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When English is Performed Rather Than Spoken: The Narrative Inquiry of Saudi M.A. Students' Experiences with Pragmatic Competence

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WHEN ENGLISH IS PERFORMED RATHER THAN SPOKEN:

THE NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF SAUDI M.A. STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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iii

Title: When English is Performed Rather Than Spoken: The Narrative Inquiry of Saudi M.A. Students' Experiences with Pragmatic Competence

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In this qualitative research study, the author investigated the pragmatic experiences of five Saudi graduate students as they were pursuing their Master's degrees in English in one American university. The author used narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to co-construct the five participants' narratives in terms of sociality (type of interaction), temporality (time of interaction), and locality (place of interaction) dimensions. The study recalled the students' past experiences in Saudi educational contexts, explored how they were negotiating pragmatic experiences in the United States, and shed light on how the participants felt that these experiences might impact their future pedagogical practices in Saudi Arabia. The study was conducted to promote awareness of pragmatics among Saudi teachers and professors, so their students could gain the English grammatical skills coupled with the sociolinguistic knowledge needed to communicate with others appropriately. The narrative inquiry utilized four collection methods (i.e., individual interviews, an electronic blog, multiple self-recorded reflections, and a focus group). The data was collected over seven months and yielded 12 hours of audio recordings from three of the methods (totaling 267 pages of transcriptions) and 58 pages of blog postings.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first two chapters set the scene for the research by introducing the background of the study and reviewing relevant literature

on pragmatics. The third chapter details the methodological layout, including the author's positionality, a description of the research context, and the data collection methods. The fourth chapter presents the narratives of the five participants in separate sections to keep their voices as unique individuals.

The fifth chapter illustrates a number of themes that emerged across several narratives. The study findings highlight that more efforts are needed in teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia to integrate pragmatic topics in their pedagogies. Politeness, indirect speech, negative transfer, and nonverbal communications are some of the common challenges the participants faced during their interactions in the United States. This chapter suggests some pedagogical implications for English teachers in the Saudi EFL context (e.g., broadening their pragmatic knowledge through self-study, using materials that mirror authentic language, and arranging ample participation opportunities).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you my Lord, Allah, for the long nights that turned into mornings, the great friends that turned into family, and the wishful dreams that turned into realities.

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Special thanks go to my study partners on this journey, the five Saudi inspiring men and women. This dissertation is not only my work. It is also theirs, and I am grateful to them for sharing it with me.

Finally, heartfelt thanks go to my family for their unlimited and unconditional love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Hostess (to a foreign visitor who has given her a small present):

"Oh, you really shouldn't have!"

Visitor (anxious and puzzled): "But I… Why not?"

(Riley, 1989, p. 236)

Saudi Anecdotes

Ali[1] (pseudonym) went to a Greek restaurant to have dinner with two of his friends. When the waitress came to take their order, Ali firmly told her, "Bring a bowl of salad for two." The waitress looked taken aback by the way Ali was ordering but did not say anything. Later, she came to check if they needed anything else. Ali bluntly asked, "Do you have mayonnaise?" At this moment, one of his friends turned to him and said, "What happened to your manners, Ali?"

Safa, another Saudi student, did not lack any politeness in her story; it was quite the opposite. When an employee came to fix her TV cable, she asked him if he would like to have some chocolate. He responded, "No, thank you. I'm good." Safa did not take *no* as an answer, so she offered chocolate again–as she would do in Saudi Arabia–but this time his response came with more of a serious tone, "Really, I'm okay!" Safa felt embarrassed and turned red-faced.

Anwer also experienced a cross-cultural communication breakdown when he was shopping at a mall. When the cashier scanned his items and told him the total, he said a phrase he used to jokingly say when shopping in Saudi Arabia, "Alright, I'll pay you next time." The cashier did not find that funny as she was reaching out to call the manager on

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[1] All names and institutions listed in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

1

the phone. Realizing that he made a scene, Anwer quickly apologized to the cashier, telling her that he meant no harm, and that it was supposed to be a joke. The cashier did not look relaxed even after Anwar's apology. As Anwer pointed out, this communication breakdown could be due to the fact that he was lacking some sort of formality expected when engaging in business.

Formality, however, is not always preferred when interacting with others, especially when speaking to friends and acquaintances. Naser, who lived at the university dormitory, recalled that his American roommates once told him that he was speaking to them as if he would be speaking to a librarian (i.e., speaking very formally). What they told him was: "Naser! You don't have to talk to us in this way. We are just students like you!"

Reading a book about conversation techniques, Thamer came across a chapter that discussed how people use words like *well*, *so*, and *okay* to indicate that a conversation is about to end, as in someone saying, "Well, I should let you finish your work." Reflecting on his experiences, he said that the chapter made him wonder how many times he had missed a cue to end a conversation, which led to him leaving a wrong impression on others.

Additionally, Thamer reflected that he had a problem identifying English compliments. One time, he wanted to rent a compact car, but the only available car was a red sports car. When he drove to a coffee house that night, a passing woman saw him exiting the car and said to him, "That's a nice car!" He started justifying that it was a

rental car, and that he did not plan to rent a sports car in the first place, which made it an

unnecessarily long response to a rather common compliment[2].

The aforementioned anecdotes largely illuminate the types of pragmatic mistakes

Saudi students make as they attempt to present themselves as fluent and competent

speakers of English in the context of the United States. In these situations, the students

are seen relying largely on their successful past experiences with English, which most

likely were classroom experiences. The fact that each of the students in these anecdotes

has a Bachelor's degree in English makes them feel self-assured that they will be

successful in communication. However, after coming to the United States, they see

themselves stumbling over their words and being less confident about their

communication skills. Such stories should raise red flags about the possible reasons for

these pragmatic failures.

When I attended a workshop facilitated by Noriko Ishihara[3], a leading scholar in

the field of pragmatics, I had the opportunity to reflect on some of the aforementioned

anecdotes and connect the students' pragmatic mistakes to possible causes. The

pragmatic mistake that occurred in Ali's story, when he addressed the waitress, "Bring a

bowl of salad for two," was possibly due to his limited knowledge of the social norms

expected in the American society. By giving direct orders without saying *please* or *thank

you*, Ali did not adhere to the politeness expected between a customer and a restaurant

waitress. Similarly, Anwer's pragmatic mistake can be associated to the negative transfer

of Arabic socio-cultural norms. In Saudi Arabia, to say to a cashier, "I'll pay you next

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[2] These anecdotes on pages 1 and 2 are adapted form a public blog created for the American English
Grammar course, taught in 2010 (http://engl692.wordpress.com/)
[3] A work shop entitled "Language and Culture in Sync: Developing Learners' Sociocultural Competence"
held in The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) in Minneapolis, MN in July
25–29, 2011

time" can be easily interpreted as a joke. Apparently, this joke was not comprehensible enough for the cashier to take it in a funny way.

In the second chapter of this work, I discuss in more details these two causes of pragmatic failure and other additional causes, such as overgeneralization of the perceived pragmatic norms, effects of classroom teaching and materials, and learners' attitudes towards the perceived English pragmatic norms (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Lihui & Jianbin, 2010; LoCastro, 2003).

Researchable Moments

Many English language learners can describe situations where they felt hopeless, embarrassed, or awkward; furthermore, English teachers may also know many stories that show communication failures resulting from cross-cultural communication breakdowns. As a matter of fact, I have my own story that indicates how it was my failures with communication, rather than my successes, that made me interested in pragmatics.

As I was studying in Colorado, I attended a presentation by a well-known researcher in pragmatics, Andrew D. Cohen, where he spoke about pragmatics in relation to different disciplines. After the presentation was over, I ran into my classmate, Hannah, who excitedly asked me, "What do you think of the presentation, Fahad? Did you see how he set it up?" I got a bit irritated, and I responded, "Of course, I did!" A few minutes later, I joined my other classmate, Husam, and I immediately told him about Hannah, who asked me a question to check whether I understood the presentation or not. Husam looked at me and said, "This just tells me you did not understand what the presentation was about." I looked up at the ceiling, and in my mind I was thinking: "Hannah was not

challenging my ability to follow a presentation, but rather indirectly showing her enthusiasm for it." Although I was an advanced learner of English pursuing my M.A. in TESOL, I experienced a huge pragmatic failure. While my understanding of English structures was excellent, I did not show equivalent understanding of communication rules in English.

Research Questions

The aforementioned background, which involved my own observation of myself and other Saudi students studying abroad, guided my research to focus on studying the past English learning experiences of a number of Saudi students who finished their Bachelor's degrees back home and travelled to pursue their Master's degrees in the United States. Through my research, I investigated these Saudi students' cultural and pragmatic encounters as they were adjusting to living in their new American context. Furthermore, my research attempted to shed light on how the past and present experiences the students had with pragmatics might influence their future pedagogical practices in Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, my research aimed to provide effective insight into the following two research questions:

1. How have the five Saudi students understood and experienced pragmatics in their native educational contexts?
2. How are they understanding and navigating issues surrounding pragmatic usage in their current Master's degree programs in the United States?

Statement of the Problem

In Saudi Arabia, the importance of learning English is rapidly increasing especially as we are living in this era of globalization. Effective learning of English

should provide learners with the skills needed to effectively and meaningfully communicate with other speakers. Second language learning pedagogy has undergone a major paradigm shift, moving from a sole focus on grammatical forms to a joint focus on both forms and functions (Gee, 1990). Communicative competence, introduced by Canale and Swain (1980), encompasses the idea that learning a second language requires more than memorizing vocabulary and mastering the rules of grammar; it also entails acquiring pragmatic sociolinguistic competence (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980).

Students studying English in different teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia are in a real need for adequate cultural and pragmatic knowledge to assure that they develop as successful second language speakers and writers. It is observable that the emphasis in such programs is primarily on learning the phonology, syntax, and morphology of English. Undoubtedly, the inclusion of teaching pragmatics would benefit those students who soon will be teachers, especially if they are planning to advance their educations in an English speaking country.

Introducing pragmatics in English teachers' syllabi is essential, since it encompasses four main channels of communication: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As listeners, students need to interpret what is said, and what may be nonverbally communicated. As speakers, students need to know how to converse appropriately with the expected level of formality. As readers, students need to comprehend written messages, identifying their rhetorical structures, and catching any clues of tone or attitude in them. As writers, students need to know how to write their messages clearly, bearing in mind the rules of suitable language behavior and apt rhetorical structures (Cohen, 2008).

Motivation for my Research

The many stories of learners' pragmatic failures inspired me, as an English teacher and researcher, to believe in the significance of the inclusion of cultural and, more specifically, pragmatic topics in my teaching curricula. That is because in a typical English class in Saudi Arabia, learners are mostly evaluated based on their grades in grammar-oriented English exams. As Fageeh (2011) stated:

> Traditional EFL learning materials in Saudi Arabia as elsewhere were in theory arranged for the convenience of vocabulary drill and grammar presentation. Therefore, most of these textbooks available are grammar-centered, providing little or virtually no attention to cultural content in a purposeful, overt and planned manner. (p. 67)

As a result, the learners frequently find various differences between the English they know at school and the English they encounter outside the classroom, when they interact with more fluent speakers of English. My research study is an attempt to discover whether integrating sufficient pragmatic interactions into Saudi English language curriculum would make the passage from school to the real world interactions much simpler.

Another motivation for my research study of Saudi students is the rapidly expanding number of them coming to study in the U.S. after the launch of the *King Abdullah Foreign Scholarships Program* in 2005. The program has been in progress for nine years and has already made a significant difference in the demographics of international students attending American universities. According to the Open Doors Report, more than 34,000 Saudi students were studying in the United States in the

2011/12 academic year. A year after that, the number increased to more than 44,000 students, which means about a 30% increase in the 2012/13 academic year. This number placed Saudi Arabia as the fourth country in terms of sending students to the United States, and by a wide margin the first country among the Middle Eastern countries (Open Doors Report, 2013). The Saudi program started with sending students in diverse fields of specialization to the United States before its scope was expanded to include more than 20 different countries (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012).

With such a vast number of Saudi students studying abroad and taking into consideration the types of English teaching those students have experienced, it would be predictable that the students would run into language and cultural difficulties during their academic journeys. I can only predict these difficulties because Saudi students are one understudied group in the literature of pragmatics. What is known about Saudi students' pragmatic knowledge is certainly inadequate.

Purposes of the Study

As I indicated before, it was my observation of myself and other Saudi students struggling with issues of pragmatics that led to the choice of my dissertation topic. Accordingly, my research study aims first to investigate the lack of knowledge about the outcomes of learning English pragmatics in Saudi Arabia. This investigation would begin with the participants' past experiences and educational backgrounds before starting their M.A. programs in the United States.

After investigating the past experiences, my study explores the participants' new pragmatic experiences in their new academic context of the United States, and how their current stories reshaped both their past experiences and future visions of English teaching

in Saudi Arabia. Through the means of this study, I aim at making meanings out of the participants' personal stories, which should help reflect the types of ongoing pragmatic interactions experienced as they try to present themselves as fluent and appropriate in the United States.

Furthermore, the investigation of the participants' past and current experiences would lead to recommendations for improving English teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. The study intends to envision some pedagogical tasks that should help raise pragmatic awareness among Saudi college students. It should also contribute to curriculum development in terms of integrating pragmatics in English teaching, which should ultimately advance the students' pragmatic competence.

Lastly, research in the area of pragmatics in relation to the Saudi context is highly needed due to the expanding Saudi interest of investing in students pursuing their education in the U.S., as well as other English speaking countries. To fill such need, my research is directed to help teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia understand the cultural and pragmatic difficulties students perceive when studying abroad and the factors that might negatively affect their academic development. With this study, I hope to lay the foundation for further future research on Saudi students' pragmatic knowledge.

I am also hopeful that the integration of pragmatics in teacher education programs would be educationally beneficial in two ways: 1) high school graduates would come to study abroad as undergraduates with a better English preparation, and 2) M.A. English students would be more fluent and pragmatically competent in their English language programs in the United States or any other English speaking country in which they study. Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of how improved pragmatics instructions in English

teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia may subsequently benefit novice English

teacher who would be assigned to teaching students at different school levels. Ultimately,

high school graduates would be better prepared to study abroad for their college degrees.

In the same way, English teachers would be more ready to encounter pragmatic and

cultural differences when they decide to pursue their M.A. degrees abroad.
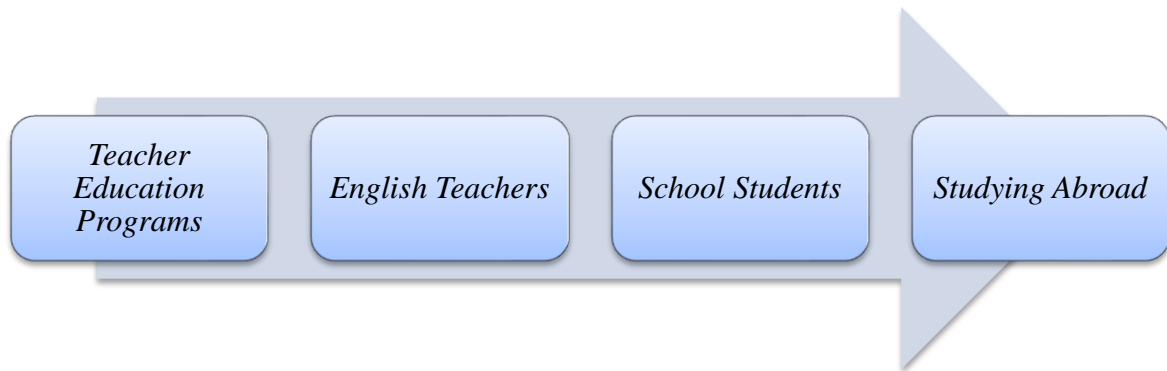
Figure 1. The possible progression of the benefits resulting from my dissertation.

Methodological Design

My study focuses on how five Saudi M.A. English students negotiated their

pragmatic experiences during their studies in the United States and how they made

meanings out of these experiences. Therefore, my study was a narrative inquiry

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which examined the past lived experiences and the more

recent lived stories of the five participants, to generate data that effectively answer my

research questions.

A number of data collection sources were employed in my narrative inquiry,

which included: preliminary individual interviews followed by multiple follow-up

interviews, a final individual interview, and a focus group interview with all participants.

The participants also were asked to capture their pragmatic experiences through digital

recorders. Additionally, the participants were invited to contribute to an interactive blog that was created specifically for the purposes of my research study.

Significance of the Study

Following Marshall and Rossman (2011), I divided the significance of my study into three types: Significance for Knowledge, Significance for Practical and Policy Problems, and Significance for Action.

Significance for Knowledge

To the best of my knowledge, no research has investigated the pragmatic communicative difficulties that Saudi M.A. English students may encounter in a western country like the United States. Therefore, this study was planned to fill an existing gap in pragmatics research and lay a foundation for more studies that focus on Saudi students' pragmatics production, comprehension, and development.

Significance for Practical and Policy Problems

The findings of this study may help language educators in Saudi Arabia realize the role that pragmatics can play in language education and how language pragmatic features can be developed in classrooms. A significant proportion of Saudi students are currently studying in the United States and many other English speaking countries. Needless to say, these young students need to be better prepared and equipped with reliable knowledge about the variety of different cultures that they are about to experience studying abroad.

Significance for Action

Understanding the individual experiences of the five Saudi M.A. English students could have considerable significance for improving English teaching in their teacher

education programs in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, firsthand accounts of the students'

cultural and pragmatic experiences, as they were collected in this study, could offer

insightful ideas to Saudi English educators and EFL curriculum designers to be adopted

in their different educational institutes.

English Status in the Saudi Educational System

The educational ladder in Saudi Arabia is based on a six-three-three pattern. At

the age of six, students begin their first grade in elementary school. In the intermediate

school (i.e., "junior high" in the U.S.), students go through the seventh, eighth, and ninth

grades. During secondary school (i.e., "high school" in the U.S.), students finish the

tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Students' progress through secondary school, shown

by their grade point averages (GPA), determines which colleges they can join. Generally,

a high GPA aids admission into more competitive disciplines or majors in college, such

as medical school and engineering. Public education in Saudi Arabia is free, and to

further increase interest in educational progress, the government pays monthly stipends to

students at university levels and to those in specialized training programs.

English is the only foreign language offered in public schools in Saudi Arabia.

The goal of teaching English, as stated by the Saudi Arabian educational policy, is to

"furnish the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original

language, to enable them to acquire knowledge, arts, and useful inventions, [and] transmit

our knowledge and science to other communities" (Ministry of Education, 1974, p. 13).

English used to be taught as a core school subject beginning in the seventh grade;

however, it has been recently moved to begin in the fourth grade. In each grade, English

is taught four times a week by teachers from different national backgrounds, such as

Saudis, Egyptians, Jordanians, Sudanese, and Palestinians. Some private schools employ English teachers from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Al-Omrani, 2008).

In addition to public and private schools, English is also taught in a variety of government institutions and military academies. English is included in all Saudi universities as either an elective subject or as a major field of study. English is the medium of instruction in most scientific, technical, engineering, and medical university majors. Both King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) and the newly established King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, (KAUST), employ English exclusively as the medium of instruction.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction that discusses the statement of the problem, the purpose of my study, my two research questions, and the significance of my research. Chapter Two reviews the literature on pragmatics that is needed to help me answering my research questions. Chapter Three presents the research methodology including: the rational for choosing my research paradigm and descriptions of my data collection methods and research procedures. Chapter Four displays the narratives of the five participants. Lastly, Chapter Five discusses the themes emerging from the narratives, presents the pedagogical implications, and proposes directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1950's movie, *Harvey*, Jimmy Stewart plays a quirky Elwood P. Dowd, whose character is both very literal with language and speech and at the same time has an imaginary and invisible friend Harvey, a six-foot white rabbit. In one scene of the movie, Elwood enters a bar to be asked by the bartender, "What can I do for you, Mr. Dowd?" To that Elwood asked, "What did you have in mind?" The Bartender altered his tone to ask again, "What's your order?" Elwood, understanding the second question, orders two drinks.

What did Elwood initially understand of the bartender's question? What could the bartender have in mind? Instead of asking, "What would you like to drink?," the bartender opted for a more social and indirect question causing Elwood to miss the intended meaning of the question. The bartender by saying "What can I do for you?" used a contextually appropriate expression in a bar situation. That expression was as common as "How can I help you?" used by a service employee to greet a customer (Andrews, 2006). What happened in Elwood's interaction with the bartender is a common example of a communication hiccup and a pragmatic failure, a point at which grammar rules and vocabulary are not enough. Though Elwood is an example of someone who may rely wholly on grammatical competency, he is an example of what an interaction void of sociolinguistic competence can yield.

The aforementioned exchange illustrates the heart of my proposed study which is to help Saudi M.A. students navigate the complexity that comes with using pragmatics appropriately in an American setting. As the bartender and Elwood negotiated language,

14

this study will examine how Saudi students and their American community members are doing the same. A step up from Elwood, Saudi students enter into their American context with competence in their first language, but like Elwood, pragmatic moments in English for Saudi students may be filled with hiccups and missteps.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections are organized around my two research questions. The chapter concludes, in the third section, with a discussion of how pragmatics can be developed in an EFL Context. In this light, it is important to revisit the research questions that guided my study.

1. How have the five Saudi students understood and experienced pragmatics in their native educational contexts?

2. How are they understanding and navigating issues surrounding pragmatic usage in their current Master's degree programs in the United States?

To help answering my first research question, I define pragmatics in the first section, and outline the theoretical background of pragmatics research, with an introduction to Gee's work (1990) on Discourse and the sociolinguistic competence under Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence. Also in the first section, I review three major topics of the field of pragmatics: speech acts, cooperative principle, and politeness. My initial inquiry, shaped by the first research question, is to examine how the five Saudi students understood and experienced such pragmatic issues in their native educational contexts.

Responding to the second research question, the second section should aid my study in the examination of the students' current pragmatic experiences in their current American educational context. In the second section, I introduce the concept of

interlanguage pragmatics. I then review relevant studies that explore the pragmatic competence of multiple groups of English language learners. I consequently discuss possible factors of the learners' pragmatic failures.

The third section serves to explore actions and provide examples of current pedagogies that focus attention on pragmatics in a number of EFL contexts. The third section focuses on the teachers' roles in fostering learners' knowledge of pragmatics. The chapter concludes with a brief account of how the present study can complement this body of research in pragmatics and help fill the existing research gap.

The First Section: The Boundaries of Pragmatics

When I began to study pragmatics, that notion began to form for me, as the influence my language would have on others and the reflection of self through language. Pragmatics, for me, is not only overarching situational norms; rather it is the small intricacy of daily life. I began to play with changing a small part of language to see how it changed the listeners' response to me. For instance, when I was asked, "How's it going?" I would answer, "Pretty good. How are you?" and then engage in a conversation; while if I answered, "It's still going," the listener would realize I was showing less interest in the conversation, and many times would move on with a smile.

The field of pragmatic research is not new; as people learning new languages, they have always come up against the encounter of cultural appropriateness. The term *pragmatics* is traced back to 1938, coined by Charles Morris to refer to "the study of the relations between language and the real people who use it" (Robinson, 2006). Though the language of the definition has changed, the definition has not dramatically altered with Yule (1996a) stating that pragmatics is "the study of the relationships between linguistic

16

forms and the users of those forms" (p. 4). A shift toward an inter-personal study of pragmatics is in Crystal's (1985) definition who understood it as:

> the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (p. 240)

This shift in study toward inter-personal interaction, rather than singular experience in a situation, is also found in modern pragmatic research such as Kasper and Rose (2001), who define pragmatics as "the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context" (p. 2). More recently, Murray (2010) describes pragmatic as "an understanding of the relationship between form and context that enables us, accurately and appropriately, to express and interpret intended meaning" (p. 293). The breadth of definitions and research suggests that pragmatics is and has been a field of great inquiry where new stones are turned to show new avenues of exploration.

From these definitions, it is clear that researchers collectively agree that meanings are not inherent in the words alone, but are part of a larger socio-cultural interaction which involves the negotiation of meanings between the users, the context of utterance, and the possible meaning of an utterance. The social cues, larger institutional structures, expectations, and cultural norms create a stew to which a person must find the correct parts for any given situations. Choosing to be direct or indirect, formal or casual, serious or sarcastic all impact our speech and shed different meaning shades to our interaction to help different purposes. Pragmatics then can be defined in this work as going beyond

what a speaker has said inquiring into self-identified meaning and contextual appropriateness.

Gee's Work on Discourse

For this project, Gee's research offers a point of inquiry into the socio-cultural communication of pragmatics. Though Gee does not explicitly use the term pragmatics in his work, he suggests many avenues for exploration of meaning appropriateness, which I will use in my own research. His work views a language user as a multi-dimensional and dynamic actor who is impacting and being impacted through time and space. Gee's definitions of how people communicate and find meaning structures is representative of much of modern pragmatic research. What is essential in successful communication, as Gee (1990) argues, is not simply speaking grammatically, but functioning appropriately by "saying the 'right' thing at the 'right' time and in the 'right' place" (p. 139). Gee's work is directly applicable to my own study, because as I work to break up a traditionalist ontological perspective on language learning in Saudi Arabia, Gee's tools are both research points of inquiry and possible pedagogical tools.

To begin, the term language itself, according to Gee (1990), is a misleading term since it denotes different referents in different teaching contexts. In a traditional Saudi context, language is equated to the grammatical forms of the language. While in the literature, language has taken the meaning of not grammar alone but also the meanings language performs. Gee elaborates on the importance of applying new definitions in the field by stating that "a language class that taught grammar perfectly would ensure that students know how messages were encoded in the language, but they would still not know when and where to use which encodings" (p. 139). Gee's definition places central

to language teaching the role of cultural and interaction in the pedagogy of the language classroom, making dissemination of pedagogical reference to meaning essential to language teaching.

Gee (1990) further explains that language is not merely for *saying* things but it involves two more functions that create meaning. Through language, speakers can *do* things, and *be* things as well. When speaking, a successful language user needs to say the right utterance, do the right action, and at the same time express "the right beliefs, values, and attitudes" that adhere to a particular social identity or role (Gee, 1990, p. 140).

As language learners, there is an opportunity through experimentation to see clearly how saying, doing, and being come together in different situations. When I return to my learned response of "It's still going," I am using language to perform an action, suggesting to the hearer that I do not have time to talk, but still inferring a level of friendship and intimacy. My response is witty and possibly placing me in a new light for the person hearing it. My response is also personal in nature, so I only use it when I am talking to a friend, showing that I am conscious of the social status.

Gee (1990) then introduces what he calls *Discourse* with a capital *D*, a crucial concept needed in order to understand language in its social context. He introduces this concept as:

> a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role.' (p. 143)

The relationship between Gee's Discourse and pragmatics can be seen in the ability of pragmatics to give access to language learners to better understand the target language from greater understanding of the collective values and expectations of its speakers (Gee, 2011; Gee, 1990). That is to say, an effectual English classroom requires more than just teaching the vocabulary and grammar rules of the language, but it additionally involves slipping into the culture of the language as naturally as possible (Fageeh, 2011).

Canale and Swain's Communicative Competence

Reflecting on my English learning experience as a college student in Saudi Arabia, it was a common belief that being successful with communicating in English equaled memorizing a large number of vocabulary and applying them with grammatical rules. I understood that having a good command of English grammatical rules was paramount to being a correct and competent speaker of the language. Being correct was all that mattered regardless of how appropriate a learner would sound. Then, when I watched myself confronted with more fluent English speakers stumbling over our words and feeling frustrated at lost meaning, I realized that my learning needed something greater than grammar and vocabulary. For a long time I began to develop personal theories of learning English till, in graduate school, I came across Canale and Swain's (1980) model of *communicative competence.* In their work I found structure for the personal theories I had been developing about language and communication.

Canale and Swain (1980) developed a theoretical framework outlining the contents and boundaries of three areas of *communicative competence*. The framework was further expanded by Canale (1983) to include four types of competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse. Canale defines the communicative

competence as "the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication" (p. 5). To break down the theories of communicative competence, I will expand on each of the four sections suggested by Canale.

Sociolinguistic Competence

Strategic Competence

Grammatical Competence

Discourse Comptence

Communicative Competence
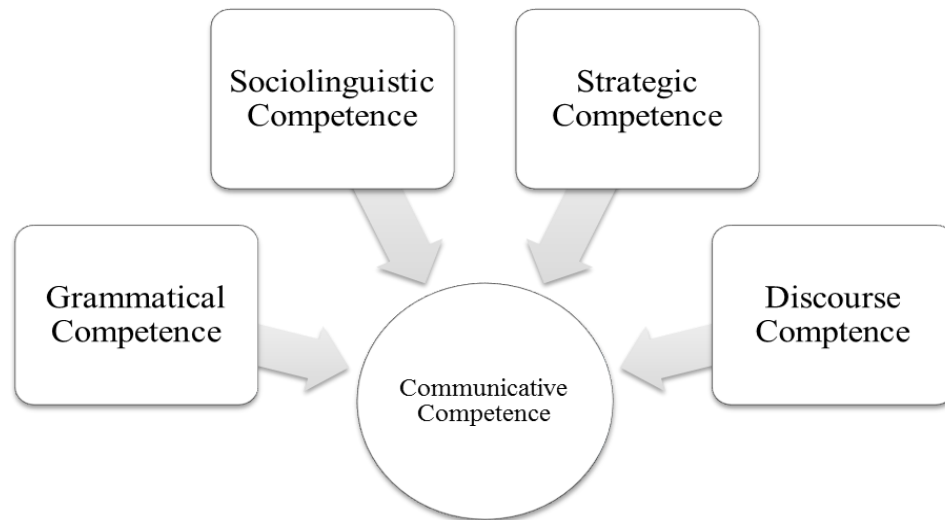
Figure 2. The four areas of communicative competence.

Grammatical competence is what many students and teachers traditionally consider language learning encompassing; that is, "knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology" (Canale & swain, 1980, p. 29). This linguistic accuracy does help learners express and interpret the literal meaning of utterances (Canale, 1993). However, though one part of the whole, it is never sufficient alone to make language learners communicatively competent.

Language learners need another type of knowledge that can be found in the sociolinguistic competence, which "addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction" (Canale, 1993, p. 7). Canale (1993) draws attention to "a tendency in many second language programmes to treat sociolinguistic competence as

less important than grammatical competence" (p. 8). He elaborates that this tendency gives a wrong assumption that being grammatically correct is more important than being appropriate; ignoring the fact that sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting language utterances for their social meaning.

The third type under this framework is the discourse competence. It concerns the mastering of "how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres" (Canale, 1993, p. 9). Olshtain and Cohen (1991) visualize this competence as "the grammatical glue that holds sentences together within a large piece of discourse" (p. 154). This competence is to help learners be cohesive and coherent through the appropriate use of pronouns, synonyms, conjunctions, etc. As learners are required to show correctness in grammar, they are expected to show appropriateness in meaning, and the discourse competence is to bring grammar and meaning together.

The fourth competence a language user needs to obtain is the strategic competence, which helps them employ "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communications due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). For instance, when not knowing the English compound word "train station," a learner can paraphrase it to "the place where trains go." Such strategies do not have to be limited to resolving grammatical problems; learners often run into sociolinguistic problems as in how to address strangers when unsure of their social status (Canale, 1993).

Under this framework, it is worth pointing out that pragmatic competence is not explicitly spelled out as a distinct constituent of communicative competence, although it

can be implied as a part of sociolinguistic competence (Yule, 1996a). LoCastro (2012) defines the pragmatic competence as "the knowledge that influences and constrains speakers' choices regarding use of language in socially appropriate ways" (p. 307). I tend to use LoCastro's definition as the operational definition in this study. That is to say, being appropriate in conversation requires adhering to conventions and norms of the second language context, which demonstrate the speakers' sociolinguistic competency. Canale's argument comes in support to Gee's (1990) suggestion that learners need to be appropriate in using language by "saying the 'right' thing at the 'right' time and the 'right' place" (p. 139). Therefore, the addition of Gee to Canale and Swaine offers an expansion of the competencies toward recognizing larger domains of skills.

Three Major Topics within Pragmatic Competence

Canale and Swain (1980) offer an umbrella of places to begin but the literature in the field suggests that research begin with everyday communicative interactions. From my own experience of developing awareness of pragmatics, I have begun inquiry into how Saudi students, like myself, are aware of pragmatic problems during their language learning. In what follows, I briefly provide a background for speech acts (Austin, 1962; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991), cooperative principle (Grice, 1975), and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as three major topics frequently discussed which impact my study. This background is intended to illustrate the kinds of demands made on the second language learners in the course of everyday conversation.

Speech acts. Immersed in an English speaking community, one cannot help finding people requesting to do things, complaining about their problems, complimenting each other, refusing invitations, and apologizing for their mistakes. People in such

conversations carry out specific social functions known as speech acts (Robinson, 2006). The word *acts* entails doing actions. Within a specific context, Austin (1962) states that "to say something is to do something" (p. 8). For Austin, language is aligned with purposeful doing; that is action. Therefore, when someone says "I'm sorry", it is not only to state the fact that he or she feels sorry but also to carry out the speech act of apologizing.

Austin (1962) distinguishes three different forces in any given speech act. In the example of someone uttering the words, "Do you have a watch?" The locutionary force would be the literal meaning of the actual question. The illocutionary force, or intended meaning, would be asking for the time. While the perlocutionary force would be the action created; the listener looking at the watch and tell the time.

Searle (1975) contributed to the development of the foundational definition of speech acts through his discussion of indirect speech acts. In the example above, the questions, "Do you have a watch" is an indirect speech act. Searle defines such situations as the "cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by a way of performing another" (p. 60). To interpret the intended meaning of the example, the hearer needs to consider the social context to respond successfully. Failing to recognize the meaning beyond the surface level of the question may lead the hearer to take out his watch and show it to the speaker possibly wondering why the speaker would want to see the watch. Understanding indirect questions is at the core of the cooperation expected among speakers of the same language, which in turn is part of the learning of a second language.

Cooperative principle. In my own experience living in an American society, I experienced the need to learn to cooperate in everyday interaction. Initially, as I stated earlier, when someone asked me, "How are you?," I would answer, "Fine, how are you," a response which sometimes would lead to conversations I did not have time for. Relating cooperation to the study of pragmatics, interlocutors in conversation are reaching out the create meaning with each other. Living in the United States, I found that if I used shorter language, as it is common in my first language to infer that I don't have time to speak, people looked confused because it was not polite. When I came across usage of the phrase "It's still going" it was like a pragmatic gold mine of appropriateness. I was able to accomplish the goal of cooperation.

Participants need to bind their actions within the conventions through cooperation. There are always social rules and principles that are expected to be followed. To better understand this, Grice (1975) introduced the *cooperative principle* and stated it as: "Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose, or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 45). Furthermore, the principle is broken down into four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims are displayed in Table 1. The examples in this table are taken from Yule (1996a).

Table 1

The Four Maxims of the Cooperative Principle

Maxim	Definition	Example
Quantity	Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.	An expression like 'Well, to make a long story short' indicates the awareness of the quantity maxim.
Quality	Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.	An expression like 'As far as I know' or 'Correct me if I'm wrong, but', show the speaker's awareness of the maxim of quality.
Relation	Be relevant.	'Oh! By the way' is an expression to show that the speaker is conscious of the relation maxim
Manner	Be perspicuous. Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly.	'I'm not sure if this makes sense, but' is used to show the awareness of the manner maxim.

Generally speaking, interlocutors are assumed to be cooperative in conversation, which conforms to the four maxims, as in this example:

A: Are you coming to the party tonight?

B: I've got an exam tomorrow!

Here, the utterance given by B does not look at first as an answer for the question asked

by A. However, A would be able to interpret the utterance to mean 'No' or 'Probably not'

since the cooperation and relevancy in speech are assumed between the speakers. Having

an exam tomorrow would require studying, which prevents going to the party tonight.

This is most likely the meaning speaker A would infer from the utterance of speaker B

(Yule, 1996a).

Language learners should know also that interlocutors do not always talk in the

way ascribed by the maxims. Oftentimes, they intentionally flout the maxims to signal a

different meaning. This flouting requires listeners to be responsible for interpreting the

invisible meaning beyond what is actually said. An example of flouting the quantity

maxim is given below:

A: How do I look?

B: Your shoes are nice.

Speaker A here would understand that the whole appearance is not that appealing which

made speaker B comment only on a small part of it (Cutting, 2002). Speakers feel

obligated to flout the maxims by producing ambiguous and apparently irrelevant

utterance. The rationale for flouting the maxims can be explained by politeness theory

discussed next.

Politeness theory. A final element to the major topics within pragmatic

competence is politeness in interaction. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the

reason people often do not adhere to the cooperative principle and the four maxims in

communication (i.e., be informative, be true, be relevant, and be brief) is due to their willingness to communicate politely and their ultimate goal of communication as the preservation of face. In pragmatics, face is "the public self-image of a person" which refers to the "emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else (to) recognize" (Yule, 1996b, p. 60). In light of that, politeness is seen as "showing awareness of another person's face" (Yule, 1996a, p. 134).

Brown and Levinson (1987) further explained that face "is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (p. 61). They stated, "[i]n general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face" (p. 61). When a speaker says something that represents a threat to another person's expectations regarding self-image, as in the imperative "Give me that paper!," the speaker could be carrying out a "face-threatening act" unless he or she has more social power than the other person. An indirect request as in "Could you pass me that paper, please?" should be less threatening to the other person's self-image and it is considered a "face-saving act" (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996a).

Additionally, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduce two types of face: positive and negative. The negative face is defined as "the need to be independent and to have freedom from imposition" as in, for example, 'I'm sorry to bother you… ; I know you're busy, but…' (Yule, 1996a, p. 134). The positive face, on the other end, is the "need to be connected, to belong, to be a member of the group" as in showing solidarity by saying 'Let's do this together… ; You and I have the same problem, so…' (Yule, 1996a, p. 134).

In Chapter One, I talked about Ali, the Saudi M.A. student who addressed the restaurant waitress by saying "Bring a bowl of salad for two" which resulted in the unhappy look on the waitress's face. Yule (1996a) states that when a speaker says something that represents a threat to another person's face –as in Ali's example–the speaker could be carrying out a "face-threatening act." An indirect request–as in "Can you bring a bowl of salad for two, please?" should be less threatening to the other person's self-image and thus it is considered a face-saving act.

It is important to mention that politeness largely relates to speech acts in general, and to indirect speech acts in particular. Searle (1975) points out that "politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness" (p. 64). This indirectness adds to pragmatic challenges faces by language learners when socializing in a context like the United States. Being direct in their speech may reflect their image as disrespectful and rude.

The three concepts of pragmatics: speech act, cooperative principle, and politeness emphasize the earlier discussion that learning a language means more than just grasping its linguistic forms and grammatical structures. This statement is supported by empirical studies which have argued that even higher proficiency learners with a good mastery of linguistics and grammar may fail to function pragmatically in the target language, indicating their under-developed pragmatic competence or as it can be called *interlanguage pragmatics*, where I turn to next.

The Second Section: Living in Between Languages

In the second section of my literature review, I examine the literature that helps me better respond to my second research question where I investigate Saudi students' pragmatic experiences after they have advanced in their English studies. I focus on the

progressive stages learners go through when learning a new language in relation to context, and I discuss the reasons for possible pragmatic failures.

Interlanguage Pragmatics

The term *Interlanguage* refers to a learner's developing language, which contains a large number of errors that seem to have no connection to the forms of either their native or target language (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Yule, 1996a). Interlanguage pragmatics, therefore, is a learner's "use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 4). It refers to the "intermediate, dynamic, and transient linguistic system" a learner develops as he or she attains higher proficiency levels (LoCastro, 2012, p. 112).

A large number of pragmatic studies have investigated advanced English language learners during their interlanguage stages where the focus has been on speech acts. Gass and Selinker (2001) state that "much of the work in interlanguage pragmatics has been conducted within the framework of speech acts" (p. 243). What has promoted this considerable amount of speech act research is the apparent mismatch between the words used by the speaker, and the function intended by these words (Cohen, 2008). The participants in these studies are often English language learners who live in EFL contexts and may have little access to English language input and limited opportunities to use the language outside the classroom (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Reviewing these studies helps anticipate the kinds of pragmatic interactions encountered by learners in similar EFL contexts, such as in the case of Saudi students. My research aims to study Saudi advanced learners of English during their studying in an American context to explore the nature of the pragmatic problems they encounter.

Interlanguage Pragmatics Studies

Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) and Al-Momani (2009) are two studies that investigated requesting strategies among Jordanian learners of English. Saudi Arabia and Jordan are two neighboring countries that share the same language and similar cultural traditions. In my research, I explore if Saudi learners experience the same pragmatic issues as the Jordanians because of the similarity between the EFL contexts.

Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) and Al-Momani (2009) investigated requesting strategies among Jordanian learners of English, and they compare that to the produced requests of American native speakers of English. The participants in both studies were undergraduate American and Jordanian students. Data were collected through the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), a test with scripted situations that represent social situations of everyday college life.

In both studies, the participants were asked to write down what they would naturally say in each given situation. For example, when asking to borrow a book from a professor, an American participant requested, "Hi professor Watts! Could you please lend me x book? I need it to write a term-paper." The Jordanian student wrote, "Hello Professor Watts, I hear that you help students who really want to study hard. If you don't mind Professor, I want the book you have and I appreciate your help" (Al-Ali & Alawneh, 2010, p. 327). Jordanian learners in both studies were noted to have a tendency to use lengthy and wordy requests whereas the American participants tended to spell their requests out directly. The requests made by the Jordanian learners were accompanied with justifications and delayed requests; something seen as a result of transferred

31

pragmatic strategies from Arabic cultural norms to English (Al-Ali & Alawneh, 2010; Al-Momani, 2009).

Forming wordy requests is not always the problem with English language learners; it can be the type of words used in the requests. Hendriks (2010) focused on the English e-mails written by Dutch students. The study investigated native speakers' reactions to the request modifications in these e-mail messages, such as, "I was wondering if." The results showed that the participants' deviations from the expected norms had a negative effect on the evaluation of their personalities (Hendriks, 2010).

This study indicates that pragmatic skills and competency are not matters to be taken lightly in relation to communicating with others. Feeling grammatically competent, English language learners engage in conversations expecting to communicate successfully. They begin to doubt their abilities when they in situations where they do not know the appropriate thing to say. As a result, they unintentionally produce something that is misunderstood resulting in negative their self-images. This pragmatic failure is caused by a reliance on sociocultural norms of the first language or other misleading language sources, as I explain next (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Lihui & Jianbin, 2010; LoCastro, 2003).

Pragmatic Failure

Lihui and Jianbin (2010) use questionnaires and interviews to investigate pragmatic failures that Chinese college students majoring in English tend to commit in cross-cultural communication. Although these students are advanced in their reading and writing and able to score high in English proficiency tests like TOEFL and IELTS, they struggle to communicate with other fluent speakers. The mistakes they commit are not

grammatical; they occur because certain social conventions have been violated. These kinds of mistakes are described as *pragmatic failure*.

According to LoCastro (2012), issues of pragmatic failure are the "mistakes in producing and understanding situationally appropriate language behavior" (p. 83). Research has shown a number of factors that likely influence learners' language production and comprehension of the target language pragmatics (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Lihui & Jianbin, 2010; LoCastro, 2003).

Among these factors is, first, the negative transfer of the first language pragmatic norms to the target language. Whether aware of it or not, learners sometimes depend on their first language norms and culture when interacting with other speakers in the context of the target language. Although pragmatic transfer can produce positive results, the transfer of first language norms more likely causes misunderstandings and communication breakdown between the speaker and listener. This is especially the case when the listener is not familiar with the learners' first language or culture (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Two of the most problematic areas are humor and social graces. For example, it has been my observation that pragmatic failures happen when learners try to transfer jokes from Arabic to English; or even worse, when transferring compliments. Telling someone, "Your face is like the moon," is a common compliment in Arabic. To an Arabic speaker, it means that it is so beautiful, but it is an incomprehensible expression if used in English. Santos and Suleiman (1993) comment on this point as:

Some of these (sociolinguistic) features usually transfer to English in an

inappropriate manner. For example, the depth of questioning about family affairs,

health, and other private matters are culturally incompatible. Jokes are also culture-bound; what is humorous to an Arab might be outrageous to an American and vice versa. (p. 177)

Not only does the problem exist in paying someone a compliment, they may arise in receiving one. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) describe instances where English language learners respond to compliments in unexpected ways. Here is an example:

A: That's a nice watch!

B: Thank you! You can have it.

Usually speaker B does not really mean to give the watch away, but is trying to be nice by responding to the compliment following his or her cultural traditions. With this in mind, English teachers should plan in advance for potential misunderstandings between speakers of different languages. By planning in advance, I mean that teachers should integrate cultural teaching by adding related cultural topics to the course syllabus, as suggested by Lihui and Jianbin (2010).

The second factor of pragmatic failure is associated with the developmental interlanguage stage in which learners are progressing toward the pragmatic norms of the new language. In a typical grammar-oriented classroom in Saudi Arabia, English teaching is designed to develop student understanding of the grammar while culture is ignored. As a result, Saudi students are typically better able to successfully complete grammar-based exams than communicate with other speaks. According to Gee (1990), developing learners' grammatical control is not necessarily in correlation with developing pragmatic ability.

In addition to exposing learners to the rules of grammar, teachers should attempt to create culturally rich learning environments. Teachers can assign a cultural-based passage, and then ask students to reflect on what they have read in their journals, discuss the passage in groups, or role-play the different characters. Any of these activities will provide opportunities for students to think and speak in accordance with the social conventions of the new language and culture. Such activities will raise learners' awareness of the appropriate application of cultural information learned in class and will prepare them for real communication with other English speakers (Lihui & Jianbin, 2010).

The third pragmatic failure factor is derived from the overgeneralization of the learned pragmatic norms of the target language (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; LoCastro, 2003). It is noticed that when learners have a basic understanding of the target-language culture and the nature of its pragmatic norms, they depend on their preconceived ideas of these norms and mistakenly apply them to different contexts. For example, an apology like 'I'm sorry' or 'Excuse me' is perfect for miner situations whereas other serious situations require more sincere and profuse apologies (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Lihui and Jianbin (2010) state that English language learners in EFL contexts are commonly misled by the so-called standard linguistic patterns that are taught in class. These patterns are not necessarily followed in real life conversations, such as: "How are you? Fine, thank you." Accordingly, they advise teachers to avoid introducing pragmatic knowledge in a fixed way; and instead, teachers should encourage students to try alternative patterns in different contexts. When I first came to the United States, I could

not understand familiar greetings, such as "What's going on? and "What's up?" It took me a while to interpret their meanings as alternatives of "How are you?"

The fourth factor leads to learners' pragmatic failure is the inadequate classroom teaching and materials. The simplifications made by English teachers can be misleading for learners. When, for example, a teacher emphasizes one form of requesting, learners may apply that form in every situation regardless of the social status, degree of formality, and level of directness. Teaching materials can be misrepresenting especially if they are created based on intuitions of English speakers only and not on real-life data (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). This is an example:

Abdullah: Gosh, you look great, Beverly! Have you lost weight?

Beverly: That's nice of you to notice – I've lost about 10 pounds, but I still need to lose another five or six.

LoCastro (2003) clarifies this example by saying, "in the United States, men do not compliment women unless they are close friends; in particular, comments on weight are usually inappropriate" (p. 262). Introducing the learners to this example without providing them with the social relation between the male and the female can be deceptive, putting the learners in potential social troubles.

Lihui and Jianbin (2010) state that exposing to authentic learning materials will foster the learner's language competency, especially in EFL contexts where learners do not have many opportunities to have direct communication with native English speakers. Therefore, teacher should direct learners' attentions to outside authentic teaching apart from textbooks. Among the many sources that can be used as supplements to the textbook are novels, magazines, newspapers, movies, and TV series.

The fifth factor of pragmatic failure is the attitude towards the pragmatic norms of the target language (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; LoCastro, 2003). Unlike the four previous factors, this factor is different in that it is not related to cognitive functions of language learning but to the learners' subjective positions, such as social identities and personal beliefs (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). As teachers, we should be aware that not all our students are willing to gain membership in the second language community; some students would deliberately opt for maintaining their native-language cultural identity as a way of asserting their subjectivities. Rather than imposing the socio-cultural norms of the target language, "the teacher must attempt to raise awareness, inform, instruct, and then let the learners make their own decisions as how 'nativelike' they become" (LoCastro, 2003, p. 271).

In conducting my research, I choose to focus on the Saudi context which may result in discovering new factors of pragmatic failure other that the ones discussed in the literature. Focusing my scope of research to incorporate the study of this particular group of learners would provide teachers and curriculum designers in Saudi Arabia with empirically established knowledge on the pragmatic needs of Saudi students. With the vast growing of Saudi students studying in the U.S. nowadays, more research focusing on Saudi students is totally needed.

The Third Section: Developing Pragmatics in the EFL Context

This section aims to shed some light on the roles teachers and teacher educators can play to become more pragmatically competent in their EFL classrooms and language institutes. Teacher plays the most important role in EFL language classes. If the classroom is a chessboard, the teacher is the queen. Like the queen is able to move in any

number of squares and in any direction–vertically, horizontally, and diagonally–to guard the king and other army soldiers, the teacher is seen as the most empowered member in the classroom because of his/her responsibly to guard the students from misleading ideas and untrue conceptions of the socio-cultural norms of the target language. In many EFL contexts, students see in their teacher a representative of the target culture and a model to be followed to achieve high levels of competency in the new language. These roles granted to language teachers come with their responsibilities of embedding issues of pragmatics and culture in their teaching curricula.

This discussion leads to the question asked by Kasper (1997) "Can pragmatic competence be taught?" Kasper defines competence as "a type of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use or lose," and argues that instruction can only hope to "arrange learning opportunities" so that competence can develop (1997, p. 1). In what follows, I examine some pragmatic teaching literature to see how teachers have arranged the learning opportunities for their students and the influence that has on the students' performance of pragmatics.

Teaching Pragmatics in EFL Contexts

Bardovi-Harlig (2001) points out that "learners who receive no particular instruction in L2 show divergence in L2 pragmatics in several areas." Accordingly, she calls for "making contextualized, pragmatically appropriate input available to learners from early stages" (p.31). There is no wonder that teaching pragmatics can start as early as the first day of second language class; the day when learners study greetings and how to address with Mr./Miss/Mrs. kind of titles.

Different studies have suggested different approaches to develop pragmatic competence in different EFL contexts. I choose two studies to highlight, one from Spain (Alcón, 2005), and another study from the United States (Reyes, 2008). In these studies, pragmatics was taught following different deductive and inductive teaching approaches. The studies propose a number of tasks and activities to be carried out in EFL classroom.

Realizing the need to raise awareness of pragmatics among her EFL learners, Alcón (2005) asked the question: "Does instruction work for learning pragmatics in the EFL context?" In an attempt to answer this question, Alcón examined the effectiveness of two instructional methods: explicit instruction versus implicit one. More than 130 Spanish high-school students participated in study and were randomly assigned to three teaching groups: an explicit pragmatic teaching group, an implicit pragmatic teaching group, and a controlled group. The three groups were exposed to excerpts from different episodes of the TV series *Stargate*, a military science adventure.

In Alcón's study, both explicit and implicit groups received different instructions in relation to using the speech act of request appropriately. The explicit group was provided with direct awareness-raising tasks, and written feedback on the students' use of requests. The students, for example, were asked to read about a specific pattern of requests and then try to extract related examples from the *Stargate* excerpt and justify their choices. The students in the implicit group were provided with a set of implicit awareness-raising tasks. They were presented with fragmented requests and asked to complete them by looking the *Stargate* excerpts. Although both explicit and implicit methods were beneficiary for the students, Alcón found that the explicit group showed better performance over the implicit one (Alcón, 2005). In consistency with these results,

LoCastro's (2003) state that, "by means of direct interventionist teaching, awareness is developed and problems of understanding and producing pragmatic meaning are discussed" (p. 267).

In the other study, Reyes (2008) reported on her own experience as grammar teacher at an English language institute in the United States. Her students were from different language backgrounds such as Arabic, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, and Turkish. In her class, she used grammar to teach her students a number of appropriate requests in English. Reyes suggested that the requesting strategies, which seemed problematic to the students at first, improved because of the explicit pragmatic instruction she employed. The study provides a good example of how teaching pragmatics can be effectively embedded in teaching other language skills such as grammar (Reyes, 2008).

In many educational institutes, English teachers may not find courses that are strictly designed for teaching culture or pragmatic. In this case, teachers may point to pragmatic and socio-cultural issues as they come across them in the reading passage they provide, the writing composition they assign, or the historical movie they show. Since English teachers are seen as responsible for transmitting linguistic and cultural knowledge about the English language to the learners, they should be working to meet the socio-cultural and pragmatic needs of their students.

Developing Pragmatic Teaching Materials and Pedagogies

One way teachers can adopt to meet their students' socio-cultural and pragmatic needs is by developing pragmatic teaching materials and creating a culturally rich classroom. In Saudi Arabia and as it is the case in many EFL contexts, English teachers use traditional English teaching materials that focus on vocabulary drills and grammar

illustrations. Therefore, and as Fageeh (2011) indicates, it is not surprising to find that most of the textbooks available focus on grammar with very little attention to the culture of the language. English textbooks that cover adequate amount of cultural and pragmatic topics would be more helpful and valuable to learners. With this kind of culturally rich suitable textbook, teachers can develop their own techniques in order to better raise pragmatic awareness in their classes.

Cutting (2002) suggests using materials that include scripted texts to teach some specific pragmatic topics, such as the cooperative principle. These texts can be selected from newspapers, general books, electronic websites, and scripted real-life conversations. Teachers can employ such texts in their teaching and where the students are asked to analyze the texts for any pragmatic violations. According to Cutting (2002), such open-ended exercises will guide students through a self-investigation of different pragmatic topics, and help them develop the sensitivity towards pragmatic incidents in every day interactions. With the space teachers have, doors are open for creativity and inventing new pragmatic activities for their students.

Adopted from Ishihara and Cohen (2010), I once altered the famous advice column "Dear Abby" and used it in teaching an introduction to TESOL class. I began with circulating two samples of "Dear Abby" column for students to explore them and gain a first impression of this cultural artifact. Next, I asked every student to individually write a "Dear Abby" letter addressed to another classmate focusing on some particular pedagogical issues related to the teaching or learning of pragmatics. The letters were passed around and every student was asked to respond to as many "Dear Abby" letters as

41

the time allowed. Finally, I had volunteers to share with the class not only the original

"Dear Abby" letter constructed but the responses to those original one.

Such an activity is helpful for the students in identifying issues that they may have

in relation to the teaching of pragmatics, especially when the activity is conducted with

pre- service or in-service teachers. Through the discussion with the class teacher and

other peers, clarification can be made and solutions can be created (Ishihara & Cohen,

2010). Although this activity can be possibly performed with learners in different

language levels, it will yield better results if performed with learners who have pragmatic

experiences to share, i.e., ideally those who are at higher education levels.

The Role of Teacher Education Programs in Teaching Pragmatics

Speaking about college students leads me to think about how and to what extent

English students are taught and trained to deal with pragmatic issues in college before

they begin their profession at school. Vásquez and Sharpless (2009) conducted a study to

investigate to what extend master's-level TESOL programs incorporate explicit teaching

about pragmatics into their curricula. Vásquez and Sharpless conducted a telephone

survey with the directors and other faculty members of about 100 TESOL programs

across the United States.

The results showed that time for teaching pragmatics varied from no time at all to

more than eight weeks. Some programs introduced pragmatics in one week as a part of

'introduction to linguistics' course. Other programs covered pragmatics in two to three

weeks in a sociolinguistics or discourse analysis course, where the emphasis is mainly on

topics like speech acts and politeness. Only 11% of the surveyed programs reported

having a dedicated course for pragmatics in relation to language teaching (Vásquez &

Sharpless, 2009).

When the study extended to ask about the attitudes towards pragmatics, about 60

participants provided comments about the growing awareness about the importance of

pragmatics in recent years. One faculty member stated, "We are currently considering a

revision to our curriculum, and we are considering dedicating greater time, attention, and

prominence to such topics" (Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009, p. 19). Another faculty member

made reference to international students by saying, "This is a very important field,

especially for EFL teachers. The international M.A. students find this [pragmatics] course

very helpful" (p. 20).

The growing awareness towards pragmatics in the United States predicates a

change of in the attitudes of English teacher about the importance of pragmatics in

different EFL context. Many of the English teachers and teacher educators in Saudi

Arabia graduate every year from the different TESOL programs in the United States.

Those graduates will bring with them these new perceptions about teaching English

pragmatics and socio-cultural in their native educational schools and institutes. These

new perceptions are already apparent, as recently stated by Fageeh (2011), "it is worth

mentioning here that ELT educationalists and syllabus designers in Saudi Arabia had

separated the English language from its inner circle cultures till a very recent time" (p.

65).

In many EFL contexts, teachers are considered the first source of knowledge,

responsible for transmitting linguistic and cultural knowledge about the target language

to the learners. Therefore, and as Lihui and Jianbin (2010) advise, teachers should be

encouraged to keep updated with the newest teaching techniques by attend professional conferences and training programs. Not just that, but they should broaden their linguistic and cultural knowledge through self-study and make good use of all the available resources, such as academic journals, books, research projects, and workshops (Lihui & Jianbin, 2010).

Through the third section of this chapter, I intend to explore how the Saudi M.A. student and future teachers would strategize to overcome pragmatic challenging interactions when they return to teaching in their native context. I plan to discover their attitudes towards teaching pragmatic and cultural topics in their class and whether they are willing to keep on developing themselves to keep up with the new trends in teaching English language, its culture, and pragmatic norms.

Chapter Summary

Given the pragmatics enjoys a great impact on language, it consequently appears that pragmatic awareness should be given enough attention by further advocacy to be incorporated in English language curricula in EFL contexts. Pragmatics earns it significance from enabling language learners to be appropriate in their use and interpretation of language. This chapter reviewed the necessary literature to help me, as the researcher, in answering my research questions. Accordingly, the chapter was divided into two sections aligned to the research questions, and was concluded with discussing the development of pragmatics in the EFL context.

Very little research was found in relation to pragmatics in Saudi Arabia. This adds to the significance of my study which aims to fill in the existing research gap. In the following chapter, I propose my research methodology I intend to follow to contribute to

the literature of pragmatics. Consequently, my research study can complement the body of research in pragmatics especially in relation to the context of Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed map of the research

design and methodological layout incorporated in this study which focuses on exploring

Saudi students' experiences in relation to pragmatics. Foundational to my map is:

1. The articulation of my positionality and subjectivity as the researcher

investigating the pragmatic problematic encounters that Saudi M.A. English

students face when interacting with other English speakers during their academic

socialization in the United States.

2. I discuss the characteristics of the study design which utilized a narrative

inquiry approach under the umbrella of qualitative research methodology.

Narrative inquiry as a method will serve to the personal and social interactions

that the participants had and are having in their "revisited past, negotiated present,

and imagined future" (Messekher, 2011, p. 79) as they foresee their future

teaching in the context of Saudi Arabia.

3. I describe the research context and the study participants; then I explain the

data sources, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis. The chapter

concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness criteria.

The aforementioned details are essential in achieving the following research foci:

to study the past pragmatic experiences of five Saudi M.A. students attending their

English programs in the United States; to explore how they negotiate their current

pragmatic experiences in the U.S.; and, finally, to anticipate how these experiences might

have impact on their future pedagogical practices in Saudi Arabia. I believe that a better understanding of these experiences will allow educators in Saudi Arabia to address the needs of these learners with a more informed perspective.

Consequently, it is important to revisit the research questions that guide my study:

1. How have the five Saudi students understood and experienced pragmatics in their native educational contexts?

2. How are they understanding and navigating issues surrounding pragmatic usage in their current Master's degree programs in the United States?

Researcher's Positionality

My positionality is shaped through the many ways in which I am a member of the communities that I am studying and hoping to serve through this research. I have experienced the confusion, shock, and excitement of adapting and socializing. Here I offer a narrative that shows how I gradually evolved from being a novice language learner to a language teacher to a language researcher. I reflect on my feelings, quandaries, certainties, and confusion as I develop from someone for whom English began like instrumental music, where the words were unclear, toward speaking and interacting fully orchestrated in English as a member of an English speaking community.

I began my journey of curiosity about pragmatics from my own lived experience. The ideas behind this study come from my own experiences as both a learner in Saudi Arabia and a teacher of English as a Second Language in both Saudi Arabia and the United States. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), personal biographies, under the research design, are helpful in tracing how personal interests, beliefs, and values inspire researchers and serve as a lens that guides the research focus and interest. They

add that the direct experiences expressed in researchers' personal biographies can be a source of inspiration and a starting point from which researchers structure their research questions. These personal interests and beliefs can be "referred to as the researcher's positionality" (p. 63). Razack (1998) suggests the importance of our experience to the success of a research project. She writes, "how we know what we know is central to our political practice because it helps us to locate the inconsistencies, the cracks we might then use to empower ourselves" (p. 51). By talking about the passion and insight that led to my research project, I provide my own subjectivity and bias, and I give the reader access to how these elements of identity affect my study.

To explore the *crack* which carry forward my subjectivity, perceptions, and feelings about pragmatics, I begin by sharing glimpses of my life so that the reader may briefly look into how my own lived experiences influenced both why and how I am conducting this research study. In telling my own personal story, I disclose my own lived experiences that have developed who I am as a student, a teacher, a teacher educator, and a researcher in pragmatics. My goal, in writing about my experience is to offer the reader a fully interpretive text that "plunges the reader into the interior, feeling, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching worlds of the subjective human perception" (Denzin, 1997). The goal of this narrative is to show the reader a handful of transformative experiences in my undergraduate and graduate years, which reflect on my English and the ways I look at it. Such experiences solidified my decision to become a language advocate promoting pragmatics in classroom, and led me to where I am today: a Ph.D. student in an English program in the United States. Through this narrative I hope to paint a picture of my position for the reader of my research. The narrative summarizes the critical moments of

my experience from the time I was in junior high until today as I conduct research for my Ph.D. dissertation.

A turning point. Although English was introduced to me in the seventh grade, the English I learned at school turned out to be inadequate when I needed it most. One day in 1995, I was riding a train with my cousin from Frankfort to Munich, Germany. It was a summer day and I wanted something to drink, but at the same time I did not want to bother my cousin to get up and go with me to the train cafe. I asked him, "Can you tell me what to say?" In a sleepy tone he taught me, "Give me a Coca-Cola, please!" I repeated that phrase until I reached the café, and finally said it to the barista with a hesitant, broken voice. It worked, and I got my drink with no hassle or need to use hand gestures. I felt empowered and amazed at being understood. I said to myself, "I have to learn English."

English is more than just grammar. Upon graduating from high school, I made up my mind to join the teaching profession. I wanted to become an English teacher when I finished college. I came to believe that teaching is an important profession for humanity, and I developed a very strong desire to become a part of this profession. Carrying my experience of empowerment into my education, I became strongly motivated not only to learn English but also to share that knowledge with others. Also, for the first time, I was trying to speak with other English speakers and learn about culture.

That motivation led me to start my Bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia as an English major. I did well in my studies. Among the many great professors I took classes with, I liked two of them the most: Mr. Johnson and Mr. Al-Ahmed. Their classes were

different from the others, because I was not just learning English but learning the language plus extra things. On top of doing the class assignments, I was jotting down English idiomatic expressions, multi-word chunks, lexical collocations, and phrasal verbs. I felt encouraged to take risks by using new expressions learned from classes, movies, and fun readings in my assignments and communications with these two professors. I received a lot of compliments on my English fluency because of my use of these new expressions.

Teaching as an intern. In the summer of 2000 as a junior in college, I had an opportunity to put both my English and teaching skills to the test. I was recommended, along with other students, to teach at a training center housed in an oil company in Saudi Arabia. The teachers in this reputable center were mostly from inner-circle (Kachru, 1992) countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. At the center, I taught English to the company employees at different English language fluency levels. At the end of the course, in a meeting, the head teacher stood up and, with an arm reached towards me, said, "This is one of our best teachers. We want him to come back." In spite of his kind words, deep inside I did not mirror his vision of me, because during that summer I felt frustrated when carrying on conversations with my highly-fluent colleagues.

The experience at the training center caused me to truly reflect on the type of English I had learned and what deficits in my learning had prohibited my competency when communicating with my colleagues. Though I was ultra-competent at the mechanics of English–skills valued by my head teacher–I began to see that access to friendship and personal expression in English were wholly different skills that were not

part of my English education at college. My experience at the oil company made me wish for that level of competence not only for myself but also for my classmates and students.

Thank you *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, I learned many language expressions and cultural norms from you. The fun part of my job as a language teacher is that I am, at the same time, a language learner. A personal technique I shared with my students at the training center was to keep a journal close by when watching a movie or television show. When I watched Sabrina talking to her animated cat I learned new words, idioms, or expressions that I jotted down in my journal, such as: *Say no more*, *Be my guest*, and *Like I have a choice!* By doing so, I improved both my listening and speaking skills. The experience of surrounding myself with English cultural artifacts also influenced my writing skills, when, to my teacher surprise, I began experimenting with these expressions in my compositions.

Teaching in the professional world. As a new teacher, I stepped into my first job in my hometown at a high school with students stumbling in the same way I once did. I could see myself doing this for years, working hard as a teacher but not learning new things. I feared my English-learning journey would stop there. In the evenings, I started applying to different higher education teaching positions in the hope that with a new job would come an opportunity to travel abroad. When I was offered a teaching assistant position at the university level I quickly accepted, excited to see what it would bring to me. A year after I graduated from the university I returned to teach at that university, which offered what I had hoped, an opportunity to study abroad to pursue a higher academic degree.

New opportunities and expectations. Planning to pursue my M.A. in the United States, I applied to a TESOL program at one reputable university in Colorado. When I received my acceptance letter, I impatiently went through the process of getting a visa, I booked my tickets, and I took off. I recorded my impression when I first came to the U.S. in the following poem:

America, the Movie

I was boarding a plane

Happy to see America

A father of two daughters looked at me

Approached me and asked me

If I was going home.

"Home?" I said. "No, I was going to see America."

It was my first day and I was happy to see America.

 "Any expectations about America, son?"

"I guess I saw it all in the movies, Sir."

"No. No, kid! It's way different than the movies."

In the movies, I saw a sandy beach, a long golden boardwalk

And Pamela Anderson running in Baywatch

Wide highways, speeding sport cars, and blonde girls

In the movies, I found a lively downtown, dirty alleys, and men
carrying loaded guns

A college dorm, a night club, and girls and boys… screaming out their
joys

I made it to my new college town and I began attending my first Master's classes. As I was studying and socializing with colleagues, I realized that what I had experienced at the training center was more salient in this new context, where English was constantly around me. More explicitly, I could see how my undergraduate teacher education courses in Saudi Arabia, while providing me with certain valuable knowledge and techniques, were not quite congruent with what I needed as an international Master's student in English.

While studying in Colorado, I had the opportunity to teach intermediate writing as an intern at an English language institute that was part of my university. During the job interview, the institute director asked me not only about grammar and teaching methods, but also about my knowledge of American holidays, American sports, and other cultural topics. It was a marked moment that led me to see the intertwined nature of language and culture. I then began to deepen my inquiry into that relationship as I began my Master's thesis.

From learner to scholar. Experiencing language learning from the perspective of a student and teacher in both Saudi Arabia and the United States has deepened my desire to contribute to the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia by investigating the differences between the English spoken in my Saudi classes and the one used in the States. Thus, in my Master's thesis I focused on one aspect of the divide I observed: the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Saudi learners of English. The commonness of phrasal verbs in everyday English is astounding; for example, *look up, come across, take off, check out, and put down*. Phrasal verbs obviously cause no problems for first language English speakers; but they can be maddening for an English language learner.

The many semantic uses of the word "off" in phrasal verbs can be confusing for someone to whom off means something equitable to end, close, finish or stop. For example, once when I was in a grocery store in Colorado, an older man at the register upon hearing the alarm said, "*Oh it goes off all the time*."

To which I responded, "*Goes off*?"

"*Yeah, makes a sound*" he said, with a puzzled expression on his face.

We were both confused.

In my thesis, I came to the conclusion that being able to use and understand a wide range of phrasal verbs is part of the cultural literacy needed to feel fully comfortable speaking English (Ben Duhaish, 2008). Exploring new aspects of the pragmatic use of English became a more pronounced part of my professional identity and cultural literacy development. I presented my thesis at the 43rd TESOL annual convention in Denver, Colorado in March 2009.

Spanish experience with language and culture. While pursuing my Master's degree, I had the opportunity to start anew with language learning, studying Spanish. Motivated by the Spanish around me in Colorado, I signed up for an intensive three week course. Unlike when I was a youth learning English, memorizing and following in an unconscious way, while learning Spanish I was determined to apply the knowledge I had developed through reflection on language learning as well as my scholarly work. Much like my English students, I put myself in their shoes.

To my happy surprise the professor began the course with a salsa lesson rather than a grammar lesson. She taught the class differently than the English classes I had experienced in my youth. She highly valued the openness to learning the culture when

learning the language. She focused on cultural literacy skills to promote rapid language learning. I discovered a whole new language through context, and I became excited at the prospect of applying that learning to new ways of teaching. My Spanish professor in a letter of recommendation wrote:

> As a Spanish student, Fahad's analytical skills and his openness to a new learning experience helped him achieve an unusually rapid learning curve. …He is clearly grounded in his Arabic cultural roots, yet he is also open to different cultural perspectives and therefore able to enrich his experiences away from home without losing his connect with his own culture. (M. Velazquez-Castillo, letter of recommendation, 2008)

When I received this letter I felt so successful that I imagined a new life, married to a Spanish-speaking woman, living on a hacienda in Mexico. Though, after three weeks I was still far from fluent, I felt that that goal was attainable. Now, as I read this letter, I see my professor's work supports the argument in academic literature that learners who can produce accurate grammatical forms are not necessarily able to use the language in pragmatically appropriate situations (Gee, 1990). The development of pragmatic literacy offered greater opportunities for intercultural understanding.

Finding my niche in pragmatics research. Throughout my development in cultural and linguistic literacy, I remained focused on my future position as a professor at the university level in Saudi Arabia. During my Ph.D. study, I had the opportunity to work with scholars of pragmatics. From that experience, I am eager to develop pragmatic knowledge in the Saudi context which draws from both U.S. scholarship of the field of pragmatics and my own work. The class discussions, workshops, and conferences I

attended during my journey all opened up doors of opportunity for me to discover more about the role of pragmatics and be an advocate for putting pragmatics into practice in English classes in Saudi Arabia.

A pivotal point in my study occurred in 2011, when I had the opportunity to synthesize and learn at a workshop in pragmatics given by Noriko Ishihara, a leading scholar in the field. In that workshop, I learned what I knew all along, that adjusting language use to suit different sociocultural contexts is a truly intimidating challenge for second language learners. How, for instance, social status is known and accommodated in language, sometimes so subtle that it seems impossible to teach. While acquiring pragmatics competence can take learners many years, the workshop showed that the process can be facilitated through explicit instruction. In that workshop, I gained practical insights on how to enhance the learning of pragmatics, and had the opportunity to develop activities and materials for my future classroom. I began to connect myself as a learner of Spanish, and the work I was doing to be successful in Spanish, to my teaching of English.

The concept of 'I all' and group membership. As a native speaker of Arabic, a multilingual person, a Saudi Ph.D. student, an international doctoral student, a Saudi teacher of English, and a teacher educator, I bring many identities to my work. I sometimes think of myself as "I all." It is essential to me as a qualitative researcher that I acknowledge that my own background shapes my interpretations. Creswell (2007) explicates that interpretations flow from the researcher's own personal, cultural, assumptions, and historical experiences. Friedman (1998) writes, "change the scene and the most relevant constituents of identity come out to play" (p. 23). As a researcher,

embedded heavily in the communities of which I am studying, enacting self would be a balancing of the many selves to which might emerge in each situation.

It is also critical that I do not allow my personal interests to predetermine the findings or bias the study (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To overcome such influence, Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) direct the researcher to recursively reflect on the research processes and to continuously examine "the way one's own subjectivity influences one's research" (p. 27). As a result, reflectivity plays an important role not just during my collection of data and my analysis procedures, but also before I even begin conducting the research.

By articulating my own positionality, I follow in the steps of other researchers, as Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) describe:

> We acknowledge who we are, what our values are, and our research agenda. We think that our personal experiences …are relevant to our interest in studying this phenomenon. We believe that knowing about personal perspective allows other researchers to better evaluate our conclusions. (p. 27)

Through this section I have showed the many ways that I position myself within the literature.

My role as a researcher. Through using qualitative research, I intended first to go deep into the stories of my research participants to give a more accurate and detailed picture of the pragmatic interactions they have experienced and still experience. In this research, I attempted to interpret and make sense of the meanings others had made about the world from their own lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). The participants in my

research presented to me my future students population as well as others, like myself, who navigate a different pragmatic landscape.

Second, I felt it was my responsibility as a researcher to provide a space for the research participants to voice and share their experiences by telling their stories. Displaying and analyzing the narratives of five Saudi M.A. students in their English programs would have the potential to help in exploring the challenges Saudi students face with pragmatics during their studying and socializing in the United States. Such narratives did in fact inform the participants' perspectives and revealed the beliefs, struggles, frustration, achievements, and successes they encountered with English in order to understand the language teaching needs in teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia.

Why Qualitative?

Given the nature of my research, which "relies primarily on human perception and understanding" (Stake, 2010, p. 11), my study was best conducted following a qualitative research design. My choice of a qualitative research design was motivated by Denzin and Lincoln's (2008) definition, which stated that:

> *The word qualitative* implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. ….[Researchers] seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 14)

My research study aimed to investigate the pragmatic experiences of five M.A. students in their English programs in the U.S. stressing the pragmatic problematic encounters that the participants face through their interaction in academic contexts. To conduct my research, I chose a qualitative research approach for the reason that it is "a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. Its various genres are naturalistic, interpretive, and increasingly critical, and they typically draw on multiple methods of inquiry" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 3). In that end, I donned the mantel of a qualitative researcher to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Creswell's (2007) visualization of qualitative research emphasized the design of research and the employment of multiple procedures. He stated that:

> [q]ualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. …The final written report or presentation includes the voices of 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. (p. 37)

Creswell's definition outlines the sequence of procedures needed to establish the methodological framework of a research study. It emphasizes that the step that follows articulating the philosophical assumption is to define the researcher's worldview or research paradigm.

Social Constructivism as My Research Paradigm

My choice of qualitative research was therefore an acknowledgement of my particular stance. To further shape my research, I had chosen a paradigm to guide my investigation. A paradigm or worldview is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). This paradigm is seen by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as "the net that contains the researchers' epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (p. 9). In other words, each paradigm used in conducting research reveals particular sets of assumptions about the nature of reality, the researcher's epistemology, and the use of methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Vygotsky (1978), language and culture play major roles in how humans perceive the world and in how they develop intellectually. He argued that meanings are culturally defined, and look at language and culture as the frameworks through which humans experience and understand realities. That is to say, individuals learn through their interactions in groups where knowledge is collaboratively constructed.

In this vein, I position myself as a social constructivist. My research is grounded in a social constructivist research paradigm where the realities existing in one community are given alternative meanings by the community members through their collective actions and interchanges (Creswell, 2007). Knowing that meanings could be varied and multiple lead me to negotiate meaning with the participants in order to co-construct a sense of who they were and what ideologies they held in regards to pragmatics.

Narrative Inquiry as My Methodological Approach

According to Creswell (2007), worldviews or paradigms narrow to theoretical or interpretive stances that shape the data collection sources, data analysis procedures, and

the use of the findings to call for change. The emphasis in this study is on how five Saudi M.A. English students negotiate their pragmatic experiences during their socialization in the U.S. and how they make meaning out of these experiences. For this purpose, I chose narrative inquiry as my methodological approach because I reexamined the lived experiences and the in-progress life stories of the participants to generate data to address my research questions.

The term "narrative inquiry" was first used in educational research in 1990 by Connelly and Clandinin in their published article, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Informed by the Dewey's (1938) concept of experience and its three dimensions of *situation*, *continuity*, and *interaction*, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) proposed a three-dimensional narrative inquiry framework in which they focused their interest in lived experience. They defined their methodology as:

> [n]arrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated, …narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

As stated in this definition, the three dimensions of narrative inquiry are 1) *place* (i.e., situation); 2) *past, present*, and *future* periods of time (i.e., continuity); and 3) *personal* and *social* spaces (i.e., interaction). Clandinin and Connelly (1994) provided a further explanation of narrative inquiry looking at experiences from four directions:

inward (i.e., internal condition), by looking at participants' feelings, hopes, reactions, and personalities; *outward* (i.e., existential conditions), by looking at the participants' interaction with the environment; *backward* and *forward* (i.e., temporality), by looking not only at the participants' current experiences but to their pasts and to their futures. Therefore, in order to efficiently record an experience, I, as a researcher, asked questions and collect data considering each of the four directions.

Figure 3 illustrates how I conceived narrative inquiry with its three dimensions: temporality, sociality, and locality. The Venn diagram shows all possible overlaps between the three dimensions. At first, my study examined the pragmatic personal and social interactions of the participants that took place in the past, in their native educational contexts. Secondly, my study negotiated the participants' current pragmatic interactions happening during studying in the United States. Finally, the investigation of the past and the present led to the exploration of pragmatic teaching strategies that may take place in the participants' future context, Saudi Arabia. It is worth noting that the overlaps of the three dimensions did respond to the two research questions of my study.
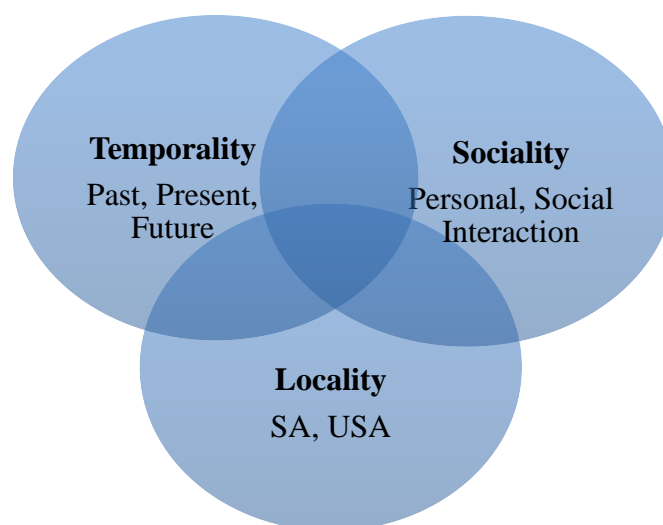
Figure 3. My visualization of the three dimensions of narrative inquiry.

Placing the participants' narratives in a timeline of past, present, and future helped me as a researcher understand their current experience, not only as they grew out of their past lived experiences, but also as they envisioned their future experiences.

Entering the Field

In January 2012, I started looking for prospective participants for my study. It was crucial that the participants shared several specific characteristics. I used the following selection criteria: 1) participants had to be Saudi Master's students in English; 2) they had to have already taught English in Saudi Arabia; 3) they planned to go back to Saudi Arabia upon completion of their graduate studies; and 4) they have proven their English language proficiency by scoring 550 or higher in TOEFL exam (equivalent to six in IELTS exam).

The use of the TOEFL score as a research criterion was not a goal in itself but rather a means to indicate that the participants were at an advanced level of English proficiency. Other language proficiency tests were also available for me, as the researcher. Among such tests was The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Although ACTFL is widely known, using ACTFL would be beyond the scope of this research study. Unlike TOFEL that is focused on ESL speech community, ACTFL is broadly focused on foreign language speech communities. The reason I chose TOFEL over ACTFL was because the prospective participants in my study would be situated in the ESL community, acting as both learners and teachers in in that community.

By March 2012, I noticed that there were about nine persons who fit the selection criteria. This large number called for a purposeful sampling. Therefore, I began to

63

consider specific people in April 2012. Consequently, I shared my dissertation topic with those who I found to have strong potential to participate, but did not proceed any further as I had not back then successfully defended my dissertation proposal nor had I submitted my Institutional Review Board (IRB) application.

After my proposal had been approved, and after I secured the IRB permission to conduct my study (See Appendix A, p. 222), I began recruiting my participants via formal emails. In these emails, I indicated that their participation was totally voluntary, that only I would know who was participating, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants who agreed to take part were given informed consent forms to sign prior to any data collection (see Appendix B, p. 223). The consent forms defined the steps I had used to ensure privacy, including the use of pseudonyms, and a guarantee that the data collected would be used for no other purpose than the study at hand.

The Context

This study was conducted on the campus of a public university located in western Pennsylvania. The English Department in the university offers four different concentrations: generalist, literature, TESOL, and teaching English. In each of the programs, students are required to complete a minimum of 36 graduate credit hours which equated to Master's classes and thesis hours. At the time when I started my study, Saudi students were enrolled in only three of the four Master's programs; no students were enrolled in the teaching English program. This omission from the teaching English program could be because the program is specialized for high school teachers who would be working in school in the United States.

The first program is an M.A. in English in TESOL, an acronym for "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages." The program is designed to enrich prospective students in the area of TESOL. The program offers courses including Second Language Acquisition, Second Language Teaching, and ESL Material and Media. The program attracts both international students and American students who desire to teach abroad. The second program is an M.A. in Literature. It is designed to introduce students to traditional and nontraditional works and incorporates both literary theory and criticism. The instructors focus on the history of literature and criticism, and other topics, including American and British literature. The third program is a Generalist M.A., which gives broad exposure to the variety of work that comprises English studies. The program is designed for students who have yet to decide a particular focus in their course of study. Courses are offered from across the field of English studies–literature, composition, teaching English as a second language, and teacher preparation–giving the students the opportunity to explore the range of possibilities for focus and career preparation.

The English Department sponsors a student organization that serves all students who are enrolled in the graduate programs. This organization serves as a place to make friends, share ideas and concerns, and participate in events and workshops. The department also has a student lounge that is designed to give students a space to relax and study. This place is a good locale for me to conduct my research.

The Participants

My study followed a purposeful sampling with research participants fulfilling the selection criteria. The selection criteria were: They are all Saudi Master's students in the three English programs, former English teachers in Saudi Arabia, intend to go back to

Saudi Arabia upon completion of their studies, and have proven their English language proficiency by scoring 550 or higher in TOEFL exam. According to Patton, (2002), qualitative research should rely on purposeful sampling in order to investigate a particular phenomenon in depth.

Although I initially found nine participants who met my research criteria for this research, I narrowed that number into five, a number which better fitted in the parameters of my methodology. Patton (2002) explains that if what researchers are after is breadth of information then they are more likely to opt for a large number of participants while if what they are after is in-depth information, then they are more likely to select a small number of participants that have to be rich in information. Creswell (2007) further supports my decision to limit the number of participants. He maintains that narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experience of a small number of individuals. Considering the purpose of my research, that was to deeply explore the Saudi M.A. English students' pragmatic experiences as they interacted in their different academic communities, as well as the duration of the study, I needed to choose only five participants from the larger group of available students.

The breakdown of five participants was as follows: all of them were first-year and second-year students, with three participants from the TESOL program, one participant from the literature program, and one participant from the generalist program. The five participants came from different regions in Saudi Arabia and have taught in different cities of it. Two of the participants were female. Having voices from both genders was significant to my study because in Saudi Arabia qualitative research is generally gender-bound (i.e., male researchers study male participants and vice versa).

For his dissertation research, Alkhatnai (2011) studied a number of Saudi EFL students form both genders. Due to the conservative features of Saudi society and the issue of gender segregation, he was not able to conduct his in-depth interviews with female face-to-face. Alkhatni stated:

> While it was easy and possible to interview the male participants, due to social and cultural barriers, female participants were interviewed over the phone. The female participants in the group were first emailed, and consent for phone interviews was acquired prior to setting interview times. (p. 85)

Alkhatni mentioned that using this kind of remote interviewing was justified "when face-to-face interviews are impossible, as they were in the Saudi context between a male researcher and female participants" (p. 101). Such statement reflected the kind of obstacles researchers often face when interacting with Saudi participants from the opposite gender. I feel fortunate to have participants from both genders in my study, which can be, as stated earlier, significant to my dissertation.

Data Sources and Data Collection

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), collected data are called "field texts" because they are "created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers" (p. 92). They suggested various sources of data collection that can be utilized in narrative inquiry, including field notes, journal records, interviews, observations, storytelling, autobiographical writing, pictures, and personal philosophies. Additionally, researcher voice can be included in narrative inquiry through researcher journals in order to "portray the relational circumstances of the situation represented in the field text" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 95).

In conducting my narrative inquiry, I employed four types of field texts or data sources. To begin with, I met with each of the five participants and conducted preliminary individual interviews to ask about their educational backgrounds and their reasons for pursuing graduate studies. On the same meeting, I introduced the participants to a blog that I designed specifically for the purpose of my study and to be used throughout the entire data collection process. Right after that, I provided each of the participants with a digital audio-recorder to be used for capturing their self-reflective pragmatic moments as they occurred during the whole period of data collection.

As the data collection process continued, I conducted a number of follow up interviews with each of the participants to discuss topics emerging from the blog entries and the self-reflective pragmatic moments. Towards the end of the data collection process, I conducted a final interview with each participant and a focus group interview that brought all the five participants together. As previously described, both the blogging and the audio recording were planned to contribute to the research data throughout the entire data collection process.

There were two divisions of the research site that responded to the four types of data sources. The individual and group interviews were carried out in the group study rooms located in the main library. The second research site was the private blog created on-line by the researcher. For the self-reflective pragmatic moments, participants were free to record them anywhere they liked but not be inside their classes. Figure 4 illustrates the different data sources I utilized in my narrative inquiry. The data was collected over seven months and yielded around 12 hours of audio recordings from three of the methods (totaling 267 pages of transcriptions) and 58 pages of blog postings.

```
┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│   preliminary   │ ───> │                 │ ───> │                 │
│   Interviews    │      │   Blog Entries  │      │ Audio-recordings│
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
        v
┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│   Follow up     │ ───> │   Focus Group   │ ───> │                 │
│   Interviews    │      │   Interview     │      │ Final Interview │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
```
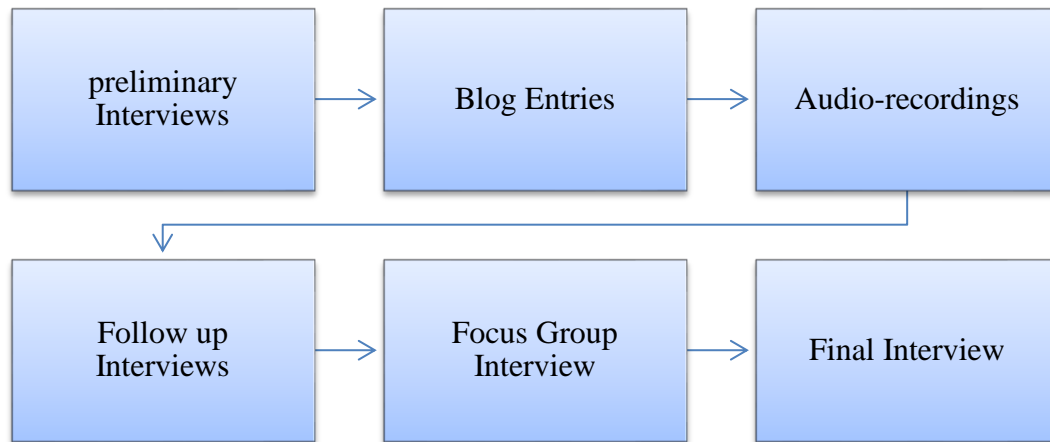
Figure 4. Outline of data collection.

Crystallization

As the figure presented, I collected data from multiple sources over a period of seven months (from November 20, 2012 until June 7, 2013). The multiple data sources reflected the very wide breadth of data I desired and ultimately collected. These diverse data sources were designed to allow for "crystallization" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 478), which fostered a more thorough exploration of what occurred in various facets of the participants' interactions in the pragmatic situations. Just like crystals offer multiple colors, refractions, and patterns, crystallizing the data sources allowed me multiple ways of analysis, a variety of discussions, and numerous interpretations, all focusing on the multiple perspectives expressed by the participants.

Conceptualizing validity through the metaphor of the crystal called for a methodology that demands self-critique or self-reflexivity (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To explore the past and present experiences of the Saudi students, I crystallized the four sources of data to be used throughout the process of data collection. The use of

crystallization eventually allowed me to cross-check any formed claims and support any emerging themes.

Data Sources

In my data collection process, qualitative interviewing became my dominant data source where I followed Patton's (1990) three categorizes of interview: 1) the informal conversational interview; 2) the general interview guide approach; and 3) the standardized open-ended interview (pp. 280-289). These interviews aimed to make explicit the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs the participants had in relation to pragmatics.

Below, I offer a description of the procedures I followed in the process of data collection. Each data source is defined, with a description of the rationale, and how the data source would bring me closer to answering my research questions.

Initial interviews. I start collecting the participants' demographic information through conducting initial interviews. The initial interviews also provided each of the participants a valuable platform to speak about his or her past assumptions, views, and educational backgrounds (Creswell, 2007), as well as to share details specific to pragmatics as an English learner and teacher.

During the initial meetings with the participants, I followed the *standardized open-ended* interview suggested by Patton (1990). This type of interview "consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (p. 280). Here, Following Patton advice, the interview

questions were predetermined in advance and were designed in a totally open-ended

format (See Appendix C, p. 225).

      Blog entries. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) proposed the use of journal records

as another data source in narrative inquiry that could be made by both the participants

and researcher. Because of the rapid evolution and growth of technology, I found blogs to

be a better data collection tool that met the perceptions of the participants. According to

Warlick (2005), blog is the main tool for building literacy skills in the twenty-first

century since it is revolutionizing reading, writing, self-expression, and publishing over

the Internet. What made the blog unique for this study was that it used as an avenue for

self-reflection and to communicate identity, personality, and most importantly a point of

view.

      In the blogging space, the participants were asked to participate and reflect on the

pragmatic incidents they would encounter inside and outside their classes. Furthermore,

the participants were given prompts and asked to respond to them, for instance: *Write*

about an awkward moment happened between you and one of your classmates this

semester. What made it awkward? and how would you have avoided this discomfort?

(See Appendix D, p. 226 for the entire list of blog prompts).

      According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the researcher is advised to

collaborate with participants by actively involving them in the research. As they were

blogging, the participants were encouraged to initiate new topics, capture personal

incidents, and respond to each other's entries. The blog provided the study with rich data

as the participants expressed their ideas and attempted to co-construct interpretations of

their stories and pragmatic incidents. Some of questions in the follow up interviews were

driven by the content of these blog entries. The blog were created on *Wikispaces* platform [https://isaudi.wikispaces.com/]. The blog was configured as a private one, which only the five participants and I had access to via a password.

Audio-recorded self-reflective pragmatic moments. Audio recording could be seen as a part of a wider new approach to narrating stories known as "digital storytelling" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In a typical digital story project, participants employ both audio clips and images to create a digital story (Iannotti, 2005). In my research though, I only wanted the participants to audio-record their own personal reflections of the pragmatic moments they encounter. By doing so, they were able to give a real voice to their pragmatic moments, capturing the fun, laughter, frustration, awkwardness, and empowerment that surround their stories. The audio-recording method was intended to richen the quality of the data and facilitate my understanding and interpretation of them. What made this data source unique was that it gave the participants the opportunity to record and reflect on their pragmatic moments immediately after they occurred, while they were still fresh in mind.

To record their stories and pragmatic moments, the participants needed to use a digital recorder, which was provided by the researcher. All the participants were asked to use the digital recorders to express their reflections throughout the entire period of data collection. After recording their self-reflective pragmatic moments, it was easy for the participants to upload their audio files to their computers and eventually sent them to me. After I received the participants' audio clips in my computer, I started the process of transcribing.

Follow up interviews. As the participants were contributing to the research data by creating their blog entries and sending their audio clips, I was meeting with each one of them individually for follow up interviews. These interviews were necessary so that the participants would reconstruct and further discuss the details of any contemporary pragmatic experiences they encountered during their living in the United States, or elaborate on any topic newly raised in the research blog. The follow up interviews were able to give me access to a deeper understanding of the participants' academic socialization processes as well as to the frustrations and joys they experience.

The follow up interviews in my study were designed in a semi-structured fashion following the *general interview guide approach* suggested by Patton (1990). Unlike the *standardized open-ended* interviews that have carefully scripted questions, the general interview guide approach guided my interviews to be more flexible, involving a list of topics and questions. This was the most typically used type of interview in qualitative studies, as Patton stated. He described the interview procedures to involve:

> outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The issues in the outline need not be taken in any particular order and the actual wording of questions to elicit responses about those issues is not determined in advance. (p. 280)

Conducting the interviews, I was allowing the participants to deviate from the interview questions when they were inclined to do so. Being flexible with the interview helped me access richer narratives of the five participants. The number of the interviews was not predetermined. The follow-up interviews were scheduled to the convenience of the participants. At the end, I was able to meet with each of the participants four times,

with the exception of one participant who I met with only three times. The length of the interviews was about 30 minutes in average. To conduct the follow up interviews, I designed an interview protocol created in a format of an outline (See Appendix E, p. 228).

Final individual interviews. Towards the end of the semester, I conducted final individual interviews with the participants so they could finalize their reflections on their pragmatic experiences and the meanings they infer from these experiences. These final interviews were intended to be the times when they could talk about issues I did not ask them about in the preceding follow-up interviews. The final interviews were basically a free space for the participants to add any additional information they had to their narratives. During the final interviews, I also asked them about their ideas of how to integrate pragmatics in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia.

Following Patton's *informal conversational interview*, the interview were unstructured, and were conducted "on-the-spot, as casual conversations" where the questions were spontaneously generated. Patton directed that the questions in the informal interview should "emerge from the immediate context" and should be "asked in the natural course of things; there is no predetermination of question topics or wording" (Patton, 1990, p. 288). I conducted my final interviews accordingly, following Patton's directions (See Appendix F, p. 234). All the initial, follow-ups, and final interviews were digitally recoded and transcribed. Transcribing each interview recoding straightaway helped me revise and generate new interview questions for the coming follow-ups. I was keeping notes in my journal and recording my reactions directly after each interview.

Focus group interview. The final data source is a focus group to be conducted at the end of the semester. Focus groups, at a broad level, are collective conversations and group interviews (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008). Focus group interviews are unique in that that they allow data to be generated through interaction amongst all research participants as they converse with one another. Patton (2002) explained:

> Unlike a series of one-on-one interviews, in a focus group participants get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say. However, participants need not agree with each other or reach any kind of consensus. Nor is it necessary for people to disagree. The object is to get high-quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. (p. 386)

My focus group interview, following a semi-structured interview format, was conducted with the five participants over coffee in a group study room in the university library. Four participates were physically present during the interview expect for one participant who joined the group from Saudi Arabia through a webcam conversation. The aim of the focus group was to generate more data and to react to the already generated data in an atmosphere that was different from the individual interviews.

The participants were asked relatively simple and direct questions. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), there is a rationale for using simple questions where "the trick is to promote the participants' expressions of their views through the creation of a supportive environment" (p. 149). Following their directions, I provided open-ended questions so the participants and I could discuss and respond to each other's ideas (See

Appendix G, p. 235). This flexibility in the focus group interview was meant to explore any pragmatic issues that might unpredictably arise (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The focus group was recorded and transcribed.

Wakefulness

While conducting this narrative inquiry, I had to be *wakeful* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It required "a keen eye", as Creswell (2007, p, 57) stated, to search the data collected for the purpose of identifying the specific stories that captured the participants' experiences. Wakefulness as projected by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refers to the "ongoing reflection" needed in the decisions made by the researcher (p. 184). As the wakeful narrative researcher I attempted to be, I was reflexive and I kept a researcher journal during all stages of data collection. My journal was basically "a bound notebook that the field-worker carries into the field and in which is recorded observational notes, personal notes, sketches, ideas, lists of terms, and so on" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 115). In my journal, I recorded of my observations, references, problems, and personal reflections.

Gum Shoe Syndrome

In addition to being wakeful, I needed to make my position explicit to myself, my participants, and the reader of my work as I collected and interpreted the research data. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) asserted that researchers need to "be prepared to follow their nose and, after the fact, reconstruct their narrative of inquiry" (p. 7). Therefore, reconstructing the participants' narratives was a part of my job as I conducted a narrative inquiry, but the question that begged to be asked here is *how*?

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that researchers in narrative inquiry typically

share "the field notes or interview transcriptions" with the research participants, and then

may construct the written analysis collaboratively with them. Marshall and Rossman

elaborated that when in narrative inquiry, "there is open recognition that the researcher is

not just passively recording and reporting the narrator's reality" (p. 154). Consequently, I

needed to make explicit where I stand in this reconstructing of the narratives. To do so, I

borrowed a concept from Morris' article (1999) known as the *gum syndrome*, typically

seen in the work of the bilingual interpreters in the courtroom.

The gum syndrome refers to two contrasting situations that a court interpreter

commonly faces. In the first situation, the interpreter is viewed as "an invisible pipe, with

words entering in one language and exiting−completely unmodified−in another

language" (Morris, 1999, p.7). In other words, the interpreter is seen to act like a machine

that translates the words literally as they are spoken by the defendants. In the contrasting

situation, the interpreter is seen by the defendants as one who represents them and

protects them from communication misconceptions. These two opposing perceptions

make the court interpreter feel, and as Morris (1999) put it:

> like the merest of incidental items and, at the same time, the most important
>
> person in a defendant's life. These two contrasting situations have been likened
>
> by interpreters to being a piece of gum on the bottom of a shoe-ignored for all
>
> practical purposes, but almost impossible to remove. (p. 7)

Understanding my role as I conduct my narrative inquiry, I anticipated myself struggling

with the dilemma of whether to present the participants' narratives exactly as I collected

them from the data sources or to merely present the reader of my work with only my interpretation of the narratives.

The gum syndrome comes with a lot of stress for me as the researcher. Just like the court interpreter, I struggled with the fuzzy boundary between my insider and outsider positions. In other words, being the researcher on the one hand, and a Saudi student on the other, made me wonder what my responsibilities would be to the participants' narratives. The fact that I share the same racial background as my five Saudi participants led me to think of their experiences as intricately interwoven with my own experiences as a Saudi student studying in the United States. In view of that, I was not researching "the other" but "one's own kind" (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006). I saw myself as one of them, who might have dealt with many of the same pragmatic issues that they had dealt with during their life experiences as learners and teachers of English.

Moreover, the problematic situations the gum syndrome anticipated did in fact appear as I completed the data collection process and began reporting the research findings. In an attempt to overcome this research challenge, I employed three proposed techniques. First of all, I kept myself close to the participants during the process of data collection via utilizing the different data tools (e.g., interviews, blogs, and recordings) like a piece of gum stuck on the bottom of a shoe. I did not want this closeness to lead me to take over the meanings the participants want to deliver as I began my data analysis. Therefore, I strived to remain as faithful as I could to their voices; and this leads me to talk about my second technique.

To avoid the complexity the gum syndrome would bring, I was very reflective during the data collection period by taking notes and commenting on every interaction

with each of the participants. When I presented my reflective comments alongside the verbatim narratives, I highlighted how my relationship with the participants might influence my data analysis, bearing in mind both my insider and outsider positions (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006).

As my third technique, I shared the initial emerging of themes and categories and my analytical write-ups with each of the participants. This step was important so that none of my research findings would come as a surprise to the participants (Park, 2006). Accordingly, I grant the participants access to the research data and asked them to verify my comprehending of their narratives through member-checking.

Instead of being pulled to any of the two contrasting directions of an insider or outsider, my presentation of data analysis was a collaborative effort between the participants and me, as the study researcher. Following the three techniques of being close to the participant, being reflective, and sharing my analytical notes with the participants, I intended to escape the problems caused by the gum syndrome. I found that my responsibility as a researcher of "my own kind" is to do critical work by creating a balance between the participants' voices and my understanding of their narratives. After all, it was very important to assert that my interpretation of the data was only one form of many possible interpretations because of the different experiences I brought to the table as a Saudi, male, bilingual, Ph.D. student.

Data Analysis

In data analysis, the process of interpreting raw data and displaying the meanings to the reader through the written report remains mysterious (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Patton (2002) noted, "qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula

exists for that transformation. Guidance, yes. But no recipe. …[T]he final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when–and if–arrived at" (p. 432). With this in mind, I acknowledge that my approach of data analysis is not necessarily set in stone, as qualitative research is always a fluid, shifting task (Creswell, 2007). As a researcher, I must carefully plan out my study, yet remain open to revision since research is "a story that unfolds over time" (Creswell, 2007, p. 43).

Following Marshall and Rossman's analytical procedures (2011), I conducted data analysis through five steps. Each step entailed two actions: data reduction, so the piles of collected data could be brought into manageable chunks, and interpretation, so the data chunks could be associated to interpreted meanings and emerging themes.

First, I organized the data collected. I performed line-by-line reading throughout the collected data and made a computer folder for each participant to keep all his/her files grouped together. Organizing my data was not expected to be an easy task. Patton (2002) noted, "[s]itting down to make sense of out of the pages of interviews and whole files of field notes can be overwhelming. Organizing and analyzing a mountain of narrative can seem like an impossible task" (p. 440). Therefore, I performed the minor editing necessary to make my journal notes retrievable.

Second, I read through the entire data set for each participant at least three times in order to immerse myself into the data. From this immersion, I was able to generate a sense of each participant's narrative structure. I accordingly created a table displaying the participants' demographic information, length of study in the M.A. programs, study abroad exposure, teaching experiences, and imagined future plans after they finish their M.A. programs (Park, 2006). The table helped me situate the participants' individual

stories within the three-dimensional timeline of place, time, and personal and social interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). At the end of this step, I crafted narratives for the five participants regardless of how their stories were told. I rearranged the narratives within a chronological sequence, highlighting the participants' past-present-future life history timelines (Creswell, 2007).

Third, I examined the data for the purpose of identifying preliminary categories. I brought the categories that had similar meanings together to form larger themes. All categories and themes were sorted in relation to the participants' past experience, present socialization, and future planning. That was an important step to reduce the data to the most relevant information related to my research questions.

At the fourth step, I applied a coding scheme to the categories and themes. The codes were made in the form of numbers and abbreviations of key words as advised by Marshall and Rossman (2011). The use of codes allowed me to see how the data pieces would cluster together forming major categories and theme. To gain as much information from the collected data as possible, I planned to go through two stages of coding. I first coded each participant's data separately, and then I coded them again comparing each participant to the others to do a cross-participant analysis.

Fifth, I read through the coded narratives and offered interpretations to the emergent categories and themes. I simultaneously was writing the interpretations in a form of analytic memos (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I attempt to make my analytical memos coherent and supported by linking them to the topics discussed in the dissertation literature review.

According to Patton (2002), "interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order" (p. 480). Therefore, I produced a lot of reflective writing during this step in order to identify relations among the coded data, and to look for unique findings. My writing of the analytic memos was used as building blocks in my final report of data analysis, in Chapter Four (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Trustworthiness of the Study

Conducting my study, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria by categorizing the four areas of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* in order to establish the trustworthiness of my own research study.

Credibility

Schwandt (2007) stated that credibility "addressed the issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondents' views of their life ways and the inquirer's reconstruction and representation of same" (p. 299). My own understanding of the participants' thoughts and stories was based on my own interpretations, but, at the same time, I attempted to remain as faithful as I could to the participants' voices. In order to do this, I shared my findings as I was drafting and finalizing my research discussions. I included the participants in the research process through member-checking to validate that I understood their narratives correctly. Each of the five participants was empowered to point out any misinterpretations and to verify the accuracy of what I had written (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the use of crystallization and the utilizing multiple

sources of data collection assisted me through offering multiple perceptions of the collected data.

Transformability

Transferability is concerned with "the issue of generalization in terms of case-to-case transfer" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 299). Working on the drafts of my data analysis, I attempted to use thick description as it "allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). Through thick descriptions, readers should be able to decide if the conclusions drawn in my study can be applied to other contexts.

Dependability

Dependability highlights "the process of inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable and documented" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 299). In order to ensure dependability in my study, I consistently recorded my own actions, thoughts, and feelings at each step of the research process in my researcher journal. I was also reflective on my communications and interactions with the research participants and context. I reported on my reactions and decisions as they related to both data collection and data analysis.

Confirmability

Confirmability is "concerned with establishing the fact that data and interpretations of an inquiry were not merely figments of the inquirer's imagination. It called for linking assertions, findings, interpretations, and so on to the data themselves in readily discernible ways" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 299). In line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) practice of auditing, I made arrangements to have my data analysis audited by one of my qualified colleagues in order to verify my results. Being aware that a truly

objective qualitative research study is not possible, I wanted to get their reactions to the coding and the analytic memos, as well as the next-to-final drafts.

Chapter Summary

The third chapter of my dissertation focused on the following: my positionality as a researcher, a justification for the use of qualitative research, my research paradigm, and my choice of narrative inquiry as my methodological approach. In this chapter also, I introduced my data analysis procedures and how that would help me identifying the emerging categories and themes from my five participants' narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TALES OF FIVE ADVENTURING M.A. STUDENTS

Introduction

In this chapter I unpack the past and present narratives of my five participants:
Sarah Albassam, Najla Farhan, Hamad Alghadi, Bader Abulyla, and Firas Salama. From
the infant stages of data collection, in November 2012, through completion, in May 2013,
I had realized my participants are both unique individuals, while also sharing many
characteristics with their Saudi graduate-student peers who are also practicing English
teachers in Saudi Arabia. Coming in this chapter, I investigate the layers of experience
my participants have had. In those layers, it was easy to see the commonalities many
Saudi students faced and also the uniqueness of how my participants storied those
experiences and learned from them.

The patterns of oral storytelling happen with a person's memory rather than in a
cemented chronological order. To keep the voices of participants as individual, I have
chosen to make a section in this chapter for each one and tell their stories within that
section. For the purpose of retelling and to then reconstruct the stories, regardless of how
they were told, I used the three-dimensional framework of place, time, and personal and
social interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This means I told the stories
chronologically: past experiences, current experiences, and anticipated future. It was
important to me to represent each participant to the reader as an individual who brought
to their experience their own unique past, present, and expectation for the future. I also
heightened the awareness of the reader to the place of the story (i.e., in Untied States or
Saudi Arabia). I did this because place played a central role in many of their

interpretations of their own experiences. As I moved forward in writing this chapter, I learned that place was part of a larger matrix of information the reader would need to make sense of the stories.

To Tell a Participant's Story: A Researcher's Choices

As I began to unpack the stories I was told, I began first with what I gleaned from each of the data sources. The results presented here represent data collected during a seventh-month data collection period, and come from four data sources: individual interviews, an electronic blog, multiple self-recorded reflections, and a focus group that they all attended. When I started this study, I began with the four sources of data, and I presumed that they would generate equal amounts of data. I theorized that I needed all four, and that together they would offer me the chance to step into my five participants' lives. For seven months, I would live and learn with my participants in their authentic contexts. However, as happens in qualitative research, along the way things changed. The enthusiasm the participants brought to the interviews did not translate into the other data sources. While they would talk verbosely and at length in the interview, on the blog they would write very little to nothing at all. Like news-reporters of their own lives, I imagined that they would record themselves all day, but instead, when I clicked on their recording files there was little to nothing to hear. As an explanation, Firas, one of my participants, told me he did not find that type of reflection helpful, but preferred to speak with me directly, in the interview. He said genuinely:

I would say more interviews are better than blogs. Why I'm saying that? Blogs, I found myself blogging just for the sake of blogging but when interview, I'm more

honest. I really think about it. I really try to find real answers. I'm engaged with

the study. (Interview, May 27, 2013)

When I asked him about the recordings he said, "The recordings are good. They're better than blogs and less than interviews" (Interview, May 27, 2013). His candor was expressed by many of the other participants.

In response, when the third interview period began, I negotiated longer meeting times with participants to make up for the data not collected from the other sources. I changed the type of questions I asked into 'sharing' questions, pushing toward participants telling stories rather than explaining blog entries and recorded moments. I asked the participants for detailed explanations of pragmatic incidents inside and outside the classroom. After that interview, Sarah, one of the participants, told me warmly that she enjoyed the new format.

The changes that I made in my methodology were in the tradition of Motha's (2009) afternoon teas session. Motha was elastic in her methodology and data analysis. When her participants asked her to get together for tea, she offered her home as a meeting point. Little by little, these gatherings translated into valuable data that opened new avenue of discovery for her. Motha found that the participants consulted each other about teaching and functioned as a supportive community of practice, information she may not have found in the individual meetings she had with them. She also found that privileging transcripts of afternoon tea visits over her more traditional data sources created a more vivid picture of the experience of her participants. In that vein of discovery, I made changes according to my participant needs and coded data privileging the interviews, a data source in which my participants seemed to come alive.

When I began to code the data from Hamad, for example, his confidence in himself showed through in his mannerisms and ways of being –both elements that may have not been apparent in the writing or recording I asked him to do. Hamad never used the recordings and preferred to meet, and show me his stories with how he told them. He also rarely spoke about his own pragmatic hiccups. I learned a significant amount about his strong and confident manner from how he told his stories and which stories he chose to tells. I also found that to learn about Hamad more fully, I had to be open to working with him as an individual who was willing to share on his own terms.

Throughout the core of this chapter and in alignment with the study research questions, I present highlighted accounts of the pragmatic experiences of my participants that happened in their pasts. Consequently, I selectively bring together the pragmatic incidents that were encountered during the participants' present living in the United States, including any future plans after finishing their participation in my study. Each participant's narrative was organized by its relationship to the following two research questions:

1. How have the five Saudi students understood and experienced pragmatics in their native educational contexts?

2. How are they understanding and navigating issues surrounding pragmatic usage in their current Master's degree programs in the United States?

In what follows, I try to create a character for each participant independently. I begin with Sarah, because her experience with English was the least. I then contrast her experience with Hamad, whose private education and travel abroad exposed him to English consistently throughout his life. I then continue on with, Bader, Najla, and Firas

whose experiences in English fell in between Sarah and Hamad. Bader is having his second opportunity to study in the U.S. after one year and two months in Texas. Then, Najla, who was introduced to English as a child in private school and traveled a lot to the United States and other European countries. Last but not least, Firas whose experience mirrored in many ways Sarah's; both of whom learned English in public school and used it infrequently if at all.

Sarah: Slowed Down Sometimes but Never Stopped

My first encounter with Sarah was at her apartment where she invited me over for a pot of tea and some baked treats. Unlike my other participants who accepted my invitation to meet on more neutral turf, Sarah insisted that at home she felt comfortable and that I would feel welcome. When I arrived, her whole family, including her husband and her three year old daughter, greeted me warmly and I quickly felt comfortable and at home with them. Sarah instantly struck me as a confident, outspoken, and smart woman. Sarah was an established English M.A. student with a concentration in TESOL in her third semester. It was only later that I would learn that during her first experiences learning English, Sarah stumbled, lacked confidence, and wanted to hide in the classroom. Though she told me that those experiences happened, I saw none of the markers of a lack of confidence in any of the meetings we had together. Sarah was consistently sure of herself in her American new context.

Looking Back: Living in Saudi Arabia

As a young woman growing up in Saudi Arabia, Sarah's initial experience with English is much like the majority of Saudi students, which is best described with the word "prescribed." Sarah studied in a public school where English was introduced as a

subject in the seventh grade. In her experience, English was taught like a math or science class rather than a language course and Sarah said, "I don't consider them [the classes], like, learning English" (Interview, November 21, 2012). Throughout her education, Sarah muddled through classes in English. Her grades were dependent on her ability to memorize paragraphs of text, only to be written verbatim into the exams. When she graduated, Sarah did not see herself majoring in English and was happy to leave the language behind.

The less than auspicious introduction to the English language Sarah shared made her choice to learn English in college somewhat baffling to me. She cleared it up by explaining dryly that it was not a choice, "actually, it was my destiny; I didn't choose it to be honest" (Interview, November 21, 2012). Sarah had applied to study her passion, hoping to major in computer science. But, to her dismay, Sarah did not get admitted into a computer science program; her GPA was not meeting the standards. Heart broken, Sarah had to move on and adopt a new dream. Shocking even to her, she found herself falling back to her second major, English. Sarah started college in 2002 majoring in English with a concentration in translation.

Sarah, in a different level of language course, where she could not rely wholly on memorization, struggled. She looked back confused at how the six years of English as a subject in school, four classes a week, did not prepare her at all. To add to her frustration, she found herself in a new pool of learners. She now had to compete with classmates who had studied in countries like the U.S. or the U.K., or had graduated from private schools where English receives much more attention. Some of Sarah's new teachers inquired in class about those students who lived abroad or studied in private schools making Sarah

worry about the extent to which those students would be more ready for English than her. Sarah was barely treading water.

A sinking feeling. For the first time since I met Sarah, I could see the vulnerable student that she described. In her first semester, she sat down to write her first paper only to be lost as to how to begin, what to write, and how to put the words on the page. Sarah narrated, "I remember the first writing essay I did… I never write like a paragraph myself, never." Lost she wrote on her paper, "I can are something –I don't remember the sentence." When the teacher walked around and collected the papers, Sarah felt nervous. Her fears were validated when the teacher held up the paper and shouted harshly, "Who wrote this down? I mean, are you stupid?" Sarah felt like hiding. The teacher continued by reminding the students who did not have strong English backgrounds that "it's not your place here; it's not your place." Sarah looked around the room and wondered what the other students had produced and if there were others who were struggling like her. In her mind, thoughts of transferring became vivid but she quelled them and resolutely decided to move forward. She said, "I wanted to transfer but I say no." She moved forward (Interview, November 21, 2012).

Sarah struggled through that first year but made it. Sarah knew that to continue meant a lot of hard work. Her language skills needed improvement. Following the useful instruction of her second year writing teacher, Sarah started a portfolio collecting her short paragraphs and gradually comparing older paragraphs to newer ones. To her delight, Sarah started to see improvements in her writing as well as her speaking skills. Sarah finished her degree in five years during which time she made a great leap from stumbling over her words into a more fluent English speaker and a professional

translator. As further acknowledgement of her accomplishment, and upon graduation with her Bachelor's degree, Sarah took a TOEFL test and scored very high.

On a roll. After so much difficulty, Sarah had built a strong reputation in the English Department. When she told me that she was viewed as a successful English speaker and was receiving a lot of compliments, she glowed. Sarah explained proudly:

> They [her colleagues, friends, and professors] always ask me, did you study [in the States?] They think, oh you speak good English; maybe did you study English in the States when you were like little? Or is it like a good school? Or is it because you watch movies? So they really like my English. (Interview, November 21, 2012)

They wanted her to be the model that had been successful in Saudi Arabia before, a student from private school who had traveled abroad, but Sarah informed them without hesitation or fear of stigma that she had gone to public school and worked very hard. Sarah had learned to be part of the world of people who were that model and to be successful. Even though she may not have known it, she was preparing for her travels to the United States by learning the skills of pragmatics in her new academic community.

Because Sarah had built a reputation through her accomplishments, she was asked to begin teaching before finishing her college degree. She started teaching at the beginning of the summer of her junior year in a private English center. It was her first time as a teacher in a classroom and she loved it. Later, she was offered a full time teaching position there after graduation and she happily accepted it. Sarah quickly climbed the ladder in that center and within two years she had become a head tutor. She then became the operation manager for the center, and continued to climb the ladder to be

the operational manager for four other branches of the center. Later, an opportunity would knock on Sarah's doorstep as she was offered a teaching job at a reputable government institution, where she was assured a scholarship to study her Masters' in TESOL in the United States. Sarah agreed and embarked on her new challenge.

Over the course of talking with Sarah about her history, I asked her many times about pragmatics. I found that Sarah's exposure to ideas of pragmatics were limited during her high school, university, and teaching life in Saudi Arabia. During her college years, Sarah took two courses in culture: one covered topics in American and British cultures while the other one compared the local Arabic culture to the western culture. Sarah enjoyed both courses. She learned that America has 50 states and background information about British politics and the monarchy. She further explained about the content of one of the culture courses, "and then we talked about the education, the health system, the society, and then their traditions, everything about them, everything" (Interview, November 21, 2012). As I listened to Sarah, I understood that the courses did not cover pragmatics but focused heavily on surface level and mainstream culture. When I asked her, I learned not only had these courses been lacking in pragmatics, but in none of her courses had she heard the term *pragmatics*.

Current Experiences: The Fall Back

Sarah applied and was accepted to a Master's degree program. When she got on the plane, fear and anxiety crept up on her. She feared, much like the beginning of her college degree, that she would not be able to keep up. No one in the U.S. knows her reputations of hard work and excellence, but she could not help but fear that she would let herself down. Sarah had only traveled abroad once, on her honeymoon, to

93

Switzerland. She had never undertaken a long journey, nor one for such a long period of time. When she began to explain her initial experiences: struggling to use greetings, finding things in the grocery store, or attempting to negotiate bus systems, I realized that Sarah was being introduced to pragmatics in an experiential way. And though some of the stories she told me were very positive, many fell into the category of the word *overwhelmed*.

Going through her new daily life became a trial. Little things like supermarket coupons were confusing for her. She had never seen them before. She said, "I remember seeing people doing that in the supermarket [using coupons]. I was thinking, what is that?" (Blog, May 26, 2013). Her confusion was not cleared by talking to the supermarket workers or fellow shoppers. She explained:

> I always find it difficult to explain for Americans, for example, in the supermarket
>
> what I want if I fail to remember the name of an item. Also, sometimes the choice
>
> of words I use, if it is not familiar to them, make them misunderstand what I am
>
> trying to say. (Blog, January 12, 2013)

Frustration traveled with Sarah everywhere she went. Though Sarah was bringing her determination to each experience, she left feeling that, "When I come here, I think sometimes I can't speak. Really, I really, I mean literally I can't speak. I don't know why?" (Interview, November 21, 2012).

To pass time, Sarah did the simple task of walking with her daughter through town but found that also to be riddled with types of pragmatic experiences she was not wholly prepared for. As Sarah walked, people would greet her with the phrase, "What's up?" Sarah treated it like a synonym for "What is going on with you?" and felt she had to

offer an explanation rather than smiling and returning the question. Sarah explained further that she did not think of it as a greeting, but responded with, "so when someone says this to me, I feel I have a lot to explain" (Blog, February 16, 2013). For a time Sarah did that but then learned with relief that "What's up" simply meant "Hi!" and her response could be the same. Sarah began to understand that rules existed for even the most everyday task and, much like learning to mold into the English community in her university, she now needed to begin to learn rules that are unsaid.

Learning that there were rules opened Sarah's eyes to a world of new ways of doing everyday things. In Saudi Arabia, when Sarah walked with her daughter, it was appropriate for people to grab and kiss the child. Sarah would then respond with a smile. But in America, touching rules for children proved to be very different. Sarah explained, "I noticed that when they [people in the street] want to talk with my baby, when she was little, they ask me if it is ok and they never kiss her, touch her, or hold her" (Blog, May 26, 2013). That observation made Sarah notice that maybe kissing in general was less accepted.

Along with her new understanding of touching, the social conventions of beauty shifted. Sarah wrote, "I was surprised... when they saw my daughters' curly hair, they love it. They give compliments and talk to my daughter and say, 'I wish I have hair like you' with a smile." Sarah then explained that the ladies response to the curly hair ran contrary to that of women in Saudi Arabia who would suggest with a conciliatory tone, "It will be better when she grows up." Sarah felt a bite in their tone that made her say, "[I was] worried that my daughter does not look nice" (Blog, February 26, 2013). Confusion

about the mixed messages she heard made Sarah realize that both the concepts of beauty and what constitutes a compliment may be different in America.

Sarah began to use the tools she had to make sense of the new rules that were part of her life. She considered TV a source of cultural knowledge and watched social programs, sitcoms, and reality TV. Sarah explained:

> I can say watching these TV shows along with living in the same context help me to understand a lot of cultural issues in the American society... I come to understand how much [for example] choosing a wedding dress is important for the bride and her family… I see how important is choosing a wedding cake for a perfect wedding. (Blog, May 26, 2013)

Sarah also learned some social language that she would try out later as she interacted with more people. She learned, "hanging out, freak out, overwhelming, make a toast" (Blog, May 26, 2013). Sarah was still overwhelmed but finding the skills to create the frames in the interaction she needed.

Sarah in school. The feeling of being overwhelmed by social interactions carried into Sarah's professional life. Simple pragmatic tasks such as formal/informal greetings and understanding day-to-day expressions were stressful. Sarah felt misunderstood in interactions with her professors and classmates. She also struggled with confidence as, at every turn, she found a new rule that she did not know before. I could hear her frustration as I read in her blog:

> When I used to email professors or university advisors in the U.S., I used to use very formal greetings, and my style was similar to the Arabic way of starting an

email or a request. Then, I was surprised that their reply was very friendly! (Blog,

February 16, 2013)

At each pass, Sarah found moments where she was not prepared for interaction with classmates, community members, and professors.

In the classroom, Sarah watched as life went by eager to make her mark. In her past experience in Saudi Arabia, it had been tough, but she had succeeded in becoming a valuable member of a classroom. Now, she wanted to do the same in her new community. She spoke, and from her mouth came not a clear word but a stutter. Sarah stuttered. Of the confusion in her mind, Sarah explained:

Sometimes I feel I know this word; I know what I want to say but I can't say it. I

don't know… Like during the discussion, you want to say something, you have

the idea in your mind but still you can't. I don't know. (Interview, December 29,

2012)

Yet, Sarah would try, speak, and look around at her classmates for feedback. Painfully, on many occasions, they would say supportively, "Can you explain it again?" (Interview, December 29, 2012). And Sarah's heart would fall a little but she would still try again.

Her next big opportunity came in a classroom a few weeks later. A professor asked a question and a Saudi man, Omar, jumped quickly into a response. As he was talking, Sarah's mind started to fill with ideas. He talked and she formulated her own response to both him and the question that initiated the conversation. Then, the moment came and she entered the conversation. Sarah was carefully choosing words and attempting to make her point when suddenly, Omar said in a dismissive tone, "anyway!" When Sarah recounted this story to me, she characterized Omar; she flipped her head

back and threw her shoulders in a haughty way. I saw her dislike. Sarah tried to ignore

him and finish her thought, but Omar would not give back the floor, and spoke over her.

Sarah felt what his actions were tell her, "It's not important what you are saying; what I

am saying is more important than you!" Sarah was silenced.

The incident continued after the class was over. Classmates drew Omar's

attention to how his behavior was not socially acceptable within his new group. In

response, Omar sent Sarah a Facebook message of apology. He wrote, "I'm so sorry. My

friends told me that I say this word and I didn't know that it hurts your feelings." He

followed it up with a sincere assertion: "You're my friend and we don't want to have this

problem." Omar expressed clear concern that his behavior was offensive when that was

not his purpose. Sarah found his effort as changing to positive and accepted his apology.

She wrote back to him, "That's okay as long as you realize what you're doing is not

right" (Interview, December 29, 2012). Sarah's learning did not conclude with Omar's

apology but, rather, she formed a new set of social rules. Sarah realized that, while

Omar's behavior was judged wrong in this context, she may also have to change and be

more assertive to have her voice heard. When others are not there to regulate the

situation, Sarah will have to learn to do it herself.

Cut your tail. Sarah found that even when her classmates inserted their voices,

sometimes what they choose to say confused her. To complicate her experience, an

element of her Master's degree program was that the classroom was filled with students

from different countries who spoke different Englishes. Sarah's English study in Saudi

Arabia focused heavily on texts which came from United Kingdom and the United States.

A moment of confusion happened when Sarah entered a classroom and another student

turned to her and said as matter of faculty, "Sarah, please cut your tail with you!" Sarah turned to see if anything was hanging off of her long *Abayah*. When she didn't see anything, she thought perhaps her classmate was making reference to the length of her outfit. She knew her classmate would not normally care about such things as her outfit, so she was still confused. She looked across the room for Joe, her American classmate to whom she normally asks cultural questions but he was too far away. Sarah had walked in just as the professor was beginning the class but instead of sitting down she was consumed by the question, "cut your tail?" Curiosity and confusion would not let Sarah go and she bent her head and whispered to the classmate who had asked her the baffling question, "What do you mean?" Her classmate turned to her, smiled at the confusion, and said, "I meant, shut the door behind you!" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment, May 30, 2013). Sarah smiled relieved that she did not have some sort of tail, indexed the idiom and promised herself to look up its origins later. Sarah's classmate was African so she thought she may start there in her search. She also realized that she must be ready for a broader linguistic concept of English than she had formally been exposed to.

Indirect speech can be frustrating. One day I opened Sarah's blog to find an entry entitled "Not funny at all!" I learned that the story "Cut Your Tail" was not Sarah's only experience being confused at language in use. Sarah wrote, "I notice when I talk to Americans, they do not like to be direct when giving answers or telling me what to do, which confuses me more" (Blog, March 31, 2013). She then explained that it was a warm Texas day and she decided to indulge herself with an ice-cream cup. She walked up to the stand to order and after her ice-cream came, she placed it on the counter so she would have two hands to pay with. After paying, she saw a woman standing and looking at the

many flavors in the ice-cream counter. Sarah also noticed that her cup may be blocking the woman's view. Sarah quickly reached in to move her ice-cream. The woman, noticing this action, said dryly to Sarah, "Don't worry! I'm not gonna have a bite" Sarah was startled. She asked, "Excuse me!" The woman repeated her joke with the same non sequitur. Confusion filled Sarah and she worried that the woman may have taken offense at her cup being on the counter. She tried to explain to the woman, "I am sorry, I did not mean anything, I just checked out and [I'm] taking my cup" The woman looked at her and said cajolingly, "I know, it was a joke." The woman still did not smile and Sarah found her behavior so confusing that she was unclear how to move forward in conversation. Sarah concluded the story with some annoyance, "I cannot explain what was that. It was not even a funny joke" (Blog, March 31, 2013).

The indirect language that the woman used coupled with her offsetting body language made the conversation less than ideal as a rule making pragmatic moment. Sarah had had positive experiences with strangers before when they were generous with their complements of her daughter's hair. This moment was very different. Although the moment was supposed to be humorous, there was not the smile or laughter of a joke for Sarah to respond to. Like the experience of "the tail" this was one more example of the non-translation of humor.

How to shake a hand without shaking a hand. Another point of disconnect between Sarah and the woman buying ice-cream came from Sarah's fear of being impolite or rude. That fear was a common element in many stories that she told me. One everyday example of a time when she worried that her behavior would be considered rude came with the issue of Sarah shaking hands with men. Sarah felt that, because of her

religious and cultural beliefs, she should not shake hands with men. In one blog entry, she said "I don't feel comfortable when shaking hands with a male because it is against my religion but I do not know how to act" But Sarah felt that, by not shaking hands, her behavior would be construed as rude in her new context. Some people suggest that Sarah put her hand on her chest or make her hand unavailable when the moment to shake hands came. But Sarah worried though that that action may still confuse people (Blog, March 31, 2013).

The experience of trying to shake a hand without actually shaking a hand was something new in Sarah's experience. Before now she had tried to act appropriately and be accommodating in her American context. In this occasion, she could not be the most appropriate without breaking from what she felt was a correct action. Sarah learned that there were parameters as she moved forward. Sarah had learned new idioms and would now close the door if someone asked her to "Cut her tail." She had learned greetings and "What is going on?" But now Sarah was learning to Master herself in a situation and to make choices of how she would act. That new level of ownership would now become one of the things she had learned as she began to think about her Ph.D. and returning to Saudi Arabia to teach.

Moving Forward: Potlucks and Baby Showers

After next semester, Sarah will finish her study in the United States and take back to Saudi what she considers a drive to be a better teacher. She said with judgment in her voice of the how she taught in the past, "I used to teach grammar and it's all about, like, doing activities [grammar drills]." And quickly shifted to a more excited tone when she describes her future classroom, "[t]here is nothing like doing discussion which the

students really need. They need to speak, like to speak all the time because the only chance they have [is] in class" (Focus group, April 28, 2013). Sarah brought her ideas even more forward by planning to include pragmatics and culture in her classroom.

Sarah laughed as she explained that she wanted to bring to her Saudi class some cultural events she gained from studying in the U.S., such as potlucks and baby showers. In her laughter, I could tell that she had had really nice experiences with both traditions. She explained:

> I like the fact that, in the last class we always have a *potluck*. It made us
>
> forget about work and have more fun. It also gave each of us a chance to
>
> taste different cuisines especially in a class like mine (Japanese, Korean,
>
> Chinese, Iraqi, American, African, Russian, and Turkey) cuisines. Also
>
> having three *baby showers* meant a lot to me because there were so
>
> touching. Although we came from different parts of the world, it made us
>
> feel like one family. I decided to do the same with my students to create a
>
> nice and warm environment in class. (Blog, May 26, 2013)

I could tell that Sarah had indexed many of her social experiences and newfound knowledge to share with her Saudi students. However, Sarah would not return to the classroom just yet.

Sarah also told me that participating in this study, coupled with her cultural experiences, opened her eyes towards language and how important pragmatics is when teaching English. She said resolutely, "I should reserve a space for teaching pragmatics in my curriculum. The students should be aware of it more" (Blog, May 26, 2013). She went on to explain the importance of pragmatics for her. When she went to the TESOL

convention, she gravitated toward exhibits that feature books about pragmatics. She explained:

> One of the companies, they have a new book for teaching conversation and it's very helpful for like understanding pragmatics. It was all based on like creating a play or creating a movie. You have kind of script and then like you have group of students, one of them is like who give the ideas and other one who write the conversation like the scenario according to the situation in class, and then you create a movie. This can help them... When they see the script, like kind of model, they can like create their own scenario, they create their own like conversation between each other and maybe this will help them to understand how to open a conversation, close a conversation, how to replay. (Focus group, April 28, 2013)

Sarah was excited. She had found a resource that would support what she wanted to teach in the classroom. Sarah sat up in our focus group and shared the details of her trip and the books she had found. The way the other students were nodding and listening encouraged Sarah to continue talking. She said, "And it [the conversation book] has like different disciplines like, let's say, something about medicine and stuff, something about entertainment, something about food and whatever. It's really a good one. It could help." I was also glowing and listening intently because, as Sarah was talking, I could hear many of the ideas of pragmatics shining through.

After finishing with her participation in my study, Sarah still has one semester left before she graduated with an M.A. and start applying for her Ph.D. program. Sarah explained that from her Master's degree, she will carry with her new experiences of learning in America. She said, "because I live in the American context [for] almost three

years, I had the chance to have many experience in terms of dealing with people and different mentalities, observe actions, hear expressions, deal with situations" (Blog, May 26, 2013). When I look back on the stories Sarah told me, I knew her good nature and intense curiosity would carry her forward and help her to be even more successful.

A Brief Interpretive Analysis of Sarah's Narrative

In this interpretive analysis for Sarah's narrative, as well as the other forthcoming analyses, I highlight some of the key pragmatic moments shared in narratives by looking back and forward into a timeline of the past, present, and future (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Sarah's past narrative focused on her educational background in Saudi Arabia and the language ideologies she possessed and carried with her to the United States. Although Sarah graduated with an English-major Bachelor's degree, she was never introduced to the term "pragmatics" before taking a part in this study. The lack of exposure to pragmatics and to the language culture in a bigger sense made a disconnection between what Sarah had studied in college and what was expected from her when interacting with more fluent speakers. This connection was proven when Sarah found herself immersed in a different language/culture context as in the United States. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) foresaw such disconnection when she pointed out that "learners who receive no particular instruction in L2 show divergence in L2 pragmatics in several areas" (p.31), and that was what happened to Sarah.

Living in the United States, Sarah was destined to be exposed to pragmatics first-hand. She could not help but to notice the many unsaid and never-taught social rules that govern people's interactions with each other. Among these overwhelming rules was the indirectness in people's speech (Searle, 1975). One example from Sarah's narrative was

104

the idiomatic phrase "*Cut your tail*" said by Sarah's classmate who perhaps did not want to ask Sarah directly to close the door but opt for performing a more polite, less face-threatening request by being indirect (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996a). Other indirect pragmatic examples were seen in the humorous statement "*Don't worry! I'm not gonna have a bite!*" said by the woman at the ice-cream stand and the informal greeting "*What's up?*" given to Sarah by students passing her on campus. Although Sarah already figured out a lot of these ambiguous indirect utterances, it was seen that speaking indirectly to Sarah can really make her frustrated. That is because decoding indirectness requires moving from the surface word-by-word layer of meaning to a deeper layer, taking in mind the context of the utterance.

As this narrative showed, Sarah gradually was learning that the unsaid social rules did not only limit people's spoken language but also their behavior and self-representation (Gee, 1990). No matter if Sarah was dealing with grown-ups or even babies, these social rules always took precedence. However, it was odd for Sarah and literally backwards that touching or kissing random babies was completely inappropriate whereas shaking hands with male grown-ups was sometimes expected and difficult to avoid. To Sarah, this appeared quite the opposite of how she used to act back in Saudi Arabia. After all, Sarah could not embrace English pragmatics without paying attention to the limits set by her religious principles and cultural beliefs. Being the most appropriate in one culture may require breaking rules in another one. Cross-cultural communication could, in some cases, create contradictions which, in the end, might cause frustration to the learners. Being able to negotiate meanings could become a necessary skill for language learners to tactfully navigate cross-cultural encounters.

Towards the end of Sarah's narrative, she made it clear how coming to the U.S. pushed her to revisit her language ideologies and reform her teaching philosophy. She expressed that if English professors keep focusing on merely teaching grammar rules and brushing aside pragmatic rules, college students will miss the point of learning a language to communicate appropriately, just like what happened to her. Sarah was smart to overcome the gap of cultural knowledge through turning a routine into a learning experience; she was watching TV with an attentive mind to learn a lot of the tactful unsaid cultural rules in America. Sarah promised to be a better teacher and to include pragmatic and cultural topics in the syllabi of her future classes to help her students bridge the English they learn in the classroom to the English they come across on TV and when interacting with others. She will not be alone in that plan since similar language views are recently appearing in Saudi Arabia (Fageeh, 2011). Although Sarah experienced a lot of turbulences in her journey with English from Saudi Arabia to the United States, she came out to be a successful graduate student and a promising English teacher. In her journey with English, Sarah was slow and steady so she eventually won the race.

Hamad: Multicultural and Confident

The first time I saw Hamad on campus, I thought he was younger than he really was. He wore a funny graphic t-shirts, a baseball hat, and sweat pants. I could easily imagine him as an undergrad, rolling out of bed just moments before in order to meet me. But Hamad was a student in his third semester in an English Master's degree program. I introduced myself and he told me his name was Moe. Hamad has an American nickname loosely based on his name and he asked me to call him that. He sat back

106

comfortable at the table, and his demeanor made it seem that every place he goes is his own living room. Unlike the other participants who "warmed up" to the interview process, Hamad seemed comfortable from the first moment. Unfiltered, Hamad never paused, and seemed to say the first thing that came to his mind. He said for clarification, "I feel confident; a lot more confident than probably other students" (Interview, November 20, 2012). I could see Hamad's confidence as he not only answered questions, but questioned my questions. He left no stone unturned. Hamad's conversational style and pleasant personality put me at ease, and I would later try to invoke that easiness in future interviews with all my participants. Hamad's ease was not a natural skill but came through his experiences of: moving to America as a child, moving back to Saudi Arabia as a teenager, and his constant efforts to find footing in new communities. Hamad had a multifaceted approach to meeting people born from his life experience.

Looking Back: An Early Start with English

Hamad's story begins with his first experience learning English as a six year old, in first grade. The English book Hamad carried in his backpack was more of an alphabet book with pictures of a car, dog, and ice-cream. At the time, he was keeping up with his peers and thankful for the language he was learning. Hamad, as a private school pupil, began to learn English six years before his public school counterparts, when he was in the first grade. Yet, now reflection back he said with frustration that he learned, "only a handful of words" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad was remarking that the words that he had learned were not enough when he finished third grade and found himself boarding an airplane with his family for the United States. It was not a vacation. His father was beginning a seven-year degree program so Hamad would study from the

fourth grade till the tenth in an American school. When he began, Hamad quickly found that his early start with English was not enough and he had a lot to learn.

In a vivid flashback, Hamad took me to his early school days in the United Stated, in the year of 1995. He remembered that everything was strange and different for him. Hamad turned to the right to find a girl sitting next to him in the same classroom. Hamad recalled:

> I was in a school in Saudi Arabia that was sex segregated. So when I came here and I'm studying with girls and boys at the same time and I had a female teacher, this one of the things that was kind of weird to me. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

As he spoke, I thought about being a fourth grade boy in general and I felt for Hamad. He was surrounded not only by women but he could not understand what they were saying. It was a very dramatic change for him.

Shying away from interaction with the girls Hamad reached over to take the hand of a male classmate in hopes of finding a friend. When he touched the other boy's hand, the boy quickly drew it away. Hamad's action was normal in Saudi Arabia and so the other boy's reaction was bewildering to him. He felt confused. He explained about his experience, "As kids in school [in Saudi Arabia], we always hold boys' hands. In the U.S., that's a big taboo. Now you cannot hold boys' hand, stuff like that" (Interview, December 20, 2012). Hamad felt separated from his new peers and not confident that he could bridge that gap using the English that he knew.

Although Hamad was armed with the words he had learned from his alphabet book, he did not understand all the language going on around him and was not confident to speak. He narrated:

> I didn't have confidence to speak. I did not want to speak… I knew some words like at my level at fourth grade, I just didn't have enough confidence to say it with… like with all my peers being native; Americans. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Being surrounded by kids who only spoke English, Hamad was overwhelmed.

Hamad was not alone in wanting interaction. Curiosity fuelled the other students and they began to try to ask him questions. Hamad explained of the other students and teachers in the school, "People ask me questions… I failed to answer the simplest question like where are you from?" After hearing this question many times, Hamad knew that he would have to begin to speak and this was where it could begin! He explained with conviction, "I wanna answer them or at least I wanna go back home and ask my dad or search to understand, to know what they're asking me because some of them repeat the same question again and again." When Hamad made it home much of his memory escaped him but he was able to remember one word "from." It was enough! His dad told him that the other students wanted to know where he was from and now Hamad was prepared to tell them. At school the next day Hamad sat at his desk waiting. He explained, "So I was happy and excited and I was waiting from someone to ask me to say Saudi Arabia and I was asked and I said it. So that was my first I guess interaction in English" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad smiled when he shared this memory.

But, there was still a lot of language he needed to know. Indeed, Hamad still had far to go but it was a little bit of success.

That momentous occasion passed and Hamad was silent again. Hamad was silent until he had to face losing something he wanted. A girl, sitting close to him, reached in and took what he was using. He was upset. Unlike before, when he would have sat silently, he exploded, "Don't take this! This is mine!" The girl looked at him with shock on her face. She forgot about the object, she forgot that they were fighting over it, and she cried out to the class, "Look, look, look, Hamad can talk" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad took in the stares of the girl and the class and he forgot his anger and filled with a new confidence. He had turned the page: he spoke, was listened to, and was understood. Hamad would use this moment as the starting point in his story of being a confidence speaker of English. He eventually jumped over the language barrier that marginalized his voice in the classroom, for quite a long period of time.

Times began to change for Hamad when he began to use English as his main language of communication. English seeped into his home life and he slowly found that his brothers and sisters were using it as their everyday language. When he met with other Arab children at the mosque, youth group, or playground they used English to play together. Hamad explained, "We spoke in English because they've been there [in America] for five, six, seven years and some of them were born there. So English is the easiest way to speak" (Interview, April 3, 2013). Slowly English began to be part of Hamad's thought process and paralleled Arabic as a language that he used to make sense of the world.

A student at high school. Half way through Hamad's tenth grade year, Hamad's father graduated from the university and the whole family went back to Saudi Arabia. Hamad may have tried to fit in amongst his new Saudi classmates, but his English quickly set him apart. He would have to learn to communicate again only in Arabic, because no one at school would understand the code switching language he used with his Arab friends and family in the United States; this code switching was basically a norm more than a conscious strategy for Hamad. During this transition, he was surprised to experience notoriety. His classmates and friends would tout him "as the best guy who spoke English." They told him with admiration in their voices, "Oh you're so American. You really know how to speak English." It went beyond his peers and impacted how his English teachers viewed him in the classroom. While some viewed him as outstanding, he explained that this was not the case for all his teachers. He said:

> Some of them, I don't know, but they saw me as a challenge, I think, because they
> would grade me on a different rubric than they'd grade other students, and I didn't
> think that was fair. So a teacher would pay attention to every single detail I write
> on my final exam but wouldn't pay that close attention to other students'
> mistakes. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

The combinations of his peers' idolization and his teachers singling him out had a profound impact on how Hamad chose to represent himself after high school, in college.

Choosing to move forward with a foot in the past. Learning from his experience with teachers and peers in high school, Hamad decided to keep his head down. He narrated:

In college, I guess I never talked to teachers about this [his experience learning English]. I never said I went to the U.S. so teachers don't know. They probably suspected it but we haven't really talked about it. Yeah, because I saw that that was my mistake in high school that… like that backfired on me saying that I went to the States. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Unlike the other major transitional periods in Hamad's life this time he had an opportunity to fit in. Though Hamad never shared his past experience openly it did play a strong role in the choices that he made while in College.

So far, for Hamad English had been a challenge, a point of discovery and a stigma to shake. But now, in college, Hamad would find that English was an asset. Selecting English as a major felt like a no-brainer to Hamad. It was also not surprising for his family that he wanted to major in English in the college. Hamad spoke out, "To be honest, I learned English as a young kid so it was the easiest way for undergrad school, I guess, or to school and I didn't have to work hard" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad completed many of his courses with flying colors; these courses focused on simple reading, writing, and speaking. It was only when he reached advance levels that he found himself challenged in courses like linguistics and inspired by courses in literature.

Hamad studied pragmatics. Beyond the courses that focused on speaking English, Hamad took classes in linguistics, translation, and literature. As he told me about the courses he had taken I hazarded the question of pragmatics in his courses. Surprisingly, Hamad did not miss a beat and told me that he took a course that covered topics in pragmatics. Hamad explained, "We had a textbook that was about discourse

analysis and there was like a small part [a chapter] of it that talked about pragmatics"

(Interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad went on to explain that, during the course, he

himself had done a presentation on the topic for pragmatics.

When the professor assigned the course chapters to be prepared and presented

Hamad was assigned the chapter about pragmatics. Hamad showed a video clip from the

TV show "Heroes" and explained how misunderstanding could happen when sentences

are taking literary. Hamad explained:

> In Heroes, there is a Japanese [character] travels in time I think, and he is talking
>
> to an American guy who does something I guess fly...The American said like…
>
> and the [Japanese] guy didn't understand what he was saying because he took him
>
> literally. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Hamad used the example to show his classmates how indirect speech can cause bumps in

intercultural pragmatic interactions. When Hamad explained to me what he taught his

classmates I could not help but apply it to Hamad's life, beginning with his own struggle

as a child and moving into who he is today. I thought to myself that Hamad may not have

needed a video clip to explain pragmatics, but needed only draw from his own life

experience.

Sitting back and noticing in college. Hamad used his experiences learning in

America as lenses for his college experience learning English in Saudi Arabia. He could

not help but spend his time in the English classroom noticing how the behavior and

speech of his college professors and classmates were different from what he remembered

from his time in the States. He noticed:

The teachers might have been teaching him in an accent that [was] easier to understand… They all understand that all their students are non-natives, so "I'm gonna talk very slow so everybody understands, and I'm not gonna say water [/d/ instead of /t/], I'm gonna say water [/t/] so they understand. (Interview, December 20, 2012)

The discernible different speech patterns quickly focused his attention not on the language he should be learning but on the pragmatic differences between Learning English in Saudi Arabia and English in America.

Hamad noticed that not only was there a gap in the professors ways of speaking but the classroom itself did not teach the pragmatic skills Hamad knew to be essential to successes in the language. Hamad noticed that his professors, in Saudi, privileged a teacher-centered classroom by spending a majority of the class time lecturing. He explained the situation with a tone of judgment:

We don't need to speak in English in class. It's just short sentences but we don't usually have conversations. We usually just barely answer a question, which is a short sentence and then this is it… This is your English. You don't have to speak any more English. (Focus Group, April 28, 2013)

At this, he shrugged his shoulders to show that he did not know how that system could be changed nor what help it was offering his classmates, who had ambitions to study and live in English speaking countries. At this, Hamad then did not let the conversation go.

Hamad leaned forward and continued. He explained that in the classroom not every student was given an opportunity to participate. Hamad raised his voice slightly and explained that students did not speak in the classroom. He reinforced this by

114

asserting that they did not need to speak to be successful. Rather, Hamad added, students could get by through passing written midterms and finals. Hamad explained with frustration, "I know students who graduated from my university and I don't.. they don't.. they can't speak English" (Interview, December 20, 2012). Unlike his peers, Hamad knew that the education they were receiving would not prepare them, and that even with the high marks they were working for, they would be lost when entering an English speaking context.

Current Experiences: Hamad's Second Arrival to the U.S.

Unlike in Hamad's past, when he had to struggle in foreign contexts, he strived in University. Hamad graduated with a very high GPA and a great reputation of being a strong and confident student. His reputation and credentials made him competitive in the job market. He chose a job as a teaching assistant in the department of English from which he had just graduated. Hamad narrated, "[After graduating] I got a job as a teaching assistant. I worked for about a year then I came here [to university in the States]" (Interview, November 20, 2012). At that, Hamad was off on a new adventure abroad. This time he carried with him more resources to be successful than before. He packed his bags and left to begin his Masters' on the generalist track in English with a focus on literature studies.

Hamad's sail was full of success and expectations as he walked into his new Master's degree classroom, but Hamad was not immune to the anxiety that accompanies most graduate students when they begin a program. Hamad felt the same anxiety many students express but it would not stay with him long. He said of his fear of being unprepared, "In the beginning, I thought I was lucky to get in grad school. I was like huh!

115

It's their mistake they accepted me. They didn't know." This initial fear did not stifle Hamad and he quickly began to find his footing. This is the only time that Hamad told me about a time he felt anxiety in all of our conversations. He went on to describe, with some relief, the first impression of his classmates, "I saw that I guess people are normal, I mean, graduate students are normal. They are not any different. So when I saw that my work is the same as their work, then I gained more confidence." He went on to explain his progress, "with time; as time progresses in the program here, I started to understand more and faster" (Interview, December 20, 2012). Three semesters later, Hamad carried himself like the University was his oyster to be plucked.

I could not help but notice that, when Hamad spoke of his anxiety in his new context, he did not focus on his Saudi identity or language skills as being a point of focus for that anxiety. Hamad told his story much differently than my other participants who constantly paralleled life in Saudi with their lives in America. Hamad explained that language skill was never an issue for him, he said, "the main thing I'd say is I grew up here. That's the main aspect of my confidence." He expressed his understanding of his English level by explaining that, "It might not have been the same words as the native speaker words but the idea would still get crossed to the class or to the professor" (Interview, December 20, 2012). I knew, from what Hamad had said, that he felt an ownership of English.

Hamad felt an ease in America that none of my other participants expressed. After several weeks of listening to the struggles of my other participants to acclimate, I finally decided to asked him if he changed socially between when he arrived and now, his fourth semester. He responded nonchalantly, "I'd say.. I think I'm the same. I don't think I

changed as socially. Yeah, I talk to everybody around me; most of people in class. Yeah, I don't think I changed." I asked him, "Alight, so you've seen some frustration in your colleagues, do you have your own frustrations. Like…?" but before I could finish my question he responded bluntly, "No I don't, as I said I feel comfortable." His quick response startled me and I asked for confirmation, "Really?" to which, with no change in his tone, "Yeah" (interview, November 20, 2012). Hamad showed that confidence was deeply rooted within him, and very little would shake it.

Unlike in his first experience in America, or returning to Saudi, Hamad did not feel a struggle with language. When I asked Hamad if he would consciously work to expand his vocabulary he said:

I don't think I have a goal in learning words or language structures or.. I think that at my stage right now, I don't think it helps going up and looking up words and try to memorize them, not even going up and trying to understand grammar. I think this comes with practice, with more reading. You just acquire it. (Interview, June 7, 2013)

Hamad laughed, making me realize that learning new grammars and vocabulary was not a focus of his energy. He indicated that his language would evolve naturally as he runs into people and come across books, without the need for purposely planning for his language development.

It is all about confidence. The concept of confidence was a cornerstone to Hamad's description of his own success, but also what he saw as a failure of his Saudi Arabian colleagues. He said, "I have colleagues from the same country [Saudi Arabia] who don't feel confident." Hamad went on to describe how their lack of confidence

117

impacted their experience in the classroom. He explained, "They [Saudi Arabian students] have the same answers [as the American students], they could have said it, they just didn't have enough confidence to say it" (Interview, December 20, 2012). His Saudi Arabian classmates were not able to interject into classroom discussion. As Hamad described the experience of his Saudi peers, I heard that he was described himself as neither a member of the Saudi nor American community, but reflecting a hybrid identity of both.

Hamad began to fall into a familiar role, as outsider and observer. He watched his Saudi classmates grappling with new social norms, while also watching his American classmates engaging in academic discourse. Hamad sat back, as he was uniquely qualified to do, and noticed how the interactions took place. He began to compile, in his mind, a list of suggestions to make the space more cohesive. His first clear observation was:

> I noticed that like Arabs sit together and they only talk to each other for the most part... I noticed Chinese people sit together and they usually only talk to Chinese people, and Americans kinda sit together. So it's kind of each group is sitting by themselves. (Interview, December 20, 2012)

I could see a mixture of excitement and frustration as Hamad began to rattle off some off his suggestions to desegregate the seating chart. He began with the general suggestion:

> So if they [the Saudis in the class] like interacted socially with those students [that are in the classroom], talked to them, and became friends, obviously there would be no barriers, I guess. I don't know if I would call it that but yeah. (Interview, December 20, 2012)

Hamad again suggested that the root of increased cohesiveness stemmed from the confidence of the international students to interact. According to Hamad, the Saudi Arabian students needed to take a first step by moving apart in the classroom, and a second step by engaging with their American and international peers. He said, "Native speakers of English don't mind if their accent wasn't so good and they still understood them" (Interview, December 20, 2012). Hamad felt that, if his Saudi classmates would tackle their own issues in confidence than they would be more successful at having their voices heard.

Piggybacking. Hamad did not only notice the physical makeup of the classroom but also turned his gaze toward the interaction patterns of his American classmates. He first noticed a difference in when and how people interrupted each other in the classroom than what he remembered from Saudi Arabia. In Saudi, students may interrupt each other mid-sentence to share a new idea or shift the conversation. Hamad noticed that the native speakers tended to wait till a whole idea is shared or transitional words or hedging occurred. He also found that, when American students would string their ideas together they would use phrases to pay homage to the idea of the student who spoke before them. Hamad noticed that American students use phrases like "piggyback off of what X student says" before they continue with their own comments. Hamad offered more details:

> So piggybacking off of what X said, which is like you're building up on that person's idea…. "piggybacking off" just so that they don't say that this is my idea and also not to look like an idiot who stole somebody's idea. (Interview, April 3, 2013)

Hamad explained that, even while speaking, American students were practicing citation and referencing. Citations were part of the academic discourse Hamad was learning, and he felt he was now seeing them practiced by the Native speakers around him.

Bridging of communities. In a similar way to the classroom, Hamad found himself aware of representation and language outside of the classroom. But, outside of the classroom Hamad focused on self-representation and the perceptions of others. Hamad felt he knew how to act to be *Saudi* while he also knew how to act to be *American*. The two identities played dueling roles as he traveled through his personal time. Unlike the other participants who constantly seemed in moments of confusion and surprise about how their Saudi identities and American lives would fit together, Hamad was not confused. Hamad drew from his many experiences assimilating into new cultures to feel a greater level of control as he socialized into his new American context. He said:

> In the U.S., I try to assimilate to the culture and norms as long as they don't contradict any of my culture and norms because I am very proud of my heritage. I just try to avoid actions that might be taken in a whole different understanding. (Interview, April 3, 2013)

Part of Hamad's concept of heritage are the traditions he learned while living in Saudi Arabia.

Hamad expressed a heightened level of ownership over the choices of representation he makes in the U.S. than any other time in his life. Hamad explained one example of a Saudi tradition he excluded from his routine because he knew that it could be misconstrued by Americans and mess with his image. He explained, "Cheek air kisses are totally fine among Saudi males, but they might refer to something about the person's

sexuality if two males kissed in the United States. So, I try to avoid kisses that might be misunderstood" (Blog, April 6, 2013). Hamad went on the explain, "This would affect your image here. You might be classified as.. your sexuality might be classified. So this is something that I don't feel comfortable dealing with" (Interview, April 3, 2013). I noticed that part of the choices Hamad was fueled by how others would see him. In this case he was worried he would be seen as gay, a status that would carry with it different markers of identity than the ones he felt represented him. Hamad did not want to be misunderstood.

Eating out. Hamad's fear of social judgment carried into his times when he went the public places with his Saudi friends. Hamad worked to find a balance between his Saudi self with his friends and what he knew to be appropriate behavior in America. Hamad shared a recent decision that he had made after a series of interactions that he found awkward while at restaurants with his Arab friends. In Saudi culture it is a show of generosity to fight over a bill at a restaurant. Hamad explains how that practice, for him, does not fit into an American context. He explains, "Something that has started to embarrass me when I'm with my Arab friends, whether Saudi or not, is that we always fight at the cashier over who gets to pay for the meal." At that moment when his friends are engaged in the fight for generosity, Hamad reddens with the feeling of the stares of the people in the restaurant. "The cashier is always surprised and astonished, and other customers are always looking at us in a weird way." Hamad could not let his friends remain oblivious to the attention that they were getting every time. He stepped in and imposed a new arrangement. He explained:

121

We let one pays at the cashier while we are in front of people who might

misunderstand and think we are fighting, then when we get in the car we can

decide if we will split it or if one of us will pay for the rest. (Blog, March 10,

2013)

Hamad had found a balance; he would honor the Saudi tradition of fighting over the bill,

but in the car, away from the eyes of non-Saudi onlookers. How Hamad was perceived by

the outside world was very important to him.

As Hamad told his story of negotiating a new practice with his Saudi friends, I

realized that Hamad rarely told a story in which he did not play a dominant or

omnipresent role when it related to culture. Hamad was the character that always knew

what was happening or was in control of the situations in the stories that he told. The only

time Hamad seemed to face confusion was when he stepped out of the academia and tried

to interact with local people in the community. He explained:

We're usually talking to professors and students at college. That's usually a

certain class of people, educated people. Then, when you go to, let's say, a barber

shop or a car garage, that's a working class. So they have kind of different words

they you've never heard... So, you don't know what they're talking about. (Focus

group, April 28, 2013)

Only in this situation did Hamad share a similar feeling of awkwardness in interaction

with my other participants. As he was listening to people outside the university talk, he

thought bemusedly, "Is this English?" Hamad suppressed that observation, because he

did not want to be rude and followed up the feeling of laughter with a little bit of nerves,

"I mean, they're probably being funny and you're not laughing. So that happens to me…

I laugh when they smile although I don't know what they're saying" (Focus group, April 28, 2013). On this occasion Hamad was outside his element. But even in this situation, Hamad knew how to handle his confusion and what pragmatic tools he could apply to smooth over the conversation.

Looking Forward: Future Plans

Hamad future was filled with excitement. Hamad will begin a Ph.D. in the fall. Hamad will bring his multilayered understanding of American and Saudi culture as well as his confidence forward as he carves out an identity in his new studies. I could see that Hamad has used all that he had learned to now look at the world around him with a critical eye toward changes that would foster more cohesive intercultural interactions. An example of this came at the end of our meetings when I asked Hamad about pragmatics and what he had learned. I was curious to know how Hamad, who had so much experience grafting in and out of culture, made sense of my project. He said:

> I think there is more hope because people are.. I don't know, I guess because I see that lots of people are paying attention to it now more than the past, and realizing how it's important when you are in contact or communicating with the natives [native speakers]. (Focus group, April 28, 2013)

As part of his learning, he gave the example of reading posts on the blog my participants shared. He read about the trials that the other participants had been through. In some cases he could draw back in his own memory to similar experiences while others situations that were described were foreign to him. He explained, "This project has also made me aware of how often misunderstandings happen among the international students, and how they change or react to such issues" (Blog, June 7, 2013). Hamad

123

began to reflect on how different his experiences were than that of his Saudi colleagues, and how far he had come in his own understanding of pragmatics.

A Brief Interpretive Analysis for Hamad

Hamad's moving to live in the United States at a very early age set him apart from the other participants in this study. It helped him develop an observant eye and made him open to cultural change. As a kid, his initial way to recognize cultural differences was through observing students in his American elementary school. Observing that boys, for example, cannot hold hands in school nor can they give each other cheek kisses was quite strange for Hamad. Growing up, Hamad's mind was growing more critical and his observant eye became more acute. In college in Saudi Arabia, for instance, he would sit back and start rolling his eyes in English classrooms to notice the discernible gap in the professors' teaching and how they would privilege written exams over classroom discussions. As Hamad's detailed observations were helpful for him to realize language and social norms around him, they helped me, as a researcher, in drawing a clear picture of the frustrating way English might be taught in some teacher preparation programs in the EFL context of Saudi Arabia. Hamad's observation skills also aided me to realize the language and cultural hindrance other Saudi graduate students run into as they socialize and interact in their U.S. academic context. Being an observer was a chief repeated role Hamad played throughout his narrative.

Despite the fact that Hamad lived in the U.S. at an early age and for a long time, he never lost connection to his Saudi cultural backgrounds. A close look at Hamad's narrative showed that he was clearly grounded in his cultural roots yet open to enriching his experiences away from home, living in America. This multifaceted character Hamad

124

attained made him act as an outsider to the Saudi community in some occasions and an insider in others. When Hamad mentioned his colleagues' dispute over the restaurant bill, he described it as "embarrassing" but at the same time he talked about how proud he is about his Saudi Arabian heritage. Putting these two pictures together, it looks that Hamad had a very high awareness of context. Among Americans, he would be so considerate of the American context; that is to say no kisses on check are tolerated, no fighting over the bill is accepted, and no class self-marginalization is approved. When he is away from American spectators, he can be 100% an Arab. Hamad can easily be seen as someone able to alter the balance between his two selves based on the present sociocultural context. After all, pragmatics is all about the communicative actions one opts for in relation to the surrounding sociocultural context (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary for everyone taking a part in an interaction to make language choices that are apt to the present sociocultural context, which helps smoothly deliver the intended meanings (Crystal, 1985).

Very importantly, Hamad's narrative draws attention to one specific context: the pragmatics of classroom. Hamad indicated that all students are expected to adhere to the academic norms and expectations in the educational setting of the classroom. Knowing how to take the floor, allowing turn-taking, acknowledging sources, and giving credit to other students in class is crucial. Opting out of these techniques might make students appear as rude or offensive. Hamad adopted the phrase "*piggyback off of what X student says*" so he can come out as polite and acknowledging to the effort of the student who spoke before him. Hamad explained that citation was part of the academic discourse he was adopting and wishing other colleagues to adopt. Not following classroom

conventions might put a student into a lot of academic trouble. No student wants to appear as the thief who steals others' ideas or the rude person who keeps interrupting the class flow. Therefore, as Gee (1990) pointed out, what is essential in successful communication is not simply speaking grammatically but functioning appropriately by "saying the 'right' thing at the 'right' time, and in the 'right' place" (p. 139).

Bader: Young with a Lot of Avenues to Explore

I first met Bader when he called me from Saudi Arabia asking me to help him find a place to live in the town where he was moving and I was living. He got my phone number through the Saudi community on Facebook, to which I am a member. In a traditional style, I found him an apartment and I picked up the keys from the leasing office for him since he was arriving late that night. After our correspondence I was excited to meet him. Bader took the shuttle from the airport, arrived to the address of his apartment building, called me, and I walked down to meet him.

When I arrived to the building, I found a well-dressed guy standing by the door and I wondered if it was him. I greeted the man in Arabic "*Ahleen* Bader!" I seemed to have gotten his attention but he just looked at me, I heard nothing back. With the lack of response, I suspected that I took him by surprised speaking Arabic, so I switched to English. I waved my hand and said, "Hi! Are you Bader?" He continued to look at me and I noticed that his eyes got wider, but he had no expression on his face. I thought to myself, "I used Arabic and it didn't work and I used English and it didn't work either. Could he be just a Hispanic guy who happened to pass for an Arab?" So I hazarded, "¿Hablas español?" At that, I start to notice that his lips were moving but I could not hear a thing. So I went back to my English question "Are you Bader?" with a rise on my tone.

I noticed his lips moving and he eventually boosted his voice and uttered in an audible

way, "I'm telling you, yes!" I was surprised by his stand-offish response to my questions.

He stood still while I approached him, not taking a socially conventional step toward me

or really acknowledging that I was speaking to him. I attempted a smile and temperate

my next statement, "Well at least it's you. Welcome to America! Here are your keys." I

anticipated that he would be friendly toward me and thankful for my efforts to find him

an apartment but my first impression of Bader was a coldness and lack of connection.

I later learned that my interaction with Bader was not out of the ordinary for

him. Bader is a self-identified cautious person, ill at ease in many social situations, and

sometimes overly courteous. On one occasion he explained:

> Really, I get embarrassed, I'm okay with it because I know that it's the, you
>
> know, it's what life is all about. Nobody is perfect. So, when I go to the mall,
>
> when I go to the supermarket, and I have this embarrassing and awkward
>
> moment. (Interview, May, 22, 2013)

Bader's reflection on himself showed an inhibited person, caught up in a constant fear of

social missteps. On several occasions I noticed Bader pausing in new situations before

he spoke, trying to take in the scene and speak appropriately. Bader's inhibitions did not

only impact him in the beginning of a interaction but throughout. He explained pointedly

"I still have troubles with ending a conversation because when I start discussing

something, I find myself ending up with things like "and" or "I don't know" or a pause"

(Interview, April 7, 2013). Bader would trail off, leaving him weighed down with a

feeling that he had failed.

Bader's efforts to interpret a situation applied also to our meetings and his interpretations of my questions. During data collection with Bader, I collected more information than any of my other participants, but found frustration that there was a disconnect between my questions and his answer. An example of this can be seen when I asked Bader about the value of showing movies in the English classroom. He responded:

> Yeah, I think they should do that. I'll tell you two examples, or two let say living examples. Well, this guy.. actually, he was good in English because he used to go.. to have friends who've been already to the U.S., or you know an English speaking country. Then he developed his interest in learning languages.
>
> (Interview, December, 18, 2012)

Bader's example continued and at no point did he return to my question, or mention movies in the classroom. As a researcher, I did not want to interrupt his narrations in hope that he would ultimately make turns to answer my questions. This resulted in having prolonged interviews, and a lot of stories, with little related data.

Though Bader apologized for speaking so much, his good natured approach to my study suggested that he was not looking for a sounding board, but instead he thought that the more stories he shared, the better my research will come out. Bader wore three hats while participating in my study. He was a participant with experiences to share. He was also a friend and who saw the study as an opportunity to both help me. He was also a Master's degree student, sharing the stories he believed were examples of pragmatic moments.

Bader shared stories that represented his different roles, and they are told here in a timeline fashion. Beginning with his disinterested in English, his experience studying

English in the United States, and eventually leaving the field engineering to follow a developed passion for English, his passion for English led him to studying the language in college and eventually move to the states to pursue a Master's degree in teaching English.

Looking Back: "It was Nothing."

When I asked Bader how many years he studied English prior to coming to the U.S., he told me, "That would be about seven, eight years." I was surprised because In Saudi Arabia, students generally start English at the seventh grade, so with doing some calculations and taking into consideration that Bader had a degree in English, I thought he must be wrong! Noticing the wonder on my face, Bader wasted no time to explain:

> Well, you know in Saudi we start studying English, a course of English, in middle and high school but it was nothing really. I mean, I graduated with let's say 5% or 4% of English and it didn't really contribute to me in anything, in any way.
>
> (Interview, November, 23, 2012)

Bader considered the real beginning of his English learning was when he chose to become interested in English, rather than when it was introduced to him as a subject in school.

First time to Texas. Bader did not count the six year of intermediate and high school English, but instead began his narrative when he went to the United States to study. Bader explained, "The real start of studying and learning English was from 2005, from September 2005 till now" (Interview, November, 23, 2012). He became excited as he rushed to tell me the stories of his life in Texas! Therefore, this is not his first time to

living in the United States, and the excitement I saw came from his incredibly good experience in the past.

After high school Bader traveled to Texas, and at the time he was young, with minimal experience in English. The present day Bader mused that he, at the time, did not know that he would become an English major. Yet, when he told the stories of being in Texas, I could see Bader the linguist forming. Yet, when he went to Texas English was a barrier for him, because passing a class meant admittance into an engineering program. Sponsored by one Saudi industrial company to study abroad, Bader came to the U.S. to study English as a prerequisite for starting his degree in engineering. He said, "Actually, I wasn't planning to study English [in college]… I was going to study engineering" (Interview, November, 23, 2012). Bader needed to take classes in an English intensive program prior to starting his engineering degree. In Texas, Bader found himself facing the subject of English, a topic that he neglected and had not enjoyed learning in school. It was a high barrier he had to leap over to meet his other goals.

Howdy y'all! In Texas, Bader could not help but notice the language being used around him. He started to notice how people talk to each on every corner of his small Texan city. He detected a word he had never heard before. He blogged, "I noticed that almost everybody was using 'HOWDY!' as a way of greeting." At that time, Bader was familiar only with certain forms of greetings and such a regional greeting was certainly not one of them. "Howdy" was so common that he asked his English teacher about it and learned what it meant. Bader, falling into his shyness, was not sure how to throw it out in his speaking. He explained, "Even after I understood what its meaning, when, and to whom I could say it, I wasn't really convinced to use it." He thought it would come out as

weird simply because he is, and as he described himself, "a foreign student." Bader continued with his trepidation:

> Even if I tried using it, I would always imagine the strange looks that people
> would have on their faces. I think being a new, shy, foreign student coming from
> another culture hindered me from using 'HOWDY' to greet others. (Blog,
> February 7, 2013)

Bader saw himself as an outsider not privileged to use a colloquial greeting. He was stifled.

You say coffee, I say Nescafé. As time went by Bader continued to have missteps that left him barely comfortable to open his mouth. He recalled from that time, "I had a lot of misunderstandings, a lot of situations where I got confused, or ask the wrong question, or answered in a different way, or in a way that was not suitable or appropriate." Bader was hanging out with a friend at a coffee shop not very far from the English institute where he was taking his English classes when he mustered the nerve to ask for coffee. The coffee aroma was so inviting and Bader wanted to get himself a cup. He tried to confidently say to the barista, "I would like some Nescafé." After he said it he felt good about his effort, but quickly realized from her lack of response that somehow he had failed. Surprisingly to Bader, the barista did not understand what he meant. Bader continued, "He [the barista] got confused and fortunately I had one of my friends with me who had a little bit more English." So the friend howled "coffee!" (Interview, November 23, 2012). Nescafé is synonymous with coffee in a lot of coffee shops in Saudi Arabia, but the coinage was unfamiliar to the American Barista. Bader had tried but was unsuccessful again.

Walking away from engineering. After his 14 months of studying in Texas, Bader's narrative shifted and explained to me that he began to see a different path in his life. His engineering dreams started to fade away and the desire to study English started to get stronger. His interest in Engineering became tumultuous. He continued:

> During that year in the United States in 2005 till 2006, I deeply thought about it [Engineering] and it wasn't me. I meant I didn't feel like doing a major in such a field. I believe that I grew to be a fan of English language when I started studying in English. (Interview, November 23, 2012)

Bader was moving away from Engineering and toward English in what felt to him like a great speed as each day passed. Bader quit his engineering major to choose English as a new and ever exciting pathway.

English at college in Saudi Arabia. After spending that time in Texas, Bader finally found his path in life. Suddenly, Bader's stories became full of excitement. Bader was no longer struggling but instead growing and finding constant success. Bader went back to Saudi Arabia because he was not willing to continue working towards the engineering program. He joined an English program in one teachers' college. Very enthusiastic, Bader started his first semester as an English major student. He described:

> I was like, you know, sitting in the front of the class, you now, taking notes, every single class, every single lesson, and going back home focus on homework and assignments, and yeah when the results, or you know the final results of the first semester showed up, I was really happy I did something great. (Interview, November 23, 2012)

All that energy and hard-work paid off. The experience Bader had in Texas and the passionate he showed help him be successful in his second college experience.

Culture courses. In Bader's English program, he studied a number of classes in linguistic and literature, in addition to some educational courses. Among these classes, Bader took two courses relate to language and culture which added much to Bader's cultural understanding of the United States, while also giving him an opportunity to reflect on his past experience living in the States. Bader clarified, "the examples that were mentioned in the book were very useful although I had already experienced such issues and themes" (Interview, December 18, 2012). So living in the U.S. coupled with taking the classes both added up to make him form a better sense of the English and western culture. After graduation from college, and teaching for one year at a newly established university in Saudi Arabia, Bader decided to come to the U.S., once again. Bader's job sponsored him to travel to the U.S. to pursue his graduate studies, concentrating in TESOL. Bader felt more prepared than his first trip to America, and he was ready to make the most out of his new chance.

Current Experiences: To the U.S. Once Again

Though Bader felt more prepared than before, he could not shake off a fear that he would make a social mistake. He described his initial days, "The first day I arrived here, I was really that formal guy who did not talk with anyone and listen to every single word and took it, you know, personally" (Interview, April 7, 2013). Afraid that he would be misunderstood, Bader did not approach people, and when he spoke, he was careful with every word he choose. Often times he left conversations feeling lost and anxious about his behavior. He expressed, "the first time I came here, I was really shy and I had to

133

know and to learn so many things before starting a conversation or even getting engaged in class for example, in class conversation" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). Bader felt inhibited by his natural predisposition toward worrying in social situations and very quickly receded into his own world.

Bader's reflections. When Bader told me about his approach to interaction, I thought back to his experience in Texas. At that time he would use a similar pattern of reflection to that which I noticed in his stories of America. Only now Bader had more language skill and cultural knowledge. So while in Texas, he may have been focusing on word level understanding, in his new environment he was focusing on the pragmatic elements of his speech. He utilized the same pattern of thinking about an experience, having the experience and reflecting on it to do so. One thing I noticed about Bader's narratives after coming to the U.S. that they rarely came without some reflections. Although he was still facing bumpy and awkward moments when interacting with others, he started to reflect and learn from them.

Bader on the phone. Bader shared stories of his efforts to negotiate interactions to gain different outcomes. The first stories Bader shared in his narratives after coming to the U.S. showed that, in most cases, the awkwardness or the conversation breakdown was not due to the shortness of vocabulary like it had been when he was in Texas, but rather the overthinking of what to say, especially when juggling two languages at the same time where one language rhetoric may influence the other. One day as Bader was calling the registration office, a woman answered him and she was about to give him some instructions to follow. While doing so, she asked him, "Do you have a pen?" At that moment, Bader, for some reason, did not get her question because he did not hear her

very well. So he yelled, "WHAT?" The woman's tone changed as if she was bothered. Bader attempted to tell her that he didn't hear what she said. After that experience, Bader had never used "what?" in such a situation. He simply replaced it with, "pardon me!" Bader reflected:

> However, saying "What?" in Arabic, my first language, is normal when mishearing others. To Americans, saying "What?" in such an incident is inappropriate and considered rude. I knew that before, but because I was thinking in one language and speaking in another, I did what I did. (Blog, February 7, 2013)

The reflection Bader did after every conversational breakdown helped him learn more, and change the unpleasant situations into learning experiences of how to be a more appropriate speaker.

Need to speak up. Bader's language was not the only place where he saw change garnish better results. Reflecting on his classroom interaction with his classmates, Bader reported:

> There were like a few times when they [classmates] needed me to explain something again or say it in other words, or you know raise my voice. So the English itself was not a problem. It was about, you know, the tone or my voice or the way I was trying to explain something. Sometimes, you know, as a nonnative speaker of English I can bring something from Arabic to English and I get confused. But I still can, you know, say that again in English. (Interview, November 23, 2012)

135

Bader began to realize that he could move beyond worrying about language toward thinking about pragmatics.

Losing the ID card. When Bader kept bringing up "low voice" in his data, I started to feel he had an issue with the volume of his voice and the way he project his talk. I remembered my first awkward interaction with him, and the part his quiet tone played in that interaction. I learned that the issues kept causing him to fall into a lot of misunderstandings and embarrassments. Bader spoke about a time when he lost his university ID card. As part of the University transportation system, to get on board a bus, a student needs to show a student ID card to the bus driver. On a trip to campus Bader lost his card. Bader made it to his destination, and looked for his card, but did not find it. Bader called the ID card office and also the bus department to report the lost ID card and inquire if anyone had found it.

The ineffectual response from the authorities made Bader impatient so he decided to wait no longer and to look for his ID card himself. Bader described:

> So I waited for like an hour then I decided to go myself to the same bus and ask
> the driver for my ID card. Once I got on the bus, the driver. I actually told him
> that "I have lost my ID" and I also I think I also said, "in the bus" but in a lower
> voice. So what he heard was: "I have lost my ID card" So he told me that it's
> okay to get on the bus, and that's what I did because I felt embarrassed to ask him
> again that I have lost my ID card "in the bus. (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment,
> May 1, 2013)

In Bader's story the bus driver allowed him on the bus though he did not have an ID. Bader had not successfully conveyed the point of his journey, to find the ID, to the driver.

In this situation, Bader did not carry the same volume in his speech and misunderstanding ensued. In the end, Bader's story was happy. He explained, "Once I took a seat, one of the girls was sitting next to me told if I had lost my ID card and I said, "Yes" and she gave it to me" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment, May 1, 2013). Though Bader's story had a happy ending because he found his ID, it is still an example of a pragmatic hiccup, because he was not able to get the driver to understand his purpose.

Misunderstanding and being misunderstood. Bader's negotiation of volume happened in tandem with other types of interactions that left him feeling discomfort. At this point, half way through his second semester Bader explained:

> My main issue has been I believe ambiguity because sometimes you miss understand people and they may also misunderstand you. And that would cause tension and it would also discourage you from learning more… ambiguous ways of conveying the message. (Focus Group, April 28, 2013)

Bader began to realize that his discomfort with ambiguity was impacted his learning experience.

During my interaction with Bader, I learned that he is very self-conscious and meticulous in both his personal and academic life. A prime example of a manifestation of his meticulous nature came in his choice of attire. When I saw Bader I was consistently struck by his fashion. On one occasion he was wearing a turtleneck and jacket, liken to an old British professor. I could not help but compare him to Hamad, who I never saw out of sweatpants and a t-shirt. Bader was conscious of his clothing choices.

When Bader composed a blog and titled it "Compliments are Complicated" I had a good idea it would have something to do with his clothing. As I would have guessed, in it he wrote about a time he received a compliment on his outfit. He wrote:

> For me, I'm not used to compliments… Last semester, I was in an academic event with some of my friends and classmates. Two of them told me that I looked nice in my suit. I was really embarrassed because I didn't know how to reply to such a compliment. What makes me confused, however, is the degree of compliment itself, and what people *really* mean by giving me a compliment. (Blog, March 12, 2013)

Bader applied his reflective approach to the interaction and worried more about his response than their compliment. He was caught up in the purpose.

This is not the only time Bader received a comment about his outfit and the way he dresses. In the blog, Bader explained that he was waiting for the bus outside a supermarket when a man commented on his clothing. He wrote:

> A man working there took a break and sat next to me. Unexpectedly, he said to me, "Do you box?" I said, "Pardon me?" He then pointed to my shoes, which are often worn by boxers, and said, "Do you box?" and did a little thing with his hands to explain what boxing is. I laughed and told him, "No, I just like wearing them. (Blog, May 24, 2013)

Bader saw such conversations as good opportunities to interact with others that would help him improve his social and communication skills.

"Sometimes people would leave me!" Another challenge, in addition to voice and ambiguity, was also the skill of ending a conversation. Bader talked about not being

138

able to close a conversation appropriately. Many times he felt that the end was stunted, with the person he was speaking to abruptly ending the conversation. Bader brought this issue up in the focus group, when he explained:

> The problems any non-native speaker of English would face is the use of the closing, the taking turns, and opening and closing a conversation. I myself have suffered a long time from this issue. I mean, how to close and how to open a conversation. Sometimes people would leave me. I was [would be] speaking and they would leave me. (Focus Group, April 28, 2013)

As his laughter erupted in the room, I thought about a time Bader and I talked for nearly an hour, while our conversation may have concluded after a few minutes. He friskily continued, "That happened! Yeah, that happened. They left me while I was speaking to them. All I did was 'Well, I'll see you later!'" I could easily imagine this scenario playing out. Bader saw that as not only an issue he had, but a pragmatic problem for all international students. He explained, "So, yeah one of the problems is how to take roles and turns in a conversation" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). Bader's ability to laugh about a pragmatic misstep showed a new response to an awkward moment that would hint at what was to come.

Adjusting and making changes. Toward the end of the data collection, Bader started a new type of narrative that declared him as a person who was capable of changing. I began to see the layers of his awkwardness melt away. He declared:

> I guarantee you that I was very shy when I came here almost eight months ago or nine months ago… Really, I get embarrassed… and I have this embarrassing and awkward moment. Everyone does actually have these moments but now I'm not

really ashamed of it. I'm not really embarrassed. I just laugh with people. I tell

them what I mean and.. because in the past, I used to withdraw, just escape the

moment; just, you know, say what I have to say and leave. Now, nah. It's

changed. So, the change is good, is positive. (Interview, May 22, 2013)

Bader was full of excitement as he explained how he started to figure out the cultural

dynamic around him. He began to see that lowering his inhibition walls would make him

approachable to others and help him have more confident conversational experiences.

When Bader said that he had changed, he was not bluffing. I saw Bader begin to

develop new cultural rules, feel authority in them, and enforce them on his friends. In one

situation, he explained to me his new understanding of kissing on the cheek. Right after

the Christmas break, Bader ran into one of his Saudi friends just outside the library and as

Bader was extending a hand to shake, he told his friend, "Please no kisses on the cheek; it

would bother me if people thought of us in any certain way" (Blog, March 22, 2013).

Two months later, Bader changed his opinion and translated it into a directive towards

Hamad, another participant in this study. In a blog response, Bader wrote:

Like you [Hamad], I have been avoiding some kinds of greeting that we use back

in Saudi Arabia. However, I find myself becoming more and more indifferent to

what others may think of me. I think that this part of my identity has been

reconstructed. I believe that everyone is free to represent her/his culture as long as

her/his actions don't interfere with others' freedoms. (Blog, May 16, 2013)

Bader said he has changed and has showed that he has changed. This was the only story

of this type that Bader told me, where he was assertive and in control. It occurred at the

end of our meetings and possibly shined a light toward his future communications with others.

Bader's new ownership of his experience carries forward into his approach to pragmatic interactions. While in the past he would use his own impressions to make change, now Bader is starting to have more resources to draw from. In a story shared in the focus group towards the end of data collection, Bader excitedly addressed everyone:

> When we had the Saint Patrick's Day, I was in the car with one of my friends. We stopped by one of the coffee places and I said, "Why is everyone wearing the green t-shirt?" So I said, why don't I ask the guy on the window, on the cashier window about that?... He said: "It's the Saint Patrick's Day!" So I went back home and I Googled that and I understood everything about it. So I think technology would really help. (Focus Group, April 28, 2013)

When I was listening to Bader, I saw that he was eventually getting out of his shell. His tone was more clearly projected with no sign of hesitation or pausing. Whereas Bader was socially guarded and insecure in the past, I saw him in this focus group very self-possessed and assured. I could easily see him make even better social and cultural adjustments in the future.

Looking Forward: Promising Future

With the changes happening to Bader's character, I began to see him evolving and becoming more willing to take chances without self-imposed failure. Bader expressed that he was probably stressed out before but lately he was feeling more relaxed. With the end of the semester approaching, Bader had new plans and processes to accomplish these plans; some are academic and others are simply social. Mainly, Bader had three goals in

the future: He aims to be more successful in conversation, he wants to writes a thesis, and he intends to apply for a Ph.D. program.

When Bader spoke about his goals, he sounded more confident than ever before. He said:

I'm thinking about my thesis. I'm going to start writing my literature review, and now I can say that I know what research is." He continued, "In term of languages, I'm also thinking about improving my own English. This is for many things. One of them is to be ready for a good Ph.D. program… I'm planning to memorize words, new words, vocabulary, and also to use them. Not only memorize them, but also to use them while I'm talking to others because I always enjoy having new words in conversation. (Interview, May 22, 2013)

Bader, with his new assertiveness, seemed determined to fulfill these plans and achieve these goals.

Lastly, when I asked Bader if this study influenced him in any way, he thankfully said:

Well, believe it or not! I have been more accustomed to people here in the US.. It's not only because of this study but this study actually triggered me to think about pragmatics; how I talk, how I interact with people. (Interview, May 22, 2013)

Although I did not plan for this study to immediately educate the participants about pragmatics, I was happy to hear that Bader could find this study somehow inspiring for him to reconsider his interactions with others. With this new positive character Bader

started to show, I can see him confidently jumping from one success to another.

A Brief Interpretive Analysis for Bader's Narrative

From the first time I met Bader, he struck me as unique. Through listening to Bader's interviews and reading his blog posts, I learned that the first impression I formed about Bader is indeed my ongoing impression. Through all the times I interacted with him, Bader seemed to me as an inhibited person caught up in a constant fear of social slip-ups. His self-consciousness pushed him to categorize himself as a "foreigner" who was not privileged to, for example, use a colloquial greeting like "howdy!" when he was studying in Texas. Because of Bader's self-marginalization, he may have missed out on the opportunity to be an evolving learner and active member of the English language community. I interpret that his attitude towards English was basically placing him outside the loop. As indicated by LoCastro (2003), not all language learners are willing to gain membership in the learned language community. LoCastro asserts that language learners should "make their own decisions as how 'nativelike' they become" (p. 271). After all, among the factors known for pragmatic failure is the learner's attitude towards the pragmatic norms of the learned language (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; LoCastro, 2003).

During the data collection process, Bader anxiously provided me with voluntary unsolicited data in response to my interview questions, and in some cases, he would interrupt my questions to bring me back to some old answers of his. Several times, when I asked him if he had a story to share in relation to a specific topic, he would respond that he had three. This resulted in having prolonged interviews with little related data. The way Bader opted for to share his stories was in itself a form of data that reflected his pragmatic level. Bader was aware of this issue which made him apologize for speaking

"too much" during the interviews (Interview, December 18, 2012). I was wondering if this issue was only because he was being interviewed or whether it was a usual characteristic of his everyday speaking. Consequently, I started to look for evidence in his narrative. I found that Bader in many cases expressed that he had a problem with allowing turn-taking or closing the conversation aptly. As a result, people will just leave him talking and walk away. He once said, "Sometimes people would leave me. I was speaking and they would leave me" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). From the evident examples I found in Bader's narrative coupled with seeing him responding to my interview questions in an expected way, I assume that Bader has an issue with being cooperative when interacting with others. When people in a conversation provide more information than what is conventionally expected, they would be showing less awareness of the cooperation need between speakers, and consequently violate Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity.

Bader's narrative also showed examples where he, whether consciously or not, would depend on his Arabic language and cultural norms when interacting in English within an American context. This transfer of the first language norms would more likely cause Bader not to express himself as clearly and appropriately as he wished. When Bader yelled "What?" at the phone because he could not hear the woman's question at the other end, he certainly did not sound the most appropriate. Reflecting on this story, Bader expressed that saying "what" in a raised tone is common in an Arabic phone conversation, and he justified that he was thinking in one language and speaking in another. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) stated that "negative transfer" of the first language

144

rules to the second causes learners to depart from the expected conventional norms in the context of the second language.

Najla: The Giggly and Socially Polite

Najla is a successful student in her last semester in the M.A. TESOL program. In both classes I took with her, she struck me as someone who likes to tease others and crack jokes. Her classmates would always burst out laughing from her witty remarks. Even during the interviews, it was frequent to hear her responding to me in a way that evokes amusement. One time, I was telling her that we were moving from one section of the interview to another so I asked her if she wants to take deep breath, to which she humorously responded, "A deep breath? I'd rather take a nap!" followed by a howl of laughter. Because of her being so lively and down-to-earth, every interview with Najla was a barrel of fun.

Looking Back: Reading Stories and Watching Cartoon

Najla's days with English go back to her kindergarten days: when she would sit down to watch Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Big Bird in Sesame Street. Najla started her first grade in a private school where English was essential and introduced from day one. Encouraged by her parents, a father who was an American university graduate and a mother who was a lover of knowledge, Najla would stay in her room for hours flipping the pages of her English story books. She animatedly described, "I wasn't so aware when I was so young that I was so good in picking up words, but my parents were so aware of that and they encouraged me either at home or at school" (Interview, November 20, 2012). From a very young age, Najla showed an observable interest in English. She was

not only reading in English and watching English cartoons, but when an English song was played on the TV, she would jump and start dancing to it.

"To be or not to be." In school, Najla was a popular teen. She was a familiar face on the school theater because she had what it took to be there. She used to act in plays in English in front of audiences of students, teachers, and parents. She eagerly explicated:

> They [English teachers] were also letting me participate in plays in front of audiences in our school in English, [to] sing or just to say some parts, you know, of some famous plays… It wasn't so serious because at my age we didn't like things to be so serious. So I was, for example, just saying some parts… just 'to be or not to be' and then to, for example, continue in a sarcastic way. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Najla approached English as a functional means to express, sing, and communicate. She was also aware of different roles English would play as in being casual, serious, or even ironic. Najla gleefully spoke about her English teachers and how they wanted the girls in school to love the language and not just to look at it as a subject that they have to take. It was expected that all this caring, encouraging, and praising would pay off when Najla tried her English outside the walls of her school, to communicate with people other than her teachers and classmates; that is what happened.

Travelling to Europe. Before migrating to the U.S. to pursue her M.A. degree, Najla has never lived in a country other than Saudi Arabia per se, but she was quite the tourist. She used to travel a lot with her parents and siblings for tourism to places like the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, and what language would she use in all these

different places? It was English. With the supervision of her parents, she used to practice English and a little bit of French, when needed, by interacting with venders and sellers. It was sensational for her to be able to greet people with *marhaba*, *hello*, or *bonjour*. She reflected:

> It was an opportunity to practice the language, and my parents were giving us this opportunity to deal with the front desk, receptionists, the waiters; they wanted us to practice all the time. Also, they wanted us to be independent. They didn't want to do everything for us. (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Being able to negotiate in another language gave Najla the means to reach out to people everywhere she goes, to communicate, to laugh, and to make them smile. Language for Najla had a real purpose; she knew first-hand what it means to have another tongue, to understand others, and to be understood.

Going to college. When Najla graduated from high school, she knew that she was good in languages and that she could turn that into a college major. With her knowledge of two western languages, it was baffling for her which one to pick. She narrated:

> So I was thinking then either the English or other languages like French or other thing but when I thought about it seriously, I said: Okay, even if I spend like four years in learning French, where can I use it? And whom I'm gonna practice it with? (Interview, November 20, 2012)

Najla's mind was setting on English because of the promising career path available with English, and because it was the international language that she would use when traveling and interacting with people around the globe.

When Najla entered college, she had to move away from her teen life-style to a more matured life. The bouncy type of English she used to play with in school was not there anymore. She exhaled when she said, "everything has changed since I moved into the college because everything was boring and everything was serious. We had only to focus on the materials themselves and it was above our skills at that time" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Suddenly, the table has turned and English became the language for solving phonology problems and analyzing poetry verses. Najla had to leave the fun English on the threshold of college and start to be more focused and serious.

"We sound like books talking!" The way English was presented in college was nothing like the English Najla knew in school. English became more of a lecture language and less of a social language. Najla told in a sarcastic way:

My phonetics professor then was a native speaker and the only thing I can remember that she was trying to insert some of the, you know, cultural pragmatics in our conversation… although my conversation professor wasn't allowing us to speak. It was her time to speak! (Interview, November 20, 2012)

She elaborated:

When you read the topic 'conversation' in your schedule or the prescribed syllabus that you're gonna take, you expect to at least speak or practice speaking but unfortunately most of the courses that I had then, the topic was totally different than the content itself of the course. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

Najla sounded frustrated as she spoke about her past college experiences and she was calling them "bad memories." This bubbly person was brought down by the type of experience she had in college.

148

In addition to her complaining of the college instructors, Najla evaluated some of the materials and textbooks she had taken. She stated, "We are using an abandoned language that they [English speakers] don't use anymore. We have been taught in the Standard English while they usually now use the slang which, in my opinion, causes the ambiguity [in interaction]" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). Najla made it clear that the English taught in her English education program is not the type that would help her reach out and interact properly with fluent English speakers. She knew what she would speak English, but she was wondering how others would perceive her English. Najla sighed, "I don't know if we sound like books talking" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Najla was torn between her college expectations and her actual experience. She made it clear that for her, the purpose of learning any language is to communicate, and that exposing students to merely formal English would act like a barrier that would prevent them from speaking fluently and confidently. With its good and bad memories, college days for Najla were eventually over and she was on the market waiting for a good teaching position.

Finished college and started teaching. Najla started teaching at a public school, but it was not the job of her dreams, as she was not at all thrilled with the school atmosphere. Just like English in her school days, Najla tried to provide students with supplemental materials, but she did not feel support from her colleagues or the school administration. "It wasn't that nice" Najla said, "You didn't have that much space to interact with the students or create for your students to make them love [English]" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Najla was surprised to see the students memorize the compositions to write them verbatim on the exams. In her mind, Najla was a novice

teacher who could not make a lot of change on her own. By and large, it was a flaw in the system not a problem in herself. That flaw was bigger than her as she believed in the Arabic proverb that says: "one hand cannot clap." Najla was frustrated from her school teaching experience. She did what she had to do without enjoyment, and her eyes were set on better teaching positions.

One year went by before Najla regained excitement in her teaching again. She was accepted to teach at one reputable government institute. She was content with the great amount of freedom she had in class and she was pleased to work with teachers from different nations. Najla felt at home as she had foreseen that this institute would help her broaden her teaching horizons and meet her creativity. Not just that, but the institute promised Najla to sponsor her if she wanted to purse her graduate studies in the United States. An opportunity like that does not come very often, so Najla wasted no time. She explained, "I don't want to stop in a specific limit where we have stopped back there in the college. So I chose to continue my graduate study and here we are" (Interview, November 20, 2012). After teaching for a couple of years, Najla was packing her stuff and with that she was drawing imaginary pictures in her mind about her life in the US.

Current Experiences: Coming to the U.S.

Traveling for tourism was no problem for Najla but moving to another country to study made her have butterflies in her stomach. Najla described her first semester experience, "I was so nervous, anxious, you know, because I don't know what to expect and I don't know what do they expect from me" (Interview, January 9, 2013). As apprehensive as she was, Najla did not expect, for example, professors to be at ease or even speak informally to her. She thought, just like her professors in college in Saudi

150

Arabia, professors in the U.S. must be serious and keep a distance all the time. After all, teachers are treated with a high level of formality in Arabic cultures. She narrated:

> Sometimes whenever they [professors] throw a joke or something or an expression just, you know, to break the ice, at the beginning of our classes, we are so shocked and surprised and we seem that we don't know what to do. (Focus Group, April 28, 2013)

Najla laughed when she said this, "I think that after doing that [joking] and they didn't find the reaction so much, they just stop doing that." (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). Here, Najla pointed out that when students do not follow the joke or their reaction is cold, the intended amusing meaning of a joke is lost and awkwardness occurs. It shows the students as either they do not care or they do not understand and both of these situations would reflect negatively on the students' image. Even though Najla was a fun person, her expectations constrained the way she experienced graduate school. She indicated that if there is a situation where students did not know how to act, laughing was not the safest move. Little by little, Najla began to assimilate to graduate school and her personality started to shine again.

Made some adjustments. As the first semester went, Najla was forming a better sense of graduate school, classroom dynamics, and course requirements. Her inhibition was getting lower, and she went back to an old habit of hers, reaching out to people and joyfully interacting with them. She explained, "At the beginning, I was only speaking whenever I need to, but now I'm also joking with people. Sometimes two other persons are talking together and I'm just throwing a joke or something like that" (Interview,

January 9, 2013). Although Najla's classmates in the U.S. would be coming from different cultural backgrounds, she quickly made friends. She spoke about her cohort:

> Some of them are really friendly and I like to socialize with them, you know, all the time either in the class or out the class and I have a lot of good relations with a lot of my group and most of them are not from my country, but we really find or found a lot of, you know, things in common between us to talk about. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

Najla was in a lot of cases the initiator of the conversation and the one who breaks the ice. Najla's openness to diversity showed that she is naturally pragmatic and that she obtained a lot of practical skills that she was not conscious about.

Najla was not only observing herself developing, but she was also comparing herself to other colleagues from the same country. Najla was seeing herself as free and self-assured while she thought her colleagues were still stumbling. Najla felt that some of them were still translating whatever they wanted to say from Arabic to English, which created confusing language structures and lead listeners to lose the intended meaning. Najla thought that not adhering to the social and language rules classmates expect in their communication create this awkwardness between Saudi students and other students. She continued to say that, "Maybe because back home we are used to give unneeded details." Najla felt that her professors got annoyed when students lost focus, expanded, and gave unneeded details. She wanted to show me how a professor would react in such a case, so she hollered, "Move on, stop that, I don't need that. It's already.. you went too far from the topic that we are talking about. Please focus!" (Interview, January 9, 2013). Although Najla was smiling at this point, I could detect frustration reflected by her facial

expressions. In her funny enacting of her professor's talk, she showed awareness of the academic pragmatics and classroom expectations.

So expressive at school. In the interviews with Najla, it was not difficult to know what she meant just by looking at her face and hands moving. Najla was giggling when I brought up that she is easy-to-read. She confirmed my observation and said, "People tell me that you are so expressive; your facial expressions, your hands, your body language." Najla is not just expressive but also appreciates facial expressions and other nonverbal clues in a conversation. She clarified, "The tone and the facial expressions are so important. The intonation also in the way how it has been said, and also from the person who said it" (Interview, January 9, 2013). Having facial expression is helpful for a better understanding of others but one cannot expect from others all the time.

One time, Najla nervously asked one of her professors about the class assignment. She narrated, "I was shaking and I was asking him: is this the question you wanted me to initiate in my paper?" Her professor took a glance on the paper and he responded deadpan –in a calm tone and without any facial expression, "No." To that, Najla became even more nervous and she shouted: "What?! Sorry, sorry!" So the professor said, "Take it easy! Come on. Calm down. I'm joking, I'm joking!" Relieved, Najla said: "Okay, okay. Don't do that again, please!" (Interview, January 9, 2013). Najla was laughing at herself being in this situation. She probably did not yet notice that having a blank/poker face that shows no emotion is a part of the joke. She indicated that facial expressions would have been appreciated in her conversation with the professor to avoid the misunderstanding.

One semester after another, Najla was building a stronger confidence and ability to negotiate meanings around her. As of her fifth semester, she described herself as becoming more confident and less hesitant. She spoke proudly when she told me:

I can communicate now more freely with people, not just because I need a thing, no… Sometimes I know how to start a discussion or a topic that can be common so we can, you know, go on and, you know, we have fun instead of talking about something that they are not interested in. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

More and more, Najla is showing that she is growing a better sense of pragmatics.

When in Rome. In all aforementioned incidents, Najla has been cast as a fun person, who showed courtesy and care wherever she went. In this next scenario, Najla's good manners almost cost her an expensive item she was wearing to class. One time, Najla's classmate Lindsey paid her a compliment saying, "I like your ring," to which Najla spontaneously responded, "Please, have it!" Lindsey looked shocked by the generous offer, so she rejected it saying, "No, no, no! I don't mean that. I mean it's really nice." Najla felt bad to create such awkwardness since a response to a compliment did not need all this complication. So Najla explained to Lindsey that it was the way people in Saudi Arabia respond to anyone admiring items they have or wear. Najla was concerned that Lindsey found her spontaneous response "please have it!" as offending, especially with the baffled look that appeared on Lindsey's face. Najla felt relieved when she saw Lindsey smiling as she was starting to understand the cultural origin in Najla's response.

After that incident, Najla adapted to a new way of responding to compliments. When anyone runs into Najla and says, "I like your boots, I like your coat, I like your hat," her response would simply be "thank you!" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment,

154

May 1, 2013). Najla felt the necessity to absorb into the new prevailing culture by drawing a line between her Saudi character and her American one. She knew that this absorbing and change would not happen overnight. She started to become a fan of the saying: when in Rome, do as the Romans do!

"It's from my mother." From what have been shown about her already, Najla can be described as friendly, approachable, and generous. She is very welcoming and from time to time, she would invite people over to her house. One afternoon, Najla asked her friend Alexandra if she wanted to try Arabic coffee. Alexandra gladly accepted the invitation, and inside the house, Alexandra and her generous host spoke about Saudi customs and foods. As they were speaking, Najla gave Alexandra a bowl of dates to try and said, "This is our tradition to offer dates together with the Arabic coffee." Alexandra loved her new coffee treat and found it delicate and soothing.

Later on Alexandra's way out, Najla gave her a new bag of dates as a gift. To that nice gesture, Alexandra enthusiastically said, "Oh, thank you very much. I really appreciate it!" Najla impatiently responded, "It's from my mother's. When my mother came to visit me, she brought that with her." Najla was not aware that she inadvertently painted her guest into a cultural corner. Alexandra felt trapped because of Najla's last comment. An awkward silence happened before Alexandra handed the dates back to Najla and nervously said, "Oh sorry! Maybe it had like a special memory or something for you!" Najla was wondering about the meaning Alexandra understood from her utterance. Najla wanted to make herself clear, so she insisted, "No, please take it. She [my mother] brought a lot with her. I want you to take it. What I meant was that it's really a good quality" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment, May 1, 2013). Najla wanted

to call attention that her dates were of a premium quality, not bought from the local markets, but brought from back home. Because of the different cultural backgrounds between the guest and her host, the intended meaning of "it's from my mother" was pushed aside whereas the unwanted meaning became essential. Najla learned that no matter how careful she could be with her speech, misunderstanding sometimes just cannot be avoided.

"Sorry for sitting that way!" Another personality trait about Najla that makes her stand out, other than the idea that she is funny and generous, is that she is genuinely polite, although her polite gestures sometimes cannot be easily discerned by others. One time in class, Najla and her colleagues were asked to sit in circles to form discussion groups. After every student pulled their chairs together, Najla and her colleague Mark, who was not in her group, had an awkward encounter. She narrated, "So I had to move my chair to give my back to the other colleague that wasn't in my circle. So spontaneously I told him: "Sorry for sitting that way!" Najla continued on to say that Mark looked at her in an inquiring way, not sure what she meant by the apology, but he had not said anything yet. Najla said that she took it for granted that Mark understood what she meant in her apologizing statement. The class was soon dismissed and everyone in the discussion groups was getting ready to leave. At that moment, Mark approached Najla and asked her: "Sorry, I didn't get you. What did you mean by "Sorry for sitting like that?" Najla turned red-faced and bashfully responded:

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean anything but because it's back home, it's impolite for us to give our backs to whomever is sitting next to us even if we don't know him. So

that's what I meant by telling you "sorry." (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment,

May 1, 2013)

Najla expressed that Mark felt relieved that he eventually untied that complex statement

he heard and enthusiastically said, "Wow, that's very polite!" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic

Moment, May 1, 2013). Najla was happy that this ambiguity was cleared away. All Najla

wanted to do in her complex apology "sorry for sitting like that" was to save face for her

colleague. She wanted to send him a message that although she was turning her back on

him, she was not trying to ignore his presence or cause him to feel offended.

When I told Najla that what she did can be pragmatically seen as a face-saving act

according to the theories of pragmatics, she laughed. She thought that I was playing a

joke on her because she was familiar with this concept in Arabic. She explained, "When I

hear you say that [face-saving], I think that you are just translating something in Arabic,

you know, because we are using the same expression… It's interesting to know that they

are using this expression also in English" (Interview, April 6, 2013). Najla started to see

that there are pragmatic concepts that can be overlapping between her native eastern

culture and her new western one. She learned that there are no clear lines isolating

different cultures and that it is wise that one takes advantages of cultural commonness

when interaction with others and sidesteps complexities.

Looking Forward: Learning Slang and Student-Centered Learning

Meeting with Najla for interviews, reading her blogs, and listening to her self-

recorded reflections felt really insightful and amusing for me at the same time. Najla's

life-history and how she turned English from a fun tourist language to an academic

researcher language without losing her cheerful shiny personality demonstrates her

157

evolving and abilities to grow and continue learning. Towards the end of my interactions with Najla, I was eager to know how she envisioned her future. Najla told me about her liberal plans to break from norms and go beyond the academic language generally fostered in school. Without missing a beat, she expressed:

> I like to learn more about the slang English because we are learning [in Saudi Arabia] a very different language than the language that is spoken here. That's why we find difficulty in communicating with them [American students] because we are talking a Standard English while they are using a non-standard, the slang, and they are going so quick while we are thinking about our grammar. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

Najla not only wanted to explore the area of slang and casual speaking, but she also told me that she would consider conducting her Ph.D. dissertation on that topic.

Applying for a Ph.D. program and researching the area of slang in English communication sounded like an apt personal/academic goal for Najla. As for her teaching goals, Najla is reconsidering her teaching philosophy to implement more of a cooperative learning style. Stepping into the students' shoes again made her reshape her teaching vision by placing more focus on communication. She explained:

> Being a student again these two and a half years put me in my students' place and I learned a lot. I learned about my students' feelings. I will try *insha Allah* in the future to avoid lecturing. I want them to practice the language more than listening to the language. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

She said that this vision is becoming common between the teachers in the institute where she worked in Saudi Arabia.

She reflected about the necessity to teach in a way that bridges the classroom to the outside world. She passionately said, "Everyone believes now that something is missing in our curriculum to be taught in order to make our second language more attached to the real native language" (Focus group, April 28, 2013). Najla calls for a critical need to make a shift towards more practical and functional English in teacher educational programs since a key goal of learning a language is to communicate. She wants to incorporate the actual communication she experienced in the U.S., which included slang and more casual speech, and make it meaningful to her students. She expanded, "We need really to practice the language more than learning the language. It's not really enough to know the grammar and the vocabulary of the language while we can't, you know, communicate" (Interview, November 20, 2012). Najla indicated that focusing on grammar without being able to use that grammar in a communicative way would result in seeing more college graduates who are very good in the written exams, but in everyday communication tasks they would be seen as inadequate. She pointed out that for her, communication with grammatical mistakes can be more practical than perfect grammar with less communication. She reflected:

> We always encounter people who are communicating with us… they don't have this too perfect grammar, but you still can understand them, and they are so successful in communicating, while at the same time other people maybe spent a lot of effort… but for you, as a listener to them, you lose the flow of the sentence because they are putting a lot of effort, you know, and they are so careful about their grammar. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

Najla made it clear that for her, being fluent and smooth with some grammar mistakes is more functional than the other way around. Najla showed that her vision of language has gone to privilege the language she has when she was a young student in school, a language full of energy, spirit, and meaning.

A snapshot of Najla's teaching after going back to Saudi Arabia. Najla was the only participant who graduated from her M.A. program before I completely finished the data collection. She travelled back to Saudi Arabia and resumed teaching at the same government institute she worked at before. I was curious to learn about her teaching in Saudi Arabia after going through the experience of this study. She mentioned that because the textbooks used in the institute are "imported" and not designed for the local culture, different cultural topics are always brought up in class discussion. Najla then clarified that not all topics are teachable and that she had to pick and choose what to discuss in her class. She openly said:

> Sometimes I have to delete some topics that are not convenient or appropriate in our culture or our society… There are some topics that I can't go through like, for example, in one of my books which is a listening course, they were talking about dating. It wasn't appropriate… you don't expect anything from the students and as well you can't give anything. (Interview, April 6, 2013)

Najla learned that teaching the culture outside its boundaries can be challenging as it cannot be done without the necessary filtering. In her class, Najla had to be mindful of the present teaching context and cater to both the local culture and the imported culture. Being able to find balance between the two cultures is essential, and like it is said, better safe than sorry.

160

A Brief Interpretive Analysis for Najla's Narrative

It is evident from Najla's narrative that her English has two purposes. During school years and the time of travelling, Najla looked at English as a vehicle to approach people, communicate with them, and have a good time. When Najla came to college, her language expectations quickly smashed the wall of reality. Najla, as the case was with many other students, had to let go of the communicative language and adhere to a more formal and dry language to be successful in college. She had to follow the conventions of top-down system as opposed to the dynamic language learning she always wanted. She had no control over this shift since her college professors were followers of teacher-centered education with little to no opportunity for students to contribute to their education. What made it even less student-centered was that the professors utilized textbooks that valued grammar over communication, with little attention to cultural topics. This just made it difficult for Najla to relate her college experience to the English she used outside the college campus. Najla's observation was in agreement with Fageeh (2011) who pointed out that in a typical English college class in Saudi Arabia, students were mostly exposed to learning materials arranged for the convenience of vocabulary drills and grammar presentations, providing little or virtually no attention to cultural content in a purposeful method. It was not surprising, after that, to see Najla seeking a solution in learning slang to make up for the missing part of her learned English and to keep up with the language she found outside the college.

This narrative also shows Najla's awareness of the communication aspects that go beyond the surface level of a sentence. In many examples, Najla proved her ability to notice paralanguage and nonverbal signals that are used to communicate attitudes or other

shades of meanings such as pauses, tones, intonations, hand gestures, and facial expressions. Especially in the United States, Najla was relying a lot on these nonverbal marks in conversations that require a deeper level of interpretation as in sarcasm, mockery, and jokes. She was successful in some cases, as in showing clear facial expression and hand gestures to the degree that people pointed out that she was indeed expressive. In other cases, she was frustrated that she could not detect a nonverbal clue, as in her deadpan joke with her professor. Being able to give and detect such clues aids to better interactions, especially when uncommon cultural issues are present (Canale & Swain, 1990).

Lastly, it was also seen throughout Najla's narrative that, in some incidents, she could not separate between her two communicative literacies, the Saudi and the American one, which could cause people around her a lot of confusion. Najla could be acting polite where her colleagues might see it as weird or different. Eventually, it would require an effort to explain to her interlocutors that what she was saying or doing was meant to be polite and courteous in her own way, following her own cultural traditions. In two pragmatic incidents, that is, when Najla gave her ring away in response to one classmate's compliment, and when she apologized to turn her back to another classmate, Najla was adhering to the pragmatics of her culture, which were not familiar in the American context. There was no doubt that her intentions were to communicate politely and her ultimate goal was to save the public self-image of the person she was speaking to (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996b), but her actions came out with no alignment with the American social norms and expectations. Although some of these pragmatics and polite gestures overlap between Eastern and Western cultures, communication

breakdowns often happen due to the transfer of norms and expectations from one language to another, or one culture to another (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). This takes place especially when the pragmatics used in local contexts contradict what is used in home contexts.

Firas: TV Watcher and Movie Lover

One day I saw Firas walking with a classmate out of a college building. Firas was talking with animation, his hands moving to illustrate each word, and I knew from his listeners responses that they were friends. When Firas saw me he smiled and introduced me to his friend, Lisa. Because they were walking out of the classroom together I assumed that, like Firas, Lisa was studying Literature. So, as an introduction I said adversarially, "Hi! I'm Fahad from the other end of the English department, the applied linguistics program. We are the enemies!" She laughed at my jab and replied coyly, "No. I'm actually from the generalist program. I take classes from both programs." Her tone was playful and she followed it up by exclaiming, "We can be friends!" Firas laughed as he took in the playful exchange. After it was over I told him that he had just witnessed a pragmatic incident. Firas said with surprise, "Is this what pragmatics is about? This is fun!" Later, when I formally invited Firas to join my study, he immediately accepted.

Before Firas and I started to meet for my study, I had known Firas as a member of the Saudi community at the school. Firas had been in the small town where he was studying literature for three semesters, and in that time he accrued valuable information that he shared with his friends. Firas knew the local of the land. Before I began interviewing Firas, I knew that other Saudi students turned to him when they were picking out a cell phone or buying a TV. They valued Firas's well-informed opinion.

Firas was also the friend that everyone knew they could call if they want to go to see a movie. Firas would either tell you about the movie's rating, trailer, stars, and plot, or because he loved movies so much, go with you to see the flick.

When Firas joined my study I learned that seeing him as a person who lived movies was not off the mark. Firas's movie watching was not a byproduct of moving to America, but part of his overall experience in academia and learning English. Unlike other kids who watched movies passively, Firas was active, taking in as much of every scene as he could. Firas loved movies and that love would serve a motivation to develop his language skills. TV takes a big portion of his day. He enthusiastically said:

> I engage with English every single day… When TV show is in English, there is
> some kind of negotiation with what's the TV says because when it's in English,
> you think in English. So there is one side communication but still there is your
> part of reaction. (Interview, April 3, 2013)

In this coming narrative, it would be not surprising to see his love of English and movies serving to be part of his choices at moments of transformation in his life.

Looking Back: Beginning with English at the Seventh Grade

When Firas made his first step onto a path of learning English, he felt almost like he entered the yellow brick road in the movie The Wizard of Oz. At the end of the movie, instead of the Wizard, Firas hoped to unlock the ability to understand any English movie he sat down to watch. His first encounter on his journey with English was when he met his Palestinian teacher. The teacher made jokes in the classroom and was clever enough to relate the language to the seventh grade students he was teaching. As Firas would explain with admiration, the teacher also emphasized the importance of vocabulary

164

acquisition to language learning. Firas thought back warmly at his teachers' wisdom, "he knew that the vocabulary is your key to unlock the language" (Interview, November 26, 2012). I knew that from this experience, Firas felt catapulted forward in his language and cultural learning.

Firas's magical journey continued from seventh to eighth grade where he met his second guide to the castle. This time, it was a Saudi teacher. As an eighth grader, with limited exposure to English Firas was constantly amazed at his Saudi teacher's abilities with the language. He explained how he saw his Saudi teacher from the perspective of his either grade self, "he was the all-knowing guy. He knew everything. He knew how to program web-pages just because he knows English" (Interview, November 26, 2012). Firas learned that, to become all knowing he would have to learn more than just the English that he was learning in the classroom.

As Firas moved into the ninth grade, he was eagerly learning vocabulary and interacting with English outside of the classroom. Now, his third guide was an Egyptian teacher, who would encourage Firas to also read. Firas grew confident as the teacher pushed Firas to read out loud in front of his classmates, in almost every class. These three teachers were preparing Firas for the next stage. They gave him: a love of English movies, understanding that English is the language of the internet, and reading. All added to his confidence as he moved into high school and then college. Firas pulled all his resources together, he learned, he had access to read about technologies and read about them on the internet. All these teachers gave him seeds that he would keep in his basket as he traveled down his yellow brick road. They would become fruit that would nourish him in high school and college.

The power of TV. In high school, Firas began to branch out in one very specific direction, the TV. In Saudi Arabia, when Firas was small, there was one television channel in English, in his house. Before middle school he would skip that channel or watch it with curiosity, understanding very little. Now Firas watched it with excitement. Firas found that, in high school he ignored Arabic movies in favor of American or British ones. One could say, Firas's high school career was all about movies. Firas narrated, "When I was in high school, in one semester I finished more than 90 films in one month or so. So that was a lot. That was too much" (Interview, November 26, 2012). Thanks to the English he learned in Middle school and his new found love of movies, Firas was ready for his next challenge with English, in college.

It cannot be over emphasized the impact of TV on Firas's development of English. He brought it up in every conversation and strung it into most of his narratives as a positive and helpful resource. He explained:

> TV, why TV? It's already there. It's working all the time. You can find it whenever, however, whatever. You just turn it on and listen. You can't find the conversation that you need but still you'll find the native who speaks. (Interview, May 27, 2013)

Throughout his college and graduate school, a TV set would not be far from him.

A shift from a doctor to a teacher. Right after graduating from high school, Firas was accepted into a pre-medical program and began studying to become a physician. To his delight, it was required at the medical college that students spend one year in an intensive English program. Firas started taking the intensive English course designed for medical students and very literally loved it. The passion Firas had for

English was stronger than anything else and he could not imagine spending the next

several years studying medicine instead of English. Firas decided just to quit the medical

college and move to the English department. At the end of his freshman year, Firas

transferred to the English department. When he took the required acceptance test into the

major, he finished with the highest marks. When the list of accepted candidates was

posted on the department's announcement board, he was first on the list. Seeing his name

on the top of the list, Firas was impatient for the next semester to come so he could make

a shift from medical to his new path, English.

Firas started the next fall semester majoring in English and translation but

assuming that, like his middle and high school, he would use what he learned in the

classroom to support his real interests. Firas came to English in college with one goal.

That was, as he expressed, "to watch a full movie without close caption, and [to]

understand every aspect of it." The first semester of coursework was easy for Firas

having his passion and the one year intensive English courses under his belt. He

explained, "When I started majoring in English, I thought it was a joke that I can finish in

like three years, then I'm done" (Interview, November 26, 2012). All the grammar and

composition courses offered for first year students were not so challenging for him with

his experience. Like before, he could focus his energy on his goal of watching movies.

Firas thought about English as a vehicle to watching movies and learning about

culture, suddenly in his classes, it became something else. As he took more classes, his

course work became more vigorous. He narrated it with a more serious tone, "When I got

to the real materials like introduction to linguistics, I discovered that it [English] is not

about to know how to read, it's more about what should you understand" (Interview,

November 26, 2012). For the first time Firas was struggling with being interested in the English he was learning.

Firas's observation of his English program. After two years of studying English in university, Firas started making distinctions in teacher knowledge between qualified and unqualified instructors. His English program was lacking in the number of faculty, so some instructors were assigned courses that did not match their specialties. Firas said, "We had Applied Linguistics and the instructor who was teaching that, he has his M.A. in literature. Can you believe it? He was just translating what's in the pamphlet" (Interview, November 26, 2012). Firas explained that though the literature professor may have been an expert in his field, he was unprepared to teach the nuance of applied linguistics. The disappointment of having a non-specialized instructor to teach him linguistics did not discourage Firas form actively participating in class.

In the beginning of his senior year, Firas felt the spark of excitement about learning English, when he sat down in the classroom of Dr. Al-Bassam. Just like the English teachers of his middle school, Firas found an instructor that engaged him. Firas quickly added Dr. Al-Bassam to the wall of fame. Over the course of a semester Dr. Al-Bassam would mold much of Firas's future understanding of both pragmatics and English Language learning.

The "Discourse Analysis" course: A turning point. In his senior year in college, Dr. Al-Bassam introduced Firas to "Discourse Analysis." Firas grinned from ear to ear as he described the class as "the turning point" in his academic career. I was caught up in Firas's joy as began to describe what Dr. Al-Bassam taught him. He explained, after three years of being an English major Dr. Al-Bassam exposed him to, "new stuff; new

168

dimensions of the language." He smiled as he told me that he learned that communication

is all about understanding verbal and nonverbal clues. He explained, "You have to see the

keys [i.e., clues] in my language to see what I mean" (Interview, November 26, 2012).

With this statement, I knew that Firas was introduced to a different level of language,

somewhere behind the surface structure of a sentence as in, subject, verb, and object.

Firas's raised awareness of discourse analysis seeped into all aspects of his life.

Firas was thrilled to learn about "turn-taking." It made him feel clever to learn keys that

indicate a how turns are taken in conversation. Firas never lost the level of enthusiasm

when as he continues, "It opens your eyes to see [these clues]. It makes you feel wow,

now I'm clever; I see things that might the majority of people don't see." He was so

excited about this new level of language that he even started to apply the turn taking clues

to his family conversations. When they all sat down for dinner Firas would observe how

they reacted to each other (Interview, November 26, 2012). Listening to the excitement in

his tone and the laughter as he spoke, I knew for sure that Firas had broken out of the

boundaries of believing that English is merely the words on the page but was beginning

to see English on a much deeper, practical, and pragmatic level.

Firas was introduced to the concept of face (Yule, 1996b), a dimension of

interaction that challenged him to see pragmatics as a practical part of the world he lives

in. Dr. Al-Bassam introduced Firas and his classmates that speaking a language is like a

complex dance between two partners; filled with a give and take. For Firas more

important than the concept itself, he learned that both Arabic and English give attention

to the concept of face-saving. He related, "It's called 'face' and it was not new because

we have it already in our culture which is "*wajeh*" which is the same translation of face…

which was interesting" (Interview, April 3, 2013). This was important because, knowledge of English and Arabic had always been separated for Firas. For the first time, Firas found that a concept in Arabic was transferable to English and that his Arabic was a resource in his learning. Firas said he came out from that class with more "a panoramic view" of the language (Interview, November 26, 2012).

Firas was now ready to be one of the teachers who graced his wall of fame. He was in the second semester of his senior year and would begin teaching as a teaching associate at the college where he studied. Firas set high goals for his students, and aimed for his classes to be more practical and his students to learn beyond book language, to see English as something alive.

Firas the teacher. Firas was over the moon when he began teaching. He quickly began to try to fill his students with the English that he knew would help them. He started with movies. "Watch movies!" he said to them with enthusiasm. He explained, "I was telling them that language is beyond grammar. I was telling them that language is not what you get from this book, language is what you get from listening and speaking. Language is beyond beyond what you read." Firas is pushing the students to understand that learning English happens beyond the classroom. He reiterated, "So go and watch movies, then that grammar goes indirectly to your head" (Interview, November 26, 2012). As he spoke his enthusiasm for language, teaching and pragmatics all shone through. Firas loved English as it was no surprise that his path would lead him to studying a higher degree in the United States.

Current Experiences: Coming to the U.S.

Listening to Firas speaking about his English experiences in Saudi, I expected his settlement in the U.S. to be hassle free. In other words, with the level of awareness Firas expressed, I expect his studying abroad to be smooth and natural. To the contradiction of my expectation, when Firas started to talk about the States he shared moments of confusion and awkwardness. The stories Firas shared began on his first day in America, when English quickly swirled around him. He went on to share stories about that initial time period, and then being in the classroom.

One of things Firas immediately noticed after landing in America was that people speak faster than he was used to. He expressed, "I at first didn't understand them." For dramatic effect Firas reiterated, "It was the pace; the speed of the language; how fast they speak." It was only after some time that he started to adjust the new pace of speech, little by little. He explained with a tone of calming nerves, "but with time, I can break things so know what they're saying" (Interview, November 26, 2012). Firas began to explain that "breaking things down" did not only mean words but also body language and context.

To interact with more success, Firas started relaying on communication clues other than merely spoken words. He said, "It wasn't the language, it was all, like the body language helped me, the context itself helped me" (Interview, November 26, 2012). When Firas explained how he tackled his problem I realized that his theoretical knowledge of language prepared him. Firas followed up with describing another conversation clue, the tone of speech. He explained:

Tone is helpful when you make a statement and/or ask questions. Even if my

grammar is broken and the other native speaker cannot understand what I am

saying, the tone helps. It shapes/forms the spoken utterance. It makes the other

person knows whether you're asking or not. (Blog, March 10, 2013)

After he was finished, I knew that Firas approached his English context like it was puzzle

with multiple layers of pieces.

Giving a tip. Firas found that even cultural markers that he did know about were

not as he thought. Though tipping is not a customer in Saudi, Firas knew from movies

that it was a cultural custom in America. Not too long after his arrival to the U.S., Firas

drove in the city and wanted to get a fast food meal. Like a character in a movie he

wanted to drive thru a drive thru for the first time. Firas wrote in the blog:

When I first came to the U.S, I did not fully understand the tips! I thought that it's

paid at every restaurant! One time I have been ordering from KFC, it was a

takeout order, and when the cashier gave me the receipt, I did not find the "tip"

section, and I asked, "Where do I write the amount of money for the tip?"

Firas explained that fast food employee's tone dramatically rose saying, "WHAT!" That

tone made Firas instantly aware that there was a disconnect. He explained: "I figured out

that I did something wrong," in response he quickly hedged, "no nothing thanks" (Blog,

February 25, 2013). Here in the blog post, Firas added the emoticon :). I knew it mean

that he was somewhat embarrassed that the exchange, which he initially felt would be

easy, did not go as planned. Firas went home and did some research to find that "the tip is

for the waiter who serves you!! It has some cultural condition" (Blog, February 25,

2013). Firas admitted that cultural nuance was still a thing he was struggling with.

172

Even though Firas knew the custom he was proven incorrect when applying his knowledge. It is clear in this story that Firas has knowledge of culture. Though Firas did not acknowledge it, I noticed that Firas was successful because he was instantly aware from the employee's reaction that he was not correct. It shows that he overgeneralizes that a tip is given in every food service. Even more so, Firas realized that even though he saw his English speaking and Arabic speaking identities as being separate, throughout his initial time in the States his Arabic identity and cultural knowledge was a force in every interaction he had.

Confidentiality at the leasing office. Another pragmatic experience Firas encountered, in which his assumption drew from his Saudi identity, occurred when he was looking for an apartment to rent. Firas explained that he was looking for an apartment to move into and when he sat in the leasing office, he thought of the questions he would have asked if he was in Saudi and he quickly translated the first one that came to mind. He asked, "Okay, I'm willing to live here and I'm Saudi. Do you know how many Saudis live here?" Even though he had a background in English, renting an apartment in the U.S. was a new experience for him. At his question, the leasing office agent looked at him confused. Firas wondered about her confusion and thought in his head, "It's just a question. If I'm in Saudi Arabia, they would answer me." But the leasing agent would not. He explained that she said to him in a solemn tone, "No! This is real serious secret information. We can't just give you." Firas did not know what is confidential and what were the norms of this situation.

Firas felt confused and embarrassed. He thought in his head, "I'm seeing just, because I'm one of them, I just want to be with them." In Saudi Arabia, it is common

place that the leasing agent would give you the background on all of your neighbors. Firas turned and considered explaining this to the leasing agent, but decided against it. He continued his narrative, "And I thought that: maybe this is not an appropriate question to ask, because it's like personal information. Don't ask about that! Personal information is valuable here. I don't know. In my culture, they're not" (Interview, December 19, 2012). Instead of arguing, Firas indexed this new piece of cultural knowledge and continued on.

In Firas's first few months, things had not been as smooth as anticipated by his confidence. Both the story of the tip and leasing office show that Firas had expectations for successful everyday interactions that were then challenged but cultural differences. But that, through his reflective way of being, he was quickly able to adjust, find a way to understand the interaction he was participating in, and then translating a moment of confusion into a learning experience. Firas also began to understand that to be successful in conversation he needed to think beyond the translated sentences to culturally appropriate behavior. But, like trying to understand every word in the English movies he watched as a child, Firas understood that being pragmatically perfect would be an endless journey.

Panicking at school. At this point, Firas had found an apartment and a car, restaurants and the local food store. It was time for his to begin his next challenge, graduate study in the United States. When Firas walked in on the first day he instantly felt pressure. He was overwhelmed with the new graduate study. He looked around the classroom to see that many of his new classmates were Americans, a fact that overwhelmed him with panic. Graduate school in itself felt scary enough to Firas, and now he felt he was competing on a new plane. He explained, "First of all, it was a new

experience for me. It was a grads school and grads school means wow! And [second] I'll have to compete with native speakers, and that was the hardest part" (Interview, December 19, 2012). Firas filed with worry about competing and the workload, and could not help but also wonder about the pragmatic experiences that would challenge him. Firas also began to discover that, unlike renting an apartment which may happen only once or twice, he would now experience recurring pragmatic events that he would have to negotiate.

Picking up expressions. Firas was unaccustomed to the feeling of being on edge that had entered his life. In the classroom, Firas found himself being more serious. He explained, "at the first, I'm taking it very serious. Sometimes I am being rude while I disagree with things strongly, then I accustomed with that idea and the way I disagree." At the response of his classmate, and his internal feeling of unrest Firas reflectively sat back and asked himself, "how do I argue, disagree but still polite in that context?" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). At this point, Firas began to enact his skill of negotiating contexts, he began to listen to people and learn how they acted. Firas began a process of learning.

Firas shared an explanation of his negotiation of interacting in the classroom. He explained that his initial way of being came from his experience in Saudi. He explained, "we sometimes when we don't know the appropriate expressions, we bring our own appropriate expression in my own language and apply it to the other language. Even when it's the word choice is problematic for us" (Interview, April 3, 2013). Firas went on to explain that when his translated expression failed him he would then pay attention and try to mimic the language of his classmates.

175

He made a list of some of the expression he learned, "Some of the expressions are *coming a long way* and *piggyback off*. I like an expression in today's class." He added, "How to go from one topic to another topic… I use *off the topic* all the time, but I have to find something else." At this Firas was smiling and laughing. He said jovially, "I like the expression when the professor noticed that you want to say something, she said, *Do you want a way in?*" (Interview, April 3, 2013).

An awkward situation. After a few weeks, Firas began to feel happy about his interaction with professors and classmates. Yet one common interaction still left him without a response, compliments. He explained, "I find it difficult to know what is a compliment and how to react to it… I cannot distinguish if the other speaker is trying to be nice, or s/he really means what they say." Firas explained, "back home, there is always a fixed answer that always works just right.. yes it is the magic word, "*Jazak Allah Khair*" (translated as: May God reward you." Firas knew that that phrase would not translate into his American academic context and began to search for something new. He adopted, "I will take this as a compliment."

Firas explained the day when his new phrase would fall lamely. He explained that one day his professor said to him with a smile, "Nice work." To which he replied, "I will take this as a compliment" At that, she looked at him confused. The situations left Firas confused. He easily realized that he should have responded with a simple "thank you" but this response did not meet Firas's internal rules for compliments. He explained the disconnect, "because I feel compliments require fantasy replies" (Blog, March 10, 2013). Though Firas had figured out a new rule, it still felt complicated to him because it

challenged his expectations. Yet, at the same time Firas was moving at a pace that left him feeling that he was easily developing as an active member of his new community.

Appropriate language makes friendships. Firas excitedly spoke about the next chapter of his experience in the United States and how that the awkwardness began to fall aside as he started to feel some command in his new community. Firas used the metaphor of making American friends to show how far he had come pragmatically in his new community. He then explained how he made a divide between his Saudi and American self in order to smooth the schisms in culture between his Saudi and American communities.

Firas proudly spoke about his friends and how friendships started originally from the classroom because of good communication. He said excitedly, "we went from classmates to friends and I think that it wouldn't happen if we didn't communicate well to each other." Firas then analyzed why this happened. He explained, "So I think I made it to a level that makes me good in the language to the degree that I can make friends… because if you lack the way of communication, how can you be friend to them? They would be nice to you but they wouldn't be friends to you" (Interview, December 19, 2012). Firas felt like he was now in the loop, stepping beyond knowing English to feeling a deeper level of understanding of American culture. The friendship of his classmates showed Firas the value of learning culture.

I was amazed by Firas's feeling of acceptance in such a short time. Never short of reflection, Firas happily explained to me how he felt so comfortable in two very different worlds. He explained, "If we are two Saudis and we bring our own culture in that position, but if I'm with others, Americans, I would react according to their culture. And

177

that happens." Firas explained that he felt that he had two identities and gave an example. He said:

> When I pick you up from the airport, I refuse if you offer to pay for the gas but when an American, I may take it. Yeah, because when you offer me as a Saudi, it dishonored me but when someone else, I would understand that their culture. I wouldn't take it that offensive. (Interview, April 3, 2013)

I could not help but wonder what would happen if his two cultural contexts collide. As Firas shared examples of the ways that he enacts himself, I knew that he was feeling more comfortable but that he was also still growing and learning.

Handshaking with limits. Firas's two worlds did collide at a conference that he attended in Washington D.C. Firas was the first presenter to enter the room. It was his first national conference and he was nervous. He entered the room with his wife, who sat on one of the chairs designated for the audience. Firas, at the other side of the room, sat down at a long table placed for the presenters. As he prepared, a young woman walked into the room, and he knew from her name tag and collection of papers that she was also a presenter. To his surprise she began to confidently walk toward him and extend her hand. He explained, "She came to and introduced herself, 'Hi, this is so-and-so' her name and she tried to shake my hand." Firas looked at the woman and looked at his wife. He explained, "culturally it's something I don't usually do, especially when my wife is here. Now, I'm shaking a girl's hand. It's a greeting thing. It's something courteous, but still in my wife's eyes, it's not." Firas did not know what to do. He felt that his wife would be angered if he shook another woman's hand. He felt pressure from both women in the room, his wife who represented his Arabic culture, and his co-presenter who represented

his professional side. In the end shook the woman's hand. He explained, "They just.. it's how the way they do it with conference and between the presenters. It's a tradition that they come, they meet the other presenter, they shake hands, and introduce themselves" (Interview, April 3, 2013). Firas did an impression of himself shaking the woman's hand. His voice began to shake and rise with intense discomfort. He showed me that initially he awkwardly lifted his hand only slightly hoping she would not take it. But in the end, she took it and they shook awkwardly in front of his wife.

Unlike the other narratives, where Firas finished the story with a happy learned reflection, in this case he seemed to just felt bad. He explained in a tone of self-criticism, "But it was something strange to me because there are some traditions that I should have known before I go." He went on to explain that, if he had known that shaking hands was an expected professional norm in such settings, he would have been better prepared. He said, "I wouldn't be in that resistance position. I would have done another thing. I like made my first move to introduce myself without shaking.. at least I would have found a solution to know how to do it" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment, May 1, 2013). In the end, this story represented how Firas experienced a limit in his assimilation to his new culture because of his cultural and religious values.

Born from his hours of movie watching, Firas had knowledge of pragmatics in American culture but, in the first phase of his educational experience in the U.S., he needed a chance to practice. In each interaction, Firas employed what he learned as a child learning English from movies to observe and reflect. Firas was constantly making new rules. He felt success when his development garnished him new American friends. Through interaction with new friends and in the classroom, Firas was adopting

179

new styles and learning new expressions, but still he had a foot in his Saudi culture. He may have felt that he had two identities but he could not always control which one would be dominate. Sometimes he could not break boundaries, as it was in the handshaking encounter. With all the experiences Firas had, he began to move forward making plans to begin a Ph.D. and continuing to grow academically and professionally.

Looking Forward: Plans for the Future

Over the course of the semester Firas transformed much like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy had read children's book all of her life, but not until she was caught up in a tornado and found her wandering down the yellow brick road, did the story become a reality. Like Dorothy, Firas moved down his own yellow brick road with a little trepidation but also a thrill to see what would befall him. Earlier in the interviews, Firas would talk about expectations for his life in America, born from the movies he had inhaled as a kid. He talked about the pragmatics of English as a bunch of theories. Later he talked about pragmatics as part of his reality. As Firas finished his participation in this study, and told me about his plans for the future, I could hear his journey reflected in them.

Firas spoke about two important changes. The first and more immediate change was Firas's acceptance into a Ph.D. program. When Firas told me about the Ph.D. it felt two fold. First he shared his excitement, "It was the best final week because I graduated. I'm going for the Ph.D." (Interview, May 27, 2013). I could hear in his tone that Firas is embracing his new life in the U.S. with vigor. The second was a new philosophy on his professional life as a teacher. He explained:

We have to study the pragmatics of the conversation, the way we interrupt, the

way we take the floor, the way add, the way we contradict; different manners…

we lack these appropriate interruptions. We don't know how to take the floor

appropriately… how to take the floor without offending the other. (Interview,

April 3, 2013)

In this story, Firas shows how he is reflecting even into the future, and framing how he

will approach teaching.

Even with all the success, Firas has felt since I met him, he still dreams of

enhancing his English level. Like his childhood ambition to be able to understand every

word in an English speaking movie, Firas now want to be able to speak confidently and

with greater levels of clarity with Americans. Firas said, "I didn't reach that level where I

can say I master language but I know in myself that still I need to improve my language

on different levels. Conversation with natives is the most important thing for me." To

explain this plan, Firas said, "I need to develop that and I plan to develop that by listening

more and more to TV, like watching not listening, but watching and pay more attention to

the listening." And with that I knew that Firas would continue to use all the tools he had

to grow. In the end, Firas explained, "As long as I stay here, I get new things. I

understand new things. I live as one of them" (Interview, May 27, 2013). I knew Firas

would constantly be re-adjusting his approach and learning.

A Brief Interpretive Analysis for Firas's Narrative

Firas's narrative showed how one can turn a hobby into a path in life. Firas's

passion about movies served as a motivation for him to develop his English skills and

later pick English as a major in college. Firas excelled in his classes and gradually

181

advanced in his academic work. With the level of language readiness Firas had, he anticipated his journey to the U.S. to be smooth and hassle-free, but that was not the case. As Firas was taking his first steps in his new American context, he quickly ran into a number of communication challenges, one of which was that people simply spoke faster than he was used to. His tactical strategy to employ hand gestures, body language, and tone in his communication was helpful to overcome this challenge. This was a smooth move from Firas when he was perhaps instinctively following Canale and Swain's (1990) suggestion that a language learner needs to have "strategic competence" by using verbal as well as nonverbal communication tactics to compensate for any communication pauses and interruptions.

The other challenge Firas ran into was not due to his lack of social knowledge but ironically because he was too aware of the American customs. Firas was confused and causing confusion to others when he thought that he was being the most appropriate. For instance, when he was picking up his fast-food meal from the drive-thru window and he started inquiring where he would write the tip on the receipt, it was puzzling for him and the person at the window. In Saudi Arabia, tipping is generally not expected for services and it is sometimes confused with bribing. Although Firas knew about the customs of American restaurants, he was deviating from the norms by doing something extra and unexpected. Thinking that tips are given for every food service, Firas was basically overgeneralizing what he knew about the American customs. Similar incidents happen when language learners have a basic understanding of the social and pragmatic norms of the target language; they subsequently depend on their preconceived ideas of these norms

and inaccurately generalize and apply them more or less in all contexts (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; LoCastro, 2003).

Language expressions are fun to pick up and learn, and commonly used among fluent speakers of English but for Firas, they were somehow problematic, especially if they were coupled with overgeneralization. Through his interaction in class, Firas successfully adopted a number of useful conversation expressions such as "Coming a long way, off the topic," and "I'll take that as a compliment." When Firas used this last expression "I'll take that as a compliment" in response to his professor's genuine praise "Nice work," he created an awkward pragmatic situation. Firas could have unintentionally sounded sarcastic if not rude to his professor because of the fuzzy relation between the professor's praise and Firas's response. Violating the maxim of relation (Grice, 1975) here could be perceived in a negative way that backfired on Firas. In his defense, Firas adopted this expression to be a fixed response to every compliment he received. Being a successful language speaker requires thinking beyond the surface level of a sentence and paying attention to its relation to the immediate context.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I aimed at drawing detailed portraits of each of the five participants, highlighting their past memoires, current challenges, and future plans. Although all the participants shared similar characteristics as 1) being Saudi MA students at one American university, 2) who studied and taught English in Saudi Arabia, and 3) who eventually plan to go back to teach, I could not help but seeing each one of them as a distinct individual. The narratives I chronicled and constructed based on individual face-to-face interviews, written blog entries, recorded self-reflections, and one focus group

yielded a lot of data. I noticed that the participants shared stories about their present lives more than they did about their lived histories or future plans. This could be due to the fact that the present is always current and fresh in mind whereas the past requires recalling and remembering, and the future can be still anticipated and negotiated.

Although, in this chapter, I looked into each of the five participants' narratives separately, the end goal of this study is to look at the recapitulation of the findings at a larger framework. Therefore, in the next chapter, Chapter Five, I present a number of thematic ideas that cut across the five participants' past, present, and future life timelines with reference to the research questions raised earlier in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMERGING THEMES AND CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Coming to a closure of my dissertation, I find myself reminded of Connelly and Clandinin's idea that "living, telling, retelling, and reliving mark the qualities of a life" (2000, p. 187). This study was designed to explore the experiences of five Saudi M.A. students in three different English programs (i.e., TESOL, Literature, and Generalist) at one American university located in western Pennsylvania. The study aimed at examining how the five participants' experiences reshaped their senses of language learning in a larger scope, and pragmatics in particular. The revisiting of the five participants' past experiences and the negotiations of their current experiences functioned as the essence of my study. As I was conducting this study, I was reliving, with my participants, their pragmatic experiences as they narrated them through the data collection process.

After a thorough analyzing of the presented narratives in the last chapter, which was performed by examining and coding the entire collected data for each participant, I identified a number of thematic ideas emerging from the data highlighting the participants' pragmatic and cultural experiences during their past educational stages and in their current context of studying in the United States. Therefore, in this chapter, I begin with restating the purposes and research questions of my study. After that, I discuss four themes that emerged across several narratives and put them into conversation with current pragmatics research. I then discuss the implications that such themes hold for pragmatics pedagogy in the teacher educations programs in Saudi Arabia and for Saudi EFL college students. I also address the areas of potential future research indicated by

this study. Finally, this chapter concludes with a number of reflections: theoretical, methodological, ethical, and personal reflections.

Restating the Four Purposes of the Study

As introduced in the first chapter, this study had four purposes. The first purpose was to address a dearth of knowledge by exploring the English teaching in Saudi Arabia in relation to issues of pragmatics. This investigation was designed to shed light on the five Saudi participants' past experiences and educational backgrounds before starting their M.A. programs in the United States. To fulfill this purpose, I chronicled, with the participants, their past journeys: starting with the first time they were introduced to English, moving to their experiences at school, and following a long until they graduated from college and started their English teaching careers. Based on Clandinin and Connelly's framework of narrative inquiry (2000), I was attending to the three dimensions of space, time, and place. The language and cultural experiences in participants' stories were revisited and reconstructed which revealed multiple personal and contextual meanings. Investigating their educational backgrounds, I was also attentive to how the participants' past experiences influenced their current ones, and as Connelly and Clandinin stated, "People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories" (2006, p. 375).

After investigating the past experiences, the second purpose for my study extended to exploring the five participants' new pragmatic experiences during their living and interacting in their current academic context of the United States and how their current stories reshaped both their past experiences and future visions of English teaching in Saudi Arabia. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) pointed out that a story can be seen as "a

portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (p. 375). By the means of narrative inquiry, I aimed at making meaning out of the personal stories of the five participants. Their stories should help to reflect the type of on-going challenges Saudi M.A. students face as they try to present themselves as fluent and appropriate in their second educational context, the United States.

Furthermore, the investigation of the students' life histories and their current experiences should lead to the exploration of recommendations for improving English teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the third purpose of this study is to envision some pedagogical tasks that should help raise pragmatic awareness among Saudi college students. The five participants' narratives revealed a number of pedagogical tasks that will be presented and discussed in the implications section in this chapter. Conducting this study, I only hoped that my investigation would contribute to the curriculum development in teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia in terms of integrating pragmatics in their English teaching.

Last but not least, research in the area of pragmatics in relation to the Saudi context is highly needed due to the expanding Saudi interest of investing in students studying in the U.S. and other English speaking countries. To fulfil such need, my study hopes to lay the foundation for further future research on Saudi students' pragmatic knowledge, which should ultimately help teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia understand the pragmatic difficulties students perceive when studying abroad and the cultural factors that negatively affect their academic evolving.

A Snapshot of the Findings

Prior to discussing the themes emerging from the stories shared by the five participants, I summarize the most problematic pragmatic interactions experienced and shared by the participants in the following table. Table 2 demonstrates the types of interaction experienced by the five participants with examples taken from their narratives. Due to the fact that all the participants did not share a significant amount of their past pragmatic interactions prior to their studying in the United States, the table only reveals the pragmatic interactions found in the participants' current lived experience in the context of the United States.

Table 2

A Summary of the Pragmatic Interactions Experienced in the United States

Interaction Type	Examples	Sarah	Hamad	Bader	Najla	Firas
Speech acts	greeting; complimenting	X		X	X	X
Speaking register	formal; informal	X		X	X	X
Four maxims	quantity; manner	X		X	X	X
Idiomatic expressions	idioms; sayings	X	X			X
Paralinguistic	Tone; facial expressions		X		X	X
Politeness	indirect speech; humor	X	X	X	X	
Conversation dynamic	turn-taking; interrupting			X		
Social conventions	handshaking; kissing	X	X	X		X
New customs	tipping; potluck	X		X		X

Moreover, Table 2 reveals the pragmatic issues encountered by every participants individually. For instance, the first row in the table shows that all the participants, with the exception of Hamad, have experienced pragmatic events where they could not respond appropriately to greetings or compliments, known as speech acts. Another row in the table demonstrates that Bader, for instance, was the only participant who had issues with keeping the conversation flow, done by interrupting and not allowing for turn taking in his interactions with other speakers. Table 2 aim to give a snapshot of the individual pragmatic interactions before moving, in the next section, to discussing the themes emerged from the cross case analysis of the five participants' narratives altogether.

Themes Emerging from the Participants' Narratives

The past, present, and future narratives of the five Saudi M.A. students revealed different pragmatic and cultural experiences that they faced through their educational experiences in their native context, Saudi Arabia, as well as in their new context, the United States. The analysis of their narratives revealed, in many incidents, the interconnection between the grammatical side of the language and the pragmatic one. In this section, I discuss four prominent emerging themes that cut across the participants' past and current experiences.

Here, I find it very important to point out that by discussing the emerging themes, I do not mean to overgeneralize my findings on the context of Saudi Arabia. Instead, I present the pragmatic interactions as they were perceived by the five participants in my study. In their narratives, the participants tended to criticize the prior programs they attended in Saudi Arabia. While the participants strongly suggested that significant revisions and changes are needed to take action in their Saudi English programs, the

study does not provide enough evidence either to put blame on teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia or to make any claims about what should be done in these programs. This study is projected as a preliminary research study in a new filed, which only explores the participants' experiences and its findings only express the participants' views. Given the participants' experiences and what I know from my own pragmatic interactions experienced in Saudi Arabia, there needs to be a movement towards a trans-lingua pragmatics, a movement into a pedagogical initiative (G. Park, personal communication, June 12, 2014). Next, I discuss the emerging themes with reference to the two research questions:

1. How have the five Saudi students understood and experienced pragmatics in their native educational contexts?

2. How are they understanding and navigating issues surrounding pragmatic usage in their current Master's degree programs in the United States?

Revisiting the Past: Pragmatic Awareness Is Important to be Raised in Saudi Teacher Education Programs

After I examined the five participants' narratives in this study, it was evident that all of the participants, with the exception of Hamad who grew up in the United States, were running into numerous communication challenges with everyday conversations after arriving to their new academic context of the United States. The nature of these challenges was not largely connected to grammatical inaccuracy or vocabulary shortage of the participants' speech; however, it was often related to performing and responding to utterances, such as greetings, compliments, and humors, in a conventional appropriate manner. The narratives showed that Sarah, for example, was in some occasions

wondering how someone would ask her a question like "What's up?" and then walk off not waiting for her answer. Najla, in other occasions, was offering her jewelry to her friends in return to their words of admirations, whereas compliments made Bader feel embarrassed and silent. In these narratives also, Firas was seen disrupting the leasing office agent by inquiring about private information related to his prospective neighbors.

It could be alarming to EFL teachers and educators that these challenging encounters did not happen to students who had basic knowledge of English but to graduate students who were practicing English teachers in their home country. One common fact among the five participants was that all of them successfully finished their English Bachelor's degrees from teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. This fact raises a question about the existing gap between the participants' high grammatical proficiency and their low pragmatic knowledge, evident by their narratives.

A number of research studies have recently investigated the quality of teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia and indicated that they do not provide their students with the sufficient knowledge needed when engaging in successful English encounters (Alshuaifan, 2009; Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012). Furthermore, Al-Hazmi (2003) called for an urgent improvement of the teaching quality in teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia to overcome their current inadequacy. Al-Hazmi, who is a Saudi professor teaching at one of these programs, stated that "the gap between the content of teacher education programs and the needs of the classroom widens. After graduating from university, many teachers lack essential English skills, especially the ability to speak the language" (p. 342). Al-Hazmi's statement acts in agreement with the views shared by the five participants about their past experiences attending teacher education programs in

Saudi Arabia. Najla, for instance, reflected on her past experience and indicated that students were learning extensively about the linguistics of the language, while given limited opportunities to practice the language and engage with it in a communicatively pragmatic way. This resulted, as she expressed, in creating a difference between her spoken language and the English she encountered in the United States. The other participants also shared many stories that showed them losing confidence in their English communications in the U.S. after they were quite self-assured back home. These narratives should raise a red flag about the way English is presented in the teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia.

Alshuaifan (2009) conducted a study on one of the teacher education programs in the city of Ha'il, located in the north of Saudi Arabia. The study surveyed 83 faculty members in the program and 13 graduates, who were teaching English in the same city, to determine their perceptions towards the program's main goals and curriculum. The data showed that the faculty members were generally pleased and satisfied with their current program. The program graduates, on the other hand, thought quite the opposite as their surveys reflected their disappointments with their program experience. Nevertheless, the data disclosed that the faculty members were supporting of the notion that the program curriculum could be advanced by adding courses like EFL syllabus design and *cultural awareness*, which may imply the teaching of pragmatics. Moreover, the study showed that the majority of faculty members emphasized the importance of preparing the students for living abroad and raising their cross-cultural awareness, which was missing in their program.

In a similar study, Javid, Farooq, and Gulzar (2012) have newly investigated the current quality status of one teacher education program in the city of Taif, in the west of Saudi Arabia. The study employed a structured questionnaire to collect data from 103 students and 31 faculty members. The study showed that program curricula put a lot of emphasis on literature courses at the expense of other language areas, which made an imbalance on the students' language proficiency. Among other items highlighted by the study findings were that lecture-based classes were "disliked" by both students and faculty members. Consequently, the study suggested that students should be engaged in more communicative activities to help them "achieve written and oral proficiency in the target language" (p. 65).

Like the participants in aforementioned studies, my five participants expressed their disappointment about the teacher preparation programs they graduated from in Saudi Arabia. In their narratives, the participants reported about studying mainly linguistic courses, which included syntax, phonetics, phonology, and morphology, but none of them mentioned taking a course in pragmatics or sociolinguistics. The only two participants who were introduced to pragmatics were Firas and Hamad; they reported reading a chapter on pragmatics as they were taking a course in discourse analysis. However, the emphasis in that course was mainly on topics like turn-taking and indirect speech. The other three participants did not take any course closely related to pragmatics, but they reported taking cultural courses that lightly touched on mainstream topics. Sarah, however, was the only participant who did not hear about the term *pragmatics* until she participated in this study. Finding that most of the participants in my study were complaining about comprehending the pragmatic rules and social conventions after

coming to the United States confirms the notion stated by Gee, that developing learners'

grammatical control is not necessarily in correlation with developing pragmatic ability

(1990).

What the participants considered to be frustrating about their past experiences in

teacher education programs was that their classes did not provide them with a balanced

learning experience that linked theory to practice. A number of the participants expressed

that they learned a lot *about* English but not *how to use* English pragmatically and

appropriately, keeping in mind the application of language on its surrounding context.

The participants also agreed that teacher education programs should embrace more

interactive classroom discussions, especially because the classroom could be the only

place for students to speak in an EFL context. They indicated that by the integration of

pragmatics in English curricula, it would be easier for the students to go beyond the

surface level of an unclear English utterance and be able to decode it through its social

clues and overall context. After living in the United States and reflecting on their past

educational experiences, the five participants formed strong certainties that being able to

negotiate meanings appropriately is one truly essential skill for language learners.

In addition to not being adequately introduced to culture and pragmatics, the five

participants, in particular, expressed that their frustrations come mainly from two factors:

1) *professors* in their teacher preparation programs privileged teacher-centered teaching

methods, leaving a small window for students to participate in the classroom, and 2)

textbooks and *teaching materials* used in their programs heavily rely on formal language

with little to say about the language pragmatics. The tone of frustration was easy to

perceive in Hamad's description of his college experiences: "We don't need to speak in

194

English in class. It's just short sentences, but we don't usually have conversations" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). The frustration was also detected in Najla's criticism: "my conversation professor wasn't allowing us to speak. It was her time to speak!" (Interview, November 20, 2012).

When the five participants decided to join their teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia, they entered the programs with high expectations to learn a language and be capable of teaching it. Language consists of a larger package than only vocabulary, and learning it definitely requires more than mastering its grammatical rules (Canale & Swain, 1980). College classrooms are supposed to be the ideal place for students to grow a sense of what is socially appropriate in the language they are learning. Their professors should spare no effort help their students make sense of pragmatic rules in class before they go out in the real world and encounter situations where conversations are broken, feelings are hurt, and offense is taken.

Additionally, utilizing updated and purposeful textbooks in teacher education programs would certainly help the students develop their pragmatic awareness simultaneously as they expand their grammatical and lexical knowledge. In Najla's narrative, for example, she indicated that the textbooks she previously studied in Saudi Arabia did not aid her to be better equipped for the real outside world. She described some of these textbooks as outdated and serving a limited set of language purposes. By using textbooks and teaching materials that heavily valued language grammar over the language pragmatics, she became concerned that students would finish their programs with a narrow view of language and that they might "sound like books talking"

(Interview, November 20, 2012). Fageeh (2011), a Saudi linguistic professor, would

agree with Najla's observation as he stated:

> Traditional EFL learning materials in Saudi Arabia as elsewhere were in theory
>
> arranged for the convenience of vocabulary drill and grammar presentation.
>
> Therefore, most of these textbooks available are grammar-centered, providing
>
> little or virtually no attention to cultural content in a purposeful, overt and planned
>
> manner. (p. 67)

English textbooks that cover an adequate amount of cultural and pragmatic topics would

be undoubtedly useful and valuable to students in teacher education programs. Just like

what other studies have shown (e.g., Alshuaifan, 2009; Javid, Farooq, & Gulzar, 2012), I

believe that if professors begin utilizing culturally rich textbooks and employing teaching

techniques that open a larger window for participation, the students' pragmatic awareness

would remarkably evolve, and their encounters with other English speakers in different

contexts would be more fruitful and successful.

With that said, it is significant to point out that my present study does not provide

enough evidence to either put blame on educational institute in Saudi Arabia or to claim

that Saudi teachers are not providing enough contextualized materials/scenarios for their

students to be exposed to English pragmatics. My study does not in fact have actual data

from textbooks, teaching materials, or even Saudi teachers' blog. The data collected in

this study came solely from the participants' perceptions and experiences as they lived

through them in the context of Saudi Arabia and what they brought to their current

context as M.A. students in the United States. Therefore, the this study does not mean to

put any criticism on the educational system of Saudi Arabia but instead functions as a

foundation for more research. After all, this study is intended to raise more critical consciousness of how pragmatic interactional events occur and the ways teachers may begin to think about of how pragmatics can be promoted in the context of Saudi Arabia.

According to Al Muhaidib (2011), many English learners in EFL contexts encounter the hindrance that their teachers' philosophies do not appeal to their own learning preferences and needs. That occurs "because most teachers teach the way they learn." She continues to state that:

> teachers of English in Saudi universities share the same embarrassment that there are always some students who show a tendency to be inattentive in class and get bored with English learning even though teachers have made great efforts preparing for the class. (p. 439)

Just as the participants in my study shared, college students become frustrated and miss the opportunity to link the classroom knowledge to their everyday social lives when their English teachers and professors prefer teacher-centered methods that do not respond to the students' needs and expectations.

Al-Hazmi (2003) suggested that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia should step up to "play a more active role in the reform process by initiating change and looking out, in this Internet-driven, information-technology age, for any chance for professional development" (p. 344). Likewise, Syed (2003) stated that EFL teachers in the Gulf region, which Saudi Arabia is a part of, realize their students' low learning motivation and reliance on memorization, coupled with outdated curricula and traditional teaching methodologies. Therefore, he called for a development in teacher education programs in the Gulf so they meet their expected roles in this rapidly developing technical era.

197

One unique example of teaching pragmatics through technology was discussed in Desiderio's study (2011). In her study, Desiderio examined the pedagogical implications of pragmatic video clips in an EFL classroom of Arabic university students. The purpose of her study was to investigate how the students may or may not benefit from the video clips that were created by English teachers. These video clips were designed to include six pragmatic topics: apologies, salutations, closing, requests, compliments, and complaints. Desiderio's study found that the pragmatic video clips were helpful in improving the students' pragmatic awareness and competence. Moreover, Desiderio pointed out that teachers in EFL contexts may create the pragmatic video clips and then integrate them in their English language courses. Whether teachers and professors in EFL contexts opt to integrate video clips or any other pragmatic-focused teaching materials, what is important is that they pave the way for their students to expand their knowledge about the interwoven relationship between language and culture (Gee, 1990).

Reflecting on the Present: Challenges with Pragmatics in the American Context

Halfway through the data collection, I asked each of the five participants individually if they had changed socially in comparison to the first semester of their M.A. programs. They all answered "yes!" with the exception of Hamad who said he remained the same. Hamad's response was not surprising since he was the only participant who spent a long time in the U.S. as a kid. Therefore, none of the other four participants experienced the ease Hamad felt in America. Sarah, Bader, Najla, and Firas apprehensively started their M.A. programs and went through an awkward stage of figuring out many socio-cultural rules around them before they became more relaxed and assertive.

As for Hamad, he shared with me his classroom observations that a number of his Saudi colleagues frequently violated many of the social conventions of the U.S., which made him, in many cases, step in to solve the situation. In many of the stories Hamad shared with me, he presented himself as a facilitator, one who would bring balance and explain the vague or unfamiliar cultural concepts to his Saudi colleagues. He explained to me that, when he came to the U.S. as a kid, it took him quite a long time before he started feeling comfortable to speak and interact freely with others. So he illuminated that the reason some Saudi students are sometimes reluctant to participate and interact with others is because they are going through a stage of settling down in the context of the second language and gaining confidence to interact with it appropriately.

During that stage, known as the interlanguage pragmatics stage (Kasper & Rose, 2001; LoCastro, 2012), the other four participants, beside Hamad, would feel that they were living between two languages, which in many encounters, would cause them to fall into pragmatic mistakes. The narratives displayed a number of incidents where the participants would make a mistake, pause to reflect on it, and then make some adjustments to their language to be more appropriate in the future. For example, a pragmatic adjustment was seen in Najla's story about compliments, when she changed her response from "Please have it" to "Thank you." Another adjustment was found in Bader's changing of yelling "what?" when he missed hearing someone, into "pardon me?" One possible reason for the participants' deviating from the expected norms was explained by Gudykunst and Kim (2003), who pointed out that:

> We communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules, and norms. Because we learn the languages, rules and

norms of our cultures by a very early age (between 5 and 10 years old), however,

we generally are unaware of how culture influences our behavior in general and

our communication in particular. (p. 4)

Even when the participants were advanced learners of English, their cultures and the way

they were brought up would often affect their communications.

One main reason the participants experienced unsuccessful pragmatic encounters

was because they were living in a stage where they were speaking in one language and

thinking in another. When doing so, the participants were probably not thinking of their

norms as being culturally specific but assuming that they would be universally applicable

(Schauer, 2011). However, this stage involves a lot of development in the participants'

both "production and comprehension" of the pragmatics in the host American context

(Kasper & Rose, 2001).

One factor, discussed in Chapter Two, that explains some of the participants'

pragmatic failures is linked to the participants' negative transfer of their first language

pragmatic norms to compromise for their lacking of pragmatic knowledge of the learned

language, or even to make up for the unavailability of the L2 pragmatic strategies in the

L1 norms (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Lihui & Jianbin, 2010; LoCastro, 2012). Firas in one

encounter explained, "We sometimes when we don't know the appropriate expressions,

we bring our own appropriate expression in our own language and apply it to the other

language" (Interview, April 3, 2013). Likewise, when Bader made a pragmatic mistake

speaking on the phone, he explained, "because I was thinking in one language and

speaking in another, I did what I did" (Blog, February 7, 2013). In several other

pragmatic encounters shared by the participants, their reliance on the socio-cultural rules

of their first language, whether they were aware of it or not, could have triggered their pragmatic failures.

The narratives also showed that humor was another one of the pragmatic areas that could be problematic for several participants. Within cross-cultural interaction, humor is seen as difficult to pick up, since it carries implied messages that require a high level of mutual understanding between speakers (Bell, 2007). In one example, Najla described how some of her classmates were not laughing at the professors' jokes that were meant to break the ice at the beginning of the semester, which made some professors stop telling jokes after seeing the students' cold reactions. In another example, Sarah was found not following along with the woman's humorous utterance by the ice-cream stand: "Don't worry! I'm not gonna have a bite!" Instead of smiling, Sarah was startled, missed the joke, and apologized to the lady. Even after the woman cajolingly told Sarah that "it was a joke," Sarah was still confused as she blankly clarified, "I cannot explain what was that. It was not even a funny joke" (Blog March 31, 2013). Such examples show that humor and jokes are easily misunderstood in cross-cultural communication since not all jokes are transferred between languages.

A third problematic pragmatic area found in the narratives that relates to meaning negotiation was receiving compliments. When Najla received the admiring comment, "I like your ring," from her friend, she did not respond simply with "Thank you" but instead, she offered the ring to her friend saying, "Please, have it!" In her defense, Najla confessed that she did not mean to give her ring away, but she was responding to the compliment following her cultural norms. When speakers from different cultural backgrounds engage in a conversation, they bring their own cultural rules to monitor and

201

assess their own speech as well as that of their interlocutors. These rules consist of different social roles, cultures, literacies, values, expectations, interpretations, and attitudes (Gee, 1990), which all affect the communication's outcome if such rules are improperly transferred into the conversation.

Also during the interlanguage stage, pragmatic failures can happen not only because of the speakers' reliance on their first language cultural norms during their meaning negotiation, but sometimes because they overgeneralize the learned pragmatic rules of the second language. When speakers have a basic understanding of the target-language culture and pragmatic norms, they depend on their preconceived ideas of these norms and may mistakenly apply them to different contexts (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). An example from the narratives would be Firas's awkward situation with the employee of the fast food restaurant, when Firas scrolled his eyes over the receipt and asked the employee where he should write the tip. Even though Firas knew the custom of tipping in American restaurants, he was proven mistaken when he overgeneralized the tipping custom over all eating establishments. In another situation, Firas was found adopting and overgeneralizing the phrase "I will take this as a compliment" to be as a fixed response to every expression of praise, admiration, or congratulations (Blog, March 10, 2013). He was not aware that such response could indicate sarcasm or mockery if it is used in an inappropriate context.

One key goal in language encounters is to make meanings understood mutually between speakers (Gee, 1990; Yule, 1996b). A successful speaker is one who keeps an attentive mind to the surrounding context when engaging in a conversation. Trusting that the first language pragmatic rules would function as well in the second language context

could create unsolicited confusion and awkwardness. The same outcome could happen when speakers draw conclusions from specific cultural situation and then extend them to more general situations. Finding the connection between the utterance and its context is what should be pursued by language speakers in order to appropriately express themselves and accurately interpret the utterances they hear (Murray, 2010).

Nonverbal Communication: Signals and Behaviors Interpreted Differently Between Two Cultures

Negotiating meaning pragmatically in a different context involves more than merely spoken language as it encompasses acting appropriately and expressing "the right beliefs, values, and attitudes" that adhere to a particular social role (Gee, 1990, p. 140). Similar to Gee's notion, Storti stated "it is not to culture that we adjust but to behavior… [since it is the] consequence of culture, that we actually experience" (Storti, 1989, p. 14). One way to demonstrate an appropriate behavior is to follow the nonverbal cues mutually understood in one context. Violating these nonverbal cues and paralinguistic elements, such as tone, intonation, and voice volume (as it was mostly found in some of Bader's stories) can create unsuccessful communication encounters.

Generally speaking, when the Saudi students came to study in the United States, they knew they would study in coed classrooms after they experienced mostly segregated education in Saudi Arabia. When nine-year-old Hamad started the first day in his American school, he right away became aware that he would need to assimilate to a new cultural and gender system. One of the new behavior rules that struck him as odd was that boys should not hold hands, nor could they give cheek kisses to one another. Growing up in the United States, Hamad learned that these touching and kissing rules were not

enforced by the school administration on little students only but were parts of a larger society system. In the narratives of the study, almost every participant shared a story where they felt hopeless and stuck in a cultural encounter that related to handshaking, cheek kissing, or interacting with children in a way they were not used to back home in Saudi Arabia.

The shared narratives showed that neither Sarah nor Firas wanted to shake hands with people from the opposite gender due to their religious and cultural beliefs. At the same time, neither of them wanted to appear bad-mannered when engaging in situations where a handshake is expected. Sarah was cautious about such situations as she was planning ahead how to react if a man approached her and extended a hand to shake. To escape physical touching, she thought of putting her hand on her chest, a hand gesture some Muslim women do to indicate a polite refusal of a hand shake, but she was afraid that might be even more confusing to people in the America. For Firas, he did not think of a handshake escape plan until he was taken off guard in the conference room and in the presence of his wife. When a female presenter professionally approached Firas, introduced herself, and extended her hand to shake, he became totally confused. Firas was aware of the cultural and professional conventions in such encounters, but because of his wife's attendance, he was undecided whether to apply the Saudi cultural rules or go with the American conventions. His hesitation was clear as he thought, "Now, I'm shaking a girl's hand. It's a greeting thing. It's something courteous but still in my wife's eyes, it's not" (Interview, April 3, 2013). At the end, he lifted his hand and reluctantly shook the woman's hand. For both Sarah and Firas, they wished they could be the most appropriate persons without the need to break their religious and cultural rules. Their fear

of being impolite and rude pushed them to think of ways that would probably do nothing but making their cultural encounters more awkward.

Since the Saudi Arabian society is described as gender-segregated society, it would not be surprising to learn that men and women would not interact closely and would probably not shake hands. What could be surprising from an American perspective is that, in such gender-segregated society, men can be seen giving each other cheek kisses in public. This contrasts with the general American attitude that heterosexual individuals of the same gender do not kiss each other. When two Saudi men run into each other, it is the tradition and custom that they shake hands and kiss each other on the cheek. It is an "air kiss" as Hamad described it, "not a real kiss" (Blog, April 6, 2013). Cheek kissing is commonly expected among friends and relatives. In fact, *not* kissing when meeting indicates that the two men are only acquaintances and not close friends, or that they are being introduced for the first time.

Cheek kissing other men in public was a controversial topic between the male participants. Where Firas, and Bader felt that they were at ease to keep the Saudi tradition of kissing in America, Hamad wanted to assimilate to the American traditions of greetings. Bader clarified, "I believe that everyone is free to represent her/his culture as long as her/his actions don't interfere with others' freedoms (Blog, May 16, 2013). Likewise, Firas said that he would keep the tradition of kissing despite acknowledging the contrasting contextualized norms. He said, "I would not assimilate the way the Americans do it with my Saudi friends; it is offensive… Even if they [people in the U.S.] become judgmental on the way we do it! So what? It is our thing" (Blog, June 1, 2013)

However, Firas pointed out that when it comes to his American friends, he would do it the way they do it.

In contrast to the other two male participants, Hamad was choosing not to be seen kissing in public, and in his defense, he explained that it could be misconstrued by people in America and negatively affect his image. He said, "Cheek air kisses are totally fine among Saudi males, but they might refer to something about the person's sexuality if two males kissed in the United States. So, I try to avoid kisses that might be misunderstood" (Blog, April 6, 2013). Hamad did not want to do anything that would cause him to be misunderstood.

In Saudi Arabia, moreover, it can be seen as a polite gesture to greet children and kiss them on the cheek. The narratives showed that when Sarah was out walking with her three-year-old daughter, people in the U.S. did not kiss her daughter but oddly to Sarah asked for permission to talk to her. Unlike in Saudi Arabia where Sarah's approaching to random children would be appreciated as friendly and sociable, she learned that rules concerning adults' behaviors towards children in the U.S. were totally different.

Being able to communicate in a language pragmatically necessitates going beyond the spoken language and being able to communicate nonverbally as well. Nonverbal communication, as in handshakes, holding hands, cheek kissing, and socializing with children, might be evaluated differently between the Saudi and American cultures. What is seen as friendly and sociable in a Saudi context might raise eyebrows and cause tension in an American context; that is because every culture emphasizes different nonverbal moves and signs that, in some cases, contradict the way people interact in other cultures. For the participants, adhering to the cultural norms enacted in one context is somehow

attainable, but when two contexts are mixed together, it is no surprise that confusion would manifest.

Politeness and Face-Saving Are Central Objectives for Pragmatic Knowledge

Politeness was frequently apparent in all five participants' narratives and it was, in many incidents, expressed through indirect language. This was not unusual, since "politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness," as Searle (1975, p. 64) stated. In an English-speaking context like the United States, people in general tend to speak in a cooperative way where direct ordering or commanding is usually avoided, especially if the interlocutors have mutual statuses (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). This indirectness can cause language learners to be overwhelmed if they are not used to it in their everyday speaking. When Sarah first arrived to the U.S., she found indirect speech to be bewildering. She expressed in one of her blogs, "I notice when I talk to Americans, they do not like to be direct when giving answers or telling me what to do, which confuses me more" (Blog, March 31, 2013). The difficulty of indirectness lays on the necessity for learners to go beyond the surface level of an utterance and look for indicators in the present context.

One motive for English speakers to employ indirectness in their speech is to attempt to preserve the listener's face and social self-image (Yule, 1996a). Therefore, in the aforementioned encounter that Sarah had at the ice-cream stand, when the woman used the indirect statement, "Don't worry! I'm not gonna have a bite," she was probably avoiding saying something that represents a threat to Sarah's face. Despite the fact that the humorous element added to the difficulty of the utterance, it was clear that the woman

was opting for a less threating statement by performing a "face-saving act" (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

When I announced this concept of "face-saving" to both Najla and Firas, they found the overlap of the concept between Arabic and English cultures to be "interesting," which made the concept easier to grasp and adopt. Najla explained, "When I hear you say that [face-saving], I think that you are just translating something in Arabic, you know, because we are using the same expression… It's *interesting* to know that they are using this expression also in English" (Interview, April 6, 2013). Likewise, Firas related, "It's called 'face' [in Arabic, too] and it was not new because we have it already in our culture… which was *interesting*" (Interview, April 3, 2013). This shows that pragmatic concepts can be spread among cultures and it would require a keen eye to distinguish where cultures meet and where they diverge.

Understanding a pragmatic concept is one thing but applying it in communication is quite another. In Najla's incident with her classmate as they were forming discussion groups in class, when she spontaneously told him: "Sorry for sitting that way," she was face-saving in her intention, adhering to the social rules of her culture. Where Najla was showing herself as polite, she was creating awkwardness to her classmate and making him wonder if he missed something before her apology. Najla was being appropriate since, according to her, "it's impolite… to give our backs to whomever is sitting next to us" (Self-Reflective Pragmatic Moment, May 1, 2013). In another incident, in Hamad's narrative, what seemed to be a dispute between friends in a restaurant would basically be unrecognized as a generous gesture in the American context. In cross-cultural communication, behaviors that are polite in one culture might not be necessarily

recognized as polite in another culture, and sometimes they can even be evaluated negatively.

Additionally, the narratives revealed a type of politeness that is found in institutional context within the larger American context (LoCastro, 2012). The academic context of the classroom was brought up in a number of pragmatic encounters shared by the participants. Sarah, for example, reported how she was interrupted mid-sentence by her Saudi classmate, Omar, who said in a dismissive tone, "*anyway,*" stealing the floor and speaking over her. The shaming reaction her classmates showed towards Omar proved that he had violated the classroom pragmatic conventions, and therefore their reaction brought him to apologize. In another classroom scenario, Firas reflected that it took him a while to figure out his way in class and that not every class argument is meant to be personal. He explained, "at the first, I'm taking it very serious. Sometimes I'm being rude while I disagree with things strongly, then I got accustomed with that idea and the way I disagree… but still be polite" (Focus Group, April 28, 2013). He learned to navigate how to be critical of ideas without being critical of the individual who stated the idea. On the same topic, Hamad compared how some of his Saudi colleagues would interrupt other students in the class to share a new idea or shift the conversation. On the other hand, his non-Saudi colleagues would tend to use transitional words and use expressions like, "piggyback off of what X says" to give credit to the student who spoke before them. All these examples shared by Sarah, Hamad, and Firas reflect on the significance of the classroom conventions and the importance of adhering to them.

The importance of politeness springs from its objective to preserve harmony among language speakers by paying attention to their feelings and social images.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find politeness to be one of the dominant topics discussed within the research of pragmatics (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; LoCastro, 2012). Polite acts are generally conventional among the members of one culture but such acts could be confusing or even unrecognizable when used in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, for polite acts to be interpreted as intended, they need to be performed using appropriate words, in the fitting context, at the suitable time, and to the right person.

Pedagogical Implications

The importance of the study findings comes from the fact that the five participants, Sarah, Hamad, Bader, Najla, and Firas are, most importantly, advanced second language speakers who have a solid language knowledge background after studying English in different teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, they all were previous practicing teachers in Saudi Arabia who intended to go back home to teach English after deepening their language knowledge and improving their teaching and research techniques upon graduating from their M.A. programs in the United States.

Through the means of this study, I asked the five participants to share their language experiences before and after starting their M.A. programs in the United States. The five participants pointed at the gap between what their teacher education programs offered them and the language they experienced in the American context. Through the means of interviewing, blogging, and digital recording, I wanted to determine how the participants' voices might benefit the teacher education programs they graduated from in Saudi Arabia. Looking into the participants' narratives, their ideas were revolving around three language sources that they were most often exposed to in their teacher education programs: teachers/professors, teaching materials, and other learners in the classroom.

210

It is important to draw attention that the implications discussed below were not directly evident from the data of this study but came largely from the participants' concerns about current practices in Saudi Arabia and their suggestions of their future instructions. Therefore, and moving away from the colonization mindset, teachers are not supposed to take the western-based ideologies about education learned in one context and apply them verbatim in the context of Saudi Arabia, but there are expected to consider these pedagogical implications and think about the ideas that they can take away, modify, and reorient for their original contexts. The changes and developments suggested by participants could be very beneficial educationally but there may be hegemonic side effects of any attempt to impose western cultural ideologies in a different context. These cultural ideologies were experienced by the participants in a western context, therefore, to take them and imply them in a different context may cause unanticipated consequences. The idea of overlaying ideologies in the Saudi context calls for more future post-colonialism research.

Teachers' Roles in Saudi Education Programs

When the five participants reflected on their classes in English teacher education programs, they frequently referred to their *teachers and professors* to be one central source of language and cultural knowledge. This view may be common among students in an ESL context like Saudi Arabia, since teachers and professors can be seen by their students as language representatives who are trusted to display the appropriate language expressions and explain their pragmatic meanings and contextual usages (Fageeh, 2011). LoCastro (2012) pointed out that "the assumption is that the teacher knows the L2 code well and has studied pragmatics" (p. 245). This assumption adds more roles for the

211

teachers and professors in these programs since they are expected not only to be teaching English grammatical forms but also modeling its appropriate social expressions.

The narratives showed a number of reflections about teachers and professors' performance in relation to language representation. One participant, Najla, described how teachers mainly focused on formal forms of English and neglected casual spoken ones:

> We are learning [in Saudi Arabia] a very different language than the language that is spoken here. That's why we find difficulty in communicating with them [American students] because we are talking a Standard English while they are using a non-standard. (Interview, January 9, 2013)

Another participant, Hamad, indicated that even when teachers and professors in his teacher education program wanted to model language forms for the students, they demonstrated them in an oversimplified manner: "the teachers might have been teaching him in an accent that [was] easier to understand" (Interview, December 20, 2012). These two examples, as well as other examples shared in the participants' narratives, showed that when teachers and professors are not mindful of the connection between English linguistic forms and of the language cultural applications, they may not be capable of transmitting sociolinguistic rules and ultimately helping to raise the pragmatic awareness of their students. Therefore, and as Lihui and Jianbin (2010) suggested, teachers [and professors] should be encouraged to broaden their linguistic and cultural knowledge through self-study and make good use of available pragmatic resources, such as academic journals, books, research projects, and workshops.

Utilizing Authentic and Updated Teaching Materials

A second central source of language and cultural knowledge the participants referred to in their narratives was *teaching materials*. Their shared stories revealed that not all of them had positive experiences with the teaching materials that were utilized in their teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. Some of the participants, like Najla for instance, spoke about being assigned textbooks for her classes that were outdated and did not authentically mirror the real functional language used outside the classroom. In that vein, LoCastro (2012) pointed out that "the materials may misrepresent the target language culture and its social rules of speaking. All too often they are not based on naturally occurring language" (p. 246). Furthermore, inadequate classroom materials was found to be one of the common factors that lead students to deviate from the expected language pragmatic norms, as indicated by Ishihara and Cohen (2010).

In addition to outdated textbooks, teachers and professors may utilize other teaching materials, like handouts, worksheets, presentation slides, etc. that can be misrepresenting of the target language, especially if they were based merely on English teachers' intuitions and not on real-life data (LoCastro, 2012). The use of teaching materials that mirror authentic language usages is vital, particularly in EFL contexts where the students may not have ample opportunities to have natural face-to-face communications with English speakers outside the classroom.

With the space and access teachers have nowadays, doors are open for adopting as well as inventing new pragmatic activities created from authentic language sources that can be used as supplements to the textbook. Among the many sources are novels, magazines, newspapers, movies, electronic websites, and scripted real-life conversations

213

(Cutting, 2002). Based on the developing trends of including cultural topics in English teaching in EFL contexts (Fageeh, 2011), one of the teacher's roles can be to remind the students that pragmatics plays an important part in learning linguistic social rules. The teacher can draw the students' attention to the pragmatic issues in such imported sources and guide the students through a self-investigation of different pragmatic topics found in such sources, so they gradually develop a better sense of pragmatics.

I understand and personally agree with the participants' suggestions to improve teaching materials and adopt functional textbooks. However, a dilemma would still remain that there is no way the textbooks nor the teaching materials will be entirely inclusive of all pragmatic situations students might encounter in real-life situations. Students can have very thick textbooks but reality is so much thicker than that. Therefore, teachers should allow their students to bring their own language contexts and interactional events into the classroom, and this is where I turn next in this discussion.

Learners' Roles and Ample Participation Opportunities

A third central source of language and cultural knowledge the participants made a reference to in their narratives was their classmates, the other *learners* in the classroom. According to LoCastro (2012), "still another source of input in the classroom is what the learners bring, their sociocultural backgrounds and expectations" (p. 248). As the case is in the teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia, advanced language learners ideally come to class with different language experiences, perspectives, and questions. When teachers and professors in these programs privilege a teacher-centered classroom, spending the majority of the class time lecturing, they are missing the opportunity for their students to learn from each other.

When the participants reflected on their past experiences in their teacher preparation programs, they reported that they had small windows of opportunity to participate in the classroom interactions and discussions. In an attempt to make a change, the participants envisioned their future classes to be more engaging and placing more focus on communication. Najla declared, "I will try *insha Allah* in the future to avoid lecturing. I want them to practice the language more than listening to the language" (Interview, January 9, 2013). Likewise, Sarah stated, "I should reserve a space for teaching pragmatics in my curriculum" (Blog, May 26, 2013). Firas was more precise in what he is going to teach when he said, "We have to study the pragmatics of the conversation, the way we interrupt, the way we take the floor, the way we add, the way we contradict" (Interview, April 3, 2013). The ways the participants foresaw their future classes, after going through the many language and cultural challenges they had in the U.S., should be inspiring for teachers and professors in teacher education programs to arrange ample participation opportunities in their classes so pragmatic competence could be developed, and pragmatic failures could be reduced.

The findings of this study, and in alignment with other literature discussed in Chapter Two, showed that the consequences of pragmatic failures can be more detrimental than grammatical errors (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Lihui & Jianbin, 2010; LoCastro, 2012). This is because pragmatic failures are often interpreted on a social or personal level and not as a result of the language learning process. Therefore, the classroom should be made a safe place for learners to try out new pragmatic forms in a more accepting environment before awkwardness occurs and offence is taken, which is more likely to happen outside the classroom. Role-plays and situational questions are

among various common techniques available for teachers to introduce learners to pragmatic experiences inside the classroom (Lihui & Jianbin, 2010). Teachers can also look for new teaching techniques and modify existing ones to fit the needs of their students in order to achieve the goals of their teaching.

Whatever technique they may use, teachers and professors should keep in mind that raising their students' pragmatic and cultural awareness does not mean enforcing the pragmatic rules on their behavior but rather, it means expanding the students' knowledge and helping them become more aware of the cultural component accompanying the appropriate language use. As a teacher, and as indicated by LoCastro (2003), I believe that our role is to clearly present social and linguistic rules to our students and leave it up to them to define their parameters.

Moreover, a question might rise about whether teachers should teach foreign languages using L1 pragmatics or L2 Pragmatics. To answer such question, I want to state the fact that EFL teachers in a context like Saudi Arabia teach L2 linguistic rules (i.e., English) but at the same time are pressured into using L1 cultural norms (i.e., Arabic) because of the dominant Arabic culture in such context. An example of this is seen in Najla's narrative about teaching, after she went back to Saudi Arabia, "Sometimes I have to delete some topics that are not convenient or appropriate in our culture or our society… There are some topics that I can't go through like, for example, … dating. It wasn't appropriate" (Interview, April 6, 2013). Such conflict happens everywhere. "EFL teachers face this huge challenge of teaching an L2 but being pressured to utilize the L1 culture… Saudi Arabia also is recognized as another country that struggles with this dual concept of teaching an L2 with the culture of L1" (M. Dr.

Zambrano-Paff, personal communication, June 12, 2014). Igoudin (2014) foresaw such challenge when she stated that, "directing language learning and socialization of L2 learners towards a full acculturation and assimilation into the L2 community poses multiple questions to language education ideology in multilingual and multicultural settings." In some teaching contexts, teachers should show a balanced teaching style where they might incorporate elements of the students' L1 culture into L2 teaching. Such balanced teaching style would signal respect of the students' cultural backgrounds and individual identities (Igoudin, 2014).

Implications for Future Research

The entire field of pragmatics research in Saudi Arabia is still in its early stages. Fageeh (2011) pointed out that "ELT educationalists and syllabus designers in Saudi Arabia had separated the English language from its inner circle culture till a very recent time" (p. 65). More research to be conducted on pragmatics in relation to the EFL context of Saudi Arabia is certainly needed, especially with the significant growing number of Saudi students coming to pursue their educational degrees in the U.S. and many other English speaking countries. The outcomes of these research studies should help language educators in Saudi Arabia realize the important role pragmatics can play in education and how pragmatics is best integrated into features of English syllabi.

Future research could begin where this study ended. Throughout my narrative inquiry, I have only looked into my participants' past lived experiences and presently negotiated experiences. The participants, however, have shared with me their future plans in relation to integrating pragmatics and culture in English teaching in Saudi Arabia. I would consider conducting further narrative inquiries to look at the future teaching

217

practices of my participants and how they would be using their renewed language perceptions to go beyond the traditional EFL framework in their teaching institutes in Saudi Arabia. In order to have a more completed timeline of past, present, and future narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), further research is needed to be conducted through following the five participants to their future educational institutes. Such research might encompass different dimensions of the effects English teachers studying abroad have on their future education institutes in Saudi Arabia. My future research in this area could address the following research questions:

- After graduating from their M.A. English programs in the United States, what impact do these five Saudi participants have on their future educational programs in relation to the integration of pragmatics and cultural teaching?

- Did these participants' experiences in the U.S. affect their pedagogical philosophies or practices?

- How can the participants' educational programs better meet their renewed expectations based on their cross-cultural experiences in the U.S.?

Another future study can make use of the pedagogical implications that were suggested in this study for teacher education programs in Saudi Arabia. These implications were mainly directed towards the teachers' practices in relation to their use of teaching materials and creating classroom activities. This proposed future study can be conducted to explore the teachers' perspectives in regard to pragmatics instruction in EFL classes. The study might help determine the teachers' actual efforts and the intended goals. This proposed future research could possibly address the following questions:

- From currently practicing Saudi EFL teachers' perspectives, how important is the integration of pragmatics teaching for language learners?

- From these Saudi EFL teachers' perspectives, what are the factors that likely influence learners' language production and comprehension of the second language pragmatics?

- To what extent do Saudi EFL teachers feel that they are prepared to teach pragmatics in the EFL classroom?

A third future study can build on what the participants of this study talked about as ways to develop their pragmatic knowledge outside the classroom, both in EFL and ESL contexts. Some of the participants, for example, spoke about the effect of watching movies and TV programs on their understanding of the cultural and social values of the target language. Other participants spoke about maintaining a group of friends and how they would learn from interacting and socializing with the group members. A future study can explore the alternative language sources the students could utilize for pragmatics self-development. The future research in this area could address the following research questions:

- According to students, what sources of linguistic and cultural knowledge can they utilize to develop their pragmatic competence?

- How can movies and TV programs be most affectively employed to help develop learners' pragmatic competence?

- How do EFL learners and teachers create alternative learning contexts through the use of technologies (e.g., blogs, wikis, social networking) to help develop pragmatic competence?

219

In addition to these three suggested future empirical studies, the current narrative inquiry could be duplicated with the inclusion of participants from various age groups and educational backgrounds to collect more representative data for analysis, and thus provide more insight into the types of pragmatic challenges faced by Saudi learners at different proficiency levels.

Lastly, although the language proficiency test ACTFL was not employed in this study, there is definitely a room for it in future pragmatic research. ACTFL can be used in parallel with other language tests such as TOFEL, where it could be functional to measure pragmatic/cultural knowledge of teachers, professionals, and research participants by contextualizing situations for them. ACTFL, with its inclusion of pragmatics, could work as a model for improving participants' assessment. Therefore, ACTFL can be seen as an aspiration to where to go next in terms of pragmatic evaluation. It would insure that language teachers, for example, are able to spontaneously interact with language in improvised real-life situations. With its different proficiency levels (i.e., novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior), ACTFL can be an ideal tool to measure language proficiency of students who graduated from language programs that emphasize some skills over others. Students in such programs could show better language performance in written tasks, for example, over spoken ones. In such case, they may reach an advanced level in reading and writing but remaining at a novice level in listening and speaking (ACTFL, 2014).

Concluding Reflections

In the following section, I conclude this dissertation with my final reflections on the theoretical work I encountered conducting my study and my echos on the

220

methodological challenges I faced working on this research. I then give my reflections in regards of the ethical principles I kept in mind during all the stages of this narrative inquiry. I end my dissertation with some personal reflections.

Theoretical Reflections

My initial scholarly effort to look into the field of pragmatics was through the lenses of the Anglo-American School, where pragmatics is seen as a core component of theoretical linguistics along with such areas as semantics, syntax, and morphology; that is, the focus is on topics emerging from the traditional concerns of analytic philosophy (Ben Duhaish, 2013). Pragmatics through the Anglo-American School introduced me to topics like deixis, references, anaphora, implicatures, and presupposition (LoCastro, 2012; Yule, 1996b). As I was thinking about conducting this study, and for the purpose of writing this dissertation, I found myself attracted more towards looking into pragmatics through the Continental School of thought, where the focus is on the functional perspectives of language behavior: that is, what people can *do* through their language (e.g., speech acts) choices in social interactions rather than what people just literally *say*. That is why, in my study, I was geared towards highlighting language events that included pragmatic features like politeness, speech acts, face-saving acts, and indirect speech.

I only took the route of the language behavior presented by the Continental School because it aptly fits my investigation of pragmatics across cultures and how that would help me explain the pragmatic failures that result from cross-cultural communication breakdowns in a way that is applicable for English teachers and language educators. By conducting this study, I intended to report on the challenges a group of

advanced language learners, Saudi English M.A. students, faced when interacting with fluent English speakers outside their EFL contexts. The study was conducted in hopes to promote awareness of pragmatics among teachers and professors in the context of Saudi Arabia, so their students could gain the English grammatical skills coupled with the sociolinguistic knowledge needed to communicate with others appropriately.

Methodological Reflections

When I planned to conduct this study, I proposed to collect data from four data sources that I considered equally in terms of generating insightful data: individual interviews, an electronic blog, multiple self-recorded reflections, and a focus group that all participants attended. As I started a period of seven months of data collection, the participants showed their preferences of some data sources over others. They were the most engaged during the interviews whereas they shared very little data on the blog and on their digital recorders. Firas, for example, told me about his preference of speaking directly to me over typing on the blog:

> I would say more interviews are better than blogs. Why I'm saying that? Blogs, I found myself blogging just for the sake of blogging but when interviewed, I'm more honest. I really think about it. I really try to find real answers. I'm engaged with the study. (Interview, May 27, 2013)

Hamad, who did not record any data on his digital recorder, said that he felt he could share his stories with me directly when we met for interviews without feeling obligated to do extra effort on his own. Because of that, I reassessed the practicality of my data sources and began to ask more questions during the interviews in hope of making up for the lack of data from the other sources. I also started to ask open-ended questions that

222

required story sharing. The adjustment I made to the interview questions were favored by some of the participants.

The whole experience of reassessing and rearranging the data source made me think of the reason that made blogs and digital recorders less practical in this study. The participants did not blog oftentimes despite the fact that I wanted the blogging space to be casual and friendly by adding cheerful pictures and using less formal guidance and directions. To give the participants instructions in the blog, I once wrote, "Whenever possible, I would like to read about your experiences living here. Please share your experience responding to the new topics posted and will be posted on this blog. This is supposed to be fun! Don't worry about spelling or grammar; just express your stories as they come in your mind! ☺" (Blog, December 3, 2012). It is possible that the participants looked at the blog entries as homework that would be a burden for them to do, and that the entries would sound less stimulating than the collaborative conversations in the interviews. In a future research study, I would either give better directions and have regular follow-ups with these less productive data sources, or I would opt to use alternative data sources instead of blogs and self-recorded reflections.

Ethical Reflections

Conducting this narrative inquiry, I was adhering to the ethical principles of "respect of persons, beneficence, and justice" (Marshal & Rossman, 2011, p. 47). I maintained these ethical principles throughout my data collection and after I finished collecting the participants' narratives. Despite the fact that it took a very long time transcribe the collected audio data, I was determined to transcribe them all myself. I did

not seek any help with the transcribing of the audio data because I did not want to endanger my participants by sharing their voices with other parties.

After finishing with all the data transcriptions, and following the standard of "gum syndrome" suggested by Morris (1999), I wanted to make clear where I stand in the reconstructing of the participants' narratives and not to passively report the participants' stories. Just like a court interpreter, I strove to find balance between being understanding and close to the participants during the process of data collection and being faithful to their voices and not to take over the meanings they wanted to express and share. Thus, my presentation of data analysis was a collaborative effort between the participants and me, as the researcher of the study.

Personal Reflections

To this day, when someone asks me what my dissertation is about, I pause before I answer because I find it difficult to explain what is meant by "pragmatics" in this study. I always try to give the most *pragmatically correct* answer by considering the status or position of the person asking me. If this person is a linguist, I usually say that my study is about the language choices in relation to the social contexts. If the person is an English teacher, I explain how I try, through this study, to promote the integration of teaching pragmatic and cultural topics in hope of raising the learners' awareness about the appropriate language behaviors. However, if the person's profession is not related to education, I say that my study is about bringing culture into the classroom. I could not find a unified answer that would be appropriate for all hypothetical persons. In such scenarios, I might have a heightened awareness of the context of the questions and how

my answer should be fitting to the setting of the question, when it was asked, and who was asking.

Writing this dissertation has left me with a wider consciousness of communication, in a sense that many people may not be aware. Through my increased awareness, I look forward to exploring what I perceive to be a newfound niche in scholarly work. At this point in our understanding of communication, it is time to promote, for Saudi educators, the necessity of pragmatics in discourse. Furthermore, there is a need to integrate this knowledge into pedagogy, specifically in the context of Saudi Arabia, where opportunities to integrate pragmatics are not yet embraced. This study may lay foundations for more research to expand this area of critical scholarship. Balance between grammatical and social rules, as represented through pragmatics, might lead to appropriateness of production and accuracy of interpretation within cross-cultural communications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
www.iup.edu

Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Stright Hall, Room 113
210 South Tenth Street
Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705-1048

P 724-357-7730
F 724-357-2715
irb-research@iup.edu
www.iup.edu/irb

November 12, 2012

Fahad Ben Duhaish
Dept of English
110 Leonard Hall

Dear Mr. Duhaish:

Your proposed research project, "When English is Performed Rather Than Spoken: The Narrative Inquiry of Saudi M.A. Students' Experiences with Pragmatic Competence," (Log No. 12-217) has been reviewed by the IRB and is approved as an expedited review for the period of November 11, 2012 to November 11, 2013.

It is also important for you to note that IUP adheres strictly to Federal Policy that requires you to notify the IRB promptly regarding:

1. any additions or changes in procedures you might wish for your study (additions or changes must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented),
2. any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects, and
3. any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in (2).

Should you need to continue your research beyond November 11, 2013 you will need to file additional information for continuing review. Please contact the IRB office at (724) 357-7730 or come to Room 113, Stright Hall for further information.

Although your human subjects review process is complete, the School of Graduate Studies and Research requires submission and approval of a Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF) before you can begin your research. If you have not yet submitted your RTAF, the form can be found at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=91683 .

This letter indicates the IRB's approval of your protocol. IRB approval does not supersede or obviate compliance with any other University policies, including, but not limited to, policies regarding program enrollment, topic approval, and conduct of university-affiliated activities.

I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

John A. Mills, Ph.D., ABPP
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Professor of Psychology

JAM:jeb

xc: Dr. Gloria Park, Dissertation Advisor
      Ms. Brenda Boal, Secretary

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study titled *When English is Performed Rather than Spoken: The Narrative Inquiry of Saudi M.A. Students' Experiences with Pragmatic Competence*. The information below will help you decide whether or not you want to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are a Saudi M.A. student studying in the U.S. who have taught and plan to teach English in Saudi Arabia.

The purpose of the study is to explore the pragmatic experiences of Saudi M.A. students during their studying in the academic context of the United States. If you decide to participate in the study, the researcher will interview you at least four times. The interviews will be recorded so that the researcher can type out the conversations and study them to understand your experiences. One group interview for students will take place during a coffee meeting at the end of the semester. All recordings of interviews will be kept in a locked drawer which only the researcher has a key to. To better understand your experiences with pragmatics, you will be asked to participate in a private blog created in conjunction to this study. Only the participants of this study will grant access to participate in the blog. During the time of data collection, you will also be asked to reflect on your personal pragmatic moments using a digital recorder which will be provided by the researcher.

The risks of participation in this study are minimal. If you choose to participate, your identity will be kept private by the researcher. No collected information about you will be given to the English department at any time. Your graduate program will not know whether you are participating in this study or not. In the write up of the study, I will be using pseudonyms (not your real names).

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to choose whether or not to participate. If you choose to participate, you may quit at any time by notifying the research advisor or researcher using the contact information below. All collected information about you will be destroyed if you stop participating in the study. If you choose to participate in this study, please sign on the next page.

<table>
<tr><td>Study Advisor</td><td>Researcher</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dr. Gloria Park</td><td>Fahad Ben Duhaish</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assistant Professor</td><td>Doctoral Candidate, Composition & TESOL</td></tr>
<tr><td>Indiana University of Pennsylvania</td><td>Indiana University of Pennsylvania</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sutton 346</td><td>Leonard Hall 110</td></tr>
<tr><td>Indiana, PA 15705</td><td>Indiana, PA 15705</td></tr>
<tr><td>724-357-3095</td><td>817-933-0393</td></tr>
<tr><td>gloria.park@iup.edu</td><td>wcjr@iup.edu</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix B (Continued): Informed Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that there is no compensation for participating. I understand that my records are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession. I understand and agree to the -conditions of this study as described, and I fully understand that "My participation is voluntary."

Name: (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached _____

Email_____

Best days to reach you_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, possible risks, and other ethical issues regarding his or her participation in this study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date: _____   Investigator's signature: _____

Appendix C: Structured Initial Interview Protocol

PART I: Participant Demographic Questionnaire

1. Full name

2. Sex

3. Birth Year

4. E-mail address

5. Undergraduate Degree, Institution and Major

6. Graduate Degree, Major

7. What is your TOEFL score?   Below 550 − between 550 to 600 − above 600

PART II: Participant Educational Background

8. Have you ever lived in a foreign country before starting your M.A.? If yes, which one(s)? For how long?

9. How long have you studied English?

10. How do you think others viewed your language competency?

11. Have you taken any Pragmatics courses? If yes, please elaborate in anything (course activities, lectures, readings, etc.) that you can remember related to teaching pragmatics.

12. How long have you taught ESL?

13. How have your studies, your language learning experience(s) affect the way you teach, in general, and specifically, pragmatics/usage?

14. Do you have any additional comments about your education, teaching background or pragmatic experience you would like to share?

Appendix D: Blog Prompts

1. Write about an awkward moment happened between you and one of your classmates this semester. What made it awkward? and how would you have avoided this discomfort?

2. Have you experienced a negative transfer from Arabic to English, or Saudi to American since your arrival to the U.S.? I'm happy to hear your story!

3. Have you experienced any confusion with greetings being here in the U.S.? Would you like share that experience? What do you have to say in relation to this issue language challenge? Do you have stories to share in relation to this?

4. Here in America, eating out can be quite an experience for some of us. Who pays? How to order? Do I have to pay a tip? Why does the waiter/waitress keep checking on me? I notice myself that it can be so different from the eating-out back home. I once was "invited" to dinner and I ended up paying my bill. What? I thought I was invited!! (like with the meaning this word carries back home). Got a story to share that relates to eating out?

5. Have you recently received a compliment? Have you given one?
How do you react to such expressions? Do you think some people react to them negatively? I know some Saudi families who might not feel comfortable if you give a compliment about their kids' appearance, for example.

6. How do think of compliments here and back home? Do you have a story to tell?

7. Now, we all use language to speak and engage in a conversation, but don't we sometimes need to use nonverbal signals to communicate? Such as tone, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, or even an eye wink ;) Do you relay on such nonverbal signals when you speak? Do you think of them when you see others speak to you? Any interesting stories? ;)

8. Have you been in a situation where you had to filter your language, let's say speaking to children, for example? I'm wondering if you experienced language change speaking to babies? How about speaking to an elderly?

9. Do you tend to act differently in front of other people here in the U.S., or do you stick to your traditions no matter what? Got any stories of your own?

10. What does TIME mean to you? When do you show up to invitations here and back in Saudi Arabia? If you got a time-related story, please share it here.

11. One time I was sharing a motel room with an American friend. When I asked him if we can open the room window, he said: "If I had my druthers, I would leave it closed."

    "Druthers?" I asked, "How do you spell it?"

    People in the U.S. can be indirect when they speak. Add to that, they sometimes use phrases that would make you confused if you don't know their meaning. Don't you agree? What was one of the most indirect things you heard here in the U.S.?

12. Now we are at the end of the spring semester, is there any interesting conversation you can share with us here. It can be about the final papers, farewell, shopping for gifts, or anything; thus "no title" :)

13. We all watch TV, right? What's your favorite TV show or series? Have you ever picked up a line, phrase, or expression from that TV show? What is it?

14. What was one thing you perceived as strange (or weird) when you first came to the U.S., then you got used to and it became just normal?

15. Being a participant in this study, has your view of language learning changed? If so, how?

Appendix E: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Follow up Questions (Second Interview)

1. Studying in the U.S., How do you relate to your classmates, inside and outside the classroom?

2. Can you give me an example of someone you speak to everyday?

3. Living in the U.S., where do you find yourself speak English freely and most comfortably?

4. Describe a classroom session. What's going on in relation to professor's language (jokes, idioms, cultural topics, etc.)

5. Tell me about your class participation. What do you notice about other students?

6. How do you feel academically compared to your first semester here? How about socially?

7. If asked to describe the American academic/non-academic community, how would describe it based on your observation?

8. Where you in a situation where you felt awkward, silly, or lost having a conversation with others?

9. Is there an English area you want to learn more about? How would you do this?

10. Through your observation of other colleagues, what do you think they need?

11. Finally, I'll give you a free space to talk about your successes and failures with communication here in the United States.

Appendix E (Continued): Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Specific follow-up questions for Bader

1. You talked about taking two language and cultural classes during your Bachelor's degree. How useful these classes were?

2. You gave the example of your friend who was very good with English although he never been outside the country. You mentioned that he learned a lot from movies and songs. Do you think teacher should bring movies into English teaching?

3. Your teaching experience at the oil company was useful and successful. What were the major differences between the English in the university and the one in company? Is there anything you want to adopt from the university to the program of the company or vice versa?

4. When you majored in English after spending 14 months in the U.S., did you feel privileged in comparison to your colleagues?

Specific follow-up questions for Firas

1. You reflected on a very positive experience with English as a student in elementary school. You said your first teacher was "funny, smart, and focused on vocabulary." What do English programs need to graduate teachers at this level?

2. You shared your story of having an instructor who taught you applied linguistics although his M.A. was in literature. You also said that the introduction to linguistics did not meet the students' level (you were not able to understand his level of English). Was that a repetitive problem in your English program?

Appendix E (Continued): Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

3. You said that at the seventh level, you were introduced to different dimensions of the language through the discourse analysis class (e.g., women vs. men language; turn taking). Do you think that such knowledge could be introduced earlier in the program? And how?

4. You talked about your personal experience with movies and how it improved your English. Do you think movies can be brought to English teaching?

Specific follow-up questions for Hamad

1. Recalling from your fourth grade, you said that "people were talking differently; think differently." Now it is clear how you found that they talk differently, but why did you say they "think" differently?

2. You mentioned more than once that you are confident with your language compared to some other colleges. Where does this confidence come from? And how would other colleagues catch up to this level of confidence?

3. You talked about how some colleagues would hold back from participation saying something like "I had the same idea, but I did not have the right words to say it." Why, in your opinion, does this happen?

4. You mentioned the Chinese/Japanese guy in the series "Heroes" and how he didn't understand what the other white guy said. Have you been in such a situation? And how did react?

Appendix E (Continued): Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Specific follow-up questions for Sarah

1. You talked about taking two cultural classes during your bachelor's degree (American and British culture; and comparative cultures). How useful these classes were?

2. What were the major differences between the English in the university and the one in "Direct English" program? Is there anything you want to adopt from the university to the program or vice versa?

3. When I asked you about how you think people see your English, you said that in the U.S. you sometimes feel you can't speak (but they understand you in general). When such moments come to you?

4. You stated that one doesn't need to be taught by a native speak nor travel to an English speaking country to learn the language perfectly. Can you elaborate in that?

Specific follow-up questions for Najla

1. In the initial interview, you talked about your "phonology teacher" and how she was inserting some cultural discussions and pragmatics, whereas your "conversation professor" was not allowing you to speak, and it was her time to speak instead. What do you see in this picture? What is your take on the phonology teacher? And what was really expected from the conversation teacher?

2. I understood from the previous interview that memorization was a real issue. In your opinion, how such a problem can be solved speaking from a teacher prospective?

(Hint: "At college, I didn't want them to relay 100% on dictionary. I want them to try to guess the meaning from the context. I wanted them to think, to explore the meaning."

3. You had suspected that L2 speakers can provide prefect English input to the students and that such input can be gained through continuous interaction with native speakers. With the lack of interaction opportunities, are there any substitutes?

4. In the blog, you wrote about the different meanings one can get from one sentence like: ooh your English is good. What would help you extracting the real meaning of a sentence?

(Hint: Do you consider the tone or the facial expressions when someone speaks?)

Follow up Questions (Third Interview)

1. Do you know SIRI, an app installed in smart phones? She's amazing because she has a vast amount of vocabulary and, of course, correct grammar. Would you have a genuine conversation with SIRI? Why?

2. During this semester, were you interacting with your classmates, how so?

3. Can you give me an example of someone you speak to everyday? How is this experience? And is it different from the first time you arrived?

4. How your classes are going? Do cultural issues come up in the class discussion, group work, assignments?

5. What do you notice about other student's participation? Native speakers first. Then non-native speakers. (to make a long story short; as far as I know; correct me if I'm wrong, but; oh! by the way; I'm not sure if this makes sense, but)

Appendix E (Continued): Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

6. Which one do you appreciate more, direct language or indirect (intentional)

   language? Or both equally?

   When do you use direct? How about indirect?

7. Are you familiar with the concept of "face" in language?

8. What other purposes for using indirect language for you?

9. Which one do you tolerate more, grammatical mistakes or impoliteness? Why?

   Hence, speech acts?

10. Do you care to learn "chunks" of the language like, expressions, phrases, and

    idioms? Why?

11. Do you think males speak differently than females? As a learner, have you faced

    any problem because of gender difference?

12. Closure question: Narratives open time. (Something you didn't mention in the

    blog or the recorder and you feel you can mention here.)

Appendix F: Final Interview Questions

Informal Conversational Interview

First of all, let me tell you that this interview is planned to be casual. It is being conducted so you can finalize your reflections on your pragmatic experiences and the meanings you infer from these experiences. Moreover, this interview is the time when you can talk about things I did not ask you about in the follow up interviews. It is basically a free space for you to add whatever information you want to your narratives. You also may discuss your ideas of how to integrate pragmatics as you go back to the English teaching field in Saudi Arabia.

Back-up questions just in case:

1. How were the final weeks of the semester for you? (e.g., traveling, teaching, projects, etc.)
2. Where are you going from here?
   a) What personal goals you have after this academic year?
   b) What professional goals you have after this academic year?
   c) What goals you have in relation to language?
3. How has your participation in this study impacted your experience as an M.A. English student?
4. Are you interested to teach pragmatics topics in your institute when you go back to Saudi Arabia?
5. Do you have any feedback to me about my research or an advice to be used in future research?

Appendix G: Focus Group Interview

Three-axis Conversation: U.S., Saudi Arabia, and both contexts conjoined

First: U.S. Context

1. Brain storm, what are the language/culture challenges that Saudi students face coming to study in the United States?

    a) Register: formal vs. informal

    b) Speaking fast/ or find you speaking slow

    c) Indirect speech vs. literal speech.

    d) Closing, opening, taking turns! Nice to meet you, I'll let you work.

    e) Interpretation

    f) Jargons

    g) Idioms, phrasal verbs, etc. E.g., Long time no see; Heads up!

2. Did you choose to come to the U.S.? What linguistic aspects have you developed during studying in the U.S. that you may not have developed studying in Saudi Arabia?

3. What are the sources of language and culture knowledge for you while you study your M.A.?

4. Do you care to follow the social/language norms when you interact in the U.S. or there is a room for creativity in your interacting?

5. If there is an advice you want to give the Saudi students coming to the U.S. (based on your experience)? Are there things to focus on or avoid?

6. How different your engagement with the society from the beginning of your M.A.? (ex. How do you take the floor in a classroom discussion?; do you see yourself think more in English or in Arabic? Why?)

7. During this semester, have been in a conversation where language betrays you? What did you do? What skills do we need?

Second: Saudi Arabia Context

1. Do you think the current the EFL curriculum in Saudi Arabia promotes pragmatics teaching?

2. In your opinion, is there more or less hope for pragmatics teaching in Saudi Arabia? Why?

   a) ……

   b) …...

   Also, taking into consideration the following:

   a) Educational Policy: e.g., orientation year

   b) Effect of instruction or teaching material and text book

   c) Curriculum in college teaching

   d) Facilities in classroom

   e) Limited language ability: is high school blamed?

   f) Resistance to using perceived L2 pragmatics : from learners, parent, administration, colleagues

   g) King Abdulla scholarship program

Appendix G (Continued): Focus Group Interview

Third: Two Contexts Conjoined

Note: Themes are derived from communality; parallel and non-parallel issues

1. On top of teaching knowledge, are there any skills we really need to teach to help

   developing communicative competence?

   For example, research skills; motivate them for independent learning; lowering

   the level of anxiety, enhancing self-steam and risk taking?

2. How about teaching things beyond the spoken language?

   a) Silent language such as body language, silence, facial expression, smiles,

      gesture, eye contact, etc.

   b) Speech acts: E.g., creating and responding to requesting, compliments, etc.

   c) Cooperative principles

   d) Politeness

3. Newly brought up topics:

   a) ……

   b) ……