it is not easy for them to get their cultural food and their cultural clothes because the city where they live is a small city. I have spoken before with the ladies about their Islamic clothes and they said they travel very long distances to get their clothes from the shops.* Teacher 1

Teacher one is teaching in a small city in Australia and revealed that it is quite difficult for AIS to locate their cultural food or their Islamic clothes in the city in which they live. Some of her female students told her that they travel long distances to buy their clothes. However, another two teachers indicated that:

- *I think in the big cities students they can find it easy to get their cultural or Halal food but I am not quite sure in the small cities and I do not know if it is easy for them to get their Halal food.* Teacher 2
- *This is common problem for many international students because it depends on the city situation which they live and study, for example we live in a small city and I can see many Arabic students find it quite hard to get their Halal food. Sometimes they tell me they need to travel to the capital city, which is about 120 km to get their cultural food.* Teacher 7

These teachers reflected that the big cities have plenty of multicultural shops; however, the small cities or the regional cities have limited access to such cultural shops. The situation of multicultural shops conveys an idea that international students could prefer to stay in the big cities where they can get easier access to their communities' places and their traditional shops. When they live in a regional city, they need to travel long distances to get their Halal food. The risk is here that students might choose only the capital Australian cities to live and study in.

5.2.4 The Overarching Theme "Students' Motivation and Praising"

The semi-structured interviews asked the teachers about the motivation of international students and specifically the AIS. Three sub-themes emerged from the

teachers' views. The first sub-theme reports on the teachers' views with regard to their encouragement to students in the classroom. The second sub-theme in this section explains the level of knowledge that teachers have about the students' home learning. The third sub-theme describes the teachers' views about the motivation of AIS in the Australian learning system. These sub-themes were reported with the results in the following sections.

5.2.4.1 Students' Encouragement

The Australian teachers were asked if they were encouraging AIS in their teaching of lessons in Australia. This question was asked because students have indicated already in the survey data that their teachers in their home countries were encouraging good students only. So, the following comments were made by teachers:

- *You know many times as teacher we have three types of students. We have clever, middle and weak students. I normally encourage the weak students because I want them to try the learning themselves and learn how to do their learning requirements. If I do that I feel that I have changed something in my classroom.* Teacher 1

Teacher one was teaching in Australia and reported that she was teaching different student levels. In the meantime, she was giving more encouragement to weak students because in her philosophy, these students need more help and input to develop their learning level. This teacher further indicated that *"however I do not like to have all of my time with this type of students",* which means she is also encouraging and paying attention to other students in order to have their work done in the classroom. This is in keeping with Hofstede's cultural dimension [masculinity dimension] in which he notes that in a feminine society, the Australian society, teachers were putting more encouragement into weak students. However, other teachers reported that they were actually encouraging both weak and good students. For instance, teacher two taught in the Arabic world and said:

- *I usually encourage both but at different times. When we have a group of students I encourage good students to lead the group discussion at the same I encourage the weak ones to participate and talk and break their quietness. I can say many times I need to encourage the weak students and make them do their work properly.* Teacher 2

Similarly, teacher seven said that most of his effort was going to weak students to help them in their learning. This reflects an idea that this teacher is following the Western teaching system philosophy where teachers were not disregarding the weak students as in Arabic countries and only encouraging and paying more attention to the good ones. He stated:

- *For me personally I always encourage the weak ones because I think the good students can lead and work by themselves without that much of effort. So I always try to put my effort to help the weak ones especially as they are coming to new learning system and they need more help. For example, their confidence in their language proficiency is very low especially at the beginning when they start their study in Australia.* Teacher 7

It seems that the Australian teachers were giving more encouragement to weak students believing that the good ones can be independent learners by themselves. The

Australian learning system is representing a positive learning environment to those who are weak in their learning.

5.2.4.2 Teachers' Knowledge about the Students' Home Country Learning System

This sub-theme reports on the teachers' knowledge about the Arabic teaching system. The researcher was looking to see if teachers have knowledge about the students' home learning systems as this will encourage the teachers to better understand these students and consequently will motivate the students to communicate better with the host people. Teachers stated:

- *Initially I do not know that much but I learnt quite a lot from them . . . sometimes I have a conversation with these students about their back home learning systems. I have learnt many things that these students are coming from the rote learning system. Also their culture is completely different to the Australian culture.* Teacher 2
- *I have found in my experience it is very much rote learning however it is changing at the moment in some Arabic countries because they have many Western teachers where they are applying the Western learning settings.* Teacher 4

The common theme of the two teachers above was that they knew while teaching the students that the Arabic teaching system was very much based on rote learning where students just sit in the classroom and get their knowledge from their teachers. Students are thus passive learners; however, in Australia they need to be active and participate in classroom activities such as group discussions. Therefore, it would be better for the Australian teachers to understand the students' backgrounds as this would help them to teach students according to their level until they can gradually become active learners. However, teacher four mentioned that some Arabic countries were changing their system because they have many expatriates in their countries. Similarly, weeks later, and during the second interview teachers five and six, said:

- *I do have some information and I know that these students are coming from a memorisation learning system without questioning the teacher and just listening to what he or she is saying.* Teacher 5
- *Undoubtedly different from the Australian learning system in my experience when I taught in the Arabic world, their system is very much based on memorisation and rote learning and chanting in the classroom. Their English language levels are very low so it would be hard for them when they come to Australia.* Teacher 6

Teacher five was teaching in an English preparation programs in Australia and specifically teaching English for academic purposes and teacher six taught in the Arabic world. It seems that students when they first come to Australia and study in a preparation course, they are still applying the memorisation way of learning in Australia and this course is the beginning of their study journey overseas. Teacher six found the same when he taught in an Arabic country and found that Arabic students were chanting in the classrooms and they were doing memorisation to achieve their academic success in the final exams. This might affect their learning journey in Australia because they need to adjust to an Australian system in which memorisation is barely used.

5.2.4.3 Students' Motivation in Australia

In regard to this sub-theme, the interviewer asked the teachers if the students were motivated when they came to study in Australia. While, the interviews were proceeding, teachers stated that:

- *I have seen some of them are very motivated . . . however some they start very desperate and they could not easily cope and they did not feel motivated with the Australian learning system because they mentioned many times that it is a new learning environment for us. As teachers we always encourage them to speak and ask questions if they do not understand us.* Teacher 1
- *Actually many international students, not only Arabic, seem very motivated with Australian learning system and some are very desperate. The main reason because some they like to challenge and some they just quit and say it is very hard for us. What I have seen many Arabic students they do not like to challenge because they like to be guided by their teachers and they are not used to thinking by themselves.* Teacher 5

The common theme of these two teachers was that many AIS were viewing the Australian learning system, as new to them, therefore, they could not easily be motivated. They came from a system where they were completely depending on the teacher in their learning; however, in Australia they saw that they needed to be independent when studying and their teachers were facilitating only. For example, students in their home countries were focusing more on grammar and when they came to Australia, they needed to work with a communicative approach. As this approach is not yet applied in many Arabic countries, some AIS would need time to adapt and be familiar and motivated in the Australian learning system in which the students were heavily encouraged to be independent.

5.2.5 Students' Participation in Cultural Activities

The researcher asked the teachers about the off campus meetings of students, for instance, their participation in cultural activities, and meeting other cultures in the Australian community. In this theme, teachers noted different views in the following paragraphs:

- *I always see Arabic students like to meet and speak with the same country friends and sometimes they speak with native English speakers because some of them are keen to develop their English language.* Teacher 1

Teacher one was teaching in Australia and reported that she saw AIS were mixing and meeting with their co-nationals. However, they sometimes meet and talk with English natives because they like to develop their English language skills. Students from ESL backgrounds were normally keen to meet people from their own countries because they were transplanted into a new environment where nearly everything is new to them. Over time, they then develop their relations with host country people, so they start coping with the new life environment and start talking with native people to develop their language levels. Similarly, teacher seven indicated that:

- *It is quite interesting when they do their shopping and sometimes playing soccer ball. Nearly always I see them, they integrate with their country friends and playing together. It is actually very rare that I can see Arabic students with local Australians. In general it depends on their personality.* Teacher 7

It seems that teacher seven found that AIS do not easily integrate with local Australians. For example, when students go shopping, they prefer going with their friends. In the meantime, this teacher finished his statement and said, *"it depends on their personality."* This statement suggests that there was individual variance when AIS were talking and meeting people from different cultures. Some people were extrovert and liked talking and knowing other cultures and some were not. It appears from the above teachers' views that AIS were keeping their interaction with their own people thinking that they could avoid culture shock or becoming acculturated into Australian society.

5.2.6 Students' ICTs Literacy

In line with the survey results, students indicated that they rarely used ICTs in their countries. Therefore, in the interviews, the teachers were asked about the Arabic international students' literacy of ICTs, and they said:

- *I must say something that quite often Arabic students are having problems with computer and Internet literacy.* Teacher 1

Teacher one was teaching in Australia and observed that AIS were having problems with computer use and technology when coming to study here. This reflects the quantitative results where only 27% of students said they did use ICTs in their countries and their communication with teachers was all in face-to-face mode without using ICT. Similarly, this was found when teacher two taught in an Arabic country. He reported *"In my experience when worked in an Arabic country, face-to-face communication is very important and it is easier for them than the online communication."* This confirms what teacher one viewed the students' situation was in Australia. However, teacher three contradicted this and said *" . . . I have seen many Arabic young students are very technological people but they still have the face-to-face communication preference for them."* This reflects that AIS when coming to study in Australia were having good experiences with ICT literacy but they do not know how to utilise this experience in the learning context. In relation to this and during the students' interviews student six mentioned that *"I sometimes used computers but for social things not for my study activities like here in Australia."*

In the end, it seems that AIS were rarely using ICTs in their home countries in learning contexts; however, when they come to study in Australia, they need to use it in almost everything during their study period and for social networking.

5.2.7 Understand the Australian Culture

People from the Middle East view that Australian culture is a Western culture, which has different behaviours and values from Arabic culture. Again according to the theoretical framework, the sociocultural theory implies that out of class activities have their importance in developing the learning of students outside the classroom environment. Therefore, during the interviews, the researcher considered the importance of cultural issues with AIS when studying in Australia. The study tried to investigate how the Australian teachers see the AIS coping and adjusting to the Australian culture. The teachers commented:

- *I do not think they easily understand the community culture because their culture is different to the Australian one this is what I can pick up from their stories.* Teacher 1

- *Many times I can pick up from students' stories when talking about Australia that it is not easy for them to study and live in Australia.* Teacher 2

The emerged common theme from the above comments indicates that AIS were seeing the Australian culture as different to their own. Therefore, teachers could not see AIS easily integrating into the Australian community. It is not an easy process for them because they stem from a culture, which has different values and customs from the Australian one. However, teacher four reported the opposite and stated that,

- *I think some students cope very well because they mainly get support from their Arabic communities where they help them how to settle and find their ways in the Australian context. I think that students sometimes take many years to adapt to the new culture and of course this adjustment has impact on their learning journey.* Teacher 4

This teacher worked in an Arabic country and knew a lot about the Arabic culture. During the interview she mentioned that there were some Arabic communities in Australia and they were helping the newcomers a lot to settle and get work. However, there were individual variances where some of AIS like to be in touch with their communities and some do not. Therefore, the ones who did not like to integrate struggled and could not easily develop their adaptation process. Some of their community members have been here for years; therefore, they would support these newcomer students to better living circumstances in the host country, which then has a big impact on their learning journeys.

Similar to what teacher four mentioned, teacher five stated that, *"it depends on the students. There are individual variances between Arabic students some of them can cope quickly some of them cannot."* This section of the analysis gives an idea that some AIS could cope easily and some could not. So, it depends to some extent on the personality if s/he wants help from their co-national people, or whether they go and seek help from other people. However, most AIS were seeking help from their communities and their country friends because they like to be in touch with their own group to have easy language communication and cultural understanding.

This chapter has reported on the findings students and teachers expressed during the interviews about the experiences of AIS in Australia and in their home countries. It seems that students were having transmission issues coming from a familiar learning environment in their home countries to an unfamiliar learning one in Australia. Both students and Australian teachers revealed during the interviews that regardless of the help offered to students in the host country, they still need to adjust to the new life and learning requirements. The English language level seems a big barrier for AIS in adjusting to Australia. This issue is considered as the first issue that students encounter especially when they first land at an Australian airport and find that because of the English language their situation is difficult. In other words, they have not learnt enough English and the appropriate kind in their countries, therefore, they find that communicating in English in Australia is a barrier and they cannot achieve their academic and social success easily. From students' and teachers' views, including those who taught in the Arabic world, AIS were not learning the kind of English that would enable them to adjust to Australian social and academic life. As a consequence of low levels of English, AIS preferred not to debate in the classroom and participate in-group discussions with their peers, and mix with Australian

English speakers. The participants' views revealed that the majority of AIS would prefer to talk and mix amongst themselves. However, there were some students who preferred to talk with natives, thinking that their English levels would be developed. This means that there are individual variances of mixing with people from different cultures among AIS.

In a nutshell, this chapter identified that AIS were transitioning from one system to another where the language and the culture of the host system is in stark contrast to theirs. It is in keeping with the main aim of the study to find the barriers that AIS might have in Australia, in order to increase their intercultural literacy and achieve better academic success.

The next chapter (Chapter six) will discuss the findings of the study of both (surveys and interviews) for this research in order to make recommendations to both AIS and the Australian universities and the Australian policy makers in order to better help AIS to achieve their academic success.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Recommendations, Contributions to Knowledge and Conclusion

An Overview

Chapters four and five reported the results of both students and teachers regarding the social and academic experiences of AIS who come to study in Australia. This present chapter is the last part of the current PhD study, which reports the discussion, recommendations, limitations, conclusions of the study, and contribution to knowledge. It is divided into seven sections. Section one discusses the pre-arrival experiences of AIS prior to leaving their home countries to study in Australia as a vital factor in their ability to make a successful transition to studying in the Western context. Sections two and three address the first and second research questions: "How do Arabic international students experience studying in the Australian tertiary education system?" and "To what extent do Arabic international students integrate academically and socially into Australian tertiary education?' Section two examines how AIS experience their arrival in Australia and how this phase of their journey has the potential to influence their initial settlement and their propensity to succeed with their studies. Section three focuses on their perceptions of their post-arrival experiences, and the accumulative effect of their home education, their experiences in their home country upon which they rely to succeed in their study in Australia, and their preliminary upon arrival and their transitional experience, together with their actual period of study.

Section four addresses research question 3: "How can tertiary education best provide assistance for Arabic international students who choose to study in Australia?" It makes recommendations based on the research that are relevant to changing policy and practices so as to improve students' learning and overall advises in creating a positive educational pathway to study in Australian tertiary institutions. Sections five and six discuss the limitations of the research and present the conclusions of the study, including suggestions about how the present research may be extended in the future. Finally, section seven addresses the outcomes of the research and its contribution to knowledge with regard to Arabic international students' and teachers' views of how their learning might be improved and how tertiary institutions can better foster a transitional pathway and pedagogy.

6.1 The Transitional Impact of Arabic International Students' Learning Experiences in their Home Countries

The research identified Arabic international students' transition pathway experiences as exerting a vital influence upon their perceptions of their journey to study in Australia. The fact that they moved from the familiar learning environment of their home country's educational institutions to a contrasting, unfamiliar learning environment in Australia had a lasting impact and influence on their potential to settle to study and succeed. This section illuminates the nature of the teaching environment and pedagogy that AIS experienced in their home countries, and their perceptions of their pre-arrival learning experiences, taking into account both the views of students' and those of their Australian teachers.

In this study, the researcher found that Arabic international students' learning experiences in their home countries were seen as very different from those they experienced when studying in Australia. When the responses from both students and

teachers were considered, as reported in chapters four and five, it was found that students were completely immersed in rote learning in their home countries where only a traditional pedagogical approach was in place, which shows that learning in the Arab world is mainly seen as transmission of information (Chandler, 2010), which is ultimately tested through formal examinations. This is in keeping with the studies reviewed in the literature, where for instance Al-Shehri (2001) indicated that the learning system in many Arabic countries is teacher-centred rather than student-centred. The consequence of this is that students may come to Western education settings with different understandings and expectations of how they will be expected to learn and moreover they are most familiar with following the directions of the teacher as opposed to taking charge of their own learning.

The importance of the issue of pedagogy and learning was reinforced by the participating Australian teachers who had taught in Arabic speaking countries. They indicated that, for nearly all Arabic students, in their experience, who were studying in their home countries and learnt English as a foreign language, the pedagogy relied upon a text book and was not 'communicative' compared with the teaching approaches in Australia where English is experienced as a second language. Importantly, this means that, although AIS may pass the required test of English that is necessary to enter university, they may lack both the communicative ability to converse and interact well enough to hold a more in-depth conversation or participate in a tutorial discussion and also the critical thinking and confidence required to critique written material and write argumentatively or persuasively. Related to this is that the Australian native teachers who had taught in the Arabic world also noted that AIS had difficulty with 'inside classroom communication' because the teachers in the students' home countries used 'formal' English compared with Australian teachers who used more 'casual' language. The contrast between formal and casual language use as defined in this study refers to Australian local/casual language compared with standard Australian language. Thus, it is not surprising that AIS are seen as having difficulties participating both in their Australian learning context and also in their local host community. When this is considered along with the fact that learning may be seen as information transmission, it becomes clear that the transition to learning in Australia may be thwarted by AIS being unfamiliar and feeling like outsiders when they are expected to participate in communicative learning experiences.

In addition, it was found that most AIS had not been communicating in the English language with native English speakers in their countries prior to coming to Australia. The nature of the pedagogy and context of their learning in their home countries was also clarified when most of them mentioned that they had spent more time learning grammar than doing communicative activities. Interestingly, AIS were able to discuss the contrasting approaches to learning and were able to recognise that the Australian learning system relies on constructivism which requires students to be more independent, and views their teachers as facilitators of learning. Looking back at the lecturers' opinions, those who had teaching experience in the Arab world indicated that they were using the rote learning/teaching approach with their students in the Arabic world because their students would not be interested in being involved in critical thinking in the classroom environment.

According to Hofstede's (1980) power distance cultural dimension, students who are living in a high power distance society, such as in Arabic countries, are obliged to follow what the teacher is saying and in such a case it seems that their teacher is the whole authority in the classroom. As a result, in keeping with Hofstede's cultural dimension, AIS would not be used to coping easily with requirements to have discussions with their Australian lecturers or peers unless they had been taught and trained to do so. In addition to that, lecturers indicated that Arab students had been quite heavily using the English language through their examination based learning system but with a limited focus on speaking with either their peers or their lecturers. Similarly, from the perspective of the students themselves it was clearly indicated that they were not using communicative and/or oral activities in their home countries. Not surprisingly, AIS found the Australian learning system to be a completely different learning system from their own. In summary, the English speaking proficiency and skills required both to participate in constructivist learning experiences and also to make a network of friends in the host society were seen as insufficient for them to communicate easily since their previous experience of both studying and learning English had been in a largely pen and paper and examination based system.

This research also found that the majority of AIS had little or no experience with technology and its use in learning. They had experienced very limited usage of computers and the Internet for study and learning purposes. The survey results showed that only a quarter of students were using technology such as computers and the Internet in their study in their home country's learning systems. Although the lecturers who taught in the Arab world reported that, according to their experience some Arab countries do apply the Internet in their learning systems, students themselves were not keen to use technology as part of the pedagogy in Australia. In addition, it is likely that those lecturers who taught in Arabic countries that had access to technology were working in places such as Dubai where there is a strong international focus on education and technology. Thus, this reveals that the Arab teaching staff and students in their home country learning contexts were generally not involved in the use of the Internet in their teaching and learning. However, regardless of whether Arabic international students' home countries had developed technology for educational purposes, the research found that it was generally not seen as a priority for AIS to utilise such technology for learning purposes. This was confirmed during the follow-up student interviews in phase two of the research. It was revealed that AIS had difficulty in coping with the technology usage required to participate in the Australian learning system because their home learning system was not requiring any kind of technology in their learning.

These findings in relation to English language communication and difficulties with technology usage reflect the strong teacher-centred environment in students' host countries. The students reported that they did not debate in the classroom and only 25% out of a total of 64 students indicated that they were able to discuss things with their teachers in class. Moreover, it was found that students' major focus in learning English was grammar with either no or very few opportunities to communicate/converse in English in class. The reason behind this is that they were required to follow whatever their lecturers directed and needed to acquire only the information, which was passed on to them. This can be explained through Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension theory 'power distance' because the power distance

between the lecturer and the students in the Arabic societal context positions the teacher as the 'guru' who transfers wisdom to the students. Therefore, AIS coming to the social constructivist learning situation in Australia find it difficult to change their role as students to learn and communicate in a more democratic learning situation (Mayer, 2012) where discussion with their peers and their lecturers is both expected and required, and critique is expected in essay writing.

In relation to the constructivist approach to pedagogy compared with that of information transmission, the AIS who were surveyed and interviewed in this study revealed that, when they were learning in their home countries, they were just listening to their teachers. Similarly, through the semi-structured interviews with AIS it was found that their EFL lecturers taught in such a way that they did not get any feeling of independence in their learning. It was therefore not surprising that from the Australian lecturers' point of view many AIS appeared to be shy in class and did not like to initiate talking within tutorial group discussions regardless of whether it involved Australian students or other international students. It is likely that in their home learning systems they did not experience learning through group work; therefore the research suggests that in the main AIS tend to be passive learners who are more comfortable when they can ask questions of their lecturers and receive direct answers. This supports the argument of Hofstede (1980) in his cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance, whereby it is understandable that students who come from strong uncertainty avoidance societies, where roles and responsibilities are hierarchical and clear, like Arabic background students, prefer closed questions and are more likely to avoid discussing and critiquing as part of learning. As a consequence of the dilemmas and challenges associated with the change in approaches to pedagogy and learning, the research found that AIS were likely to experience confusion when starting their learning journeys in Australia.

However, it was found that the Australian lecturers in this study were aware to some extent of the difficulties that AIS students may face when moving to learn in Western settings. They reported that they did help and encourage them greatly in order to provide opportunities to develop their English language levels through communicating and interacting with classmates and/or always explaining to them how to become independent in their learning. Conversely, the Australian lecturers who taught in Arabic countries reported that they had tried to apply the Australian teaching approach during their time abroad but they found that they could not create a more learner-centred classroom. This was due to the students in the Arabic speaking country seeing the teacher-centred approach as being the only credible way of learning, which was also encouraged by the need to pass examinations. Thus, in the information transmission learning context lecturers are working as knowledge feeders and students are dependent upon them to receive that knowledge.

By and large, students in their home countries were learning in an environment where the lecturer is the whole authority in the classroom, thus making her or him the major source of knowledge and as a consequence discussion and critique become unnecessary, as does the need to be an independent learner. Hence, these are important findings for both students and lecturers in enabling a more in-depth understanding of the contrast between the two approaches to learning and the consequent challenge for AIS when transitioning to study in Australia. It also reinforces the knowledge required by Australian lecturers about the backgrounds of

AIS so that they are better able to work out ways of supporting their transition to learning in the Australian context.

6.2 Factors Impacting on AIS Settlement in the Host Country

When students prepared themselves to travel and study in Australia, they were typically highly motivated and many, as they mentioned in this research, look forward firstly to improving their English language proficiency in an English speaking country. However, in practice it seems that their transitional pathway can involve significant challenges from the first day of arrival. While it is acknowledged that upon arrival in Australia AIS can expect to have to come to grips with living in a host country that clearly has a different language and culture, it is the way they experience the transition that can serve to support and nurture cultural change or create a feeling of loss of identity or abandonment.

The Arabic international students highlighted that their first challenging experience began when they arrived at the Australian international airport where they were faced with having to cope with an unfamiliar system with new structures and processes that all required their knowledge of the English language. The majority of students indicated that their English proficiency level was low, and when combined with being tired after a long journey and in a strange place with a high demand to be able to speak English they found themselves under stress, which exacerbated the situation. In addition, this was complicated by the fact that, as indicated previously, in their home learning system they had been exposed to formal English only through their EFL lecturers. So upon entering Australia they experienced an unfamiliar spoken English which was more casual and would include colloquialisms. These findings coincide with the experiences of the Indian and Chinese international students in the UK, as outlined by Lord and Dawson's (2002) study, which indicated that their stress started at the airport owing to the colloquial language used by the airport staff and the crowd of people. However, the present research also discovered that the inadequacy of their English language proficiency related to usage in other contexts as well.

Once in their destination educational institution, AIS were also faced with challenges in relation to the use of the English language for academic purposes. As found by Bailey (2006), international students had difficulty understanding their lecturers specifically during the first period of their study when their English native lecturers were talking very fast and using local expressions (colloquialisms) which students could not understand. The students in the present study noted that they found the learning terminology in use in Australia not to be the same as that used in their home country's learning contexts. This is an important distinction since there is a growing body of knowledge that draws attention to the importance of students being familiar with and being explicitly taught the language, metalanguage and concepts used in a learning situation to be able to engage fully (Moje et al., 2004; Myhill, 2006; O'Neill, 2013). This is a vital emergent issue of the research in that it adds to the argument for consideration of which strategies might work best to support AIS students' transition to learning in Australia.

The research shows also that, in addition to the in-class language challenges once students arrive in Australia, their level of English proficiency or lack of English also has a strong influence on whether they will be able to meet and speak with native

English speakers and so begin to develop their English. Lack of English proficiency and understanding of the local culture and colloquial language can serve as both an initial and also a lasting barrier for AIS to meet and communicate with Australian students and also to participate in the local community, especially the ones with low levels of English. Their lack of English has the potential to create a level of isolation in terms of interacting with native English speakers in the long term, thus forcing them to rely upon finding colleagues from their own language background and culture. This situation increases the likelihood of AIS being caught in an insular situation potentially for the duration of their study in Australia, unless there are structures and processes developed to address their transitional pathways and introduce an explicit transitional pedagogy that can be transformational in its ability to support the cognitive shift and level of acculturation required to address the move from the concept of traditional pedagogy to that of constructivism.

The other issue arising from the research was the kind and the source of support that AIS receive in the host country. Based on the results, the research found that the majority of AIS were more likely to be helped by their friends on arrival at the airport where they would be met and taken from the airport to their accommodation. This suggests that the students are likely to have made contact with other international students from their home country before coming to Australia. Students revealed that even the accommodation (typically a rental property) was sometimes arranged by their friends. However, the minority of them were helped by their universities, who arranged for them to be picked up from the airport and transported to their living places as a support service to international students.

One of the key findings of this current study was that AIS who needed to find accommodation when they arrived in Australia experienced difficulties with the Australian real estate system. Students indicated in their home countries that they could easily locate accommodation through their personal and social ties but being new in Australia gave them little credibility with the way the real estate rental system appeared to work. The need to score 100 points for the identification check was a completely different system of applying for accommodation from that in their home country. Almost all AIS revealed that they had difficulty obtaining suitable accommodation to do their study.

Those who reported that their university arranged airport pickup and booked their accommodation indicated they were very happy with this form of assistance, which was shown to be an enormous contribution to easing their introduction to studying in Australian universities. Some students considered themselves as lucky because they already had friends in Australia who helped them to find accommodation. It was not until they had spent some time in Australia that they felt they knew how to find and organise renting a property by themselves. However, they still found it a challenge to get affordable properties in suitable locations. In general, AIS were not satisfied with the accommodation process when they were reliant on the Australian real estate system. The findings of this research are different from those of Lawson (2013), who found that the majority of international students were satisfied with the quality of accommodation in Australia. However, there is no indication about students' different nationalities or whether some students were from the Arabic world. In addition, Lawson's study indicated that the majority (65%) of international students were using the real estate renting system, and only 11% for on campus

accommodation, while 3.7% were using the home stay service. There is a clear indication that the Australian universities are offering little support in terms of renting accommodation to international students. Therefore, owing to the insufficient support of the universities, AIS tried to depend on themselves to rent accommodation. However, they experienced that the Australian real estate system was quite different from their own, and they found it very expensive.

Related to the problem of accommodation was the issue of transport, which was reported as causing AIS difficulty during their initial period in Australia. One of the findings of the survey's open-ended questions showed that students indicated they were in need of accommodation closer to the university because they had problems with transport services. Students during the interviews revealed that they did not know how to use the timetable and there was no such system in their countries. This is probably because of many years of war and unrest in some Arabic countries and there is the prevalent use of taxis. In addition to that, it seems the cost of using the public transport system was a serious burden on these international students' budgets. In particular, some international students did not know how to apply for discounted prepaid tickets, and some students had not reported this to their university or asked Australian students for assistance. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2010) notes that one of the actions of the New South Wales Premier's Council on International Education was to help international students with their challenges when coming to Australia. For instance, the need to help students to access the public transport system with the discounted tickets was raised. However, this policy does not seem to be working, although such everyday needs should typically be addressed for those students learning English in English language learning programs.

In addition, the cost of transport was found to be an issue that might encourage international students to think about choosing another country to complete their studies. The survey results showed that only a quarter of students felt they had the ability to understand the Australian everyday language when they were in touch with the community and in particular related to functions such as using transport services or going shopping. Therefore it would seem strategic for AIS host learning institutions to take responsibility in this regard to ensure students are able to find their way around using the public transport system in an economical way where they know there are discount ticket opportunities and how to request them. This would be very welcome assistance to manage their budgets and expenses better when coming to study in Australia.

The issue of potential isolation also emerged particularly in relation to AIS who did not have friends already in Australia because this group had access to less or no social support. This was reported as a serious and substantial challenge for AIS because of the need to adjust to a different culture and language, which required more than the use of English they had been exposed to as a foreign language in their home country. In some respects these students, in Hofstede's terms, experienced culture shock at the start of their life in Australia. This refers back to Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013), who found international students had no social support, combined with the unfamiliarity of the host country, AIS in this study were faced with varying degrees of loneliness depending on whether they already had friends from their home country or had been introduced to other strategies to help them to settle. However,

students reported they were challenged by being alone with sometimes no network of friends from their own culture and no ability to make friends with domestic Australian students or members of the local community. This was highlighted when student one noted "my integration and communication with them [local students and people] is little since I am from a completely different culture so it is not easy to interact with Australians due to the differences in culture and language." Thus, it seems that, owing to Arabic international students' limited English language knowledge and proficiency to communicate at the local level and the different culture of Australian people, AIS are not encouraged or supported to attempt to communicate and make friends in Australia.

However, student five commented from a slightly different perspective when examining the issue in relation to the responsiveness of the members of the Australian host culture by saying:

> For meeting with natives I mean Aussies it is hard because Aussies do not like to meet with Arabic students and I have seen this because many of them they do not like to talk to us, especially teenagers, but older people they like that and they like to communicate with us; however, when you ask they will help a lot but for friendship they do not do that.

The research found that there is a kind of communication that AIS could engage in the community, although it was difficult to make friends, but it was more difficult to communicate with on campus students because of not being able to break into the culture of the younger people. In addition, while the majority of students reported that they could not make friends and communicate with Australians during the first days of their arrival, which might be expected, overall this continued to be a challenge during their study even after they had been in the community for a while. The findings of this research support Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis that explains how foreigners may start their life in the host country with a lot of interest and hope, as the AIS did in this study, but, as a result of the culture shock and the impact of trying to settle with limited social support, depression starts. In keeping with this theory, it was found that students in the present research were very motivated to come to Australia because they wanted to learn English as it is the world language and they wanted to gain a qualification to advance their careers. In addition, it was found that they preferred Australia, since they believed that it is one of the top international education providers in the world. So with these high expectations it seems after a relatively short period of time they discovered themselves to be in shock as a result of different cultural norms and values being in operation, and their difficulties in using the English language. Thus, it is not surprising that their transition to study moved into a period of disillusionment. On their arrival in Australia, their challenges as outlined so far started, including using English for functional purposes in their day-to-day living, using English to study and participate at university or other educational institutions and using English for social purposes and making contact to make friends in the Australian community. The students' views in the present research support Trice's (2007) findings that international students do not readily mix and talk together. This research found these students did not seek out other international students to make friends with but were more likely to focus on members of their own cultural group through their mutual need for cultural food and attendance at prayers.

Further exploration of the students' journeys in the present research also confirmed that they moved into the third stage of Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis. Following their disillusionment they eventually moved into the recovery period in which Lysgaard explains that students adapt and begin to integrate into the host culture. For instance, student one who had spent a longer period (four years) in Australia also commented more positively by stating that "day by day we established good friendship with many Australians so we overcome this problem of different culture and communication." The interview results showed that, after students had spent between six and nine months in Australia, they were in a better position to make connections and have friends from different cultures in addition to making some friends among Australian domestic students. It seems achieving this stage of the transitional period can take a varied but substantial amount of time. It is challenging because it involves the trauma of depression, and then making a recovery, adjusting to new cultural norms, managing new daily tasks and routines, and contending with the different pedagogical experiences in their study and classroom communication as well as the initial challenge of finding accommodation and organising transport.

The majority of students in this research indicated that, when they first came to Australia, they sought help from friends who were from the same country. In this situation, students' social identity urges them to seek help from people from their own country. This is consistent with Li and Gasser's (2005) findings in relation to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), where they found that international students are automatically motivated to meet and integrate with people from the same language and culture. AIS sought help from people from their own culture first for all matters, such as airport pick up, finding accommodation, locating and using the transport, and locating where their own community lived. It seems the AIS in the present study unintentionally or naturally did seek this kind of help, which caused them to integrate with their own country people from when they started their new life in Australia. This current research supports previous studies reviewed in the literature chapter (Chen & Chen, 2009; Klomegah, 2006; Rienties, He´liot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013) in relation to AIS integrating and communicating with people from the same culture. In addition, lecturers who participated in this research also confirmed that AIS tended to mix with their native country people in the learning context. For example, lecturer five stated:

> I have seen many times that they like to be in touch with their people because they can help them with their language or they can understand their cultural needs. However, there are some Arabic students who like to be in touch with Aussies only because they like to practise their English.

However, other lecturers have also observed some students preferring to communicate with Australians in addition to their own country friends because of their need to communicate at a higher English language level. Therefore it seems that variations on students' English language levels impact on the extent to which they are likely to communicate with Australian students. For instance, lecturer two reported that:

> I can see that their communication with Australians is less than their grouping and communication with their country friends. So I think they usually gather with people from their countries. However some students like to mix with Australian students because they like to practise their language.

The research also found that some students, in spite of having low levels of English language, preferred to talk to Australians anyway to practise their English. On the other hand, the majority of them on their arrival in Australia preferred to integrate with their own cultural group. In keeping with social identity theory, Tajfel (1978) notes that people tend to mix with people who come from the same culture and language. Thus, AIS in this study tended to be in the same circle of contact with people from their home country both at the time of their arrival and later during their period of study. This was borne out by the researcher's ability to find student participants for the research through the snowball technique. Another reason why students sought help from people with their own language and culture was found to be that they did not know any other avenue to access the help that they needed. This indicates that some Australian universities are not offering enough guidance for such international students or services are not within easy reach of or access by AIS. It is not clear if information is readily available in the Arabic language, for instance, or even if the phenomenon of non-English speaking background international students moving to study in Australia is conceptualised as a transition pathway that requires identification of the 'route', the 'challenges on the path', the 'signposts' and the kind of 'way stations' that might be most enabling to smooth the way. This metaphor, which has emerged as a result of this research, provides a strong basis to investigate current policy and practices in the area of international students experience in Australia.

For the students in this study there was substantial variability in the scope of the guidance offered to help them during the beginning of their arrival. A minority of interviewees (students) indicated that they had been picked up from the airport and the university helped them in their accommodation in student lodgings. However, others were solely dependent on friends. Thus, a key finding of this research is that, since the majority of AIS indicated that they had been helped by their friends, some Australian universities could improve their processes by ensuring such students are supported upon arrival or know what to do when they arrive through the provision of, for instance, e-mailed information or leaflets in their enrolment package that are presented in the students' own language.

In relation to Arabic international students' opportunity to access culturally related social practices, the research also found that students' participation in celebrations outside the classroom environment organised through their education institution featured as highly important events during their journey. Cultural occasions, for instance, like Harmony Day, were found to be very important for ESL students to practise the English language and understand the cultures of other international students and the local community since they were living and studying amongst people from different countries. In such events, students might have the opportunity to practise their English with English native speakers and might be able to share their cultural values with people from different cultures during the celebration. This supports the relevance of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory where AIS have the opportunity for social interaction and the use of language for real life purposes as an important practice to support language development. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between this theory and the findings of this current research. In this theory, Vygotsky asserts that learning takes place not only inside the classroom but also outside the classroom environment where in this case students are able to

practise their English to communicate and make meaning. Some participants in this research asserted the importance of participation in cultural activities. For example, student two commented that:

> I tried to participate in any party or any cultural activity either on or off campus because I tried to find out about the other cultures and to know how they behave here – for example, the flowers day, the Harmony Day where we can meet other cultures and communicate with them.

It seems that some students heard about the cultural activity from their universities and therefore they decided to join in to meet people from different cultures to understand them better. As well, the results showed that some universities did not inform students about such activities and there appeared to be no clear strategy about reaching international students to participate in out of class activities. By contrast, some students mentioned that they participated in such events and also in other typical off campus activities such as shopping and visiting local sights, and also playing soccer and joining in with different international students. However, the research found that lecturers gave slightly different opinions about students in this regard. For instance, lecturer seven stated that:

> It is quite interesting when they do their shopping and sometimes they play soccer. Nearly always I see them integrating with their country friends, socialising and playing games together. It is actually very rare that I see Arabic students with local Australians.

While this comment reflects only one lecturer's experience, it supports the social identity theory that it is more likely that when AIS participate in off campus activities and their English proficiency is low they will prefer to meet and talk with their country friends. This would contribute to a feeling of safety since when one does not have command of the language of a country then it is logical not to place oneself at risk of not being able to understand. Clearly, the development of AIS English proficiency can be related to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD in that students are unlikely to leave the comfortable circumstances of communicating within their own language and culture for the challenge of using their English unless they are in their zone of proximal development. When teachers gauge students' ZPD in second language learning, according to Turuk (2008), students need to be supported within a collaborative learning environment. In keeping with the need to scaffold students' learning, the university is like a parent in its role and responsibility to help such international students during the transitional pathway to develop their language proficiency and to support their intercultural literacy, as well as that of their lecturers and peers, through ensuring an effective two-way communication system as well as strategies to respond to the various features of the transitional pathway metaphor outlined above.

6.3 Post-arrival–AIS Development and Adaptation to the New Culture and Approach to Learning System

As has been reported in chapters four and five (surveys and interviews with both students and teachers), the research found that students were transitioning from the satisfaction of being successful in their home country learning environment to the challenge and stress of the Australian unfamiliar learning environment. The research also discovered that students were transitioning from different cultural and life style

contexts when they moved to Australia from their Arabic speaking background countries, which also influenced their ability to settle down and integrate into the local culture.

Firstly, it was clear that learning in the Australian context required time and knowledge to be able to adapt. Both students and teachers confirmed this. This placed extra pressure on AIS since once this new challenge became clear there was the added threat of the possibility of not being able to achieve under the different conditions of assessment. This was also perceived as a factor in AIS moving into the disillusionment stage since their home country learning experience meant they were trained for examination based assessment rather than writing critical discussions and participating in project-based learning. They reported their memorisation skills that comprised a significant part of learning in their own country and a pedagogy that caused them to rely on listening to their teachers rather than research a topic did not enhance their ability to engage in more constructivist learning. In addition, they needed to improve their English language proficiency but in ways that would allow them to interact in tutorials and at on campus social events as well as in the local community. They reported this as a slow challenging process where the opportunity for more structured activities designed to support their adaptation would have lessened the stress and the feeling of having to achieve this alone.

The Australian teachers indicated that AIS initially attempted to apply the strategies that they used in their home country learning experiences to learning in the Australian context but without the success they would have liked. This supports Carroll's (2005) observations when he notes that international students preferred handouts to memorise their subjects as this kind of learning was very familiar to them in their home country experiences. The reason behind that was because students were used to pen and paper exams only. This in such a case, it seems their past experience has a major effect on their need to adjust to the Australian learning and assessment system. This coincides with Mori's (2000) findings that international students in the US had used to handouts to memorise to pass their exams in their home countries thus confirming their silent and passive role as learners compared with the expectation of students as active learners who have a voice in their learning in social constructivist settings. We can clearly see through students suggested in the open-ended questions that they request fruitful feedback from their teachers in order to help them more in their learning in their new situation. For instance, student Thirteen in the open-ended survey section emphasised, "provide academic feedback with good information." Overall, there was an indication that students were in need of academic help in order to develop their ability to understand the learning and assignment demands in the host country of Australia.

Teachers need to be aware of and understand AIS learners and their backgrounds so they can provide effective support strategies or advise them where to obtain assistance. They need to be interculturally literate in order to understand the challenges that AIS face and the issues involved particularly during the early stages and the stage of adaptation to the Australian context. Feedback needs to be comprehensive and criteria needs to make the quality of performance that is expected explicit if students are to learn and adapt to the way the Australian learning and assessment system works compared with their own. ESL students in particular

require good models of performance and to receive feedback on the nature of their mistakes.

However, the fact that students in the Australian system are required to be independent and critical thinkers in their learning presents another leap in understanding for most AIS since they are programmed to follow the directions of the teacher and in a sense seek approval as opposed to thinking independently and critiquing what might seem to be authority. Thus, the present research is in keeping with that of Sawir (2005) who studied Asian international students in Australia and found that they saw the Australian learning pedagogy as challenging and stressful at first because of the change from a teacher-centred approach to one that is student-centred. The student-centred approach was used by almost all of the Australian teachers (97%) where they saw themselves as facilitators of learning. This finding relates to Hofstede's cultural dimension (collectivism/individualism), which identifies Arab countries as collectivist societies as opposed to Western countries that are high in individualism. Students from the collectivist societies are used to listening to their teachers only. This is confirmed by some students during the interviews, for instance, student three stated that:

> There is a big difference between the two systems actually in my home country and we call it feed up system, which means the teacher gives you everything and you need to memorise what you have already got.

In addition, Australian teachers' comments also project this view of students in relation to Australian learning pedagogy. For example, teacher three identified the difference between the students' home and the Australian learning systems very clearly when stating that:

> In my case I apply both actually because when I am in Australia I need to be a facilitator and when I am in the Arabic country I need to be a controller. I need to be facilitator because the Australian learning system is more democratic where students can debate and have their opinions. I need to be a controller when teaching in the Arabic country as the system and students like the teacher to demonstrate their control.

The teachers' and students' views in this research highlight another of Hofstede's (2008) cultural dimensions – that of 'power distance'. This is relevant when students from large power distance societies such as the Arab world, expect the teacher to be in the power situation. If the teacher demonstrates they are not in power then their students are likely to see them as having less credibility in the teacher-centred learning environment. However, students from small power distance such as the Australian students are used to a learner-centred approach where they are part of the learning and take responsibility for their own learning as opposed to the teacher having the responsibility for the students' learning. The findings of this research then, in relation to the research conceptual framework, show that AIS are transferring into a new learning system where they need to learn how it works compared with their own and understand that learning in the constructivist way means discussing and critically thinking to construct knowledge and synthesize information.
It seems therefore, that the Australian learning pedagogy presents as a new concept to AIS because of their strong background and values stemming from their country's examination based system and traditional approach to teaching and learning that focuses on rote learning and memorisation. Part of their culture shock related to

having to come to grips with learning in a dramatically different way where the research shows that they were not interested initially in being active learners in Australia. In addition, because they did not understand the Western approach to learning spending time talking in groups was seen as wasting time to them and working hard meant reading and writing, and memorisation according to the teacher's instructions. The complete control by the teacher was reported by Al-Shehri (2001) with regards to Saudi Arabian classes. Since AIS had not been encouraged to talk and express their opinions in class in their home countries they were hesitant to participate when the Australian teachers tried to group them with their peers.

AIS sampled in this study indicated they were having issues in their learning owing to the local language that the Australian teachers used in tutorials and class and the student-centred approach caused them to need to understand that language in order to participate. As noted earlier, AIS were not only faced with understanding the type of English language used by the Australian teachers in the classroom but they needed to understand the colloquial language in use as well. So their English language skills proved inadequate even for those who had passed the IELTS test at the appropriate level for their course. The different English language usage placed AIS at a disadvantage particularly at the beginning of their study when they were finding out about the different learning environment and needed their English to work for them to become familiar with the new context. This is consistent with Moncrieff's (2006) research that found international students have difficulties understanding "the Aussies talk" (p. 1). This is confirmed in this current research when the teachers in the interviews indicated that they were using both casual and formal language. The casual language here refers to the idioms used by Australians only, for example, 'bikkie' which refers to 'biscuits'. For instance, teacher five was teaching the English preparation program and stated that:

> . . . when I first said "hefta" which means "have to" they never understood it without me telling them the formal pronunciation of that expression . . .

It seems that AIS found it difficult to comprehend in the tutorials, since the Australian teachers indicated that they were using the Australian casual language in their daily teaching. In Moncrieff's (2006) study it was found that the international students' relationships officer also needed to be more formal in their talking with international students because most of them were only familiar with formal English language. While the teachers in the present study explained that they used both causal and formal language when teaching international students, they mainly used formal language because they were aware that this was better for students' understanding. For example, teacher two, who taught in the Arabic world, stated that:

> I have used both actually, casual and formal language; when I use the formal language they seem very happy and do not look anxious but if I use casual language I need to paraphrase what I have said many times.

The students gave an indication in this research that in their home countries they were using the formal language; therefore, they found it difficult to understand their Australian teachers when they used Australian local expressions. Thus, those people who work with international students need to be aware of this situation in their pedagogical talk. Similarly, the students themselves need to be clear about the

different language usage and need time to acculturate to be able to participate fully and not be outsiders in the learning situation.

AIS also reported that not only did they have to contend with differences in the way the English language was spoken and the social constructivist pedagogical approach but also they needed to embrace new pedagogies that required them to be independent in their learning, and research and use ICTs to search for resources by themselves. Since the research found that AIS indicated they rarely used ICTs in their home countries and most of the time they depended on their teachers for their learning they were caused more stress. Sawsaa, Lu, and Meng (2012) note that while technology, mobile Internet, and phone were being applied in education in more in developed countries and more countries they were still not widely used in Arabic countries. Both teachers who taught in the Arabic world and students indicated in both surveys and interviews that so long as the learning system in the Arabic world was teacher-centred the learning environment would not be conducive to using computers and the Internet. Therefore, when students started their study in Australia, the research found that they struggled to cope with the learner-centred system in which they needed to be independent in their learning besides search for on line resources to write their assignments or conduct research for postgraduate studies.

In addition, students found they needed to cope with the digital learning environment or online learning in the Australia context. The majority of students and teachers revealed that AIS were also very concerned about using ICT in their courses of study. Again learning in a virtual space where communication included a synchronous input online, working independently through learning modules and registering their assignments online presented a substantial challenge since this was alien to their previous experience. Their notion of the use of ICTs had been more for social purposes such as social media. For example, the interviewees, the Australian teachers, indicated that they had never applied ICT in their home learning context but it was used in every angle in the Australian learning system. Three teachers confirmed that they had observed their AIS had easily coped with the ICTs in their courses. This included use of multimedia and mobile phones. But what was revealed was that given the AIS experience with traditional pedagogy at home (UNESCO, 2009), they did not understand how their use of ICTs was supposed to contribute to improving their learning. Clearly, the purpose of learning experiences needs to be made explicit to AIS from the start of their learning journey. This was also found by Al-Mekhlafi (2004) who commented that the only learning sources in the Arabic world are the teacher, the textbooks, and the chalkboard. So not surprisingly, the Australian teachers reported that the AIS they taught did not have Internet literacy. For instance, teacher two taught in an Arabic country and found Arabic students preferred to use the face-to-face communication rather than contact him through emails. Students in the present study took the same view noting that in their pre-arrival experience they were barely using computers and the Internet for study purposes. They reported that using computers to learn in Australia was very difficult for them because they did not have any prior experience or the underpinning skills. However those interviewees (6) who had been in Australia long enough to feel settled with their study noted that they did enjoy the technology and found it to be a very beneficial way of communicating and quick and easy for them to access online resources. Thus, it would seem that the education institutions need to ensure AIS

have access to preliminary training in ICT and more importantly receive coaching on how their learning is being conceptualised when teachers incorporate ICTs.

According to this research, it is clear from the perspectives of both students and teachers, that AIS initially struggle to cope with the Australian learning system. This struggle was owing to the difference in pedagogical approaches where their home country traditional learning experiences tended to omit a focus on teaching thinking skills, including critical thinking skills. This emerged as a major difference and problem for students when they began to participate in studying in Australia where they needed to discuss, critique and debate. It was found that their prior experience did not involve reflection and critique in their learning. Thus, these students moved into an academically challenging environment, where they needed to make a mental shift into being more independent in their learning, become familiar with the new technological tools and embrace learning through ICTs and in virtual worlds.
Like students in Daud and Husin's (2004) study, they [students] who had been studying in Australia for the greater lengths of time reported that eventually they acquired the necessary skills and so gained a much richer learning experience later in their learning journey. However, the fact that they were unprepared for studying through ICT and found it difficult to conceptualise how learning occurred in this way added to their initial stress since this had the potential to impact negatively on their academic results.

Consistent with this, with regards to AIS who had been improving their English in Australia, their Australian teachers found that they preferred to be taught using the traditional grammar translation method that does not involve communication or group communicative interactions in class. One of the teachers revealed that when he heard the stories from Arabic students that most of their schooling time before their undergraduate study focused only on the audio lingual method without any utilisation of activities in the classroom to let them talk and say their opinions freely. The students also found it difficult to cope with the kinds of assignments at the beginning of their study in Australia.

Overall, the research showed that students needed a period of time at the start of their study in Australia to become orientated to the change in pedagogy and to become acculturated to the new pedagogical approach and the different language and concepts for learning. Ultimately, the students found they enjoyed the new ways of learning but importantly for some if the transition path is too stressful and difficult in the early stages and there is no access to support the chance of dropping out during the disillusion stage is extremely high.

In addition to that, the teachers noticed that Arabic international female students were not allowed to talk and mix in discussion groups if there were male students in the group. This research finding was similar to that of Sirois, Darby, and Tolle (2013) where in the United States the issue of eye contact was raised in relation to Muslim female students. While this is part of acceptable communication in Western society it is avoided and seen as negative by Muslim culture. Therefore, female students need to have time to adapt and acculturate in relation to this issue and Australian pedagogy to be able to fully participate in discussions with their classmates. As O'Neill and Gish (2008) note, avoiding eye contact in some cultures may demonstrate a showing of more respect for people. However, this cultural norm

can be seen as a shy and a hesitant response in other cultures because if, there is little eye contact it can be interpreted as not paying attention and listening carefully. This is another possible dilemma for AIS moving into the social constructivist learning environment. In this case teachers need to understand this issue as do the students' peers. When students are in the transition stage, having to cope with the range of issues identified in this research means initially they will not be able to engage in learning to the best of their ability. Depending on the extent to which they are in supportive learning environment their ability to feel comfortable with their study and be academically successful has the potential to be seriously impacted.

The fact that, the AIS found it difficult to create a network of friends who can help them cope with their new learning setting presents an additional challenge. Besides their language difficulties they lack cultural knowledge such that they have difficulty interacting with Australian people and particularly young domestic students who also lack cultural knowledge to be able to initiate contact with international students. It would seem therefore; these universities or other learning institutions have a responsibility to train Australian teachers about creating a supportive environment for such international students where they can have access to the services necessary to meet their personal cultural needs. This research shows that some students could not readily locate where key services were through their university or other institution. For instance, when they asked about prayer rooms, no one could advise them where to go. In addition to that, some AIS asked the staff in their educational institution where to go to meet their Islamic needs such as Halal food and location of a mosque but the staff members were not aware. The knowledge of staff and teachers varied but those students who were able to discuss with their teachers were highly appreciated of the support and it was these teachers that were more appreciative of their learning needs. In fact interviewees, students indicated that the Australian teachers were behaving like friends to them.

After a period of their being in Australia, students appreciated the flexibility of creating such friendships with their Australian teachers, unlike their home teachers who would typically view being 'friendly' with students as a threat to their authority in terms of power distance. Though, according to Hofstede, since Arabic culture is seen as collectivist rather than individualist AIS would be expected to prefer to create strong connections with their teachers. It was found that when they started their journey in Australia, they created connections and later found that these connections contributed to their learning journey and played a particularly important role in their learning progress in Australia. This finding corresponded with Bailey's (2006) UK study where relationships between students and their teachers differed from those they made in the community. Thus to best facilitate AIS learning teachers need to be aware and be prepared to build strong relationship with their students as a foundation to facilitate learning.

In addition to that, the majority of students, after their being in Australia for a while, reported achieving a more positive learning experience. They began to appreciate the usefulness of being able to access technology everywhere on campus, and the benefits of building positive relationships with their Australian teachers. The results of asking students if they were motivated by their teachers reflected the fact that if students were sufficiently helped by either their learning institutions or academic staff, then their positive learning experience had the capacity to increase. It was clear

from the results that AIS struggled more at the beginning of their transition pathway period; however, the level of adjustment required began to decrease as they began to understand the different context for learning and living. Their level and period of disillusionment once they realised there were serious challenges related to the level of support offered to them by their learning institutions and whether they had friends from their own culture. In keeping with Lee and Rice (2007), this research found that lack of support for AIS in the early stage of their transition was likely to cause a negative impact on students' academic success. Only half of the students surveyed reported their institution gave them support, for instance, welcome them at the faculty, and/or where to locate their community, and only 52% reported that their learning institution organised for them to be met at the airport. Experiencing difficulties with language and culture and basic survival upon arrival was found to impact negatively on students' first impressions of the host country and also their initial excitement and motivation to study abroad. These results reinforce the difficulties associated with international students' experiences in the host country specifically at the beginning of their study. Hence, this research raises the issue of ensuring that strategies are in place to supportive students from the moment they arrive in Australia to minimise culture shock and subsequent disillusionment which would also help encourage students to achieve better from the start of their academic period in Australia. The research did provide strong evidence that when the teachers in this study were keen to help and encourage AIS through their transition to study in Australia the students could clearly articulate the benefits.

An additional observation AIS made, that they saw as beneficial compared with the pedagogical approach in their home countries, was that Australian teachers gave explicit encouragement to students whose performance was weak. They reported that in their home countries their teachers mostly encouraged only the high performing students. Therefore, the way of Australian teachers by encouraging weak students contributed to AIS positive learning experience. The researcher found the consequence of a positive learning environment in this way helped AIS to cope with the Australian learning environment particularly during the period of their challenges at the beginning of their study. This reflects how teachers were preparing activities and using learning techniques that attracted the attention of AIS in the Australian classroom.

In summary, the current research study found that there was substantial variation in the nature of each interviewee's learning pathway, which depended on the following factors:

- teachers' knowledge, cultural understanding and their institution's ability to support their learning and students'
  - openness to change and ability to adapt to the new circumstances
  - personal circumstances and expectations
  - beliefs about learning
  - level of English proficiency as learnt in their home countries
  - acquisition of the language and concepts for learning and appreciation of purpose in the new environment
  - management of students' learning in the new learning environment
  - attitudes towards and opportunity for contact with the host country's students, other international students and teachers

- o financial support either from their governments or from their families, and
- o the level of support that the learning institution was offering to international students at various stages of the transitional pathway.

It seems, in spite of the contrast in the learning approaches between the Arabic world countries and Western pedagogies, the overarching experiences of students was found to be ultimately positive, though more positive once there was a feeling of settlement and an understanding of Western pedagogies and new cultural knowledge had been acquired. Whilst students were learning in their courses of study, at the same time they were gradually becoming more acculturated into the education system depending on their openness to find out about the difference and utilise that knowledge to enhance their situation. The following section discusses the research findings in relation to what recommendations emerge based on the students' and teachers' views in terms of the home situation and host country institutions, teachers and students themselves.

6.4 Recommendation

Based on the data from Arabic international students studying in Australia and the Australian teachers, including those who had taught in the Arabic world and were teaching international students in Australia, this section outlines the recommendations that emerge from the research. They are developed around the needs of AIS to be able to better cope with the challenges of living and learning and achieving better academic success in the host country of study, and in this case Australian universities and other educational institutions. They are based on the nature of the transitional pathway in which they find themselves when embarking on their journey to study in Australia. The research suggests that not only should be a transitional pedagogy in place but their needs to be a series of transitional support mechanisms to help counter or temper the effects of the Lysgaard's (1955) U-curve hypothesis, which clearly applied to the students in this study.

6.4.1 Recommendations to Students

When students want to travel overseas, they need to read about the host country' culture and have some knowledge about the customs and values of the different culture. This is so important for students in order to avoid misunderstandings when communicating with the multicultural population of Australia. As mentioned earlier in findings chapters that students found the Australian people did not like to be in touch with international students. This might be one of the characteristics of the individualist culture where people have limited contacts and the relationships are almost with family members unlike the collectivist culture where people have extended relations. Therefore, students need to understand and accept this as part of the Australian culture. In order for students to cope with this culture, they need to be involved and accepted in the community by creating a network of friends of domestic students or from the community around. However, the research found some students came to Australia with a very low level of English language proficiency; therefore, the university needs to create out-of-campus activities such sport and other recreational activities to encourage AIS to amalgamate with people from different cultures. Let alone, students will create friends; they will also develop their language through the communication with people who do not speak the Arabic language.
In addition to that, students might get the opportunity to enter into the Australian social life norms through direct communication with the host people. We can see the majority of students felt that they are secluded from the community around; perhaps the university could encourage and advertise to students to participate in cultural activities to avoid the idea of being isolated, as the consequence of this can lead to decreasing the students' homesickness. Based on the findings that emerged from students' views, this research recommends they have a strong level of participation in cultural activities that are run by their universities, in order to understand and be understood in relation to learning the casual language (colloquialisms and idioms) that they indicated were quite difficult for them. Although students indicated that their preference was to be in touch with their country people, the university or educational institution needs to build bridging programs and create events to ease the transition of students' communication with people from different cultures.

In order for students to cope with the new culture, they need to have a place in group gatherings to have knowledge of the host culture differences in terms of different way of addressing people, the different customs of the host culture, and the different way of opening a discussion to talk in an acceptable manner, and be knowledgeable

about intercultural communication styles. According to the findings of this research, the majority of students were hesitant to talk in the classroom. Therefore, it is also recommended that AIS be encouraged to take risks and talk in the classroom as this might help them to overcome their concern about making mistakes and so help them better acquire their target language level. In addition to that, the study found that students were silent when studying in their home country classrooms, because of the teacher-centred approach and focus controlling the class, which was in stark contrast to the requirement to be active learners and participants in Australian classrooms as part of the learner-centred classroom. The impact of this dilemma needs to be addressed through the development of a transitional pedagogical approach that involves personal learning for both students and teachers.

In addition to the above culture and communication issues, the current research found that the majority of AIS had issues with technology when they began learning in Australia. During the research, students indicated that they many times did not know if there were any workshops provided by their universities to support them in relation to academic writing, referencing software, and library data base searching. Therefore, this study recommends students that they need to check with their university staff and ask if there are workshops run by their university to support them while they are doing their study. In addition to that, students need to be supported in becoming familiar with the new pedagogical approaches of the Australian learning environment by realising they are able to ask their Australian teachers. A further recommendation in relation to students' learning is that students need to be able to access training to ensure they have the technology skills and the virtual learning environment as well as understanding the purposes and skills underpinning learning in the Australian learning system, since this learning is very much digitized. If students knew how to apply the technology in their study in Australia, they then might be able to participate in their study desk forums with their classmates from the start of the program, thus maximising their chances of early success. In addition, they might be able to search for resources on the library database to help them achieve their academic performance.

Both students and teachers who taught in the Arabic world drew attention to the fact that a positive transitional pathway experience that includes acculturation into education and the community is impacted by students' needing to have a variety of forms of English language rather just that required to pass an IELTS test and the like. This relates to understanding and conversing in tutorials – coming to grips with the language concepts for learning, understanding Australian teachers' casual/colloquial language and coping with the local language and cultural. Hence, the research recommends the best way for AIS to understand and acquire the range of English language proficiency outlined here is to create a network of domestic students and university staff to raise awareness of this challenge and create support groups and language and cultural learning through a program of community events.

In response to the fact that students had previously been quite and passive learners in their home countries and were hesitant in the host country to initiate talking, the research recommends that in the Australian learning system, students need to be open minded and talk with people from different cultures to practise their English and to understand the university environment. It is also important for AIS to be aware that they are required in the Australian learning environment to be independent in their

learning, unlike what was expected by their home country teachers who typically work as knowledge feeders. Students need to search for information by themselves and know how to seek help from specific university staff not only teachers, for instance, the learning centre services, the librarians, and students' services. In addition to that, it is important for AIS to search for the services offered to international students by their universities through the students' services or mentor programs and the like. For instance, students can seek help regarding how to cope with the new learning environment and understand why they are not faced with memorising their learning materials as they had been doing in their home countries. Therefore, students need to understand that they must adapt to the communicative approach in Australian classrooms and learn how to participate in cooperative learning or project-based learning where they need critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills, unlike the requirements in their home countries' authoritative focus.

6.4.2 Recommendations to Australian Teachers and Tertiary Institutions

Based on the research findings here recommendations emerge for Australian teachers, universities and other educational institutions to enable them to better support AIS and international students in general. Since, the literature indicated that there is a dearth of research about the AIS, and even more the COAG's (2010) policy notes that best sponsoring students are from Asia. Therefore, the Australian policy makers and the universities need to offer more support services to AIS, as indicated by the AEI (2009) that the Arabic international students' number is increasing. For instance, the international office needs to make contact with students and support them with organising pick up from the airport and transport to their residency, their place of living. Although, some universities were already using this service high attention needs to be paid to it since some students first seek to improve their English from very low level. The research found it was extremely difficult for such students to have a taxi or use the transport to reach their place of living. In addition, it was difficult for AIS to obtain accommodation without their friend's help. Therefore, it would be very helpful if the university can help students with the accommodation process especially at the beginning of their time in Australia. The reason why this service is seen as important is because some students found the Australian real estate system to be very difficult to understand since it is completely different from their own. After that, it is important that the university sets up an informative welcome to students and explicitly orientates them to be able to access the services they need. For instance, they need to know where to locate their communities and where to find their religious worshiping places - mosques. Doing this would help to reduce homesickness that promotes the disillusionment stage of the transition, which is usually associated with international students.

After that, universities/education providers need to proactively engage in communication with international students through creating cultural events and celebrations and meeting opportunities. In these events, the host native English speaking people can communicate with NNES students to develop their language and help break down the barriers that make international students hesitant when communicating with native speakers. It would also be helpful to encourage international students to take up casual work positions to assist them to move forward in their ability to communicate interculturally and promote their adjustment to life in Australian and the new learning system requirements. This service may

involve a mentor or buddy program, where mentors/buddies (senior students) work with international students to model, advise or assist them to cope with their study. This includes showing newly arrived students where to go in case help is needed with orientation. The research found that majority of students were not aware of the services that their universities offered, therefore, a mentor program would positively help newly arrived students. In relation to students' homesickness, the university should also offer/sponsor or promote recreational activities to encourage international students to make social connections with the domestic Australian students or other international students from different cultures, and the local community to support their intercultural communication and create a network of friends.

Universities can also provide training to their teachers to ensure their ability to effectively communicate with students from different cultures through development of their intercultural communication skills. This would respond to issues that arise such as in this research where female students are hesitant to talk with their male teachers, and/or for cultural reasons cannot interact with male students in class. It would also help inform on the impact of the transitional pathway in terms of pedagogical change, the potential for disillusionment, the challenge of transitional pedagogy and the need to encourage students to talk and also explain to them that they are required to talk and develop as independent learners when in Australia.

At the same time, the Australian teachers need to know the background of international students in terms of "the prior knowledge credit" which means to have sufficient knowledge about the background of students in order to engage effectively with them. This recommendation coincides with that of Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) who state:

> They [students] come to formal education with a range of prior knowledge, skills, beliefs, and concepts that significantly influence what they notice about the environment and how they organise and interpret it. This, in turn, affects their abilities to remember, reason, solve problems, and acquire new knowledge. (p. 10)

It is recommended that an online resource be organised for students to interact in terms of developing a partially self-supportive learning community where mentors/buddies could be participants to interact and assist. This could involve online forums through the university home page or Facebook groups incorporating multicultural staff with different languages. Providing discussion opportunities in students' home languages would reduce the initial stress AIS experience when they forced to struggle using their limited English to meet their key survival needs. This would also help students to speak with older or more experienced students in their native language before heading to Australia. Such an online strategy could serve multiple purposes including providing a place to inform students prior to coming to Australia, allowing them to be better informed and make connections in advance. During orientation week, experienced students could conduct workshops in various languages to raise awareness of transitional considerations, allow AIS to make connections and understand their new context for learning. These experienced students could be paid on a casual basis to maintain their network with the newly coming students and advise them about the best coping strategies to live in the host culture and achieve academically better.

The above recommendations provide a number of suggestions to AIS and the Australian universities to better support students and help them cope and understand how to live in the new culture in the host country and better achieve academically. The recommendations aim to assist educators better understand this particular group of international students and address their needs while prior to arrival, upon arrival and while they are on campus pursing their degrees in Australia. Based on this research there is a suggestion that there is room for improvement in supporting this group and if so, provision of better support would also be expected to achieve improved academic outcomes and possibly increase the numbers of AIS in Australia.

6.5 Research Limitations

The study was able to address the research questions via gathering data from both students and teachers through the adoption of both a survey and interview technique in a mixed methods research design. The results of the study have also raised some important issues and concepts that can serve as a basis for improving the educational and social experiences of AIS studying in Western settings. These findings also have applicability to other international student groups particularly those from language and cultural backgrounds that are different from Western English speaking language backgrounds.

However, in spite of the richness of the data and the consistency of the results the study does have some limitations. Firstly, it was not possible to identify the "total population" of AIS in Australia for either students or teachers that had taught AIS or had taught in an Arabic speaking country. Therefore, it is not possible to generalise from the findings derived from the samples of students and teachers because they are relatively small. Nevertheless, as is noted in the methodology the researcher incorporated various steps to ensure the rigour of the design within this limitation. These included the use of an expert reference group, and the trial and testing of the reliability of the survey. It is also noted that although a snowball technique was applied to select a sample for the survey the representation of the different Arabic countries and Australian states, age groups of teachers and discipline areas was reasonable. Thus, the methodology was appropriate for a descriptive case study and the issues raised are more than likely generally applicable. However, had the research been able to investigate the journeys and in class experiences of a small sample of students in greater depth, in terms of examining the deeper pedagogical differences e.g., deeper investigation of metacognitive factors, higher order thinking skills, samples of assignments and details of the linguistic challenges across the different contexts of English language needs then the quality of advice on emergent pedagogical issues would have been more informative. However, this was not possible under the parameters that the researcher was working in, so it is recommended for future research. Similarly, the research was not able to explore in-depth the nature of the impact of the cultural gaps and pedagogical issues related to students' education backgrounds and existing funds of knowledge that also appear to impact on AIS understandings of Western culture and approaches to learning. Thus, this would be a valuably area for further investigation.

Although, there were some females from different Arabic countries who answered the survey questions, there is a limitation to the study in that no females were interviewed. This was owing to the cultural restriction, as it is not culturally

appropriate in the Muslim culture for a male researcher to interview female students. As mentioned in Chapter three, the researcher did not have a funding to appoint a female person to interview female students. Thus, the more in-depth views of female Arabic background would be worthy of future investigation particularly because they may experience additional challenges in terms of, for instance their dress and cultural norms applying to participation. Therefore, the researcher notes that there is a need for future research by female researchers to include the views of female Muslim students studying overseas.

6.6 Conclusion

The study focused on examining the social and academic experiences on AIS in the Australian universities, and how these experiences affected on their academic success. Both genders, males and females, were surveyed but males only were interviewed, and a sample of Australian teachers were surveyed and interviewed too. Data were collected from students and teachers who were Australia wide and were from different learning and teaching levels. The findings support the argument for international students' journeys to study in a very different language and culture from their own to be conceptualised as a transitional pathway which should be considered from its very beginning in their home country. Conceptualising the journeys of the students in this study through the application of this metaphor allows the research recommendations to be presented according to the different stages along the route. By making these links as shown in Table 6.1, it is easy to see where the greater challenges are and provide policy and practice advice to provide the best preparation and support.

Table 6.1: Overview of Arabic international students' transitional path

Stages	Nature of the path	Support keys
Before arrival →	Teacher-centred with a lot of focus on memorisation and rote learning. Examination based. No communicative approach applied but much more focus on grammar. Formal language teaching with no classroom communication/interaction with peers. Rare or no technology utilised in learning contexts. Only listening to teachers, as their teachers are in the control of the classroom. Information transmission system of learning. Have not been used to or listened to the English language of native speakers.	Read about the nature of the Australian classroom learning system. Ask friends who are already in Australia about their beginning of life experiences in Australia. Search and join Facebook groups in Arabic and English if possible regarding the AIS who are studying overseas. Get training in the use of technology. Ask the university if possible at the early stages of getting the offer to study to be connected to mentor from the same language and culture to at least generally know the requirements of the study. While overseas ask the university if they can arrange

	Obliged to follow their teachers' opinions.	airport pick up service.
Upon arrival →	New airport system and processes. English language in use is unfamiliar. Shocked by the different Australian cultural norms and values. Feeling of abandonment. Casual/colloquial language usage - local expressions unknown. Few or no network of friends of domestic students. Segregated from the community/language and social barriers. Less social support having left home. Seek to integrate with friends from the same culture and language. Helped by their home culture friends more than their institutions. Completely different real estate system and very difficult to rent accommodation. Unfamiliar with the transport system and bus and train time tables. Accommodation and transport are very expensive. Insufficient information about cultural activities.	Use formal concepts to engage students since they have been used to this in their home countries. Engage students in the community through the off campus activities or help them to get home stay and/or volunteer work. Organise a mentor to advise about how to rent cheaper accommodation and where to easily rent. Students need to ask about the support services that are offered to them by their learning institutions. University staff need to tell students about how to get support re daily needs e.g., discounted transport cards. Help ESL students to meet Australians regularly to gain knowledge about the Australian cultural norms and use language. Students need to participate in cultural and sporting activities to help them create a network of friends. Email information about the university support offered to students and what to do when in need of help. Facebook information on the university page to guide students on the steps of their beginning life in Australia. Leaflets in their language if possible. Encourage and mix them up in cultural occasions and sport activities.
During study →	Different assessment system. Challenging classroom environment owing to the critical thinking approach.	Teachers need to be aware of understanding the background of learners to provide effective support strategies.

	Study affected by their past experience as passive learners. Need to adapt quickly to the independent learning system. Shocked from the teachers' roles as facilitators only. Required to construct knowledge and synthesize information. Class group talk seen as time wasting and not learning. Difficulty of understanding the local Australian expressions in the classroom. Shocked from the type of English used by their Australian teachers – included colloquialisms. Difficulty of adapting to technology for learning. Mental shift required from knowledge feeding system into independent learning system. Arabic female students cannot easily mix with male groups – different cultural norms. Difficult of getting a network of friends. Could not easily locate their religious and cultural places. May experience Lysgaard's U curve disillusionment.	Teaching and admin staff need to use the Standard Australian English when talking with international students. Teaching staff can paraphrase their talk into formal to let ESL students fully understand their speech. Their learning institutions can run workshops on Internet literacy training. Females need to be told separately about the way of teaching in Australia and to acculturate to group discussion. Institutions have the responsibility to train the teachers in creating supportive learning environment/transitional pedagogy. Train the admin staff to guide students to their cultural and religious places such as prayer rooms, Halal food shops, locating their communities. Access to support groups/services both formal and informal for those experiencing difficulties.

By using the metaphor of the transitional pathway to identify the stages of adjustment those involved with these students are better able to understand their experiences and kind of support strategies that are required at various times to maximise their ability to make a smooth transition into studying and achieving academically in the Australian context.

When the research findings are considered in relation to the research conceptual framework, which placed effective intercultural communication at its centre the major emergent issues in addition to the conceptualisation of the students' journeys as a transitional pathway the importance of English language proficiency, developing intercultural literacy and the students' ability to reconceptualise their view of teaching and learning and the demand to be independent learners emerged as major areas of consideration. The processes of mind mapping was used to draw together

and explore the outcomes of the research investigation into students' and their teachers' views of Arabic international students' social and the academic experiences. This mind map is shown in Figure 6.1. The four major areas are shown in different colours each with the supporting key ideas linking back to the research findings. It can be seen that the demand for independent learning relates to both the need to reconceptualise teaching and learning and also their level of English language proficiency.

Effective Intercultural Communication

Intercultural Literacy
- Culture shock
  - Lysgaard's U-curve hypothesis
  - Unfamiliar environment
  - Lack of language and cultural knowledge to find and access survival services
  - First impressions- arrival support

Transitional pathway
- Reconceptualising of students in a transition pathway
- Knowledge of home and host country's culture and pedagogy
- Need for transitional pedagogy
- Level of support for students and teachers
- Students' and teachers' mutual needs
- Inclusive approaches and opportunities for interactions with peers and community

English language proficiency
- Different usage demands from home country experience
- Australian standard English
- Local colloquialisms, idioms, dialects
- Different literacy social practices for education and daily life
- Different language for learning and study skills
- Scaffolded learning/dialogic pedagogical talk

Reconceptualising teaching and learning
- Students' acquisition of a new paradigm
- New language and concepts for learning, metalanguage
- Cognitive shift challenge
- Changing self concept and view of self as a learner
- Different perception of the role of teacher
- Teachers' professional learning
- Knowledge of students as learners

Demand for independent learning
- Cooperative learning/collaborative project based learning
- Critical thinking/ higher order thinking skills
- Use of ICTs and Internet
- Shift from examination, memorization, and rote based learning to more authentic techniques
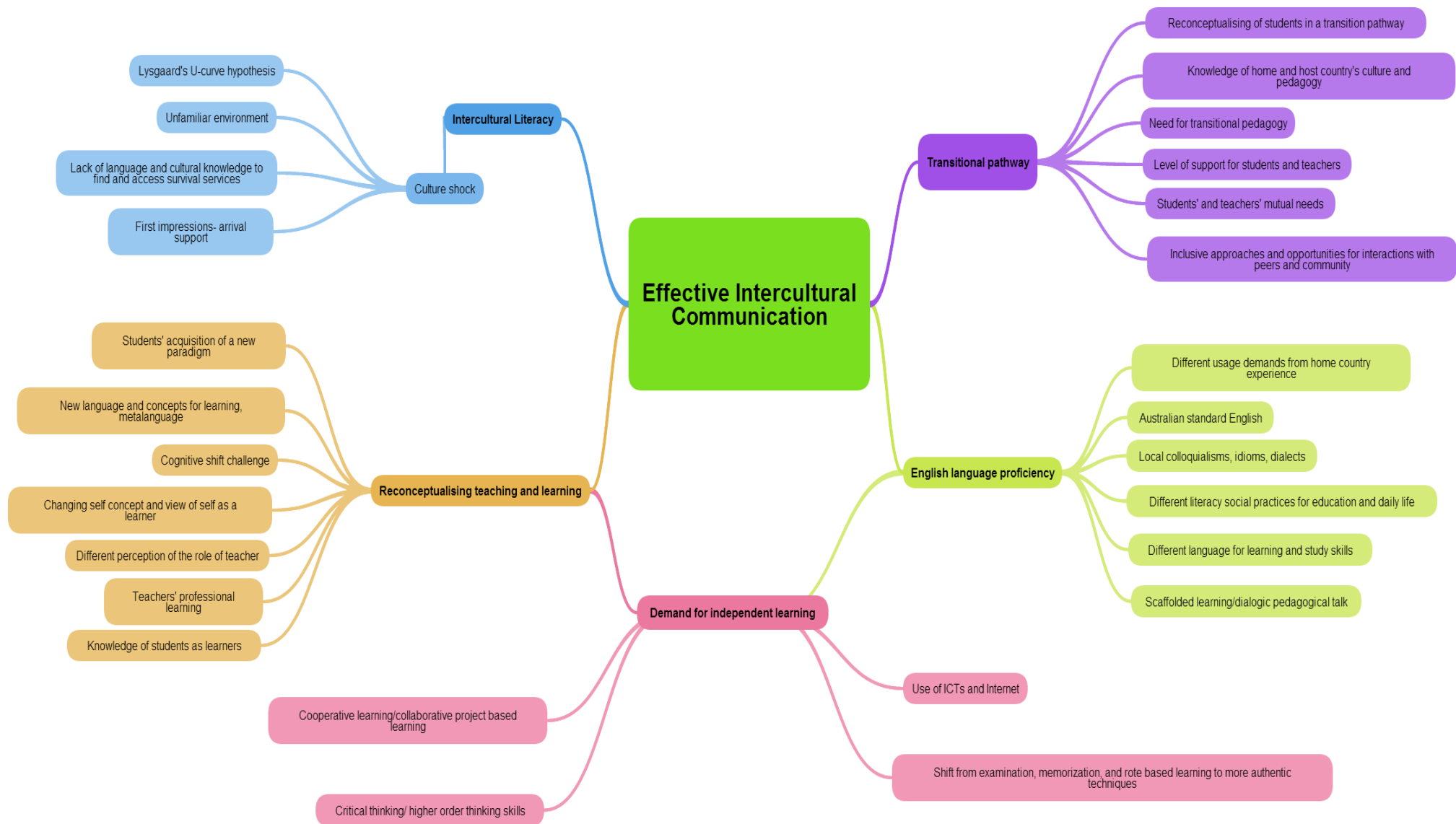
Figure 6.1: Mind map of the research findings in relation to effective intercultural communication

The mind map above shows the pillars of achieving the 'intercultural communication for both students and teachers in order to have a knowledge base of each other's system. First is the intercultural literacy where the study found that students have a culture when they started first started their life in Australian. Preceding that is the airport experience specifically with students with low level of English because they found it was difficult for them to ask and find their ways in the new environment. In such a case, the students were found that they started the depression period of Lysgaard in which students were shocked from the Australian system with less support from their learning institutions. In addition to that, the lack of students' knowledge about the Australian system caused them problems and they found themselves that they need to be independent in the Australian learning system. This is owing to their stemming from stark different learning system. The research made support keys which are called 'transitional pathway' to help students and the Australian universities to better achieve the academic success of AIS in Australia. The support keys are illustrated in Table 6.1.

The aim of the thesis was to look at the social and the academic experiences of AIS in the Australian learning system. The study explored that students have pre-arrival study and living experiences which are completely different from the Australian experiences. Table 6.1 shows the outcomes of the study which illustrate students' and teachers' views before the students' arrival, during their arrival, and after their arrival to Australia. The research found that students were learning in a tradition system with no focus on the communication in the classroom or utilising the group discussion with their peers. They also need to just listen to their teachers and they are not free to debate in the classroom. In addition to that, they were rarely using ICTs in their learning contexts. The thesis concluded with support keys in the Table above to help AIS cope and adjust to the new life and the new culture because they were found that they experienced issues on their arrival to Australia. These keys show that students need to study and understand the learning system before heading to study in Australia, as this will increase their knowledge base about the host culture. Other issues that were found when students arrive at the Australian land. From the first day they landed on the airport, they experienced issues with the local expressions used by the Australian people. The study recommended a support key to the Australian universities to help pick up students from the airport, as this will decrease the culture shock and the level of challenge especially for those who are equipped with low level of English. In addition, the other suggestion is that, students need to search and if possible create a network of friends who are already in the overseas country to gain a better idea of people from the same culture and language, who already might have faced the transitional experience and ask them about how they coped.

The thesis concluded that, students during their arrival, they need to shift their minds being rote learners into cognitive ones where they are required to be independent and look at the Australian teachers to facilitate their learning only. Students need to have knowledge of the background of the Australian learning system in order to find ways of coping and adjusting to the new pedagogy. The new pedagogy required them to be active learners and participate in discussions; therefore, the out of cultural activities will help increase their English level and decrease their depression in the host country. Figure 6.1 indicated that the 'English language proficiency' is one of the

pillars for achieving the effective intercultural communication. If students and teachers achieved understanding each other's cultural values and customs, then students would be able to have a dialogical ability with people from different cultures. By doing so, they then be able to shift from the rote learning in which they were only listening to their teachers into a higher order thinking system and collaborative learning with the utilisation of the ICT in their learning. In relation to the outcomes of the views of students and teachers, this thesis suggested supporting keys to AIS and the Australian universities which based on the sociocultural theory to decrease the depression of students and integrate them into the Australian culture of learning and living.

As a result and according to the outcomes in Figure 6.1 and Table 6.1, it seems that AIS are in need of help to achieve their academic success in the host country. In a nutshell the mind map in this chapter showed the connection between theories to achieve effective intercultural communication between students and the Australian universities.

This chapter is based upon the conceptual framework that was used in the literature review chapter to help interpret the findings chapter. The study found that students are encountering a new culture and studying and a new pedagogy which was a shock for them. In order to lessen the culture shock and cope with the new learning system AIS and the Australian universities need to achieve effective intercultural communication in which they understand each other's needs. These needs have been discovered in this thesis via a mixed methodology and that was through the snowball recruitment for surveys and purposive for interviews with both AIS and the Australian teachers. The Survey Monkey tool was used to analyse the surveys data satirically and the NVivo software was used to analyse the interviews thematically. The NVivo software was complex at the beginning, however the researcher found it very interesting to read and reread the views of the interviewees in order to create nodes and link them up to codes as themes. In a nutshell, this chapter discussed the conclusion of the thesis with the findings of the study and suggested some recommendations to AIS and the Australian universities as support keys to better help these students to achieve their academic success as this will increase their number and choose Australia as their destination of study.

It is important to reconceptualise these students' journey as a transitional pathway. It makes it clear that the students go through a process of adaptation, which can be emotionally upsetting but if they were more aware of the nature of the pathway they would be better able to prepare. The research highlights the need for all stakeholders, including students and teachers, to be able to differentiate between both the students' home country culture and pedagogy and that in Australia and to be able to talk about it. This means that those teaching should focus on providing a transitional pedagogy as part of the support. Thus, there is a mutual need if AIS are to be able to do their best and not be disillusioned.

Part of this mutuality relates to the need for intercultural literacy in order to achieve effective intercultural communication, which is the central to this research. As the mind map shows the students did experience culture shock. This was because of the unfamiliar environment, and finding that their English language and cultural knowledge was not enough to allow them to meet their needs. Their first impressions

upon arrival had a big influence. If they were lucky enough to be met and accommodation arranged it made a very big difference at that stage. Nevertheless, it was found that AIS in this study did move into Lysgaard's stage of disillusionment. Those who had their immediate family and home culture friends, and better social and academic support were better equipped to adapt and continue their plans to study.

The importance of AIS being able to reconceptualise their ideas about teaching and learning also emerged from the research. As the mind map shows AIS do need to come to grips with a new pedagogical paradigm. This seems to need a major cognitive shift, which is a major challenge because of the strict format of information transmission view of learning they have experienced at home. They need to be made aware of why the constructivist approach to pedagogy is seen as learning. With this comes new concepts and language that is used in the teaching process. They have to change their perceptions of the role of the teacher. Related to this is the importance of teachers doing professional learning about Arabic international students' home country/culture and pedagogy. All teachers need to have knowledge of their students as learners and this would contribute to helping them more effectively during their transition.

As noted already the mind map shows that a major challenge for AIS in the new pedagogical paradigm is to be an independent learner. This is a very demanding shift because they have to move from memorising information and being tested in examinations to being assessed in a different ways that involve critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. They need to understand why their learning involves discussions and collaborating in projects-based learning. Then they have the pressure of having to use ICTs and researching on the Internet. Again this needs more independent thinking and evaluation skills.

Finally, the research discovered that the students' English language proficiency was not sufficient to meet their needs. From their arrival they found that there were different usage demands from their home country where the learning was not communicative. They did not spend time interacting and conversing in class. They mainly used textbooks. The research found that they needed Australian Standard English and they needed to understand the language in use for learning and study in the Australian way. They needed to appreciate the way teachers teach by 'scaffolding' students' learning, which means they discuss, interact and question.

They also needed to understand local colloquialisms, idioms and dialects if they were to integrate with Australians in their learning institutions and the local community as well. Because they had learnt English as a foreign language in their home countries, when they came to use their English in Australia they found it was inadequate to deal with the different literacy social practices required for both education and daily life. Therefore, as numbers of students from the Arab world are on the increase in Australia it is timely for education institutions, educators and governments to review their policy and practices for Arabic international students to make sure that they are supported in the best possible way. It is also important for the students themselves and their communities and all stakeholders to be more creative in addressing the challenges and the recommendations outlined here in the context of the transitional pathway.

6.7 Contribution to Knowledge

These research findings make a significant and original contribution to extending current theoretical knowledge with regards to the nature, scope and depth of intercultural literacy necessary for AIS to transit more smoothly into study in Western society. This study has progressed the knowledge about this particular group of international students, who have increased in numbers in Australian tertiary education, by taking account of both students' and lecturers' views across Australia, unlike other studies. It has allowed a more in-depth consideration of the social and academic impact of these students' experiences and highlighted the need to conceptualise their journey as a transitional pathway that should be of concern from prior to their arrival. As noted earlier this metaphor of transitional pathway facilitates identification of the 'route', the 'challenges on the path', the 'signposts' and the kind of 'way stations' that might be most enabling to smooth the journey. Emerging from this are the support keys the research suggests are necessary at each stage. The recommendations that flow from the research will help evaluate current policy and practices in the area of international students' studying in Australian institutions, and particularly for this group who are more susceptible to culture shock because of the difficult cultural and pedagogical challenges they face. The recommendations extend to Arabic international students themselves to allow them to make more informed choices and help to ensure their journey is less stressful, so that they can adjust more effectively and timely to the Australian social and academic lifestyle.

Through the consideration of social identity theory and sociocultural theory the research showed how these students were initially challenged in their need to preserve their social identity while at the same time they experienced acculturation demands necessary for their social and educational success in the new culture. These findings confirmed the relevance of Hofstede's four dimensions of culture to the context of these students in helping to understand the social and academic differences that impact on their transitional experiences and their difficulties with coming to grips with a constructivist approach to learning that is student-centred compared with their home country's teacher-centred approach.

Moreover, the research added to the body of knowledge in terms of these students needing to reconceptualise their beliefs about teaching and learning and make a cognitive shift to understand the constructivist approach to learning and the idea of learning independently. Related to this is the study's illumination of the complexity of English language demands placed on these students. It showed that the English as a foreign language that they brought with them was insufficient even though they had met the required standard for their course. The research showed that there are three areas of English demands, including using Standard Australian English for academic purposes, acquiring the new language and concepts for learning related to the constructivist approach to pedagogy and online learning, and the Australian colloquial English that they met with locally and even used by their teachers in class. It shows that all of this is part of the need to develop intercultural literacy, which is central to the research and importantly highlights the need for teachers and Arabic international students' peers to also be informed about AIS home culture and pedagogy.

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Appendices
Appendix1: Students' Consent Form: Survey

Dear friends,
I would appreciate your participation in this survey and you may be the winner of the 300 AUD$ lucky draw. There will be a lucky draw and you will be contacted if you are a winner. Make sure you mention your mobile number and name in question two to enter the draw.

I am at present a postgraduate (Doctor of Philosophy) student at the University of Southern Queensland. I am writing to you to request your participation in a research project entitled:
"An investigation of the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian tertiary education"

I would value very highly your input into this research as it aims to:
• Explore the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian universities.
• Investigate how best to support Arabic international students when they arrive in Australia.
• Identify how Arabic international students are coping with the Australian learning system.
• See the effects of being in a new culture and using a different language.

Your participation is entirely voluntary but I value highly your potential input to the project since it will make a very valuable contribution to improving learning experiences for international students during their period of study in Australia. This will help me to make recommendations to both students and universities to lessen students' problems.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and if so all information relating to your involvement in the project would then be destroyed.

The subsequent research report will be made available to you on request or will be forwarded to all students who supply their contact address for this purpose. It will not identify you or anyone else who participates. All data will be securely stored and your name will be replaced with a code number, ensuring your anonymity at all times in keeping with the recognised ethical standards that apply to research in Australia. Thank you for considering this request. If you are willing to participate, please sign this form and email it back to me.

Name of participant……………………………………………….......

Date……………………..

Should you have any questions, before, during or after participation or you would like to discuss some aspects of the research, please contact me: Telephone: (07) 46315405; Email: Bassim.Almansouri@usq.edu.au

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer at the following contact details.

Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350.
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: ethics@usq.edu.au

Appendix2: Teachers' consent form: Survey

Dear teachers

I am at present a postgraduate (Doctor of Philosophy) student at the University of Southern Queensland. I am writing to you to request your participation in a research project entitled:

"An investigation of the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian tertiary education"

I would value very highly your input into this research as it aims to:
• Explore the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian universities.
• Investigate how best to support Arabic international students when they arrive in Australia.
• Identify how Arabic international students are coping with the Australian learning system.
• See the effects of being in a new culture and using a different language.

Your participation is entirely voluntary but I value highly your potential input to the project since it will make a very valuable contribution to improving learning experiences for Arabic international students during their period of study in Australia. This will help me to make recommendations to both students and universities to lessen students' problems.

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and if so all information relating to your involvement in the project would then be destroyed.

The subsequent research report will be made available to you on request or will be forwarded to all teachers who supply their contact address for this purpose. It will not identify you or anyone else who participates. All data will be securely stored and your name will be replaced with a code number, ensuring your anonymity at all times in keeping with the recognised ethical standards that apply to research in Australia. Thank you for considering this request. If you are willing to participate, please sign this from and email it back to me.

Name of participant………………………………………………........

Date………………………..

Should you have any questions, before, during or after participation or you would like to discuss some aspect of the research, please contact me: Telephone: (07) 46315405, Email: Bassim.Almansouri@usq.edu.au

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer at the following contact details.

Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350

Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: ethics@usq.edu.au

Appendix3: Students' Consent Form: Interviews

Project title: **"An investigation of the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian tertiary education"**

Dear students,

My name is Bassim Almansouri and I am studying for the Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba Campus. This research project is important for my degree, which I am undertaking under the supervision of Shirley O'Neill and Warren Midgley in the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project because your participation will be beneficial to help me to discover the challenges that fellow international students may face while they are studying in Australian universities.

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of Arabic international students studying in the Australian university education. The research will investigate a range of factors, such as social and cultural expectations, the academic experiences and the physical surroundings. The aims of the project are to ascertain how a new university education system and learning environment affect the academic performance and social integration of international students in Australia. In addition, the project will investigate how Arabic international students cope with a new learning system and in the process adapt to a new culture.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate that you are aware of and accept these conditions:
- I have read this Informed Consent Form and the nature and purpose of the research project, if I requested such information; the requirements have been explained to me.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

Name of participant………………………………………………………………......
Date…………………………...

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer at the following contact details.
Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: *ethics@usq.edu.au*

Appendix4: Teachers' Consent Form: Interviews

Project title: **"An investigation of the social and academic experiences of Arabic international students in Australian tertiary education"**

Dear teacher,

My name is Bassim Almansouri and I am studying for my Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba Campus. This research project is important for my degree which I am undertaking under the supervision of Shirley O'Neill and Warren Midgley in the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project because your participation will be beneficial to help me to discover the challenges that fellow international students, particularly Arabic international students, may face while they are studying in Australian universities.

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of Arabic international students studying in Australian university education. The research will investigate a range of factors such as social and cultural expectations, the academic experiences and the physical surroundings. The aims of the project are to ascertain how a new university education system and learning environment affect the academic performance and social integration of Arabic international students in Australia. In addition, the project will investigate how these students cope with a new learning system and in the process adapt to a new culture.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate that you are aware of and accept these conditions:

- I have read this Informed Consent Form and the nature and purpose of the research   project, if I requested such information; the requirements have been explained to me.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will   not affect my status now or in the future.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not   be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

Name of participant……………………………………………………........

Date……………………...

If you have any ethical concerns with how the research is being conducted or any queries about your rights as a participant, please feel free to contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Officer at the following contact details.

Ethics and Research Integrity Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees
University of Southern Queensland
West Street, Toowoomba 4350
Ph: +61 7 4631 2690
Email: _**ethics@usq.edu.au**_

Appendix5: Students' Survey Questions

1. Demographic information
1. Which is your country of origin?
2. Are you a male or a female?
   a. Male   b. Female
3. In which state or territory are you in Australia at the moment?
4. How long have you been studying in Australia?
   1. Less than a year   2. One year   2. Two years 3. Three years   4. Four years
5. In what institution do you currently study in Australia?
1. University   2. Tafe   3. Other
6. What course are you studying at the moment?

2. Thinking about learning in your native country, choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you have:
1. studied English in your native country *as a second language
*as a foreign language
2. been taught English *as grammar
*as communication activities
3. listened to videos and audios during English lessons
4. used computer and Internet to assist you in your study needs.
5. been taught about the four English language skills *speaking
*writing
*listening
*reading
6. been able to say your opinion and debate freely in the classroom
7. been taught through * memorisation
* critical thinking
8. learnt English *as a formal language
*as a casual language
9. found Australian methods of teaching to be the same as in your native country
10. found your teacher to be *a facilitator of learning
*a controller of learning
11. felt that praise and encouragement are usually given to students who are *weak

*students who are good
12. worked on projects and assignments *as part of a team
*as an independent learner
13. found the way of exams in your native country to be the same as in Australia.
14. been required to follow all the teacher's instructions in the classroom

3. Thinking about learning in Australia, choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you are:
1. studying English in Australia *as a second language
* as a foreign language
2. learning English *as grammar
*as communication activities
3. listening to videos and audios during English lessons

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4. using computer and Internet to assist you in your study needs.

5. learning about the four English language skills *speaking

*writing

*listening

*reading

6.to say your opinion freely in the classroom

7. learning through * Memorisation

* critical thinking

8. learning English *as a formal language

*as a casual language

9. seeing your teacher *as a facilitator of learning

*as a controller of learning

10. feeling that praise and encouragement are usually given to *students who are weak

*students who are good

11. working on projects and assignments *as part of a team

*as an independent learner

12. required to follow all the teacher's instructions in the classroom

4. Thinking about your arrival in Australia, to what extent did your Australian learning institution support you when needed help with:

1. the airport arrival

2. finding accommodation

3. getting Islamic personal needs

4. arriving in the faculty

5. locating your cultural celebrations

6. finding a mentor to help you settling in the community

5. Thinking about living in Australia, to what extent do you:

1. speak and communicate with the Australian people in your daily life

2. meet and talk with Australian local students

3. find it easy to understand the Australian culture

4. think you cope with life in Australia

5. understand the Australian slang

6. get your traditional food in the area where you live

7. meet native English speakers outside of your class

6. Thinking about learning in an Australian educational institution when you first arrived, to what extent is it easy to

1. deal with the university and its system on arrival

2. ask questions in your classes

3. communicate in English for your everyday needs

4. write in English academic writing style

5. move from your native country learning system to the Australian learning system.

6. express your ideas in spoken English

7. understand the Australian teaching strategies

8. feel motivated with the Australian learning system

9. join out of class cultural occasions to help your language

7. Thinking about studying away from your native country, to what extent do you prefer to:

1. live with family members while you are studying abroad.
2. be away from your native country to study.
3. engage with Australian society to make new friends.
4. study in a country with a different culture from your own.
5. mix with Australians
6. mix with your people from your country

8. Open questions

1. Please list the five most difficult problems you have faced in Australia.
2. Please list the five most important facilities you think your learning institution should have to help you settle in Australia.
3. Please list the five most important strategies you use to help you cope in Australia.
4. Please list the five most effective ways that teachers could help you learn better in Australia.

Appendix6: Teachers' Survey Questions

1. Demographic information
1. How long have you been teaching?
less than one year   2-3 years   more than three years
2. What is your major role? e.g. teaching English as a second language, lecturing in mathematics
3. Language background
Are you a native English speaker?
yes   no
4. Education sector
At which kind of learning institution do you teach?
University   TAFE other
5. In which country do you teach at the moment?

2. Thinking about teaching international students, choose a point between the two descriptors below that show the extent to which you are:
1. teaching English *as grammar
*as communication activities
2. using videos and audios during English lessons
3. using computer and Internet to assist your students in study needs
4. teaching the four English language skills *speaking
*writing
*listening
*reading
5.allowing your students to say their opinions freely in the classroom
6. teaching through * Memorisation
* critical thinking
7. teaching English *as a formal language
*as a casual language
8. seeing yourself in the classroom *as a facilitator of learning
*as a controller of learning
9. praising and encouraging *students who are weak
*students who are good
10. giving work to students on projects and assignments *as part of a team
*as independent learners
11. requiring your students to follow all your instructions in the classroom

3. Thinking about international students while they live in Australia, to what extent do you think international students are:
1. speaking and communicating with the Australian people
2. meeting and talking with Australian local students
3. finding it easy to understand the Australian culture
4. coping with life in Australia
5. understanding the Australian slang
6. getting the traditional food in the area where they live
7. meeting native English speakers outside of the class

4. Thinking about international students' learning in an Australian educational institution when they first arrive, to what extent is it easy for them to:
1. deal with the university and its system on arrival
2. ask questions in the classroom
3. communicate in English for everyday needs
4. write in English academic writing style
5. express their ideas in spoken English
6. understand the Australian teaching strategies
7. feel motivated with Australian learning system
8. join out of class cultural occasions to help their language

5. Open-ended questions requesting your opinion about how to improve international students' learning and social experiences:
1. Please list the five most effective strategies to teach international students.
2. Please list the five most important strategies that work best for your teaching of international students
3. Please note any other comments or advice for improving learning and social experiences of international students specifically Arabic international students if you have in your class during their study in Australia.
4. Please list the five most effective strategies that you use to help international students learn better.

Appendix7: Students' interview questions

Students' interviews opening questions

    a. Can you tell me about how you have come to be in Australia?
    b. How have you found getting settled in Australia?
    c. How has it been like studying in a new country or writing in a different language?

The questions below are related to the students' social experiences in Australia:

1. Have you got support either from friends or from the university and does this support benefit you in your life in Australia?
2. Airport help: how did you find yourself in the airport when you landed in Australia? Were you welcomed by any person?
3. When you arrived at the city to live, how was the accommodation process? How did you find accommodation: did you find it by yourself or did friends find it on your behalf?
4. How were the speaking and communication with Australians when you first arrived and after a period of time?
5. When you are in touch with Australians, do you understand the Australian slang either on or off campus?
6. Have you been welcomed by your faculty people? And how is your integration with them?
7. Can you describe the culture in the classroom in Australia and is it different from your culture back home?
8. At the beginning how was the experience of meeting the Islamic personal needs of you and your family?
9. Do you participate in the cultural activities when they happen off campus to mix with Australians or with people from different cultures?
10. Which people do you prefer to mix with – from your country or Australians – and why?
11. How did you find the Australian culture and language: were they easy or hard and why?
12. Compared to when you first came, what is your view about the Australian system: was it the same if yes or no why, such as the learning system, transport and accommodation?
13. Were there chances to practise English with natives either on campus or off campus? And your communication and speaking: were they the same on your arrival and after the period of your arrival?
14. Can you tell me what factors encouraged or discouraged you from classroom participation?

The questions below are dealing with students' situations in the Australian learning system:

1. How did your country's learning system compare to the Australian learning system from the learning perspective?
2. Were you using computers and the Internet in your country? And in Australia: is it easy to use computers and the Internet in your study?

3. Do you think that the role of teacher is the same in your country and in Australia?
4. Is the system of exams the same in your country and in Australia?
5. Have you met the casual and slang English in Australia and how did you feel about it: were you happy with it and could you cope with this kind of English and had you met this at home?
6. Does the Australian learning use grammar or communication activities? Was this the same in your country?
7. When you arrived did you find it easy to adjust to the new learning environment?
8. Was it easy to deal with the Australia university when you first arrived and how about the system?
9. Have you received any social or academic support from your university such as meeting your Islamic needs, finding a community and getting Halal food and academically such as accessing the learning centre, the academic workshops and the requirements of the new learning system?
10. How do you work on assignments in Australia: do you work with groups or by yourself only and is that the same in your country?
11. The skills and the way of learning in the Australian learning system: have you met such a system before?
12. Tell me whether you participated in classroom discussions in Australia. If yes, what are they about and do you normally participate in them? And your level of participation: was it the same when you arrived in comparison to after a period of time in Australia?
13. Did you have classroom discussions in your country? And was it the same to Australia?
14. How was your English when you first arrived and do you think your English level was good at that time of arrival and did it impede you from talking in Australia?
15. If you faced adjustments, what assisted you to overcome these adjustments as an international student?

Suggested questions

1. Did you have any experiences while you were studying in Australia to share with me?
2. Do you think there is something we did not cover in this interview to help discover the educational and social experiences that happened with AIS?

Appendix8: Teachers' Interviews Questions

The first six questions are opening questions:

1. Have you taught AIS?
2. What do you know about their learning system back home?
3. How did you find teaching AIS in comparison to teaching other international students?
4. Can you please tell me how AIS are finding the Australian system's learning strategies?
5. Can you tell me the about students' learning situation within the learner-centred environment?
6. How are the students' interaction and integration within the Australian culture?

The questions below deal with students' situations in the Australian learning system:

1. In your experience, how would you describe the academic writing of AIS?
2. Their adjustment process with the Australian learning environment: can you describe that for me, please?
3. How is their understanding of the colloquial or the slang English?
4. How is their participation in the classroom in group discussions, in online discussion boards, in group assignments and in answering your questions?
5. Do you think that students have a chance to meet and speak with natives to practise English either in your class or on campus and do they prefer to mix with co-nationals or with Australians?
6. What is your role in the classroom?
7. To what extent do you use computers and the Internet or any technology in your classroom?
8. Which skill do you focus more on - grammar or communication activities - in your teaching? And why?
9. How is the students' freedom to debate and give their opinions in your classroom?
10. Do you normally encourage students who are good or weak ones? And why?
11. Can you describe for me, please, how you test them and which kinds of exams you use and whether you use assignments in your testing system?
12. Has moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred strategies been easy for them? And do they need help as much as the local students?
13. In your opinion which strategies do students need to follow to cope with the Australian learning system?
14. What do you think is the best strategic preparation that AIS need to follow to achieve better academically in Australian university education?

The questions below deal with students' culture, and the first are opening questions:

1. Do you know if it is easy for students to get their cultural food or Halal Food? And have you heard from them any stories about that?
2. How are their speaking and communication with you and with others when they first started and after a period following their arrival?
3. Can you please tell me about their situation in the Australian culture?

4. With whom do you think they prefer to integrate and communicate more: with Australians or with co-nationals? And why?
5. Do they have homesickness, and who is having more homesickness than the other: single students or married students?
6. In their uncertainty about new subjects, do they prefer to get direct answers from you as a teacher or do they prefer to search and get the information by themselves?

Any suggestion for them to improve their learning ability?

Appendix9: List of Arab States

1. Algeria
2. Bahrain
3. Djibouti
4. Egypt
5. Iraq
6. Jordan
7. Kuwait
8. Lebanon
9. Libya
10. Malta
11. Mauritania
12. Morocco
13. Oman
14. Palestine
15. Qatar
16. Saudi Arabia
17. Somalia
18. Sudan
19. Syrian Arab Republic
20. Tunisia
21. United Arab Emirates
22. Yemen