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**Learning Experiences of Libyan Master's Students at a UK University:
Intercultural Adaptation and Identity**

Kamila Alhadi Salim Algwil

**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Huddersfield

March 2016

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Acknowledgements

By the Grace of Almighty Allah, I have been blessed to complete this research.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Ann Harris for her excellent research support, guidance and encouragement over the course of this study. Her constructive feedback and tutorials have been highly appreciated.

I extend my thanks and appreciation to the second supervisor, Dr. Glynn Jones for his helpful comments and for his interest and support whenever needed.

My thanks must go to all my colleagues and friends in the research office for their discussion and arguments which have been informative and useful.

I would like to thank my mother and my sister for their unconditional support and encouragement to pursue my study and their confidence in my ability. Thanks are extended to my husband and my two children for their patience during the period of this research.

I am deeply grateful to Libyan Embassy London-Cultural Affairs for their funding.

Finally, I am very grateful to all participants who gave much of their time and took part in the interviews.

Abstract

This thesis addresses the learning experiences of Libyan students studying master's courses in different disciplines at a UK university. It is a story of students who came to the UK at a particular point in time after civil war and from ongoing conflict. This study uses communities of practice (CoPs) theory as a conceptual framework to highlight the significance of the knowledge and skills that are developed through social interaction with colleagues and tutors within the master's course and the effects of that on Libyan students' learning and identity. The aims of the research are to investigate Libyan students' perceptions and perspectives of their experiences in the United Kingdom higher education (UK HE) system; to explore Libyan students' perceptions of their previous educational and socio-cultural experiences on their acculturation and learning; to evaluate the nature of the interaction between Libyan students and their colleagues; and to consider their perceptions of identity and change. The study was qualitative and interpretive, examining Libyan students' expectations, perceptions, perspectives, experiences and aspirations of the UK HE system. Semi-structured interviews and observation were the main sources of data.

The findings reveal that Libyan students encounter a number of challenges in the new learning environment. Some of these challenges are common to all international students such as unfamiliarity with the UK HE system, currency and confidence and the challenge of independent study; other challenges such as concern about the environment and lack of security might be attributable to the consequences of civil war and ongoing conflict and specific to this group of Libyan students. Among other things, the findings indicate that there was antagonism, avoidance of interaction, fear and distrust between the Libyan students themselves owing to tribal loyalties and political divisions that relate to the consequence of the initial and ongoing conflict within Libya. This limited integration, hindered mutual engagement and undermined the support that might have been expected between fellow Libyans. However, despite the alienation and schism within their own community, Libyan students joined multicultural classes to create new communities of practice and to interact and share activity with other international colleagues.

The findings also reveal that participation in multicultural classes and mutual engagement with international colleagues assisted the Libyan students to acquire the essential components of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and to complete each other's competence (complementary contribution). They acquired knowledge and skills through social interaction in shared activity with their colleagues and tutors within the master's community and through employing individual strategies and techniques. Finally, the results also indicate that participants modified some aspects of their Libyan traditional cultural values, temporarily while in the UK. Religious values, however, which are core aspects for all Libyan students' identity did not change despite the impact of living in a new socio-cultural context and being members of the master's community, nor did they appear to inhibit integration and socialisation with their host and international colleagues. Published papers see appendix 9.

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List of abbreviations

CoP	Community of Practice
CoPs	Communities of Practice
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
FCO	Foreign Commonwealth Office
HE	Higher Education
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
LMoE	Libyan Ministry of Education
LMoHE	Libyan Ministry of Higher Education
NTC	National Transitional Council
SLL	Second Language Learners
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UK HE	United Kingdom Higher Education
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study that focuses on the perceptions, perspectives and experiences of a group of Libyan students in order to tell their story. These students have come from Libya to study in the UK HE system at a particular point in time following a civil war and at a time of ongoing conflict. This is a portentous moment to tell a story about these students. The Libyan context is one that is unstable, divided and unpredictable. The fact that, despite this, these students still have the motivation and desire to study overseas is both memorable and significant. However, although these Libyan students are motivated and aspirational, this does not prevent manifestation of the very divisiveness which is undermining their country. This thesis therefore gives an account of these Libyan students' international experiences at time critical in their country's development.

The study aims to investigate Libyan students' perceptions and perspectives of their experiences in the UK HE system; to explore the impact of their previous educational and socio-cultural experiences on the HE acculturation process and their learning; to evaluate the nature of the interaction between Libyan students and their colleagues in shared activity; and to consider their perceptions of identity and of change. This chapter presents the background and the Libyan context, the research questions, an overview of the framework and the research methodology, and outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background and the context

Libya is an Arab country on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea between Tunisia and Algeria to the West, and Egypt to the East (Paoletti, 2011). The country occupies an area of almost 1.8 million square kilometres with a population of 6.5 million (Tamtam, Gallagher, Naher and Olabi, 2013, p. 20). Arabic is the official language; while English and Italian are spoken as second languages because of Libya's colonial heritage (Ahmed and Gao, 2004, p. 366). Nicoll and Johnstone (2011) and Mikail (2012) highlight that Libya is an oil rich country and suggest it has sufficient resources to finance a future for Libyans, implying that

development and rebuilding the infrastructure should be important priorities for the new Libyan rulers. Although the production of oil stopped during the initial conflict, it recovered and reached 1.8 million barrels a day in 2012 (Chivvis, Crane, Mandaville and Martini, 2012, p. 11). However, this was just a year after the revolution. More recently, it is very common to see long queues at fuel stations since most oil and gas production has ceased, and this has led to a shortage of petrol (Gov. UK, 2015). Sherlock (2015) explains that the oilfields of Sidra and Ras-Lanuf which used to produce approximately 550,000 barrels of oil a day, now have zero; the second largest oil fields, Sharara and al-Ghani, have also closed their pipeline. This is a critical situation because oil is the only income for the country. Mashala Zwai, Libya's oil Minister, states that if the production of oil ceases, Libya will "run out of money in eighteen months" and "it will not be able to pay salaries for Libyans", despite being one of the richest African countries (Sherlock, 2015). The literature mentioned earlier from 2011/12 suggested initial hopefulness after the revolution, however, the situation since then has worsened and become more conflicted. Now, Libya is divided; it has opposing governments and two armed militia, both aiming to seize the country's assets and power.

The current political situation in Libya and the armed conflict have inevitably affected its higher education system, and, as a result, Libyan students face many challenges at this time. As a case, they represent a group of people seeking higher educational experiences, but coming from a country that is divided and suffering ongoing conflict. According to Wehrey (2014), after the fall of the Gaddafi regime, the country split, and, since mid 2014, Libya has had a new civil war between armed groups and political factions. Wehrey (2014) and Murray (2015) describe Libya's two opposing governments: 1) A government in Tobruk (situated in eastern Libya near the Egyptian border), where the Prime Minister Abdullah Al-Tinni is the representative and supported by the 'X' forces; and 2) the other in Tripoli, where the Prime Minister Omar al-Hassi is the representative, supported by the 'X Libya' forces. Although Al-Tinni's government is considered as unconstitutional and illegal by the Libyan Supreme Court, it has been recognised by the USA, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and the European

Union (Murray, 2015). Meanwhile, Al-Hassi's government is supported by Turkey, Qatar and Sudan. According to Wehrey (2014), these various affiliations have deepened the division between the 'X' forces and the 'X Libya' forces. It is not simply a political division between East and West, but there are also tribal divisions which may vary not only region to region, but also city to city (see appendix 1). Each side claims its legitimacy and affiliation with the state to defend its actions (Murray, 2015). For instance, pro-X declared that they have been fighting 'Islamist extremists'; while pro-X Libya claim that they have been fighting 'Gaddafi's loyalists and the remnants of the Gaddafi regime' (Wehrey, 2014; Murray, 2015). To make matters worse, the X forces refuse to negotiate with X Libya and in turn, X Libya has been unwilling to negotiate with X force. The United Nations has tried to end the violence and to push the two governments to dialogue, unfortunately, however these efforts have been undermined owing to both sides' belief that only through continued fighting, will they secure resources and territory (Sherlock, 2015).

The Justice and Construction Party, the Muslim Brotherhood, the National Forces Alliance and the Loyalty to the Martyrs' Blood block are the key political parties in Libya that are affiliated with the armed groups (Wehrey, 2014). The challenge in Libya is that "Libya's armed forces-both official and unofficial are essentially at war with one another, with each faction bolstered by a constellation of tribes and towns" (Wehrey, 2014, p. 3). These armed groups of Islamists versus liberals, or Misrata versus Zintan, the Dawn versus Dignity reflect "long-stand feuds between rival towns, clans, and patronage networks, such as Warshafana versus Zawiya, and Misrata versus Tawrga" (Wehrey, 2014, p. 23). Wehrey's comment reveals that there is a political struggle between different armed groups and forces; and also regional partisanism, each continuing to fight for power, oil wealth and territory (Murray, 2015). As a result, the effects have been felt by the ordinary people of Libya. For instance, there is fighting in Benghazi in the East, in Warshafana and Zawaiya in West, and around the oil-Gulf of al-Sidra. In the southern town of Ubari, fighting has forced approximately 400,000 people to flee their homes as reported by the United National Refugee Agency (Murray, 2015). To add to the complexity is the split between the x Libya forces in the West and a

separatist group X in the East (Wehrey, 2014, p. 23). X group has broken away from X Libya and seceded because, according to X group, X Libya forces have deviated from the aims of the revolution. The fighting continues within and between groups which signifies yet another new chapter in the ongoing conflict. This fractured environment is the one from which Libyan students have come to join the UK master's course.

Security in Libya is notionally undertaken by a loose co-operation between the 'formal' forces of the army and police, and the more powerful 'informal' militia supported by religious authorities and traditional tribes (Wehrey, 2014). According to Gov. UK (2015), the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) has currently warned against travelling to Libya owing to the ongoing conflict, terrorist attacks, lack of security and kidnapping across the country. Military operations and fighting are widespread; airports, roads and some border crossings have been closed or suspended temporarily owing to the clashes between heavily armed groups in 2014 and 2015. Crime such as mugging, robberies, carjackings, knife, gun, and bomb attacks have increased with deterioration of the situation and the persistent policing challenges (Gov. UK, 2015). According Murray's (2015) report, violence in Libya is also widespread because, since the revolution, everybody now has a gun. Many embassies have been closed in Tripoli such as the UK, the USA, the Algerian, the South Korean, the Moroccan and the Spanish Embassies (Gov. UK, 2015).

Libya is a conservative Muslim country where Islam plays a dominant role (Zoubir and Rózsa, 2012, p. 1269). The Libyan context has been traditionally described as an "extended family, clan, tribe, village and Islamic religion" (Ahmed and Gao, 2004, p. 366), and these characteristics play an essential role in people's relationships and life. Islam provides both a "spiritual guide for Libyans and a keystone for government policy" (Blanchard, 2012, p. 19). For the Libyans in this research, like many other Arab students, their Muslim identity is significant and its impact on their UK experience is explored. Although Libya is 90% Sunni Muslim which means that there are fewer specific religious tensions than in some other

neighbouring countries like Egypt (Blanchard, 2012, p. 18), during the civil war and ongoing conflict, many extremist groups emerged such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These groups aim to create a state governed by Islamic law and to attack and denounce westerners and non-Muslims. For example, in February 2015, 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians were murdered by ISIL in Libya (Murray, 2015).

The political situation, the tribal nature of the country and the difficulty of disarming the populace pose challenges to the new authorities and significantly undermine the unity and integrity of the country (Zoubir and Rózsa, 2012). “The vast majority of Libyans will speak of tribal belonging...the tribalism in culture and the tribe as an institution will continue to exert influence on social-political interactions and on individual and group identities in Libyan society” (Zoubir and Rózsa, 2012, p. 1270). The new Libyan rulers are aware of the challenges, for example, the chairman of the National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdeljalil stated: “If the country does not succeed in containing the current violence and disarming militias, the result could be both secession and civil war” (Mikail, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, national conferences have been conducted by the new Libyan rulers on reconciliation between tribes and demilitarisation and, linked to that, has been an amnesty for anyone who fought on Gaddafi’s side during the initial conflict. However, legal precedent prevails and crimes such as rape, torture, murder or larceny of public assets which occurred during the revolution where possible will be pursued and prosecuted (Blanchard, 2012). The stability of the country, it is mooted, depends on “national reconciliation among tribes” (Zoubir and Rózsa, 2012; Lacher, 2012); “broad-based political reconciliation”; “ceasefire”; and “integrating individual members of these groups into the regular army” (Wehrey, 2014, p. 1). At the time of writing this thesis, these things are yet to happen. This is the general context for this research, and each student will have a different experience of it.

1.2.1 The Libyan education system

Libyan education is free to everyone from elementary to university level and according to Aldoukalee (2013, p. 40), the system includes five stages: 1) nursery from age two to five; 2) primary stage which has pupils aged six to eleven; 3) preparatory stage which lasts three years; 4) secondary stage which also lasts three years, and 5) university stage which lasts four years. However, after the 42 year dictatorship of Colonel Gaddafi collapsed; the Libyan education system was in turmoil. For years, according to the Libyan Ministry of Education (LMoE) (2012), the education sector had been undermined by a lack of training, deprived of investment, with little opportunity to enhance qualifications. Furthermore, traditionally, tutors had received poor salaries; and were required to teach Arabic language lessons suffused with Gaddafi's ideology and aimed at training compliant citizens. Among the subjects that students had to study were: "Political Awareness" and Gaddafi's "Green Book" outlining his political philosophy. Moreover, under the Gaddafi regime, history was prescribed and partisan, avoiding questions on sensitive topics by focusing on memorisation, not understanding (LMoE, 2012). English language faculties were under resourced with no language laboratories and few libraries (Sweeney, 2012). In Libya, it is still common to find tutors and students who have little knowledge of computers or e-learning, and this reflects the country's low level of technological literacy (Rhema and Miliszewska, 2010, p. 430). Rhema and Miliszewska (2012) also suggest that teaching and learning and the curriculum need to be modified and developed appropriately in order to incorporate appropriate information communication technology (ICT). This is significant to this study because the prior educational experiences of students are likely to affect their subsequent learning experiences, including those in the UK.

According to the LMoE (2012), Libyan students are not encouraged to discuss opinions or question ideas, and the indications are that greater criticality is desirable if Libya wants to develop a generation who is open-minded. Learning it is implied should be through interaction rather than rote learning. The LMoE emphasises that students are integral to the learning process, and that different methodologies and strategies should be utilised to ensure that various needs are addressed, and all students have equal opportunities to learn (LMoE, 2012). It

can be inferred that the Libyan educational experts realise that reform of the education system will be the key to developing Libyans because nothing will change, if the education does not change. Hamdy (2007) and Chick (2011) stress the extent of the challenges for those seeking to reform higher education, primarily: a shortage of qualified tutors with expertise in curriculum development and ICT; a lack of awareness and experience around cooperative learning as well as poor technological infrastructure and inadequate facilities.

An evaluation of the recent situation reveals that, according to Rhema and Miliszewska (2012, p. 151), the 2011 armed conflict in Libya transformed every aspect of daily life, and its impact on the education system included: 1) damage and destruction of many university, school and library buildings; 2) closure of educational institutions and universities due to violence, or detention and forced recruitment of students and tutors into Gaddafi's fighting cadre; 3) dismantling of educational infrastructure and equipment; 4) some universities being requisitioned for refugees and militias; 5) persistent power outages.

Historical evidence illustrates that, globally, armed conflict has a lasting impact physically, psychologically and socially in terms of injury, trauma, insecurity and community life, and this includes the deprivation of students' opportunities for education (Rhema and Miliszewska, 2012). In post-war situations, there are many competing priorities and higher education is not usually one of the most significant government reconstruction strategies because, according to Waters (2005) and Ben-Tsur (2009), it can be viewed as a luxury and best left to the private sector. For example, Nadjaldongar outlined his country's priorities:

In post-conflict counties like Rwanda the government paid attention to assure its internal and external security; guarantee responsible governance and everyone's participation; assure repairable, reconcilable justice, promote human rights and fight impunity.

(Nadjaldongar, 2008, p. 3)

However, Barakat and Milton (2012) have observed that the new Libyan rulers immediately after the civil war did emphasise the value of higher education for Libya's future, and its place in the reconstruction and development of the country. The belief was that education would empower Libyans with the capabilities necessary for the new Libya to assume genuine ownership of the recovery process. The Libyan Ministry of Higher Education (LMoHE) has therefore in so far as was possible been keen to ensure access to high quality education for all Libyans in the belief that the sooner the education system in Libya was reformed, the sooner it would be able to improve Libya's prospects for growth (Rhema and Miliszewska, 2012, p. 154). The LMoHE has also stressed the urgent need for collaboration between Libya and the West with regard to knowledge and skills, curriculum development, infrastructure support, scholarship and academic exchanges because these could contribute to the development of a new Libya (Baious and Dittrich, 2011). Despite the civil war and ongoing conflict, giving sponsorships to students to study abroad has still been valued by the LMoHE on the basis that it would enhance capacity-development (Barakat and Milton, 2012; Doherty, 2012). Sponsorship presupposes that Libyan students studying abroad will take advantage of this experience to contribute to rebuilding their country on their return, and this commitment was stated most clearly in 2012, just after the revolution. However, the subsequent situation has been more volatile, and support despite a government guarantee increasingly erratic. Nevertheless, during the time of this study, the government was committed to sponsorship and overseas study because of its perceived urgent need with regard to knowledge generation and transfer.

According to Barakat and Milton (2012), in societies recovering from conflict like Libya, interaction between students and people from different backgrounds can help to foster new identities and ideas. Chick (2011) states that the LMoHE believed that Libyan students studying abroad would have an opportunity to meet "the other" at university for the first time, and this would be quite likely to undermine and eradicate the historic received ideas of Gaddafi and his "Green Book", encouraging a shift to a more positive educational vision grounded in cultural respect, academic freedom and social justice. The former regime of

Colonel Gaddafi had been not just a political philosophy, but actually culturally and socially embedded in every aspect of society.

Rhema and Miliszewska suggest the areas in which the international community could assist Libya:

Provision of portable teaching and learning devices (notebooks, iPads, mobile devices), teaching and learning content (electronic teaching and learning resources including course materials, training packages, e-books), and training courses for instructors.

(Rhema and Miliszewska, 2012, p. 157)

Libya just after the initial conflict hoped to build a strong relationship with the West, and welcomed foreign investment on the basis of mutual respect and shared interest (Mikail, 2012). The LMoHE in 2012 emphasised the urgent need to have partnerships with international organisations to help Libyans deal with the next stage after the end of the revolution. There were discussions and consultation about the main goals of the education system and the new Libya's future (Sweeney, 2012), including opportunities to exchange ideas and to review the experiences of other countries. Training courses were also proposed to improve the teaching and learning processes and address the needs of learners and the society (Rhema and Miliszewska, 2012). It is noteworthy that this early 2012 literature about the Libyan situation reflected hopefulness and a willingness to rebuild a new Libya. However, because of the ongoing conflict, many programmes have been suspended and the provision of new facilities delayed (Abushafa, 2014, p. 186). The future for Libya and its education system is more dubious and uncertain now, but this study explores how Libyan students acculturated their prior experiences and adjusted to the opportunity of master's courses' requirements in the UK.

1.3 Research questions

- 1) What are the main challenges that Libyan postgraduate students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict encounter?
- 2) To what extent do their previous experiences educationally, socially, culturally and politically affect their strategies for adaptation and development?
- 3) How do Libyan students adjust and adapt to an overseas academic environment?
- 4) How do Libyan students' experiences in the UK affect perceptions of their identity?

1.4 Overview of the conceptual framework

Communities of practice theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) as a framework has informed data generation and the data analysis of this study. I chose this theory because it is relevant and significant for the research due to the complex and competing communities of which the students are part. The study investigates the significance of the communities of practice from which they have come and into which they are now placed. Lave and Wenger (1991) demonstrate how knowledge, skills and capacities are developed through social interaction with others, and in doing so shift from a traditional view of learning as a product to be acquired by an individual to a concept of learning as social participation within communities of practice. One of the key aspects of communities of practices is identity formation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and the link between this and practice is significant for this study and will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. Using communities of practice theory as a framework has encouraged interrogation of the students' expectations, perceptions, perspectives, experiences and of their views of themselves during their master's overseas experience.

1.5 Overview of the methodology

This research is qualitative and interpretive examining the learning experiences of Libyan master's students in a UK university. It explores their expectations, perspectives and aspirations as they adjust to the new learning environment. The research forms a case study because it focuses on a group of students that have come from a very particular environment to study in the UK and who intend to

return to Libya. Ethical issues in this study which included permission, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, debrief and sensitivity were particularly important owing to the sensitive nature of the context. Demographic data from questionnaires was gathered initially, however, semi-structured interviews were the main source of significant data because Libyan students were interviewed three times: in the first semester; in the second semester; and then during the dissertation stage. A reflective diary and observation gave the researcher a chance for an outsider and an insider perspective. The role of the researcher, reflexivity and the reflective diary are discussed and described in detail in the methodology chapter.

The data was initially generated in the Arabic language, and then subsequently transcribed and translated. Data analysis was done manually and is presented according to a priori and emergent themes. The five stages of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilised: 1) Familiarisation with data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; and 5) defining and naming themes.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters. Following this chapter, chapter two looks critically at existing literature about teaching and learning in the UK HE system, including deep, surface and strategic approaches to learning and international students in the UK HE system; the challenges of being an international student which deals with the expectations of international students and coping strategies; culture and identity which is concerned with acculturation; intercultural communicative competence; the cultural other; models of intercultural adaptation (Oberg and Anderson); factors that affect identity construction for international students; national identity and cultural identity, and globalisation and identity crisis. Issues about identity as a multi-layered and contested concept are also discussed in detail. I have searched systematically for relevant literature, and this will be evident in the literature review chapter.

Chapter three discusses the framework of situated learning within communities of practice theory. It starts with a justification of the theory and the reasons for it being relevant to the current study. The essential aspects of the theory such as situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation, generational encounter, mutual engagement as a concept and enabler, diversity and partiality, and learning and becoming are addressed. A critical perspective of communities of practice theory is adopted throughout the thesis.

Chapter four presents the methodology starting with a justification of the chosen philosophical paradigm and of the methodological strategy. It describes the selection of the participants; identifies ethical issues and negotiation of access; comments on the role of the researcher which includes an insider and outsider perspective and reflexivity; discusses data generation and thematic analysis, and the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter five provides analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to the themes both of 'challenges' and of the 'consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict'. It also includes evidence from the data and its interpretation. The interpretation and the discussion in this chapter are linked with the literature review and communities of practice theory.

Chapter six presents analysis and discussion of the findings in relation to both 'Libyan students' adjustment and learning as social participation' as well as the themes of 'autonomous learning' and 'identity'.

Chapter seven offers general conclusions about the contribution, limitations and implications of the study, and suggests recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This investigation primarily focuses on the learning experiences of Libyan master's students at a UK university with regard to intercultural adaptation and identity. The aim of this chapter is to review the literature around relevant issues and to contextualise this study. This includes, initially, teaching and learning in the UK higher education system which deals with deep, surface and strategic approaches to learning and international students in the UK HE system; and the challenges of being an international student which focuses on the expectations of international students and coping strategies. There is then a focus on culture and identity which addresses acculturation; intercultural communicative competence; the cultural other; and models of intercultural adaptation (Oberg and Anderson). Also addressed are the factors that affect identity construction for international students; national identity and cultural identity, and globalisation and notion of identity crisis.

2.2 Teaching and learning in the UK HE system

Watkins (2000), Biggs (2003), and Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) argue that there are significant differences between western and eastern systems of education in that the education system in western universities focuses on a deep approach to learning, whereas the education system in eastern countries is based on a more surface approach that emphasises rote learning. Ho, Holmes and Cooper (2004) also identify two different approaches to learning, but chose to designate them as: 1) the dialectic approach which it is suggested is common in eastern education and is teacher-centred; and 2) the dialogic approach which is more common in western education and is student-centred. These opposing perspectives, however, tend to polarise what is inevitably a complex learning dynamic. Learning as a concept and experience as well as the associated issues addressed in this thesis may be more layered than these East and West stereotypes would suggest. However, for many international students including the Libyan students in this study, there is a dissonance between their previous educational experiences and their subsequent experience of learning in the UK HE system. So, the following section explores the context of that system.

Tweed and Lehman (2002) and Kühnen, Egmond, Haber, Kuschel, Özelsel, Rossi, and Spivak (2011) indicate that the core elements of the western education system are critical thinking and an active expression of one's own thoughts and ideas. The tendency to question, the esteem for self-generated knowledge, working in groups, and communication are all valued in western universities with some differences according to discipline. Garrison (1991) and Askill-Williams and Lawson (2005) see this as placing an emphasis in the western HE system on the development of intellectual and academic skills and the capacity to build an argument and/or participate in discussion. Debate and disputation are essential elements of western academic discourse, and during the course of learning students are encouraged to challenge each other and their tutors with different views when supported by evidence (Askill-Williams and Lawson, 2005). For Askill-Williams and Lawson (2005), classroom discussion also increases the motivation of students because students learn through interaction and enjoy participation. However, this may not reflect every student's perspective, especially international students whose background may be at odds with the situation and engagement.

Trahar (2011) indicates the cultural and educational issues that emerge when international students bring their approaches to teaching and learning to the HE academic environment. Fox (1994) had highlighted the significance of this especially around critical thinking:

This thing we call 'critical thinking' or 'analysis' has strong cultural components...it is a voice, a stance, a relationship with texts and authorities that is taught, both consciously and unconsciously, by family members, teachers, the media, even the history of one's own country...It means... finding words that show exact relationships between ideas, as is required in allow-context culture...It means valuing separateness over harmony.

(Fox, 1994, p. 125)

A society and culture which permits dissent and embraces individuality is more likely to be conducive to criticality. However, many students, not just those who are international, find critical engagement challenging, but its development in

western education begins with their HE journey. As in the UK, critical thinking and class discussion are essential aspects of the HE system in Europe. Kühnen et al. (2011, p. 59) conducted an online survey in Germany to study the signification of critical thinking and western classroom communication for students from western and eastern Europe, and from outside Europe. Their investigation revealed that students from different cultural backgrounds experienced alternative levels of difficulty when dealing with the demands of the system and with their tutors' expectations. That there may be some difficulty is evident, but it is the extent and nature of that difficulty which might be significant and adversely affect international students.

Another concept familiar in the UK and western education is that of empowerment. Zraa, Kavanagh and Morgan (2012, p. 162) have compared and contrasted Libyan and Australian students' perceptions of empowerment. Their study revealed that Australian students who were comfortable with the educational values and a western approach to learning felt more empowered than Libyan students whose unfamiliarity with the culture and teaching methods meant that at times they felt both disconcerted and disempowered. Empowerment, however, is by definition a western concept and the response is therefore perhaps not surprising given that the notion of empowerment might be quite alien to students used to a more authoritarian socio-political regime and education system. In Libya, students are usually required to be silent in class and obliged to listen (Zraa et al., 2012). Janjua, Malik and Rahman (2011) point out that one of the challenges which international students encounter is adjustment to a new academic environment, since they often bring with them the impact of their prior educational experiences and attitudes to learning from their home countries (see section 2.3.1). Despite the fact that studying abroad promotes change and the development of students' conception of learning, according to Entwistle and Peterson (2004), some educational aspects or socio-cultural values may be more entrenched and less susceptible to change than others. When these are at odds with an approach or pedagogy typical in UK HE, dissonance may be anticipated. The following section looks in more detail at approaches to learning and how these might differ according to context.

2.2.1 Deep approach, surface and strategic approaches to learning

The term “approaches to learning” here refers to how students represent their learning and how intention and process are combined to evoke a specific learning process (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004). For the purposes of this study, three different approaches to learning were identified; they are surface, deep and strategic approaches (Lublin, 2003; Entwistle and Peterson, 2004; Duarte, 2006). These represent an attempt to probe the complex and layered notion of learning. While it is useful to do this, it is recognised that learning takes many forms according to individual, task and circumstance. The following differentiation is not intended to indicate exclusivity or fragmentation of process. Entwistle and Peterson (2004) identify as a characteristic of the surface approach, “reproducing content” which they associate with a rote learner for whom memorisation and repetition are paramount (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004, p. 415). On the other hand, the characteristics of a deep approach of “seeking meaning” might be attributable to those who seek to understand ideas. This could involve selecting evidence and relating it to conclusions; arguing critically while examining logic; and those who engage with tasks with the intention of analysis and comprehension (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004). Finally, Entwistle and Peterson (2004) suggest a strategic approach to learning includes “putting effort into organised study” which involves achieving personal goals, managing time and effort effectively, while having awareness of criteria and assessment requirements, and a feeling of responsibility towards self and others (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004, p. 415). Although Entwistle and Peterson (2004) consider a strategic approach to learning as distinct, according to Shaheen (2012, p.110), the strategic approach is not singular in the same way as surface and deep approaches are, but rather it is concerned primarily with students’ ability to move between deep and surface approaches.

While Entwistle and Peterson (2004) choose to focus on these three approaches, they also draw attention to the fact that it is a contested area, and it is not a simple division of learning, but different types of learning might be suited to specific tasks. For example, the use of a deep approach by definition involves a range of aspects and does not necessarily imply the avoidance of memorisation.

Duarte (2006) explains that when students choose this approach to learning, it could be because they have analysed the task and realise that comprehension might demand memorisation at some stage or other for a particular purpose. In many subjects, for example medicine, rote learning is a crucial part of absorbing knowledge and developing understanding.

Inevitably there is also a relationship between the approaches to teaching employed by tutors and the approaches to learning adopted by students (Entwistle and Peterson, 2004; Duarte, 2006). According to Entwistle and Peterson (2004, p. 422), “good teaching” and “freedom in learning” are associated with a deep approach to learning; whereas “heavy workload” and a “lack of freedom” are linked to a surface approach. This again, however, implies rigid demarcations and value judgements about the nature of learning which may also ignore the fact that assessment could have an influence on the chosen approach to learning. If assessment rewards memorisation and reproduction, then that is what students will do in order to succeed. However, if the assessment requires students to interact, think critically, and build an argument, then students are more likely to adopt a deeper approach to learning. This thesis will explore Libyan students’ experience of shifting from the expectations of one educational environment to another.

2.2.2 International students in the UK HE system

According to the UK Council for International Students Affairs (UKCISA) (2013), there were 310,190 HE students from non-European countries and an additional 125,300 European students studying in the UK during the academic year 2013-14. Government policy with respect to education affects all students, but international students can also be affected by a wider range of strategic decisions and political and economic circumstances. Ryan highlights: “Deep cuts to universities’ teaching budgets, radical increases in student fees and cuts announced to international student numbers as part of the government’s capping of immigration numbers” (Ryan, 2011, p. 631). The point here is that, although international students numbers are not specified by government, changes to the UK immigration rules such as the closure of the former Post-Study Work visa,

which in the past allowed international graduates to be employed for two years after the successful completion of their courses, have been significant (Migration Observatory, 2012). Nominally to prevent fraudulent applications, eligibility for UK Tier 4 visas is now also limited to an 'embedded college' with a direct link to a specific university, and international students who wish to continue their British studies must apply for a new visa from outside the UK. The aim of visa changes is, it can be inferred, twofold: to reduce immigration abuse through bogus colleges but also, in line with government policy, to reduce immigration. The UK government considers these changes are "fair and progressive and that they make social and economic sense" (Garcia and Yates, 2015, p. 1). However, it is noteworthy that, despite these policy changes, there continues to be an increase in the number of international students coming to the UK. For example, according to Universities UK's survey, there was growth in the number of international students in all levels (undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research) in the academic year 2013-14 (Universities UK, 2014, p. 18). From a university perspective, investment in international recruitment may to an extent compensate for more general reductions in higher education funding as well as contributing in a way which is politically expedient to the globalisation and the internationalisation agenda (BBC, 2011; Trahar, 2011; Adams, 2014). As a result, university strategic development has often included international recruitment and more aggressive and extensive marketing of UK HE, indicating the commodification of UK HE as a commercial and economic product, and endorsing the activity and initiative by universities associated with that.

Education like business and the economy is subject to the contemporary imperative of globalisation. Globalisation encourages people to travel to study abroad and according to Trahar (2011), this has the potential to 'internationalise' higher education. Traditionally higher education has been context specific, but technology and mobility have required it to be more responsive and global. Internationalisation can be identified as "the process of integrating an international/inter-cultural and/or global dimension into the goals, functions, teaching, learning, research and services and delivery of higher education" (Fielden, 2011, p. 7). One feature of internationalisation is the recruitment of

international students. Although British universities acknowledge that there is intense competition from other countries particularly United States, Canada, Australia, and Germany with regard to attracting international students, western education has always been attractive to international students; perhaps because of its currency, and its status and reputation. The UK in particular, according to Universities UK (2014, p. 26), appeals to overseas students because it is an English speaking country with a number of well established and highly regarded institutions.

Reputation is dependent on a range of factors, including league tables, perceived status and international renown; however, for UK universities to attract the numbers they seek, they need also to provide an attractive environment which will appeal to students and other stakeholders such as parents and partners. As well as the estate, this is likely to include perceptions of the learning environment that students are likely to encounter and an academic context that is appropriate for international students regardless of backgrounds. The resultant multicultural environment is likely to be significant for all students.

Within that environment, learning as social participation in shared activity with host and other international students can have wide benefits. It may provide opportunities for intercultural interaction and enhance greater understanding of the other cultures. As Ryan states: "Reflection on cultural boundaries...self-reflection and learning about the self through the other" (Ryan, 2011, p. 636), and this has the potential to reduce stereotypes and promote integration. Integration of host and international students in the UK can also provide opportunities for more collaborative ways of thinking and the construction of new knowledge (Ryan, 2011, p. 642). What is more, international students may bring with them a new knowledge to the new academic environment, and this can provide a course with "an international perspective" (Hooley and Horspool, 2006, p. 3) which may broaden the minds of host students (Andrade, 2006; Lillyman and Bennett, 2014) and contribute to internationalisation. Working with others in a multicultural classroom might also assist students in the acquisition of aspects of intercultural communicative competence such as tolerance and respect to others from

different cultural backgrounds (Williams, 2005; Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp and Woodfield, 2013), and these aspects are likely to be significant for all students in order to be what might be termed 'global citizens'. Working with others can enhance confidence and understanding of other cultures which may also have an impact on future opportunities and development (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2013). However, whether exposure to students from other cultures leads to greater tolerance or not can depend on the nature of that interaction and the extent of international students' integration into their host or other society.

2.3 The challenges of being an international student

Studying abroad can be an exciting and challenging experience for international students because they encounter different social and cultural norms and values from the ones they might have known; different modes of teaching and learning; and different expectations and conventions about participation and performance (Janjua et al., 2011; Campbell, 2012). There are many factors that could however affect international students' adaptation, and each may have some significance for an individual situation or context. Firstly, the distance between international students' culture of origin and the host culture. In other words, the closer the student culture is to the host society, the easier interaction and adaptation is likely to be (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Mehdizadeh and Scott, 2005). Secondly, the amount of time students have been exposed to the host culture, including duration of stay in a host society; the extent of social networking and support to which they have been exposed; the better their language and social skills, all will greatly affect the everyday life of students (Russell, Rosenthal and Thomson, 2010). Thirdly, Sulkowski and Deakin (2009) indicate that international students entering the UK HE system are likely to have previously interacted with other cultures, either through travelling or other foreign programmes, which may lead to some modification of cultural behaviour and to greater acceptance and tolerance of difference (Russell et al., 2010). However, this is not the case for all international students, and none of the participants in this study had had an opportunity previously to study or to travel abroad. This is because prior to 2011, the Gaddafi regime placed restrictions on Libyan citizens' travel and study in the West; the latter being only permissible with a government scholarship given on

the basis of compliance and political endorsement. This thesis does address issues of cultural adjustment and adaptation, however, it is noteworthy that these Libyan students are only in the UK for one year for a master's course.

Most literature on international students has illustrated a deficit approach towards their abilities. Often international students are described as rote learners, passive, unwilling to participate in classroom discussion, prone to plagiarism, and lacking in critical thinking and self-study skills (Ryan and Carroll, 2005; Asmar, 2005). Bamford's (2008) case study about the perceptions of international students of their educational experiences in the UK HE system highlights that independent study was a challenge at the initial stage of the course; however, she does not elaborate further to highlight a reason for that. Tutors, it appears, face difficulties encouraging class participation and integration between international and host students (Ryan and Carroll, 2005) and identify concomitant academic problems as a result (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Hooley and Horspool's (2006) study of international students and tutors' perceptions about non-native speakers' HE experiences in the UK reinforces this perspective and reveals challenges which include "poor understanding of academic conventions, especially plagiarism; a lack of willingness to participate in discussion based learning and poor learning techniques" (Hooley and Horspool, 2006, p. 4). As a student body, international students are often problematised, and it can be inferred that the challenge they represent might lead to stereotyping them as poor performers who are needy and time-consuming. What is more, this can lead to international students seeming "unwilling to change and adapt to new conditions and imperatives" (Ryan, 2011, p. 637). Although results suggest that many international students, while not necessarily achieving as highly as host students, are successful and competent learners (Higher Education Statistic Agency HESA, 2014), occasional studies reveal that international students can perform as well or better than host students (Morrison, Merrick, Higgs and Metais, 2005; Forland, 2006). However, a range of factors are likely to be significant in performance since international students are not a homogeneous group but differ in nationality, language, and educational background as well as in the individual qualities they bring to a new learning environment.

However, while Trahar and Hyland, 2011 (p. 623) suggest international students in the UK HE system encounter challenges that are often associated with particular classroom activities such as group work, Russell et al. list a wide range of challenges experienced by international students in an Australian context, including:

Homesickness, loss of support systems, loneliness, lack of meaningful relationships with host nationals, culture shock, perceived discrimination, language difficulties, unfamiliar academic approaches and overload, an altering sense of identity, and financial problems.

(Russell et al., 2010, p. 236)

These challenges echo what Lewthwaite (1996) had noted in a small-scale study about international postgraduate students' perspectives on intercultural adaptation in New Zealand:

While most reported on obstacles to integration as being loneliness, mismatch of culture, frustration with the lack of deep integration with new Zealanders as well as irritation with aspects of their host culture, there was not a high level of stress reported. The greatest block to adaptation was lack of intercultural communicative competence.

(Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 167)

A review of various studies, including those mentioned above, suggest that, regardless of location, international students encounter similar challenges. As noted previously, they are not a homogeneous group, however, and, therefore, the extent and nature of these challenges might differ from one situation or nationality to another. The current research probes the subtlety and nature of this variation. Research with different nationalities is revealing because of the significance and impact of relevant factors on the dynamic of a multicultural classroom.

Although some research with international students has been conducted specifically about Asian students, it appears that their challenges are similar to other international students. For instance, they encounter language barriers, intercultural communication barriers, and an unfamiliar western culture of learning (Ward and Masgoret, 2004; Major, 2005; Campbell and Li, 2008). It is predictable that language might be a barrier for any student coming from a country where there is a different first language, however, the issue of cultural 'barriers' is more complex, and it is not necessarily helpful to see it as oppositional. Ha (2006), Ryan and Louie (2007) and Ryan and Viete (2009) highlight this by criticising the stereotypical representation of international students from China with Ryan and Louie (2007) stating that the unhelpful binary description of western and Confucian paradigms noted earlier can lead to ill-informed debates and lost opportunities for a mutual and respectful exchange of ideas and an integration of knowledge from one culture into another. Kingston and Forland's (2008) study reinforces the nuances of this debate, when in considering alternative aspects of learning, it suggests that Asian students can be deep, reflective and autonomous learners contradicting the typical western stereotype that students from a Confucian culture are passive, obedient, dependent and rote learners.

However, it is important to state that while students inevitably encounter challenges while initially studying abroad, especially during the first semester, these challenges may gradually disappear during the process of cultural transition (Heggins and Jackson, 2003). Adjustment is individual and nuanced. It may depend on support structures and personal relationships. However, for a successful experience and outcome, the aim is to adjust both academically and socioculturally. Schweisfurth and Gu (2009, p. 468) have also argued that, agency is what matters since, over time, international students gain more control of their own lives in terms of their comfort and competence in managing intercultural situations and having positive feelings about pedagogical approaches. This results in a growing sense of belonging with their peers; and a greater willingness to access opportunities to work cooperatively with people from other cultures and to take advantages of institutional support (tutors and

university monitoring system) to facilitate their personal and academic development and to engender a more positive intercultural experience. Forland (2006) states that when making a comparison between the UK's higher education system and their home countries, students often comment on positive aspects of the learning process in the UK such as moving to active learning; participating in one-to-one tutorials and group work; assimilating constructive feedback by a tutor and what they see as a comparative academic freedom. Although there might be an initial reluctance towards some activities, according to Forland (2006), international students are highly adaptive and enjoy the different activities and assessment techniques in the UK HE system, a conclusion supported by Hills and Thom (2005). Similarly, an investigation of Chinese learners' experiences in the UK by Gu and Schweisfurth (2006) reveals that, despite intercultural challenges, most Chinese students are able to survive the demands of the new academic environment and take an opportunity to develop and change. It can be inferred therefore that international students are likely to face challenges at the beginning when they encounter an unfamiliar HE system, but that, with time, they are likely to manage these challenges and adapt to the system. What is significant is how that process is accommodated and managed and the extent to which students' background experience might impinge on or affect the process.

2.3.1 Expectations of international students

Moving to a new environment, inevitably, international students have expectations of the experience which can be academic, social, or cultural. However, as Pitts (2009) observes, often there is a gap between student expectations and the reality of their overseas experience, which may lead to stress, distress (Scherto, 2007; Pitts, 2009) and shock (Janjua et al., 2011). Similarly, Subhash (2013, p. 835) points out that, for international students, shock is very common at an initial stage of the overseas experience owing to the differences between the academic norms and conventions of their home country and the expectations of the new academic environment. Griffiths, Winstanley and Gabriel (2005) indicate that when international students encounter unfamiliar methods of teaching and learning and a new academic environment, they may

face anxiety and frustration, lose confidence and feel unable to engage with the alternative context. They add that it is very common at master's level because the period of the master's taught programmes in the UK is only one year, and therefore the pressure to adjust and adapt is that much greater. International students, especially those sponsored by governments, may be amongst the academically most able in their countries. When they travel abroad, therefore, according to Smith and Khawaja (2011, p. 703), they might reasonably expect to perform academically as well as they would in their home country. However, given the change in situation and standards, initial academic performance overseas may be below their expectations, leading to stress and a lack of confidence. The UK Quality Code explains the academic standards necessary for higher education qualifications in the UK, and these are likely to be different from one country to another.

Li, Baker and Marshall (2002) suggest that international students also bring with them expectations that may be derived from their cultural context and this could include different concepts of learning. However, the challenge is when tutors expect them to perform academically according to the requirements of the new educational environment. Differences in teaching and learning cultures and a lack of understanding between international students and their tutors have the potential for 'conflicting expectations' (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997; Li, 2005) which may be an important issue in multicultural classrooms. This idea of conflict is not just a sort of tension, but something more significant in terms of a lack of understanding. For example, the tutor may see a deficiency academically in student while a student sees a tutor as not being sympathetic. Expectations will differ according to discipline and according to background, but students are likely to have either explicit or implicit expectations of any new experience, including a new teaching and learning environment. Burton and Kirshbaum (2013) emphasise the significance of international students' understanding the approaches to learning to which they will be exposed prior to coming to a new academic environment. Having an idea about relevant concepts and the core elements of a new academic environment has the potential to reduce an expectation gap and its consequences; however, this is not always possible

despite what universities might do to encourage it. Evidence suggests “international students with met expectations and previous experience abroad have greater adjustment, high satisfaction, and less stress than those without” (Pitts 2009, p. 451). This is predictable in so far as satisfaction is likely to align closely with the fulfilment of expectations, but it may also be owing to the fact that, when expectations are met, motivation is likely to increase and enhance the adjustment process (Kim, 2001).

Social expectations may also have an impact. Pitts (2009) argues that many international students expect “complete integration” with host students; however, when confronted with reality, they find it a challenge to create meaningful relationships with them. She explains this is owing to “cultural differences” (Pitts, 2009, p. 454) with the result that international students resort to strengthening their relationship with other co-national students instead. However, the nature of the social expectations may vary according to the cultural context and the environment from which students come. Cultural expectations and social expectations are closely linked since according to Pitts (2009), on their arrival, international students may have idealised views about the society and culture. When they do not find what they had imagined, they encounter stress and shock. She added that, when international students have difficulty in adapting to social norms that are deeply-rooted in a host culture such as ‘eye contact, drinking alcohol’; misunderstanding or incomprehension of the host culture can push students away from engaging in host practices and again strengthen relations with their own co-national group. If the expectations of international students are too high, then students are likely to be quite significantly disappointed. Utilising coping strategies and social interaction with co-national, host and international colleagues are likely to be significant for international students.

2.3.2 Coping strategies: Social interaction and language

The techniques that students use to solve a problem are called coping strategies, which, according to Taylor, refer to “the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimise stressful events” (Taylor, 1998). Utilising coping strategies is likely to be

significant for international students in dealing with the challenges in a new society as Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman (2008) state: "Cross-cultural travellers need to develop coping strategies to deal with the stress which is caused by life changes in the process of cross-cultural transitions" (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 66). However, it appears that most studies about the experiences of international students focus on the challenges that they face, rather than on the coping strategies that they employ despite the necessity of these when in a new academic environment. For the purpose of this study, social interaction with colleagues and tutors is examined in relation to coping strategies.

In order to cope with the requirements of a new academic environment, colleagues' assistance and advice can be crucial. For instance, Morita's (2009) case study of the academic experience of a doctoral international student (Kota) revealed that he had difficulty in communicating his research ideas and receiving feedback and understanding course materials. However, despite these challenges, Kota employed a number of techniques to cope. For example, talking one-to-one with his classmates outside the classroom was a strategy critical for his learning about the academic environment and developing membership with his colleagues. Hughes and Wisker (1998) and McDowell and Montgomery (2009) also emphasise the significance of the assistance which is offered by colleagues. A student who has already completed a year or a term may provide support for a new student which helps the more recent arrival to cope with his or her new academic experience (Bamford, 2008). The more established colleague is offering experience and friendship in terms of their interaction. However, this is not always easy to engineer unless tutors deliberately link students from different years or students are part of friendship group where this could occur.

Social interaction with co-national, host and other international students are quite likely to be significant for all students. Ward et al. (2001) and Zhou et al. (2008) highlight that international students tend to belong to three social networks: 1) they may maintain their cultural behaviour within their co-national network; 2)

they may interact with host students, and 3) they may also have interaction with students from other cultures. The delineation is useful since each of the three can be significant in different ways in assisting international students' adaptation and adjustment to a new academic environment and socio-cultural context.

Co-national networks can be a powerful source of support for international students. Interaction on a regular basis with colleagues of the same nationality often provides solidarity. This may be because they have a lot in common such as a similar background, the same culture and the same first language. Many overseas students, it seems, are likely to incline towards friends from the same culture (Andrade, 2006; Zhou et al., 2008; Bodycott, 2015). Similarly, Lee (2009) points out that it is common for international students from the same cultural background on the same course to have regular interaction. This may be because they are likely to meet outside the classroom in other social interactions. Other studies highlight the significance of having communication with family, colleagues and friends of the same nationality because, according to Dunne (2009) and Curtin, Stewart and Ostrove (2013), this can provide different sources of support for international students. It can reduce stress (Fontaine, Gao and Narui, 2010) and it can also ameliorate feelings of loneliness and isolation (Furnham and Alibhai (1985, cited in Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000, p. 291). This is because interaction with colleagues of the same nationality can produce humour and storytelling as students take turns to share experiences, and this can enhance their adjustment. As Bodycott (2015) points out that, compatriots are likely to discuss and share their information and understanding of the new culture. Students may also receive emotional support, and according to Maundeni (2001), this is because co-national groups can provide international students with a sense of cultural identity. What is more, interaction regularly with colleagues from the same nationality has the potential to assist international students to reduce the expectation gap as Pitts states: "Within their co-national network, sojourns are able to refine and create new expectations for study abroad through everyday talk" (Pitts, 2009, p. 450). As stated in section 2.3.1, international students who experience a gap in their social and cultural expectations tend to strengthen their relationship with co-nationals. Daily

interaction with co-nationals may also assist students to develop confidence that is essential for temporary adjustment. However, these studies assume solidarity amongst co-nationals which might not always be the case if there are political disputes or civil unrest.

Interaction with host students can also be significant and, according to Ward et al (2001) and Ward and Kennedy (1993), will assist international students with regard to acquiring specific skills. This is because host students might be more familiar with the expectations of the course since their master's degree is in their home country. Other studies also make a link between interaction with host students and student satisfaction as Leong and Ward state: "Sojourners who interact more often with their hosts tend to be more satisfied than those who spend most of their time with fellow nationalities" (Leong and Ward, 2000, p. 766). Lewthwaite (1996) also emphasises that international students who make social contact and establish relationships with host students during their study tend to have more satisfactory academic and non-academic experiences. This may possibly be owing to the fact that the more they interact with host students, the more they feel appreciated, accepted and welcomed. Interaction with host students is often also associated with academic, social and psychological benefits. Andrade states: "The more interaction, international students had with Americans, the greater their adjustment" (Andrade, 2006, p. 136) and another recent United States (US) study reinforces this when Curtin et al. (2013) found that international students in the United States who had an opportunity to interact with Americans were better adapted than those who do not. However, this may depend on the nature of the interaction. For instance, if international students perceive discrimination and prejudice, this would be likely to cause distress and undermine confidence, which will adversely affect adaptation. However, it is important to say that interaction between international and host students is complex, fluid and multifaceted cultural dynamic.

Despite the benefits of intercultural interaction with host students, it is often limited, perhaps owing to cultural distance or perceived discrimination. For example, Asian students in New Zealand found it a challenge to make friends

with host students (Chalmers and Volet, 1997), and Campbell and Li (2008) highlight cultural differences and lack of intercultural communication as the main reasons behind their challenges. Similarly, Schweisfurth and Gu (2009, p. 463) highlight that international undergraduate students at UK universities have challenges that are often associated with limited opportunities to interact with British people, especially outside classroom. In their research, they claim that, although there might be opportunities for cooperative and collaborative learning through shared activity such as group work and discussion within classroom, these are not always successful owing to perceived discrimination. However, it appears that the issue is complex, and there may be other reasons behind that limited intercultural communication and difficulty of building friendship with host students.

International students and British students may have a desire to integrate and interact with each other, but it is possible that there are 'misconceptions' (Macias and Dolan, 2008, p. 17). As indicated above, both host and international students might have the perception that students from the same cultural backgrounds prefer to be together (Chalmers and Volet, 1997). This is likely to lead many of them to avoid intercultural situations. Dunne's (2009) study of Irish students' perspectives about their interaction with international students explains the factors that affect intercultural contact. He suggests these are: 1) many Irish students feel anxious about being misunderstood and in turn perceived as racist by international students due to cultural differences, different ways of thinking and behaviour, and lack of understanding; 2) they perceive the presence of international students from the same nationality in class adversely to affect intercultural interaction, because there is a general consensus that international students from the same nationality tend to join together; and 3) they also assume that international students do not need them as they reported that "international students had less motivation to engage with host students as their needs could be increasingly satisfied through interaction with their own cultural peers" (Dunne, 2009, p. 229). These various assumptions can inhibit intercultural interaction, lead to lost opportunities of integration, and are likely negatively to affect learning and the construction of new knowledge on both sides. To date no research on

the nature of the interaction between international and host students appears to be done. This study is an attempt to fill that gap.

International students may also interact with others from different cultural backgrounds because they are all second language learners (SLL), and, according to McDowell and Montgomery (2009), this can provide academic and social support. It may offer opportunities for developing English language competence and learning skills, and this tends to enhance students' adjustment (Zaccagnini and Verenikina, 2013); however, host students can also offer opportunities for that. Situated learning and learning as social participation in shared practice with multicultural students can be crucial for international students in terms of acquiring skills, particularly if they are more experienced. Regular interaction with other international students either inside or outside class tends to contribute to building relationships that are essential for learning and this has the potential to enhance adaptation because interaction with other nationals has often been associated with "fewer academic problems, fewer social difficulties, improved intercultural communicative competence and better general adaptation to the life overseas" (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 70). Developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is significant for international students (for further discussion of this, see section 2.4.2). According to Kim (2001) and Hebrok (2011), interaction with others from different cultural backgrounds has also the potential to promote acceptance and willingness to accommodate out-groups. This is because interaction with others may enhance greater understanding, and, for Ward and Kennedy (1993); Ward and Masgoret (2004); Masgoret (2006), this is likely to assist adjustment.

The seminal work of Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'Situated Learning' and Wenger's (1998) 'Communities of Practice' theory stresses the importance of learning as social participation in communities of practice (CoPs) (in the context of this study the multicultural classroom). They highlight the significance of locating newcomers in a community of practice (CoP) in order to acquire knowledge and skills and to build their identity. For international students, this can be especially resonant if knowledge is constructed through interaction and collaboration

between newcomers and old-timers. This is fundamental to the framework of this thesis and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3. However, in the UK, English language competence is essential for intercultural interaction.

Having appropriate English language competence can promote interaction with host and other international colleagues and, as Norton (2000) and Zacharias (2010) highlight, language enables international students to gain access to different social networks. English language competence is also essential to adjustment to a new socio-cultural context, and it may affect the amount of support received from host people (Yashima and Tanaka, 2001, p. 1201). Language competence is crucial for all international students because it is fundamental for effective learning. The ability to communicate fluently and effectively and to listen purposefully in conversation can enhance confidence, allow greater integration and build relationships with others.

Classrooms in the UK HE require students to interact with their colleagues, to make presentations and to participate in class discussion, and these activities require competent language use and a high level of academic discourse. Having effective communication skills is therefore important since it encourages engagement in creative interaction, the assumption of a positive role in class discussion and the ability to undertake successful presentations (Bachman, 1990; Wisker, 2005) all of which are important in UK HE especially in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Despite IELTS, it appears that language issue is challenge for international students wherever they are. For instance, Janjua et al. (2011, p. 1360) point out, it affects international students' understanding of lectures and undermines confidence in Pakistan. A recent quantitative study by Singh (2013, p. 6) about the challenges that international HE students in Malaysia encounter indicates that communicating ideas fluently is the most difficult of their language issues (59.9%); however, he does not elaborate further to highlight the reasons behind that challenge and its social impact. Another recent study by Subhash (2013) explains that half of the Indian master's students in a Business school in the UK

perceive language as challenge because it prevented effective communication with their tutor and understanding assessment criteria; while also undermining socialisation with host and international students. It seems reasonable to assume that language may affect international students' socialisation with host students, but it may also have an impact on these international students in the study because they are all SLL. Aldoukalee's (2013) research focuses on Libyan students and suggests that for them English language is also one of the main challenges; however, the reasons behind that challenge are not highlighted. It is worth stating that, while similar to this study, Aldoukalee focused on Libyan students in the UK, she generated data simply through questionnaire and focused only on the challenges rather than on adaptation to the new academic environment. Although her study was conducted in 2013, it appears that the ongoing conflict Libya was completely ignored. In addition, her study investigated the challenges that PhD Libyan students who have a four year scholarship encounter which is different from master's students who have only one year of study overseas.

Research about immigrants and refugees may also have some relevance to this study in so far as issues around language affect them as well as international students. For example, Fuertes-Gutiérrez's (2015) study about the experiences of refugees in a new environment indicates that culture shock, loneliness, and language barriers are the main challenges. Refugees with limited English language competence have difficult lives when they try to settle in a new culture and, according to Lu (2001), they may separate themselves from the host society. In order to assist refugees to overcome these language challenges, Fuertes-Gutiérrez's (2015) study suggests speaking slowly, avoiding idioms, and learning a few phrases to express greetings. It can be argued however that while these strategies may be effective for refugees dealing with their daily life, the issue of language for international students is more complex because they have to understand the academic discourse and discipline specific lexis of the learning environment. They are also required to use academic English in their writing and they should communicate fluently and effectively with their colleagues and tutors

in order to develop social networks and relationships that are significant for learning.

2.4 Culture and identity

Culture and identity are for many people closely linked. This section provides a definition of each term respectively. There are many definitions of culture, but Spencer-Oatey (2012) is a particularly helpful for this study because she focuses on values and orientations to life and raises issues which are closely aligned with identity. Spencer-Oatey identifies culture as:

A fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behaviour.

(Spencer-Oatey, 2012, p. 2)

Values are significant in understanding culture. In order to understand the behaviour of any group, we must look for the values that govern behaviour. Spencer-Oatey (2012) identifies dominant values which are divided into: 1) non-debatable values, for which the term “assumptions” is appropriate; and 2) debatable values, for which the term “values” is more appropriate. As stated earlier, international students are not a homogeneous group, the values of Libyan students will be different from other international students, for example, those from a European country. Culture is not genetic, but is learnt from one's social environment, and, therefore, according to Zimmermann (2015) and Alina (2015), it is fluid and not fixed. Culture is dynamic and changing. However, for some societies, there may be aspects of culture that are more entrenched and governed by deep-rooted affiliations such as religion. There are elements of Libyan social and cultural mores that have remained the same for hundreds of years, but there has also been some change. For example, socially and politically, gender roles have developed.

Zhou et al. (2008) argue against expecting international students to assimilate to the ways of teaching and learning of a host society, because “aspects of culture are deep-rooted and change could be seen as a profound threat to identity in some eastern cultures” (Zhou et al., 2008, p. 72). Understanding the cultural background of international students is significant to this study because “to reject or demean a person’s cultural heritage is to do psychological and moral violence to the dignity and worth of that individual” (Pai, Adler, and Shadiow, 2006, p. 22). The strength of words here reinforces the importance of the link between culture and identity. Linked to this, Burton and Kirshbaum (2013, p. 109) suggest the significance of a “meta-awareness” of cultural differences because what is considered appropriate in one culture may be inappropriate in another one. By developing a meta-awareness of cultural differences, students and their tutors can build relationships that tend to reduce challenges and promote shared perspectives. In addition, teaching international students requires “cultural sensitivity” (Healey, 2008, p. 347). The significance of cultural sensitivity is about not making assumptions and not being judgmental, and is a matter of awareness of cultural differences, and of tutors’ and students’ enhanced understanding and appreciation. For further discussion about cultural sensitivity, see section 2.4.1.

Another dimension of the cultural implication of teaching suggested by Zhou et al. (2008) is that of “cultural synergy” which values mutual efforts from both tutors and international students to understand each others’ cultures. Cultural synergy is not just about understanding or even empathy; it is about behaving in a way that is cognisant of the cultural nuances of situation. Cultural synergy suggests a reciprocal process where both tutors and students seek to understand each others’ cultural traditions and values in order to interpret their behaviour and their learning dynamic (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997). The key to ‘cultural synergy’ is that different views are respected and accommodated.

Identity is a layered and at times contested concept (Hall, 2003) which relates to our sense of knowing who we are and the groups to which we belong (Grace, 2006). Identity is multi-layered according to Pison (2005, p. 4) because it has four elements: the physical layer, the social layer, the habits layer, and the values and

ideas layer. Identity however is also contested because of the effects of globalisation, migration, and intercultural contact (Kopytowska, 2012, p. ii). It is a “process” that is “developmental” and “dynamic” and which always remains incomplete, always “in process” and always “being formed” (Hall, 2003, p. 608). “No identity is ever fixed for all time” (Curtin, 2006, p. 170). So, if identity is fluid and changing, as Hall points out, “the fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy” (Hall, 2003, p. 598).

Identity is, however, fundamental, and core values can be entrenched. Libyan students confronted by a multicultural classroom in an unfamiliar socio-cultural context will inevitably be affected. Wenger argues that “we know who we are by what is familiar, understandable, usable, negotiable; we know who we are not by what is foreign, opaque, unwieldy, unproductive” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). This identifies the challenge for international students who are by definition in an environment which is foreign and opaque and whose identities may be affected as a result. Hall (1990) shares Wenger’s (1998) view that identity is constituted not only by what we are, but also by what we are not. Hall states: “Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference” (Hall, 1990, p. 4). This is an important point because international students may define themselves not just through the practices in which they engage but also by others in which they do not participate. Islamic or occidental core values will affect participation and interaction in certain practices and circumstances. For example, female students may prefer to interact with other females for Islamic and cultural purposes. This will be discussed in more detail in the culture and gender section 5.2.2 in chapter 5.

In line with Hall (2003), Wenger points out that our identities are reformed when we experience “tension between our investment in the various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts” (Wenger, 1998, p. 188). Multiple identities can interact and, then, can be contested, leading to conflict and/or ultimately to resolution. Regardless what happens, however, reconciliation can be always a creative process (Wenger, 1998, p. 160). This may

lead to a process of acculturation which is a matter of adjustment that is discussed in the next section.

2.4.1 Acculturation

Acculturation is a significant issue for all students and is relevant to communities of practice because members have to become part of that culture. There are many views about acculturation; an early definition about its nature which is particularly useful for this study and has been widely quoted states:

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.

(Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936, cited in Berry, 2005, p. 701)

Redfield et al.'s comment, although dated, still has resonance in so far as it focuses on the cultural change that results from regular intercultural contact, and is considered to generate change "either in one or both groups"; so acculturation can take place in either or both the dominant group and non-dominant group. Communication is crucial to the acculturation process because it tends to assist individuals to develop insight into a new society (Kim, 2001). It can also assist international students to adjust to life abroad and to add new dimensions to their 'self' (Pitts, 2009, p. 451). It can be inferred therefore that interaction with others can affect an individual's identity because as Hebrok (2011, p. 55) points out identity is not fixed but may develop through social interaction with others. It is through interaction with others that aspects of identity might lose significance (Kim, 2001); however, some core values may be more rooted and less susceptible to change as a result of communication with host and international colleagues.

However, as stated in section 2.3.2, effective intercultural communication in an English speaking country requires 'English language competence' because this has the potential to facilitate interaction between host and international

colleagues. Furthermore, Allport's (1954) contact theory, although dated, is still significant and referred to by many researchers (Gill, 2007; Yue and Le, 2012; Soria and Troisi, 2014). This theory suggests three criteria under which successful intercultural communication can be achieved: 1) "equality"; 2) "shared aims and goals", and 3) "authority support" (Allport, 1954, cited in Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009, p. 465) and although some overlap between them is possible, each criterion may be significant in enhancing intercultural communication. Motivation can also be affect acculturation process (Kim, 2001). For instance, if motivation is diminished, acculturation will be minimal. If motivation is strong, individuals may grow in appreciation of both the new culture and their own culture of origin.

However, it appears that individuals do not undergo acculturation in the same way, and, according to Berry (2005, p. 705), there are four acculturation strategies: "integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalisation". These strategies may depend on 1) individuals' preferences of how to acculturate and 2) behaviours that are exhibited in regular intercultural contact. When an individual does not want to maintain his or her cultural identity and seeks interaction with other cultures regularly, 'assimilation' results. In contrast, when individuals place value on holding their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then 'separation' is defined. However, when individuals are interested in both maintaining their original culture and interacting regularly with other groups, 'integration' results. Finally, when there is little interest in cultural maintenance and little interest in building relations with others, then marginalisation is defined. Although Berry (2005) highlights individuals have the freedom of how to acculturate, this may not always be the case because the dominant group may enforce the choice of a certain strategy of acculturation on a non-dominant group (i.e. international students). For example, if international students perceive discrimination or exclusion, they are likely to feel marginalised.

Integration may be a preferable strategy, and, according to Berry (2005); Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer and Lee (2011) and Barjesteh and Vaseghi (2012), individuals who choose this strategy are likely to achieve better

adaptation. Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik utilise the term “biculturalism” instead of “integration” and they also emphasise the fact that “bicultural individuals tend to be better adjusted (e.g. show higher self-esteem, lower depression, prosocial behaviours) and are better able to integrate competing tenets from the different cultures to which they are exposed” (Schwartz et al., 2010, pp. 238-239). This may possibly be because an integration strategy takes into consideration both cultures (i.e. the host culture and the home culture) without discarding either of them. However, short-term master’s students are unlikely to seek integration; they may want to observe, learn, and select from the social and cultural experiences which are significant and relevant to them and to their learning and development. So, one may not need to adopt the whole host culture, but as Evanoff (2006, p. 425) explains, there might be “selectivity” whereby some aspects are valued while others are not. The term “enculturation” has been used to refer to this process of selectively whereby one retain elements of one’s own heritage culture while also selectively acquiring some elements from the receiving cultural context (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 239). Therefore, enculturation has the potential to transform individuals in significant ways. An aspect of enculturation relates to intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural sensitivity is “an affective aspect of intercultural communication where individuals have active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures” (Chen and Starosta, 1998, p. 231). Intercultural sensitivity can be distinguished from intercultural awareness through the way in which individuals experience cultural differences. It is a sequential journey from a state of ignorance to a position of understanding and empathy, or from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. As Bennett and Bennett (2004) states, intercultural sensitivity includes three stages that individuals typically go through: 1) ‘denial’ in which the difference between the host culture and individuals’ culture is not recognised; 2) ‘defence’ in which the difference is acknowledged, but one culture is believed to be superior to another and the final ethnorelative stage 3) ‘acceptance’ when differences are accepted. The stages present a delineated and sequential process, but where each stage has distinctive characteristics. However, it can be argued that intercultural sensitivity

may not be systematic or a linear; it depends on the individual and on circumstances. It appears that in the ethnocentric stages, individuals see their own culture as central and measure all other cultures against their own culture; whereas in the ethnorelative stage, an individual feels comfortable acknowledging cultural differences. Clearly, intercultural sensitivity is significant for international students because it is an essential aspect of intercultural communicative competence.

2.4.2 Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Intercultural communicative competence can be an outcome of intercultural communication and it can be defined as “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that supports effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett, 2011, p. 3). It seems that ICC has the potential to assist students from different cultural backgrounds to communicate in an appropriate manner.

ICC can include a number of essential aspects, and, according to Lewthwaite (1996, p. 169), ICC includes: 1) flexibility and open-mindedness; 2) language competence; 3) communication skills (the ability to communicate with others in culturally appropriate way and underline empathy, intercultural sensitivity); 4) communication effectiveness (the ability to communicate with host students and deal with misunderstandings), and 5) knowledge of the host culture (knowing something about the host culture reduces intercultural misunderstandings and stress). It appears that each of these components of ICC can facilitate communication with different cultural groups. Ting-Toomey (1999); Hiller and Wozniak (2009); Perry and Southwell (2011) also reinforce the breadth and significance of ICC, by referring to: perceptual understanding (open-mindedness, flexibility and empathy); emotional resilience (the ability to deal with stress in a constructive way and to cope with ambiguity); perceptual acuity (the ability to observe and interpret the others' actions through cultural lens); adopting positive attitudes towards other cultures, and self-awareness. The different components might come together or might interact in a purposeful and communicative way. A recent study by Soria and Troisi (2014, p. 262) suggested that appreciation of

diversity and comfort in working with people from other cultures can also be aspects of ICC. The UK HE system values diversity in that students have an opportunity to interact with others in shared practice inside and outside classroom, and this has the potential to assist students to acquire aspects of ICC. ICC is important for international students not only as part of their overseas experience, but also with respect to their knowledge and understanding when they are back home (see section 2.2.2).

The acquisition of ICC is significant, and, according to Masgoret (2006), it can facilitate international students' adaptation. This may be because being open-minded; flexible; having empathy and intercultural sensitivity towards others can promote students' willingness and acceptance to engage with different groups. Learning as social participation with those from different cultural backgrounds can enhance students' learning in terms of acquiring skills, and it can affect their identity and perceptions towards others. Intercultural communication affects identity because it can allow greater understanding and undermine stereotypes and negative attitudes towards others through reflection on self. This view is supported by Alred, Byram and Fleming who state: "By developing intercultural communicative competence, individuals are able to be aware of the intercultural experience and to develop insights into self and other through critical reflection" (Alred et al., 2003, p. 4). Notions of insight and critical reflection strengthen an awareness of self. A recent study by Yue and Le also emphasises that "intercultural contact is highly likely to affect the sojourner's perception of his or her cultural identity and relations with the in-groups and out-groups" (Yue and Le, 2012, p. 138). Intercultural communication with others is significant for international students because it can enhance understanding of their own selves and others.

2.4.3 The cultural other

Stromquist (2002) and Sanderson (2004) state that to internationalise the self, one needs to understand both his or her own identity and the "Cultural Other" because only when we define our own identity, are we able to understand the identity of others. Respect for the "Cultural Other" means that a person has both

awareness and critical reflection. As stated above, in the UK HE system, students have an opportunity to interact with their colleagues from different cultural backgrounds on regular basis, and this may assist students to develop an understanding and appreciation of others. As Gill (2007) points out, intercultural experience enables students to acquire a greater knowledge and understanding about other cultures through “constant interaction” and “exposure to different values and world views” in a host society (Gill, 2007, p. 175). The presence of students from different cultural backgrounds allows for interaction in shared activity and is likely to be significant because according to Thomas and Sanderson (2009), it can help students to accept differences. It can also assist to undermine and eradicate stereotypes (Leki, 2001) and this is because according to Evanoff (2006), intercultural interaction can assist the production of new ideas which may be different from the ideas that are already present within either one of them. However, to date there is limited academic evidence on the experiences of postgraduate students, particularly the nature of the interaction with students of different cultural backgrounds within an academic context and how they feel about that relationship.

Otherness, however, might be perceived as “fear of the unknown”. The idea of the “fear of the unknown” refers to difficulty in accepting others, especially through “known unknown” (Sanderson, 2004, p. 13). Fear of the unknown might be through ignorance that generates assumptions about behaviours and attitudes which are governed by the media or a marginal view. It seems that ‘known unknown’ is a way in which others can be stereotyped, so that rather than making an effort to know and accept, there is alienation, and this can lead to ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism can generate premature judgements and lead to misinterpretation of people from other cultures. It is often associated with “negative connotations” (Moore, 2003, p. 14) and this may be because it relates to individuals’ attitudes that they are “strong and superior” and the out-group members are “inferior and weak” (Lin and Rancer, 2003, p. 63). This is likely to adversely affect intercultural communication and according to Gudykunst and Kim (1997), this may be due to

lack of shared goals and a sense of inequality between in-group and out-group. Ethnocentrism can also enhance utilising the unhelpful binary terms that describe West and East stereotypes, “ignoring the many degrees of relationship that exist between the poles” (Curtin, 2006, p. 169). As stated in section 2.3, using binary opposition to show differentiation and to express distance from others can negatively affect integration and generate prejudice.

Integration with others can be a significant issue for international students. International students in the UK HE system are required to participate with home and international colleagues in shared activities such as discussion, group work, group assignments or presentations. However, international students who have difficulty integrating with host students and their culture tend to experience distance and their own identity as a “foreigner” rather than feeling like a “temporary member” of the host country (Pedersen et al., 2011, p. 883). Discrimination can lead to a feeling of exclusion, loss of comfort and identity confusion. International master’s students are foreigners in the accepted definition of the word but the significance and implications of this will affect their sense of ‘otherness’ and the potential offered for acculturation despite their short period of stay.

2.4.4 Models of intercultural adaptation (Oberg and Anderson)

When people enter a new culture, intercultural adaptation is almost inevitable. According to Kim (2001), the basic ideas of intercultural adaptation are:

- 1) Human has innate self-organising drive and capacity to adjust to changes;
- 2) an individual’s adaptation occurs through communication,
- and 3) adaptation is a dynamic process that brings about a transformation of an individual and emergence of an intercultural identity.

(Kim, 2001, pp. 35-38)

Through intercultural adaptation it appears that intercultural identity can emerge as a result of interaction with others. Within the UK HE system, international students have an opportunity to meet and interact with students from other

cultures, and this has the potential to facilitate the emergence of intercultural identity (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009), but only if the environment is conducive. The significance and importance of intercultural identity socially, politically and economically is what has driven the higher education internationalisation agenda.

This section discusses two models of intercultural adaptation: Oberg (1960) and Anderson (1994). For this study, elements of both are significant and therefore both models have resonance. Oberg sees intercultural adaptation as a linear developmental process whereas Anderson offers a model that has a greater flexibility and more credence than a more linear approach and is especially relevant to students who are only here for a year. Oberg (1960) describes the process of moving to a new culture in four stages: 'honeymoon, stress, recovery, and home'. Oberg's (1960) U-curve pattern, although dated, is still valued and referred to by many researchers (Lewthwaite, 1996; Gill, 2007; Pedersen, et al., 2011; Yue and Le, 2012). In the honeymoon stage, sojourners are excited about the new experience; they often look for similarities between the new culture and their own. After a few days, they encounter challenges; so many students feel stressed. Then, they try to cope with the challenges such as a new learning environment; members of the host culture's behaviour and cultural values and beliefs; and the accommodation of their own cultural values and beliefs and academic expectations. During this stage, many international students are able to manage the challenges, so they move from crisis to recovery stage where they 'reshape' their identity to cope with the situation. Finally, Oberg (1960) indicates that when students learn to adapt to a new culture, they develop respect and appreciation for difference, learn to master everyday life without problems, and, altering their own cultural identities, they enter to the 'home stage'. This accomplishment can lead to a sense of personal growth and flexibility which can be enhanced in the last 'bicultural period'.

Although many cite Oberg's model, others criticise it. For example, Ward (2004) dismissed Oberg's U-Curve of adaptation as she has found that Japanese students in New Zealand experience 'stress' rather than the 'honeymoon or euphoria' stage as an initial reaction to transition, and this only decreases over

time. She also claims 'cultural learning' should increase overtime, so she proposes a "learning curve" instead of a U-curve (Ward, 2004, p. 187). If the expectations of Libyan students are very high, then they are quite likely to experience stress at the initial stage rather than the putative honeymoon. Oberg views intercultural adaptation as a linear process which international students experience as whole stages; however, intercultural adaptation may not be linear.

The second model is Anderson's model of intercultural adaptation. Anderson (1994, cited in Lewthwaite, 1996 and Siljanen and Lämsä, 2009) argues that not everyone wishes to adjust to everything in the host culture. Anderson's model of intercultural adaptation is not seen as a U-curve (Oberg, 1960), but rather as a dynamic process which can be either positive or negative. Adaptation may differ from a situation where an individual can manage a new environment to another situation where they are unable to persist in a new environment. According to Anderson (1994), intercultural adaptation is a significant transitional experience because an individual's sense of self can be shaken in an unfamiliar culture; as a result, therefore, adjustment can be viewed as a process of rebuilding one's identity. In this dynamic, it could be argued that overseas experience is quite likely to affect students' identity, and because they are in a new socio-cultural context, liable to encounter unfamiliar challenges; and also meet and interact with others from different cultural backgrounds. The new socio-cultural context requires individuals to change to accommodate the unfamiliar and to overcome challenges. Therefore, 'rebuilding an identity' can be seen as a kind of adjustment. All adjustments according to Anderson are cyclical processes, and motivation is essential to overcome any barriers. Despite stress when it is successful, intercultural experience can be a transformative process contributing to personal growth and development. Similar to Anderson, Alder (1975) states that a "cultural crisis" is essential to personal development and growth because of the personality disruption that it involves. It appears that international students are likely to encounter challenges in a new society and this may be owing to cultural distance or unfamiliarity with a new context. As stated above, these challenges require individuals to adjust and adapt in order to achieve equilibrium. This change is significant because it inevitably affects identity 'identity shaken or

disruption' (Anderson, 1994), because identity is not stable and fixed, but is developmental and multi-layered concept (Hall, 2003) as stated in section 2.4

The models of Oberg and Anderson view intercultural adaptation as a process which leads to the reshaping (Oberg) or rebuilding (Anderson) of identity. This research investigates how Libyan students who participate in master's courses in the UK make sense of their overseas experiences and how people who come from civil war and ongoing conflict environment undergo the process of adaptation and adjustment. An aspect of the study explores the extent to which overseas experience reflects self-identity and transformative learning.

2.4.5 Factors affect identity construction for international students

As suggested above identity is a layered concept which is not fixed. Leong and Ward (2000) suggest that there are five factors that can affect identity construction. They are:

- 1) Tolerance to difference: according to Leong and Ward (2000), tolerance to difference between an individual's culture of origin and the host culture is a key aspect for successful adaptation. This may be because a tolerant person is able to appreciate different perspectives and recognise that others have legitimate and different viewpoints. Therefore, there is a negative correlation between tolerance to difference and identity conflict.
- 2) Cultural distance: Searle and Ward (1990), Leong and Ward (2000), Ward et al. (2001) and Masgoret (2006) indicate that cultural distance is the similarities and differences between an individual's culture of origin and the host culture. As indicated in section 2.3, similarity between cultures is associated with well-adapted international students; whereas distance between host and international cultures tends to be connected with more poorly-adapted students. This may be because international students tend to have difficulty learning the new cultural-specific skills that are needed for effective intercultural adjustment. Accordingly, there is a positive correlation between cultural distance and identity conflict.

3) Quantity and quality of contact with host students: Intercultural communication between host and other international students can assist international students to learn skills; to develop English language competence, and provide social support, all of which potentially contribute to psychological and socio-cultural adjustment (Zhou et al., 2008; Zaccagnini and Verenikina, 2013). Therefore, there is a negative relation between identity conflict and intercultural interaction with others. Intercultural interaction has the potential to affect students' identity and their sense towards others.

4) Discrimination: Wadsworth, Hecht and Jung (2008) found that some American students had negative attitudes towards international students' English language competence, and that this was perceived as discrimination by the international students. The perceived discrimination is likely adversely to affect international students' identification with the host culture, so there is a significant relationship between identity conflict and discrimination.

5) Length of residence abroad: the challenges that international students face are common during the initial period; however, increasing the length of stay provides opportunities to manage the challenges of a new academic environment and a new socio-cultural context. Thus, there is a negative correlation between increasing length of stay and identity conflict (Leong and Ward, 2000). The length of residence abroad can play a significant role in the effect of the international students in terms of developing skills and their sense of self or identity.

2.4.6 National identity and cultural identity

Nationality inevitably defines us, and, regardless of how we embrace it, comprises an essential part of our natures (Hall, 2003, p. 611-612). Schwarz (1986) states that individuals participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture. The notion of nation has "its power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance" (Schwarz, 1986, p. 106). Allegiance and identification in many traditional societies, however, were given to tribe, religion and region (Hall, 2003, p. 612). In this study, the Libyan participants come from a Muslim and tribal

country in which Islamic identity is fundamental. Hall claims that “the essentials of the national character remain unchanged through the vicissitudes of history” (Hall, 2003, p. 614). For Libyan students, however, although their heritage and Libyan tribal identity is significant, their country is in a state of conflict, and this may affect their notion of national identity.

Cultural identity is a matter of “what we really are” and “what we have become” (Hall, 1990, p. 225). It comes from a place that has history and undergoes constant transformation (Hall, 1990, p. 225). Libyan cultural identity might seem fixed as it emerges from a conservative and traditional society, but habits and customs, cultural values and heritage are all significant. Giddens explains:

In traditional societies, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations. Tradition is a means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices.

(Giddens, 1990, pp. 37-38)

Libya is in a state of transition, but this particular group of Libyan students had in a sense already made a commitment to western values by choosing to come to the UK where they presumably thought there was something significant to learn. According to Colley, James and Diment, CoPs can exclude newcomers who are unable to ‘fit in’, particularly those with a strongly established culture and sense of being (Colley et al., 2007). To date, no research on the religious and cultural values that newcomers might bring with them nor their effects on participation with colleagues appears to have done, although this is an aspect of this study.

2.4.7 Globalisation and identity crisis

Globalisation is a construct traced mainly through its perceived impact. Hall identifies the impact on identity as 1) identities are eroded; 2) identities are strengthened, and 3) identities are placed with identities of hybridity (Hall, 2003, p. 619). Giddens (1990) a decade earlier identified that globalisation had had an impact on identity and might weaken it. He also argued that “there is evidence of

a loosening of strong identifications with the national culture, and a strengthening of other cultural ties and allegiances” (Giddens, 1990, p. 621). In the 25 years since Giddens, globalisation has, through technology, impacted further on national identity. The inference is that, as the world becomes smaller (Orel, 2009), social and cultural life is mediated by global marketing, international travel and communications systems. As a result of that, “identities become detached-disembodied from specific times, places, histories, and traditions and appear free-floating” (Hall, 2003, p. 622). They are part of a kind of “international lingua franca” whereby all specific traditions and distinct identities are eroded within a “cultural homogenization” (Hall, 2003, p. 622). Although international students live in the UK only for a limited period of time, the socio-cultural context is likely to affect their development of intercultural communicative competence and their acquisition of knowledge and skills, but other aspects of their core values may be unaffected.

Pison (2005) however argues that cultural identity is strengthened and reinforced through globalisation. He states “globalisation is only a tool for identity to be stronger...identities reinforce themselves more easily because they face a unique institutionalized pattern of globalisation powers” (Pison, 2005, p. 9). This is evident for example in jihad whereby fundamentalism asserts itself rather than nationhood. Such affinities may represent “a particularistic form of attachment or belonging” (Hall, 2003, p. 623) by representing attachment to particular values, symbols and histories. In relation to international students, some identities are strengthened in reaction to the feeling of homesickness, emptiness or loneliness (Bauman, 2004, p. 20). Globalisation can therefore lead to either the creation of new identities or to the revival of traditional cultural and religious practices (Jovchelovitch, 2007, p. 76; Dervin, 2010, p. 4). For international students, the effect of socio-cultural context may lead to a stronger identification with their identity and cultural values, or they may develop a new or modified cultural identity as a result of multicultural classrooms and intercultural adaptation.

2.5 Summary

There is an increase in the number of international students in the UK HE system (Universities UK, 2014). The presence of international students in a class can give a course an international perspective and broaden the minds of host students (Lillyman and Bennett, 2014). However, traditionally, it is mooted that there is difference in the approaches to teaching and learning between western and eastern education systems. A deep approach to learning is more common in western universities, whereas a surface approach is associated with eastern study. However, the issue is more significant than East and West stereotypes. When international students come to a new academic environment, they bring with them their prior experiences of teaching and learning and their background and cultural positioning from their home countries. Consequently, if the environment they encounter is very different, they may encounter difficulty in adjustment to the new educational and social situation.

There are many factors that could affect international students' adaptation; these include cultural distance, duration of stay in a host society, and prior overseas experience. Most studies about international students discuss the challenges that they encounter in a new academic environment such as unwillingness to participate in classroom discussion; propensity to plagiarism; lack of critical thinking; lack of deep integration and meaningful relationships with host students; mismatch between teaching and preferred learning styles; and issues associated with independent study. However, the literature suggests that while these challenges are common at an initial stage, many are addressed and disappear gradually during cultural transition.

International students bring formulated expectations to the new academic environment which can be academic, social, or cultural. However, the challenge is when tutors expect them to perform according to the requirements of the new academic environment. The different expectations between tutors and international students can lead to 'conflicting expectations', and this may create misunderstanding and tension. The main coping strategy that has been identified in the literature is social support such as one-to-one interaction with classmates; more experienced colleagues' support; and social support from co-national, host

and international colleagues. Having English language competence promotes interaction and the building of relationships with host and other international students since it can be inferred that social support from co-national, host and international colleagues contributes to students' psychological and socio-cultural adjustments. However, a lack or limited English language competence inevitably adversely affects communication with host and international students.

Culture and identity are closely linked for many people. Culture is a set of values, beliefs and orientations that are shared by a group of people. Identity is a multi-layered concept which relates to our sense of knowing who we are. Some studies argue against expecting international students to adapt to the methods of teaching and learning in a new academic environment because aspects of their culture are deeply-rooted, and change could be seen as a threat to identity in some eastern cultures. Therefore, meta-awareness of cultural differences, cultural sensitivity and cultural synergy are significant in different ways. By developing a meta-awareness of cultural differences, students and their tutors can build relationships that tend to reduce challenges and promote shared perspectives. While cultural sensitivity can assist tutors and students to understand, appreciate and accept cultural differences. Cultural synergy is a reciprocal process where both tutors and international students seek to understand each other's culture.

When individuals from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other on regular basis, the result changes the cultural patterns of one or both groups. This is known as 'acculturation'. Intercultural communication is crucial to acculturation because it can assist international students' adjustment and add new dimensions to their 'self' (Pitts, 2009, p. 451). However, individuals may undergo acculturation in different ways, and Berry (2005) suggests that there are four acculturation strategies; they are: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation. 'Integration' is a preferable strategy and it can be regarded as an ideal outcome of acculturation. However, Libyan master's students who are in the UK only for one year may not seek integration, but instead may be selective

where by some values are cherished while others are not, and this might be more appropriate in the context.

Overseas experience is likely to lead to acquiring intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (i.e. open-mindedness, empathy, self-awareness, respect, appreciation to diversity and development of communication skills). The acquisition of aspects of ICC is significant for international students because it can assist those from different cultural backgrounds to communicate effectively; to develop insight into self and others, and facilitate adaptation. However, stereotypes and ethnocentrism might lead to misunderstanding of others; weaken relations, enhancing premature judgements and unhelpful binary terms. The latter could lead to lost opportunities for a mutual and respectful exchange of ideas and may adversely affect integration.

Identity is a layered and at times contested concept. It is dynamic, not fixed, fluid and changing. By interacting with others from different cultural backgrounds under certain conditions, this can facilitate the 'emergence of intercultural identity'. However, for the purpose of this study, two models of intercultural adaptation are considered: Oberg and Anderson. Oberg views intercultural adaptation as a linear developmental process whereas Anderson sees it as cyclical process. The latter is especially relevant to students who are only here for a year. Intercultural adaptation is dynamic process which leads to reshape (Oberg) or rebuild (Anderson) of identity. The factors that may affect identity construction for international students are tolerance to difference; cultural distance; perceived discrimination; quality and quantity of interaction with others, and length of residence abroad. Globalisation may also have an impact on identity in that identities can be eroded or strengthened. While some studies suggest that the essentials of national identity do not change, others claim that cultural identity is dynamic and not fixed.

In the next chapter, the conceptual framework will be presented.

Chapter 3: The Conceptual Framework: Communities of Practice

3.1 Introduction

Higher education comprises a number of communities of practice (CoPs). There are learning communities, professional communities, discipline specific communities and social and cultural communities. There are larger communities, for example the student body, and smaller course communities. International students are often designated as a group (see chapter two) and in a way which might be described as a community of practice. The Libyan students in this study were students in different master's classes. However, even within each of those classes, they joined a group which comprises not only new students, but also some students who had already been in the community for a term owing to courses having different start times. Although the practice might differ dependent on disciplines, the master's courses, where these participants were situated do function as CoPs. The key part of the Libyan students' experience of being master's students was about situated learning and social participation. I use communities of practice theory as a conceptual framework to inform my thinking about the Libyan students' experience. Communities of practice theory is relevant to this research since it is a tool that assists in operationalising the data for the study. Lave and Wenger (1991) discussed the significance of locating a learner in CoPs in terms of social learning and identity formation and that has informed both data generation and data analysis. The following chapter will explain this in more detail and addresses: conception of CoPs; situated learning; legitimate peripheral participation and generational encounter; newcomers' dispositions and backgrounds; mutual engagement including enabling engagement, diversity and partiality; and identity.

3.2 Communities of practice (CoPs)

Lave and Wenger define communities of practice as a "set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98). They add CoPs are:

An intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus participation in cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98)

A key issue in a community of practice is that individuals learn with each other in shared practice. However, it is important to note that not all people, who work and talk with each other, form a community of practice. Wenger states that “the term is not a synonym for group, team, or network” (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). A community of practice is different from other communities because it is defined by its membership and practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 464). Practice is essential to the community because members are engaged; social relationships are created; and identities are formed through social interaction in shared practice (Wenger, 1998). The Libyan students in this research entered into their master’s course. They became part of a UK university and part of a specific programme of study, although within that there are different groups that interact in various ways. Pursuing postgraduate study gave them a shared goal, a shared aim, and a shared desire to succeed, and, although they were on different courses, they were at the same university and so needed to adhere to its regulations and procedures. They also needed to comply with whatever kind of pedagogical experiences they might encounter during their year’s study.

3.3 Situated learning

Situated learning is part of CoPs. Lave and Wenger’s seminal work ‘Situated learning’ (Lave and Wenger 1991) and ‘Community of practice’ (Wenger 1998) argue that learning is situated, “it is not something that can be considered in isolation, or analysed apart from the social relations” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98); learning is “an aspect of participation in socially situated practices” (Lave, 1995, p. 2). Individuals it can be inferred learn through social interaction and building relationships with others in shared activity within a particular community of practice, rather than just individually. The Libyan students in this research

were members of their master's courses and required to participate in shared activities with their colleagues (Libyan students, British and other international students) and tutors within the master's community. Situated social interaction with their colleagues and tutors was inevitably part of this experience. Hammersley (2005) shares Lave and Wenger's (1991) view about the significance of the knowledge, skills and capacities that are developed through social interaction with others within a particular CoP (Hammersley, 2005, p. 12), (for the significance of this, see the end of the third paragraph of this section). In line with Vygotsky (1978), Lave and Wenger (1991) consider knowledge as dialectical within a zone of proximal development (ZPD); that knowledge and skills are constructed through the relationships, collaboration and interaction of the participants (i.e. Libyan students, their tutors and colleagues) in a context (i.e. master's classes); therefore that learning is situated (Benthuysen, 2007, p. 121; Orr, 2009, p. 37). This is epistemologically significant because ZPD is relevant to CoP, since it is about interaction and a developmental approach. This scaffolding provides support for the initial performance of tasks. Participation in social practice is a way of belonging to a community because becoming a member allows participation and learning to take place.

The participation of international students and, in context of this research, Libyan students is affected by the fact that they are SLL. The implications of this have been explored in chapter 2. Any student who is on a master's degree is by definition part of that course community which, in the West, means participating in situated learning within a particular socio-cultural environment. All international students have issues around acculturation, but, for Libyan students, there are additional issues that make a case.

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) stress participation as a central condition for learning, and, indeed, as Fuller states, for Lave and Wenger "participation in social practice as a condition for (all) learning" (Fuller, 2007, p. 17). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learners learn by being in social relations with others through their "co-participation" in shared practices within their CoP or the lived-in world (Fuller, 2007, p. 19). Co-participation includes the

affordance and individuals' engagement (Billett, 2007). With this in mind, Lave and Wenger challenge the idea of learning as a process of acquisition and transference of decontextualised knowledge from one person to another (Fuller, Hodkinson, and Unwin, 2005, p. 49). For Lave and Wenger, situated learning involves learning by doing (Hammersley, 2005, p. 14) and interaction with more experienced colleagues and old-timers (Fuller and Unwin, 1998, p. 160), so relationships and standpoint are crucial issues in learning. Lave and Wenger also (1991) highlight the significance of locating individuals in CoPs in order to develop their abilities and to build their identity. "Our experience and our membership inform each other, pull each other, and transform each other" (Wenger, 1998, p. 96). The members of a CoP create what is to be learnt while learning. Thus, learning is embedded in practice, not outside it or prior to it. Formal teaching is not as central for learning as social participation which is both crucial and fundamental to development (Colley, James, Tedder and Diment, 2003).

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory moved beyond the standard paradigm of learning as individual ability and cognition, as Hammersley notes:

The concept of a community of practice was developed in opposition to views of learning that treated it as individual in character, as a matter of rule-bound cognition and as properly assessed in abstract terms, for example through scientifically devised and administered tests.

(Hammersley, 2005, p. 9)

This idea of individual cognition is what Beckett and Hager refer to as the "standard paradigm of learning" (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p. 97) which is equated with a traditional transmissive pedagogy of product and acquisition, rather than learning as process and participation. According to Beckett and Hager (2002), the standard paradigm validates learning in a formal educational setting such as school or university where learning is seen as an individual matter dependent upon the presence of a qualified teacher in order to transfer codified knowledge to learners. Learning here is seen as a knowledge product to be acquired and is often assessed by examinations that test how much a learner has memorised (Beckett and Hager, 2002). In contrast, Lave and Wenger make a significant contribution by suggesting that the group is essential for learning, so

individuals learn by being in a social relationship with others within a CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As Lave and Wenger state: “Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Thus, they stress learning through building a social relationship with others around an activity rather than learning as an individual matter. The link between social practice and learning is a distinctive feature for Lave and Wenger’s theory (Fuller, 2007, p. 19) and highlights the significance of gaining access to a CoP, and having the ability to take part in activities and becoming full participant. Lave and Wenger argue that social participation enables newcomers to learn from old-time members.

However, some authors such as Sfard (1998) and Hager (2005) disagree with Lave and Wenger’s argument against learning as a product to be acquired and their emphasis on learning as a process of participation. For example, Hager (2005) argues that situated learning as a process of social participation and learning as a product to be acquired are not “mutually exclusive” since learning as participation includes both process and product because “while participation itself is process, the learner belongs more and more to the community of practice by acquiring the right characteristics (products of learning)” (Hager, 2005, p. 23). In the context of this study, learning through participation in shared practices and activities with their colleagues and tutors within the master’s community is examined as well as how this may affect students’ sense of belonging.

Österlund (1996) suggests that learning as social participation in CoPs emphasises learning that takes place within a community and ignores the significance of learning outside it. Learning can be in different contexts and not only in a classroom (Kadi-Hanifi, 2009, p. 87). This study explores the wider context which Libyan students might experience beyond their master’s community, both individually or extra-curricular and acknowledges breadth of potential learning. Newcomers who have opportunities to learn outside their community and to develop social relations may enjoy more “expansive learning” (Fuller, 2007, p. 26) than their colleagues since they are afforded the opportunity

to make connections between different types of learning and experience (Fuller and Unwin, 2004).

3.4 Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP)

The LPP is a particular aspect of situated learning which is significant and relevant to this study (and to Libyan students). The LPP is a process by which newcomers move gradually from the periphery to become full participants and part of that community (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 64). As legitimate peripheral participants engage with their colleagues in certain practices, they acquire skill, knowledge and learn to speak the language of the community; they are enculturated (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 64). (Libyan students as a case may or may not socialise gradually with norms, routines, and regulations of their CoP as they understand what is appropriate and what is not appropriate). However, since Lave and Wenger describe the LPP as a linear progress from peripheral to full participant, little attention is given to the challenges that newcomers might encounter. Fuller (2007, p. 20) notes that Lave and Wenger acknowledge that, while participation in CoPs provides newcomers with an opportunity to become established-members/old-timers, this outcome cannot be guaranteed because CoPs may create barriers that inhabit newcomers' learning. As Lave and Wenger state:

Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 29)

The idea that a CoP includes newcomers and old-timers is a helpful perspective in relation to this study in so far as there are different groups that might be considered within the established community. However, many master's groups have different start times within the academic year (typically September and January) and may include students who are already established. Also, British students may be more familiar with the style of learning experienced on their master's degree since it is undertaken in their home country while the international students, particularly Libyan students in this case, might encounter

unfamiliar challenges. Although with widening participation some British students might also need to adjust to various academic pressures and practices within a master's degree, according to Kim (2011, p. 285), typically, they do not require as much adjustment as international students. British students and international students who have been there for a term may not need to have the purpose of certain activities explained. The relationship therefore between Libyan students as newcomers and their colleagues on the one hand, and between them and their tutors is significant. It is through this relationship that Libyan students may adjust their expectations of their master's degree and acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills in order to participate fully in a master's community. Their experiences of the master's community may assist them to become more open-minded as a result of their interaction, but, if they experience discrimination or stereotyping, the tensions and conflicts that arise are not sufficiently explained or examined by Lave and Wenger. This will be discussed in detail in the generational encounter section 3.4.1.

The LPP is crucial for membership within a community of practice because for Lave and Wenger (1991), interaction with others makes learning legitimate and of value. For newcomers, it is important to participate in shared activities with their colleagues (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 109) and in doing so, "becoming part of the community" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 111). The participation of Libyan students in shared practices with their colleagues and tutors will be discussed in detail in chapter 6. However, Brown and Duguid (1991) share Lave and Wenger's (1991) view about the significance of learning to speak the language of a particular community of practice in order to be legitimate peripheral participants within that community. For newcomers, "the purpose is not to learn from talk as a substitute to legitimate peripheral participation; it is to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 109).

In the context of this study, English Language competence is significant for Libyan students as for other international students who, as second language speakers, need to acquire the discourse of their CoP, in order to take role in discussion, to read and conduct research, and to write assignments

appropriately. In addition, having competence in English language encourages interaction with tutors and colleagues, builds relationships, and gives opportunities to negotiate issues. Any group of international students requires appropriate confidence to participate and as far as possible to integrate with British students.

3.4.1 Generational encounter

CoPs include encounters between newcomers and old-timers, and this is considered as an aspect of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). However, Hughes, Jewson and Unwin (2007) criticise the notion of CoPs as a tightly bounded relationship between newcomers and old-timers and, in the context of this study, the notion of newcomers and old-timers is complex. For Lave and Wenger, their term 'old-timers' refers to those who are more established in the socio-cultural environment. However, there are different groups within an established community. I will therefore distinguish the groups in this study as follows: tutors as dominant old-timers; British students as mid old-timers because home honours graduates are likely to be more familiar with various aspects of the UK HE and the socio-cultural environment, and with the expectations of the course; international students who had been there for a term as mid-newcomer; and only the newly starting international students solely as newcomers.

Regardless of the groupings, a CoP has the potential for a range of interactions. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) and Wenger (1998, p. 100) emphasise old-timers' support as facilitating the experiences of newcomers with regard to the mastery of skill and knowledge. Colley et al. (2003) share Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that learning is a process of social participation that enables newcomers to learn from more experienced colleagues or established members, and this learning is linked within a context that is situated (Colley et al., 2003, pp. 474-475). Similarly, Unwin highlights "the notion of a newcomer embarking on a journey supported by old-timers" (Unwin, 2007, p. 109). For instance, the Libyan students in this research could have received support from their tutors (i.e. dominant old-timers); British students (i.e. mid old-timers) or other international

colleagues who are further into their study (i.e. mid-newcomers), and whether this happened and the relationships generated are likely to be significant to addressing expectations and meeting the requirements of their master's course. Lave and Wenger do not acknowledge "a hierarchical dimension" (Fuller, 2007, p. 27) in their discussion of CoPs, yet the hierarchical relation plays an essential role in creating either opportunities or barriers for learning (Fuller et al., 2005). In the context of this study, the relationship between Libyan students as newcomers and their colleagues (i.e. mid old-timers and mid-newcomers) on the one hand and between Libyan students and their tutors (i.e. dominant old-timer) on the other hand may be perceived as hierarchical. This research will explore the reasons for and implications of this within a dynamic and focused learning environment.

Although CoPs have informed this study, this has not been done uncritically. Fuller et al. (2005) dismiss Lave and Wenger because they view learning as progression from newcomers to become full participants and they ignore the tensions that might take place in a CoP. Jewson also notes that "community of practice tends to neglect the potential for violence, conflict, discrimination and persecution inherent in the formation of relationships between insiders and outsiders, own and other" (Jewson, 2007, p. 71). Recognition of this is relevant for the current research. However, Wenger does acknowledge conflicts in CoPs when he states: "Generational encounter is not free of conflicts" Wenger (1998, p. 101). He also adds:

Peace, happiness, and harmony are therefore not necessary properties of a community of practice. Certainly there are plenty of disagreements, tensions and conflicts... a community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island of intimacy insulated from political and social relations. Disagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 77)

So CoPs might involve conflicts and disagreements; however, the emphasis is "mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). What Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) appear to overlook is the

impact of external factors, such as background on the relations between members of a CoP, and this will emerge as relevant to understanding the situation of Libyan students as a case and is explored in chapter 5.

3.5 Newcomers' dispositions and backgrounds

Although Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) do mention some of the challenges that newcomers encounter while entering CoPs, James (2007, p. 135) suggests that they do not fully address them. He argues that newcomers bring with them formed knowledge, skills, values and experiences to the new context, and this means attitudes, expectations, experiences, identities, life histories and ways of learning are present that have been acquired elsewhere (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004; Billett, 2007). This is an issue which is likely to affect international students to a greater or lesser extent and, as such, to influence participation within a master's community. This will be discussed in detail when examining the Libyan students' adjustment in chapter 6.

It is important to research the dispositions (i.e. attitudes, motivation and willingness) of newcomers because according to Fuller and Unwin (2004) and Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), these are likely to have an impact on the extent to which students are engaged to learn. However, Lave and Wenger ignore what newcomers bring to communities of practice from outside because "Lave and Wenger implicitly treat their newcomers as *tabula rasa*" (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66). Fuller et al. (2005, p. 63) point out that although newcomers bring dispositions to the community, these dispositions can change through interaction and other life experiences. Billett (2007) shares Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that the motivation of newcomers shapes the social relations and conditions that create unique environments for learning. However, motivation can be a layered phenomenon especially as in the case of Libyan students who come from a country in turmoil and a society at a point of transition.

Fuller et al. emphasise the significance of newcomers' backgrounds and highlight previous educational experiences. Fuller et al. state:

Equally important is what the worker brings to that community from outside prior learning, including education, has helped construct the whole person who arrives. This embodied person learns to belong in their new setting, adapting, developing and modifying their whole person in that process.

(Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66)

This highlights the significance of newcomers' backgrounds and dispositions and the process of mutual adaptation within the community. They point out that newcomers modify their whole person through confrontation with the unfamiliar. According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004 b), newcomers to CoPs bring with them an existing habitus: prior biographies, practices, knowledge and values. These have an impact (sometimes negatively) on the dynamics of CoPs. Wenger (1998) "does take history, but only as general and abstract issues of remembering and forgetting, reification and participation" (Hughes et al., 2007, p. 43). The prior social, educational, cultural and political experiences of the Libyan students as a case are significant to this study. Most of the participants, however, undertook a 'pre-sessional course' prior to their master's programme, and this may also have affected their acculturation. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) and Fuller et al. (2005) emphasise that newcomers bring their own identities to CoPs, and the issue of identity will be discussed in section 3.7.

When highlighting what newcomers might bring to a CoP, Fuller and Unwin (2004) also point out that not all old-timers are the same. In some tasks, for example, newcomers may be more expert than old-timers (Fuller and Unwin, 2004) and even bring skills that allow old-timers to learn from them (Fuller et al, 2005, p. 61). Therefore, their presence in the master's community and social interaction in shared activity with their colleagues within the community are likely to enhance exchanging thoughts and ideas, integration and acceptance. "This process of existing community members learning from skilled newcomers is not covered by Lave and Wenger's theory" (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 61). The rationale for this may be both the newcomers (Libyan students) can benefit from learning in a successful environment with tutors (i.e. dominant old-timers); while British students (i.e. mid old-timers), and international students (i.e. mid-newcomers)

may benefit from the new ideas, knowledge and skills that could be brought by the newcomers as part of everyday activity.

3.6 Components of communities of practice

As mentioned earlier, according to Wenger, CoPs consist of three main components: “1) mutual engagement, 2) joint enterprise, and 3) shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Since CoPs form the conceptual framework for this study, a focus on mutual engagement is relevant to the analysis of data in the current study:

3.6.1 Mutual engagement

The mutual engagement of participants is the most important component in CoPs (Boylan, 2010, p. 3) and essential for establishing relationships (Wenger, 1998; Moule, 2006). Mutual engagement requires regular interaction because members negotiate meaning over persistent practice (Wenger, 1998). Negotiation of meaning is “continuous interaction, of gradual achievement, and of give-and-take” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 53-54). Wenger states that “membership in a community of practice is therefore a matter of mutual engagement that is what defines the community” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). Membership is an essential condition for learning not because members learn in the same place, but because members have mutual engagement through practices where meanings are negotiated.

During the course of this study, the Libyan students were required to engage in shared activities such as discussions with peers or in small groups with their colleagues and tutors within their community; they participated in informal meetings to prepare group presentations, or to negotiate issues that related to writing assignments or to debate or discuss unclear points. These shared practices were opportunities for regular interaction and mutual engagement.

3.6.2 Enabling engagement

Coming to class and being able to talk and interact while you are in the community are key elements for enabling engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). Within an educational CoP, this might include being present in regular classes and attending meetings such as formal and informal meetings outside class to exchange thoughts and ideas. Such engagement can also enhance a sense of belonging, knowing and understanding that may yield full participation. As mentioned in 3.4, having language competence is however an essential tool that enables newcomers (Libyan students in this study) to engage in interaction with their colleagues and tutors effectively and to build a communicative relationship. Therefore, limited English or a lack of confidence language might adversely affect mutual engagement and integration.

3.6.3 Diversity and partiality

Diversity is a “matter of homogeneity” that makes engagement in practice “possible and productive” (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). He adds that a community of practice may include young and old, conservative and liberal members all of whom have different aspirations. They may see each other daily, work together, talk with each other, exchange opinions and information, and in doing so affect each other’s understanding (Wenger, 1998). However, Wenger does not elaborate further to discuss diversity in terms of old-timers and newcomers who come from different cultural backgrounds and whose interaction affects their learning and emergence of intercultural identity. “Each participant in a community of practice finds a unique place and gains a unique identity, which is further integrated and further defined in the course of engagement in practice” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 75-76). The presence of Libyan students in a multicultural classroom and their interaction with international students and British students are significant in terms of learning and building identity. Specific issues associated with identity will be discussed in detail in 3.7.

Wenger states: “Mutual engagement is partial” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Mutual engagement involves both an individual’s competence and the competence of others. While Hammersley states:

The ability to act effectively, which is what is learnt, does not simply depend on the attributes of an individual but on how these relate to the abilities of others with whom that individual interacts in a community of practice.

(Hammersley, 2005, p. 6)

Mutual engagement also draws on what we do and know, as well as on what we do not do and what we do not know to contribute to the knowledge of others within the community. In the context of this study, Libyan students need to learn in order to meet the expectations of their master's community. Therefore, they may engage in interaction with their colleagues through shared practices such as group discussions, assignments, presentations and reports. These practices and tasks have potential to create mutual engagement among members because each member in a community offers his or her knowledge or opinion and they support each other, giving and receiving help for the benefit of all members within a certain group. This mutual engagement is called "complementary contributions" (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) because all members (Libyan students, British and other international students) within a certain group complete each other's competence, rather than each member trying to learn in isolation. Mutual engagement therefore is partial in a shared activity because "it is more important to know how to give and receive help" (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). This is crucial for all students, particularly second language learners because working in pairs or small groups with mid-newcomers and mid old-timers is likely to scaffold learning, supporting the fundamental idea of CoPs to exchange thoughts and ideas together. Learning as social participation can also affect identity.

3.7 Identity: learning and becoming

A key aspect of situated learning in CoPs is identity formation. Participation in CoPs is not only about learning by acquiring knowledge and skills, but it is also about learning to be (Lave and Wenger 1991). Curtin (2006, p. 170) shares Wenger's (1998, p. 151) view that identity is social because it is created as a lived experience of participation in CoPs. Socialisation also has a significant impact on one's identity formation because the social aspects of one's identity

necessitate the presence of others such as tutors, colleagues, family, friends (Malešević, 2013, p. 9). The presence of Libyan students in a multicultural classroom and their social participation in shared practice with their colleagues and tutors are likely to be significant aspects for identity construction. Wenger argues that “issues of identity are an integral aspect of a social learning theory and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community, and meaning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). From Lave and Wenger’s perspective, identity is embedded in the context in which learners co-participate. The link between identity and practice is one of the most powerful aspects of situated learning in CoPs theory. Lave and Wenger elucidate:

Learning implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities.

(Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53)

It can be inferred from this that identity construction is central to learning as social participation. This perspective moves away from the concept of identity as an individual matter to the concept of identity as emerging in social interaction. This view is similar to Bamberg, De Fine and Schiffrin’s (2011, p. 178) view. Lave and Wenger recognise the impact of learning as participation in social practice on one’s competence and identity construction; however, according to Fuller et al. (2005, p. 66), the notion of identity is not fully addressed in relation to particular learners. Colley et al. (2003, pp. 474-475) indicate that immersion in the social, cultural and emotional aspects are crucial factors that affect learning and build an identity (becoming). Learning as participation is an ongoing process of negotiating the self through engagement in activities and relationships with others (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Wenger points out that “learning depends on learners’ ability to contribute to the collective production of meaning because it is by this process that experience and competence pull each other” (Wenger, 1998, p. 203). Through participation in shared activities and relationships with others,

learners' identities can change or develop. Learning as participation helps the "development and the transformation of identities" (Wenger, 1998, p. 13). In the context of this study, the interaction of Libyan students with British and international students in shared activity within their master's community is crucial for their learning and identity formation. Through their relationship and interaction with others in shared practices, Libyan students are quite likely to acquire and develop their knowledge and skills and their identity might be developed or formed as a result. However, as international students, marginalisation is possible and a sense of risk or insecurity may undermine people's participation.

Engagement in practice is a "double source of identification: we invest ourselves in what we do and at the same time we invest ourselves in our relations with other people" (Wenger, 1998, p. 192). Through engagement in practice, learners know who they are, explore their abilities to engage with each other (i.e. what they are able to do and what they are unable to do) and how they can participate in activities (Wenger, 1998). Identity in practice is "an experience of the familiar and the unfamiliar" (Wenger, 1998, p. 193). This is significant because Libyan students like other international students may shape or reshape their identities through their confrontation with the unfamiliar.

3.8 Summary

Situated learning in communities of practice theory provides an important explanation of learning as part of social participation in shared practices and it raises relevant issues for all international students. The knowledge that is constructed through collaboration and interaction by participants in a situated context is significant for participants' learning and for their sense of self or identity. Employing this conceptual framework makes a significant contribution by considering learning as it involves the whole person in relation to social communities. Legitimate peripheral participation describes the progression that newcomers undergo gradually to become full participants in a community of practice. The community of practice is a tightly bounded relationship between

newcomers and old-timers; however, in the context of this study, there are different groups, distinguished as follows: tutors as dominant old-timers; British students as mid old-timers, and international students who had been in the class for a term as mid-newcomers. Language is significant for newcomers to gain access to a community of practice and in order to interact and build a relationship with their colleagues and tutors. This is true for all students, but there are additional issues that might relate to international students. Although Wenger describes communities of practices by using connotations of peace and harmony, communities of practices are not without conflicts and tensions. The theory does not adequately address the backgrounds and dispositions that newcomers may bring to communities of practice when it considers them as *tabula rasa* or novices. Lave and Wenger also consider that newcomers move to be full members or participants as part of a linear process which this research suggests may oversimplify the process. Communities of practice have three essential components: “mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998, p. 73). These elements define a community of practice and distinguish it from others.

The link between identity and practice is a powerful aspect of CoPs theory. Identity is social because learning as social participation in shared practices with other members affects individuals. This is because individuals acquire knowledge and skills through interaction, and this is quite likely to affect their sense of self or identity.

The next chapter will focus on methodology and will explore the data collection and analysis through the methodological lens.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the research methodology employed in this study and includes discussion of the interpretive paradigm and the methodological strategy adopted within the chosen paradigm, data generation and data analysis. As stated earlier, the aims of the research are to investigate Libyan students' perceptions and perspectives of their experiences in the UK HE system; to explore the impact of their previous educational and socio-cultural experiences on the HE acculturation process and their learning; to evaluate the nature of the interaction between Libyan students and their colleagues in shared activity; and to consider their perceptions of identity and of change. In particular, this study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the main challenges that Libyan postgraduate students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict encounter?
- 2) To what extent do their previous experiences educationally, socially, culturally and politically affect their strategies for adaptation and development?
- 3) How do Libyan students adjust and adapt to an overseas academic environment?
- 4) How do Libyan students' experiences in the UK affect perceptions of their identity?

This is a qualitative study, examining Libyan students' expectations, perceptions, perspectives, experiences and aspirations. The sample includes a group of Libyan students who are studying master's taught courses in different disciplines at a UK university. The methods employed for generating data were semi-structured interviews and observations. Demographic data from questionnaires was gathered initially; however, semi-structured interviews were the main source of significant data because they generated richer information about the perceptions of Libyan students. The observations and the reflective diary gave the researcher a chance for an insider and an outsider perspective.

This research forms a case study because it focuses on a group of Libyan students in the Yorkshire University (pseudonym) who had come to study in the UK HE system after experiencing civil war and during a time of ongoing conflict and were then intending to go back. The pilot questionnaire and interview were conducted with two acquaintances, the data being initially generated in Arabic language, and then subsequently transcribed and translated. Data analysis was done manually and undertaken through identification of themes and codes. Thematic analysis was used in order to code the data into a priori and emerging themes. The five stages of thematic analysis were used (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a Libyan and an international student albeit not a master's student, I am part of the community I studied and, as a result had both an insider and outsider knowledge. Being Libyan gives me an insider knowledge, I have an outsider knowledge because I am also a researcher. In this thesis, therefore when I am being reflexive, I use the first person 'I', but, when I am aiming to assume a more objective position, I use the third person and identify myself as 'the researcher'.

What follows includes: the qualitative interpretive paradigm and the rationale behind this choice; examination of the case study approach; sample; ethics; context and the role of the researcher which includes an insider and an outsider perspective and reflexivity; language and translation; pilot questionnaire and pilot interview; then discussion of data generation (questionnaire, interviews and observation); and of data analysis incorporating thematic analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

4.2 Qualitative interpretive paradigm

A paradigm is a "world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world". It "tells the researcher what is important, legitimate, and reasonable". It is a "framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place" (Patton, 2002, p. 203). In this study, the starting point of my research was to consider the philosophical paradigms "quantitative versus qualitative; scientific versus naturalistic; empiricist versus interpretive and so on"

(Sparkes, 1992, p. 10). According to Sparkes (1992), there are two main paradigms: the positivist paradigm which is associated with quantitative studies and the interpretivist paradigm that is linked with qualitative inquiry. Within the interpretive paradigm, the researcher adopts “an internal-idealist” ontology that stresses a subjective reality (Sparkes, 1992, p. 26). Qualitative researchers adopt “a hermeneutic perspective on texts” (Patton, 2002, p. 114) by which an interpretation of text cannot be judged true or false, but rather as one possible interpretation (Schutt, 2012, p. 321). If ontologically, there are multiple realities which exist only in people’s minds, then epistemologically, ‘interaction’ is the only way to access them (Guba, 1990, p. 26). However, within the positivist paradigm, the real world is not subjective, but rather made up of hard and tangible facts which can be observed and measured, and this is known as “external-realist” ontology (Sparkes, 1992, p. 20). For positivists, the reality is out there and independent of the instrument (Sparkes, 1992, p. 27) and so they seek data to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis or a priori theory.

In this study, I locate my research within an interpretive paradigm because it is most appropriate to the type of research I am doing and to the research aims and questions. The aim of interpretivist research is to understand how people interpret their world and how this informs their behaviours and actions. This study is interpretive because the researcher intends to interpret Libyan students’ perceptions and perspectives in order to make meaning from experience and to create stories. This stems from an epistemological position whereby there is only a subjective reality that is made of people’s experiences and the meanings created from them. Therefore, knowledge is based on being able to understand people’s interpretations and meanings (Henn, Weinstain and Foard, 2006). It is important to say that, although the researcher worked closely and interactively with the participants and the generated data, the researcher could separate herself from the participants. The way in which I addressed this was through criticality and reflexivity (see section 4.10. the role of the researcher).

Denzin and Lincoln state:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible...They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, recordings, and memo to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3)

This research is a qualitative study which aims to examine the learning experiences of Libyan students, their perceptions, perspectives, expectations and aspirations in the UK HE system. The researcher intends to represent the different perspectives of the participants and the richness of their experiences. It is naturalistic because I am part of the world at which I am looking, and so the data is generated through observations in the natural setting of a 'classroom' and the interviews were conducted within the university environment.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) indicate that the main characteristics of qualitative research are: it provides in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives, perceptions and histories; it allows using different methods to generate data; it includes using methods that promote close contact between the researcher and the participants; uses small-scale sample and it takes into consideration the reflexive role of the researcher (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, pp. 4-5). These characteristics fit the current study because the researcher focused on a small group of Libyan students in order to gain in depth understanding of their learning experiences. Furthermore, conducting qualitative research enabled the researcher to use different methods to generate data that require close contact between the researcher and those being researched. The researcher used interviews and observations to ensure understanding of Libyan students' perceptions, perspectives and experiences. The distinctive point of qualitative research is that it acknowledges 'the role of the researcher' in the research, recognising she is significant in the research process (see section 4.10).

4.3 Methodological strategy

4.3.1 Case study approach

Case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The two main characteristics of the case study are an in-depth understanding of a topic under investigation, and its reference to context. Stake (1995, p. 3) characterised three main types of case study: “intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study”. Stake (1995) and Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, and Sheikh (2011) argue that the researcher utilises an intrinsic case study when she or he is interested in the case and the intention is better to understand and to learn about the case. Crowe et al. state that “the case is selected on its own merits. The case is not selected because it is representative of other cases, but because of its uniqueness, which is of genuine interest to the researchers” (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 5). In contrast to an intrinsic case study is an instrumental case study which is used “to accomplish something other than understanding the particular case” (Stake, 1995, p. 3). When the case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role because it facilitates understanding of something else. The case has the potential to enable the researcher to generate findings and to test theory by replicating the findings (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 5). In collective or multiple case studies, “a number of cases are studied in order to investigate some general phenomenon” and to make comparisons (Silverman, 2005, p. 127).

This research forms an intrinsic case study because it focuses on a group of Libyan students. As a case, they represent a group of people seeking postgraduate experience overseas, but coming from a country that has endured civil war and is experiencing ongoing conflict. Libyan students represent a case, but, within that case, there are narratives and strands that comprise the different disciplines and individual experiences. The researcher has selected a number of accounts, and this offers the advantage of allowing comparisons to be made across the case. It is important to indicate that this group is not representative of all Libyan students, they are only those students who chose to take part, but they tell an interesting story and offer a range of experiences. In this context, a case

study approach was selected as a research strategy in order to understand the phenomena from the various perspectives of those involved.

Case study is also appropriate for this study because it offers the researcher an opportunity to utilise multiple data sources, such as questionnaire, documentation, archival records, interviews, and observations (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2010). In this study, demographic data was generated for background information via a questionnaire and qualitative data elicited through interviews and observations. The generation of data from different sources is likely not only to give a fuller picture, but also to enhance sufficiency and validity. Participants' different perceptions and perspectives indicated the complexity of the real life situations as they experience it. As Creswell states: a "case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). Case studies provide "considerable depth" within the case (Hammersley, Peter and Roger, 2000, p. 3) and enable a rich description of a complex social phenomenon embedded in a certain cultural context (Merriam, 1998; Bassey, 1999).

There are three purposes for conducting a case study: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory (Yin, 2009). A case study approach has the potential to enable the researcher to answer "what", "how", and "why" questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated (Yin, 2009, p. 4). The present case study is an explorative and descriptive case study because it is concerned with the question of 'what' are the challenges that Libyan students encounter in the UK HE system and 'why' they experienced these particular challenges and how their previous educational, social, cultural and political experiences have affected their current experiences in the master's course. It is also concerned with the question of 'how' Libyan students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict situation adjust and adapt to the western learning environment and their perceptions of identity and of change. In other words, through what the participants related and then through

observation in the classroom context, the researcher had an opportunity to see the correlation between the two and the impact of the context. This is different from a narrative approach in the way in which observation and context are integrated within the students' stories. Baxter and Jack suggest that "case study approach is an excellent opportunity to gain tremendous insight into a case" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 556), and Simons points out it is a flexible approach which is "neither time dependent nor constrained by method" (Simons, 2009, p. 23). For instance, in this study, Libyan students were interviewed three times during the period of their one year master's course and observations were conducted at different times. Stake (1995) and Yin (2009) argue that case study is based on a 'constructivist paradigm', and this is reflected in the current study through selection and interpretation. The selections are however made according to specific criteria and supported by contextually bound statements from the observation. It is not just the sharing of stories, but the wider implications of these stories which are also evident.

One of the acknowledged limitations of a case study approach is that it is not possible or appropriate to generalise from a single case (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Crowe et al., 2011). While recognising this, generalisability was not the aim of this qualitative interpretive study, rather it was to relay something meaningful about international students in general and Libyan students in particular.

4.4 The Sample

Sampling techniques are divided into two types: "probability sampling and purposive sampling" (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 277; Creswell, 2012, p. 206). Probability sampling is common in quantitative studies in which the researcher utilises large samples and identifies the participants and the site randomly; whereas purposive sampling is more common in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002, p. 46; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p. 277). Purposive sampling is "hand-picked for the topic" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 34), and, for the current study, purposive sampling was utilised because the researcher selected a small number of participants deliberately and consciously to get in depth. The sample

was selected according to the following criteria: full-time Libyan students, studying master's taught courses at the Yorkshire UK university in different disciplines (Education, Computing and Engineering, Applied Science, and Business) in order to compare and contrast any differences that might emerge in their perspectives or perceptions. They had all obtained Bachelor's degrees from their home country before coming to the UK, and this was their first time studying in the West. They were from different cities in Libya; and they also all volunteered to participate in this study. However, they differed in terms of age, gender, starting dates of their master's courses and their attendance at pre-sessional courses.

According to King and Horrocks, snowball sampling is a particular type of purposive sampling in which:

The researcher uses the initial few interviewees to recommend other participants who fit the inclusion criteria for the study. They in turn will be asked to suggest further contacts, and so the sample builds up.

(King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 34)

In this study, snowball sampling was utilised because Libyan students as a specific group were initially hard to access, and snowball sampling provided an opportunity to identify participants quickly and efficiently because each participant recommended two or more who met the criteria. Since it was via recommendation, it is a type of snowball sampling of which the researcher still keeps some control.

It was difficult to determine the number of the participants that would be appropriate for this study. Adler and Adler suggest that "our best bet is to advise in the broad range of between a dozen and 60, with 30 being the mean" (Adler and Adler, 2012, p. 10). For the questionnaire sample in this study, 30 Libyan students: fifteen male and fifteen female aged 25-45 years old were selected intentionally to obtain demographic data to inform the interviews. However, it is important to consider Mason (2002), Baker and Edwards (2012); Adler and Adler (2012); and Ragin (2012), who suggest "saturation" is crucial to any qualitative

sampling. In addition, Seidman (2006, p. 55) suggests two criteria for enough: sufficiency and saturation. In this study, of the total sample who participated in the questionnaire, thirteen participants: four males and nine females were each interviewed three times and observed in their classrooms. The number was reviewed after the first phase of the research process in order to ensure sufficiency and appropriately rich data. When I heard the same information and no new data emerged from the latest interview; that was a time when I said enough.

The participants in the sample were all given pseudonyms. Utilising pseudonyms rather than numbers was intended to give a kind of life to the account and a sense of the person to the reader. The pseudonyms have been selected on an arbitrary basis (see the next section ethical issues 4.5). Because this study is about the perceptions of students in different disciplines and since it includes three interviews with each participant, at the end of each quotation in the data analysis and interpretation chapters, these details are designated (e.g. Ali, Education, interview 2). Information is explicit for the reader and for transparency purposes. The following table provides a description of the questionnaire sample:

Table 4.1: A profile of the students in the questionnaire

Name Code	Sex	Age	Status	Subject area	Name of School	Starting date
1. Amina	F	39	Single	Bio-medical Science	Applied Science	9/2012
2. Khoula	F	29	Single	Management	Business School	1/2013
3. Majed	M	40	Married	Information Technology	Computing and Engineering	1/2013
4. Laila	F	27	Single	Advanced Computing	Computing and Engineering	1/2013
5. Nahla	F	32	Married	Pharmaceutical and analytical Science	Applied Science	1/2013

6. Mahmud	M	31	Married	Biology	Applied Science	9/2012
7. Khaled	M	45	Single	TESOL	Education	1/2013
8. Fatima	F	25	Single	TESOL	Education	9/2012
9. Sara	F	32	Married	TESOL	Education	1/2013
10. Omar	M	35	Married	Advanced Computer	Computing and Engineering	1/2013
11. Eman	F	28	Married	Banking and Finance	Business School	9/2012
12. Jameel	M	33	Single	Marketing management	Business School	9/2012
13. Aziza	F	41	Married	Banking and Finance	Business School	1/2013
14. Najmi	M	45	Married	Telecommunication	Computing and Engineering	9/2012
15. Nora	F	25	Married	Analytical Chemistry	Applied Science	1/2013
16. Ghada	F	27	Single	Analytical Chemistry	Applied Science	1/2013
17. Baqir	M	48	Married	Risk management	Business school	9/2012
18. Maryam	F	33	Married	TESOL	Education	9/2012
19. Husam	M	26	Single	Accounting	Business School	9/2012
20. Emad	M	34	Married	Risk management	Business School	9/2012
21. Ayman	M	26	Single	Management	Business School	1/2013
22. Amira	F	29	Married	Modern English	Humanities	1/2013
23. Manal	F	27	Married	Modern English	Humanities	1/2013
24. Ali	M	26	Single	TESOL	Education	1/2013
25. Ashraf	M	43	Married	Business	Business School	9/2012
26. Ahmed	M	28	Married	English Literature	Humanities	9/2012
27. Taher	M	34	Married	TESOL	Education	9/2012

28. Thuria	F	38	Married	Engineering	Computing and Engineering	1/2013
29. Aisha	F	45	Single	Modern English	Humanities	1/2013
30. Hussain	M	41	Married	Information Technology	Computing and Engineering	1/2013

As is clear from the table above, the numbers of males and females were equal in the questionnaire sample. Some participants were enrolled in different disciplines within the same school. Some of the participants were married and others were single.

Table 4.2: A profile of the student interviewees

Name code	Sex	Age	Status	Subject area	School	City in Libya
1. Amina	F	39	Single	Bio-medical science	Applied Science	Tripoli
2. Khoula	F	29	Single	Management	Business School	Zawia
3. Majed	M	40	Married	Information Technology	Computing and Engineering	Garian
4. Laila	F	27	Single	Advanced Computer	Computing and Engineering	Baida
5. Nahla	F	32	Married	Pharmaceutical and analytical Science	Applied Science	Misrata
6. Khaled	M	45	Single	TESOL	Education	Ban-Walid
7. Fatima	F	25	Single	TESOL	Education	Zintan
8. Sara	F	32	Married	TESOL	Education	Ban-Walid
9. Omar	M	35	Married	Advanced Computer	Computing and Engineering	Benghazi
10. Aziza	F	41	Married	Banking and Finance	Business School	Darna

11. Nora	F	25	Married	Analytical Chemistry	Applied Science	Sabha
12. Ghada	F	27	Single	Analytical Chemistry	Applied Science	Jofra
13. Ali	M	26	Single	TESOL	Education	Darna

The above table illustrates that there was difference in the number of males and females in the interview sample. The number of females who opted to participate in this phase was higher than males. This may be because, traditionally, Libyan males feel less comfortable talking to a female for cultural reasons.

4.5 The ethical issues

The ethical guidelines that are published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) have been taken into consideration throughout the process of data generation and data analysis. These students had experienced civil war and came from a country where there is ongoing conflict, and this was significant ethically. The ethical issues that were taken into account in this study were permission, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, debrief and, in the circumstances, sensitivity. First of all, permission was sought from the relevant schools and tutors with regard to observing the participants in classroom. In addition to permission, informed consent from participants is an ethical obligation for conducting research, and it is important to protect the participants from any harm (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). According to BERA (2011), the participants should agree to participate without force or pressure before the research is undertaken. In relation to the current study, the participants were fully informed about the research process such as the aims of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the importance attached to their participation. The participants were also informed about recording the interviews before they agreed to take part and about their right to withdraw for any or no reason, if at any time they felt uncomfortable during the research. I checked and double-checked that the participants understood the research and their role in the study. This is 'informed consent' in which the researcher should ensure that all participants understand the research process and that they are engaged and agree to participate (BERA, 2011). It was important that the participants should

trust that the researcher would respect their opinions and the information gathered about them.

Another ethical issue that had to be taken into consideration was confidentiality (BERA, 2011). The participants were informed about 'confidentiality' in which the data will be treated with care and kept securely in my 'Passport Portable Hard Drive' and password protected. Only the researcher had access to it, and steps were taken to ensure that no data would be published about identified persons or the university without their permission (BERA, 2011). Part of this study was audio recorded interviews which raises specific ethical issues with regard to confidentiality and anonymity. To overcome these issues, the data was transcribed directly after completing the first round of interviews and original recordings were destroyed. Anonymity is another ethical issue that should be taken into account by the researcher (Oliver, 2003; BERA, 2011). In this study, the participants were informed about 'anonymity' by which the participants and the university were only identified by pseudonyms. For instance, the university was given the pseudonym Yorkshire University, and all participants presented in this study were given pseudonyms (see table 4.1 and 4.2) in order to protect their identities and to encourage objectivity. During the interviews, I emphasised anonymity to encourage the participants to feel free to express themselves.

Participants should be provided with copies of any publications arising from their participation, and this is a "debrief" in ethics (BERA, 2011). In this study, the participants were given copies of two conference papers and also an opportunity to read the transcripts in order to make any changes they might want. Participants should be treated with respect, sensitively and fairly (BERA, 2011). The questions about Libyan students' experiences, such as their perceptions about the civil war and ongoing conflict situation, had to be dealt with 'sensitively' and considerately because some of questions could and did generate emotion.

4.6 The context

This study was conducted at a university in the north of the UK. My selection of this university was based on the following criteria: firstly, there are over 120

different nationalities enrolled on a variety of courses here, and this is significant because it gives an opportunity for cultural interaction (International Office). Secondly, the Yorkshire University provides international students with an opportunity for pre-sessional English for academic purposes (EAP) courses to improve their level of English, introducing them collectively to master's study. This feature was the experience of many Libyan students who comprise this case, giving them a period of adjustment prior to the commencement of their courses. Thirdly, according to the Libyan Cultural Attaché (2013), there are a significant number of Libyan students studying at this university, and, according to its International Office, this comprised approximately 200 Libyan students on master's courses between 2013 and 2014 studying across a range of disciplines. In April 2013, the university had been visited by the Libyan Cultural Attaché to register a memorandum of understanding between the institution and the embassy (Libyan Cultural Attaché, 2013). Therefore, this is a significant institution in which to explore the experiences of Libyan students. Having only one year for a master's degree, it is important for students to adapt quickly to the English culture of learning in order to meet the needs and expectations of the new academic environment and achieve the required outcomes.

Although there are a large number of universities in the UK, only one was chosen, extending this was considered, but on balance I felt I could get richer data by spending more time with a group who had a shared institutional experience. Also over the duration, I was able to build a trust relationship with the participants. Finally, it was deemed that one university would be sufficient to investigate the issues under scrutiny, as the focus of the research was to investigate the perceptions, perspectives, expectations and aspirations of Libyan master's students, and the Yorkshire University had a sufficiently large number of Libyan students to do this.

4.7 Pilot of the questionnaire and interview

A pilot study is defined as "small-scale versions of larger proposed studies or trial runs of methods and/or measures" (Beebe, 2007, p. 213). The pilot assists the researcher to review and revise if necessary methods of data collection in order

to complete the study successfully (Beebe, 2007). A pilot study assists the researcher to deal with unanticipated problems before investing time and effort in the full study (Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, and Graham, 2001, p. 293). So, the pilot is an essential for the researcher to avoid later problems (Oppenheim, 1992). This section is divided into: pilot of the questionnaire and pilot of the interview.

4.7.1 Pilot of the questionnaire

The pilot questionnaire was conducted on the 13th and 14th of November 2012 with two acquaintances who were not participants in the research. The acquaintances were Libyan students: one has MA TESOL and the other one has MA Modern English from a UK university. The aims of the pilot were to check the clarity and comprehensibility of the items, to substitute any ambiguous words, to review the wording of questions and the ordering of question sequences in order to reduce non-response rates, and to monitor how much time it would take to complete it. The pilot provided an opportunity to interrogate the questionnaire and see if it was appropriate and acceptable in terms of what to ask and the effort taken to answer it. Based on the comments from the acquaintances, the researcher made some changes to the questionnaire, such as revising, removing and adding to the questions. The pilot confirmed that the questions were acceptable and answerable with these modifications.

4.7.2 Pilot of the interview

The pilot interviews were conducted on the 9th and 10th of January 2013 with the same acquaintances who had participated in the pilot questionnaire. Then, they were transcribed and analysed thematically. The pilot was conducted to check the clarity of the questions and to ensure the actual interviews were conducted effectively. The pilot provided the researcher with an opportunity for revising, removing and adding to the questions and sub-questions; it helped to assure the quality of the recording and to establish a convenient place for interviewing participants in terms of avoiding interruptions and creating an informal and conducive atmosphere. The pilot also helped the researcher to determine that the questions were intelligible and unambiguous.

4.8 Data generation

The data was generated over an entire academic year (2012-2013; two semesters and dissertation stage). In order to address the aims and the research questions of this study, as indicated earlier, the methods employed were: questionnaires, interviews and observations, and each will be explained in detail:

4.8.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires were given face-face to 30 Libyan students in the sample in January 2013. As the researcher, I was available to give the participants clarification, if necessary despite the pilot, to correct any misunderstandings, or to simplify the questions. Since it was completed in the classroom, there was a 100% response rate. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain demographic data such as gender, age, status, city in Libya, and starting date of their master's course. The questionnaires included: an introduction on the cover sheet which explained the researcher's role, the aims of the research, assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, and suggested completion time (see appendix 2). The questionnaire also included closing instructions thanking the participants for their participation. The questions seemed to be clear since only a few students asked for clarification, and this may be due to the fact that the questions were framed appropriately to the participants' levels and had been piloted.

4.8.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing Libyan students was the main method of generating data for this study. Kvale and Brinkmann state:

Interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest.

(Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2)

It can be inferred that the interview is a purposeful conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee intended to gain knowledge. In this study, the interview was an opportunity to explore Libyan students' perceptions and to gain in depth understanding and more insight than could be gained from a questionnaire alone. The interview aimed to allow more freedom for students to talk about issues of significance to them. The interview is a flexible method for data generation because asking people directly about what is going on helps the researcher to gain answers to the research questions (Kvale, 2007). My selection of the interview as the main method for data generation was also based on what Kvale and Brinkmann state:

Interviews are particularly well-suited for studying people's understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspectives on their lived world.

(Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 116)

There are three types of interviews, they are: "structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews" (Robson, 2011, p. 278). Structured interviews are relatively tight control of agenda by the interviewer and may produce standardised responses (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009); semi-structured interviews list broad issues, but approach them relatively flexible (Kvale, 2007); and an unstructured interview is often informal addressing a general area of concern and letting the interview develop around this topic. In the latter two, the interviewee has more licence to dictate agenda around topic; emphasis on his or her thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas (Robson, 2011). For the purpose of the present study, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were the main source of a significant data because Libyan students were interviewed over a period of time: in the first semester; in the middle; and then during the dissertation stage in order to monitor change and development during their educational experience. Kvale and Brinkmann identify the semi-structured interview as:

An interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described

phenomena; it will have a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some suggested questions. At the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the specific answers given and the stories told by the subjects.

(Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 124)

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study because they allow the researcher to be flexible and responsive since a participant might supply additional information stimulated by the situation and in doing so develop her or his thinking. Semi-structured interviews also allow the researcher to follow up the interviewees' answers and provide an opportunity to ask for clarification if necessary or to probe unexpected responses (Kvale, 2007). By employing semi-structured interviews for the current study, the participants felt free to discuss the wider issues that particularly concerned them, rather than having their responses guided or limited by a more structured format.

The interview comprised open-ended questions that consisted of core and supporting questions to encourage depth and detail. The strengths of open questions are "flexible, allow you to go into more depth and clear up any misunderstandings, encourage cooperation, and can produce unexpected and unanticipated answers" (Robson, 2011, p. 283). The questions that the researcher asked to every interviewee were designed to address the research questions and the aims (see appendices 3, 4 and 5). The questions in the first phase focused on initial thoughts and feelings, students' motivation, their attitudes towards the UK HE system, their expectations, an evaluation of how the pre-session course prepared them for their master's course, their challenges and academic and socio-cultural adjustments. The questions in the second stage of interviews which were conducted during the second semester evaluated their course experience, what they had learnt, what was the most academic challenging in terms of skills' development, their experience of classroom activities, their perceptions and opinions about their learning experience in the UK, and their relationship with tutors and colleagues. The questions in the third phase of the interviews were more focused on their thoughts and perceptions

about their overall overseas experience and how they developed and constructed their identity.

Sensitive questions about the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya were asked during the third stage of interviews after the participants had answered neutral questions, and a rapport and trust had been established through the research process. This is because I experienced the conflict and continue to be aware of it. As discussed earlier, the relationship between the participants and myself built up through the number of sessions in which we met over a period of time and during the course of each interview. Whenever we met, I asked the interviewees if they had any questions, and I offered some of my own experience if appropriate in order to ensure they were comfortable sharing theirs (see the role of the researcher section 4.10). Therefore, in the early stages, I approached interaction in a quite subtle way. However, I did not want to ask people specifically about the Libyan conflict and politics, but, when they offered something, I gently probed it. The Libyan civil war and ongoing conflict context are significant to my investigation, but I did not wish directly to ask questions which might upset or discomfit people. However, by interviewing the same participants three times, by the third time they were more open to talk and chose to be more revealing.

Interviews can be face-to-face, one-one interview, group interview and internet interview (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 28). In the present study, all the interviews were one-to-one and face-to-face. This format was chosen because it has the potential to provide the researcher with an opportunity to listen to the interviewees' voices and to view facial expressions, and physical responses which might also be significant. Face-to-face interaction provides the researcher with an opportunity to probe interviewee's responses and to obtain in depth data (Kvale, 2007). It also helps the researcher to overcome any misunderstandings as questions can be explained if necessary. One-to-one interviews also offer the researcher the possibility of modifying the questions to follow up interesting responses in a way that a questionnaire cannot (Robson, 2011).

Robson suggests that any interview lasting less than half an hour is short and less likely to be valuable, and that any interview of more than an hour affects the participants' willingness to participate in the research (Robson, 2011, p. 281). In this study, on each occasion, the interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted in a university tutorial room which is a quiet and comfortable place that tended to encourage informal interaction. However, Seidman (2006) points out that there is no rule about the length of the interview. In the context of this study, most participants came on time to the 60-minute period. It was long enough to make them feel that they were been taken seriously. An hour interview also gave me an opportunity to develop a relationship with the participants. During this time, I ensured they were comfortable sharing their experiences and having informal discussions (see reflexivity section 4.10.2). The interviews were introduced by "a briefing" (Kvale, 2007, p. 56) in which each participant was informed about the aims of the research, research procedures, the use of audio recorder and participants' rights.

Marshall and Rossman (1999); Denzin and Lincoln (2003) and Robson (2011) have discussed the limitations of the interview. Robson (2011) highlights that bias and subjectivity on the part of the interviewer are potential limitations. In this study, I interacted with the participants before starting the interview to break the ice and to build a relationship of trust through interaction as well as through persistence. Brinkman and Kvale argue: "warm empathetic and caring interviews...neglect real power relations" (Brinkman and Kvale, 2009, p. 170). In the context of this study, I was an attentive listener and had an empathetic understanding and respect for their perspectives. At the beginning, the participants were inhibited because of the situation and power relationship between the interviewer and interviewees in that they seemed inclined to give "socially desirable responses" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 69). However, by interviewing the participants three times over several months, they became more open, and a more trusting relationship developed (see reflexivity section 4.10.2). In order to reduce untruthfulness, I utilised iterative questioning whereby I returned to previous questions (see section 4.13.1.1)

I asked the participants clear and concise questions in order to not to lead the interviewee. The participants had been reminded about confidentiality and anonymity. Emphasising anonymity and confidentiality during the interviews was intended to reinforce the ethical position and in order to encourage the participants to express their views and to talk freely about their experiences. All the interviews were audio recorded, and notes were taken during the interviews in order to fill in any missing details. It is important to mention that the knowledge generated depends on the social relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and the researcher's ability to create a conducive environment. Utilising probe-questions such as 'Can you say something more about...?' helped to elicit more information and encouraged the participant to keep talking in order to gather in-depth data. Before ending the interviews, I asked the participants if they would like to ask any question or raise any issue not previously addressed with the intention of giving the participants an additional opportunity to raise issues which might have been worrying him or her during the interview, and this is known as "a debriefing" (Kvale, 2007, p. 56; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 129). The interviews were completed successfully because they answered the research questions appropriately, achieved the aims of the study and gained in-depth data.

4.8.2.1 The methodological issues during the interviews

Giving the cultural context, conducting interviews with male students was challenging for a female researcher. The males agreed to be interviewed on the condition that they brought their wives with them, and they asked for my husband to accompany me during the interviews. I did as they asked. However, during the interviews, they avoided eye-contact with me and refused to shake hands. However, they had no problem participating. I respected their attitudes and conventions because I am Libyan and understand the Libyan cultural and Islamic values. However, on balance it did mean that more females than males opted to be included in the study although this does not reflect any limitation imposed by the researcher on the data collection. One female participant hesitated when I informed her that her voice would be recorded. She phoned her husband to

establish his agreement for this. She then asked me to destroy the recordings after I had finished my research. I reassured her that this would happen.

There was some sensitivity around people's ideas and opinions regarding the political positions of other students. One student refused to participate at the last minute because he found out that another participant, who had been a Gaddafi loyalist, pro-Al-Tinni's government and pro-Dignity forces, was participating in my study. I tried to convince him of the neutrality of the research process. Unfortunately, however, he refused to participate if there was anyone pro-Gaddafi and pro-Dignity involved. He said 'I could not forget what they did to stop our revolution'. Some participants were emotional and in tears when they talked about the civil war and ongoing conflict situation. Therefore, I chose to equalise the relationship and to be more open (see the role of the researcher section 4.10).

4.8.3 Observations

Observation can be defined as a research method "that enables researchers to systematically observe and record people's behaviour, actions and interactions" (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011, p. 170). In the context of this study, some Libyan students in the various and separate master's classes were observed in the classroom during a number of taught sessions which last two hours during the first and the second semesters. The observations include: 1) the nature of the interaction between Libyan students and their colleagues (i.e. British, international and other Libyan colleagues) and tutors and 2) Libyan students' participation in shared activities such as discussion and group work. According to Hammersley and Atkinson:

Research is an active process, in which the accounts of the world are produced through selective observation and interpretation of what is seen, through asking questions and interpreting what is said, and through writing field notes.

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 16)

I chose observation because it offers the researcher an opportunity to observe directly and closely the participants in the classroom and to gather first-hand

data, rather than asking the participants or relying on second-hand data (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Robson, 2011). Furthermore, I chose observation because field notes are always a very useful element to complement the interview data and to explore the impact of the context as Robson states: “observation can be used as a supportive or supplementary method to collect data that may complement or set in perspective data obtained by other means” (Robson, 2011, p. 317). The aims are to develop a relationship with participants and to have the possibility of sharing an experience with them while seeing the impact of context. Patton (2002) emphasises that direct observation enables the researcher to understand the context where the interaction takes place. Furthermore, observation gives the researcher an opportunity to observe things that the participants are unwilling to talk about in the interview (Denscombe, 2010). In this study, I observed that all Libyan students did not interact with other Libyans, I subsequently asked about it in the interview. I used the observations to inform the other data rather than primarily as a data source in itself.

There are different roles that observers adopt in the natural setting, and they differ according to the extent of the researcher’s immersion in the context of the research: “Participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer” (Robson, 2011, p. 318). 1) Participant-as-observer in which the observer builds trust relationships with the participants being observed in order to maintain the dual role as observer and as participant by participating in activities. 2) Observer-as-participant in which the observer is involved in what is being observed and this gives him or her an opportunity to gain an insider perspective. 3) In the complete observer role, the observer does not seek to be involved in the setting being observed. Also, she or he does not interfere in what is going on in the setting. The observer observes and records field notes. In this study, I assumed a complete observer role because I did not want to be obtrusive or affect the context that was being observed in any way. I wanted to observe things as they were without any intervention, although my role was overt to the group. I observed the participants by sitting near them; I observed what happened, their interaction with others; in the break time I talked to them, listened to what was

being said and in the interviews asked the participants to explain different aspects about what had been going on.

I found that observation was a useful way to gain “insight” into the interactions between Libyan students and their colleagues and tutors and to appreciate the dynamics of this relationship (Denscombe, 2010, p. 206). My interest was not only in the content of the interaction, but also in the nature of the interactions such as manner, tone and facial expression. The insight gained in the classroom helped to inform the questions that I subsequently used in interviews. By observing students in a situation, observations generated a more holistic view as Simons states: conducting observation enables the researcher to obtain “a comprehensive picture of the site” (Simons, 2009, p. 55). Time on site was essential to gain trust and to establish rapport. I observed conscientiously and kept fairly detailed field notes (Silverman, 2005, p. 174) on what I observed from five sessions in two semesters in total (see appendix 6). This amounted to ten hours of observations, the notes of which were recorded directly after the end of the sessions. To avoid disrupting the naturalness of the setting, however, classroom observation was not audio recorded because I felt this might be too obtrusive. Permission had to be gained from the class tutors to observe the participants in session. While some tutors were welcoming and comfortable to my presence, others did not agree to have me in class, so I observed another class.

However, Robson (2011, p. 317) points out “reactivity” by which an observer may affect the naturalness of the situation being observed. Power relationship between the researcher and those researched might affect the observation in that participants may change their behaviour to please the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007); or they may feel anxious and self-conscious and, therefore, behave differently (Patton, 2002). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln state: “The possibility of the observer’s affecting what he or she observes, nonetheless careful researchers are supposed to adhere to rigorous standards of objectivity reporting designed to overcome that potential bias” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 730). Therefore, several techniques were followed to reduce this potential effect, by which participants became familiar with my presence and less aware of being

observed. Through this and being Libyan and an international student, and through interviewing them three times; it was possible for trust and acceptance to develop over a period of time. The participants became accustomed to my presence and carried on as if I was not there. Also, I tried my best to be friendly and responded promptly if contacted. The approach was one of rapport and reciprocity and brought me closer to these students' experiences, perceptions and interactions within the master's community.

Sparkes (1992) has suggested that observation (i.e. field notes) is purely subjective because if different researchers were to enter the same setting, they may well generate different data. Field notes are the researcher's perspective while watching and listening, and so depend on the interests and sensitivity of the researcher. In this study, I was observing specific things (i.e. the nature of the interaction), which may reduce that subjectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The nature of the interaction is primarily a matter of evaluation.

As I said earlier, observation enables the researcher to gain real-life or first hand data on people's actions and behaviours. However, the observer has no opportunity to access the participants' thoughts, intentions and motivation. In the context of this study, interviews were conducted after the observations in order to gain more explanation and insight into participants' thoughts and intentions.

4.9 Language and translation

The data from questionnaires, interviews and observations was generated in the Arabic language because it is the first language of the Libyan students, and this gave them an opportunity to express themselves freely and fluently. Generating data in Arabic and writing up in English meant that the researcher was put into new positions as 'translator' and as 'interpreter' of the participants' words. The data was transcribed and subsequently translated.

Crystal identified translation as a "process where the meaning and expression in one language (source) is tuned with the meaning of another (target) whether the medium is spoken, written or signed" (Crystal, 1991, p. 346). In this study, not

only did I translate word by word or literally, but also I translated the meaning from Arabic into appropriate meaning in English in order to achieve equivalence in meanings and to convey the message clearly. However, some ideas and concepts could not be translated exactly from Arabic to English because the precise meaning or equivalence does not exist, and, occasionally, there was a contradiction between valuing meaning and the desire to obtain equivalence which presented a real challenge to me as researcher. In this case, I complemented or replaced the words and meanings of one language with the meanings of another, a process known as 'transliteration' (Regmi, Naidoo, and Pilkington, 2010, p. 18).

Brislin's (1970) model of translation, although dated, is still referred to by Birbili (2000) and Regmi et al. (2010). This model suggests recruiting two bilingual people: one translates the transcripts from the source language into the target language, "forward-translation", and the other one will then "back-translate" from the target language into the source language (Regmi et al., 2010, p. 20). In this study, I modified the model in terms of contextual understanding because I translated the transcripts from the Arabic language to English and checked the transcripts again and again to find the equivalence or the exact expression for the Arabic in English, so that I could represent the views of the participants fairly. As stated by Lyons and Coyle (2007), checking and rechecking transcripts against the translated interpretations during analysis adds more credibility to research findings. To reduce translation-related problems, to refine the translation as well as to assess equivalence and congruence, the 'back-translation' technique was utilised in which two bilingual colleagues back-translated the transcripts into the Arabic language without having seen the original text. Then, the two versions were compared to check accuracy and equivalence. Any discrepancies in meaning that had occurred during the process were then negotiated between the researcher and the back-translators, and, then, identified and removed. Translating accurately is an ethical responsibility, as well as important for the validity of the data.

4.10 The role of the researcher

4.10.1 Insider and an outsider perspective

In relation to this study, as a Libyan, I am a part of the wider university community which gives me an insider and outsider knowledge. As stated earlier, I shall refer to myself as 'the researcher' when I am aiming to assume a more objective position and sometimes I shall use 'I' when my aim is to be reflexive and interrogate the decision-making process through my journal and other activities. Kikumura states:

Proponents of the insider perspective claim that group membership provides special insight into matters (otherwise obscure to others) based on one's knowledge of the language and one's intuitive sensitivity and empathy and understanding of the culture and its people.

(Kikumura, 1998, pp. 140-141)

I am not only Libyan and an international student, but I have also previously studied a master's course in the UK. Furthermore, I experienced the conflict in Libya and left to seek higher educational experience. This means that as an insider researcher, the participants and I have a number of shared experiences. The researcher's experiences informed the choice of elements to be discussed and examined with students and also informed data analysis and interpretation in this study. This insider knowledge was highly informative and provided me with a "surplus of seeing" (Ryan, 2011, p. 642) and insight that an outsider could not have had, alongside my knowledge of Arabic language, sensitivity and empathy to prior experiences, and my understanding of the Libyan culture and Islamic values. However, I was fully aware that, as a researcher, my personal experience and preconceived ideas also had the potential to affect interpretation of data and introduce bias. Therefore, critical scrutiny was employed to minimise this. For example, I chose to be open to equalise the relationship, and undermine power. Equity is essential for building trust and for the participants to be willing to share their experiences (Seidman, 2006, p. 110). Brannen (1988, p. 559) highlights that, when a participant cries during an interview, an interviewer might become upset, so she suggests listening attentively. During this research, some participants cried when they talked about their experiences in civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya because some sensitive questions generated an emotional response. In this case, I gave a little of myself to equalise the

relationship, for example by saying 'I know how you feel as I experienced the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya' or 'Would like to move on to a different topic or to take break?' Or 'Would like to end the interview? We can arrange another time to complete it'. I appropriated the questions in a quite subtle way because I did not want to ask questions specifically about the conflict and I did not want to ask questions with which people would feel uncomfortable. The participants offered information about the civil war and ongoing conflict when they talked about their challenges, their motivation, their return home and their prior experiences.

However, Van Manen (1990) used the term 'suspending' and Moustakas (1994, p. 35) utilised Husserl's (1970) concepts "bracketing" in which the researcher sets aside her experience to take a fresh perspective as if for the first time. Rabe highlights that the "one advantage of being an outsider is the researcher looking at things with 'new' eyes and therefore noticing things that insiders take for granted or do not notice" (Rabe, 2003, p. 157). In this study, the researcher adopted an outsider perspective in order to look at things with fresh eyes, objectively and critically. Therefore, I had the advantage of being an insider who understands and shares certain experiences with the participants and the advantage of being an outsider who is able to see that which insiders cannot perceive or might consider natural and universal. An outsider perspective gave the researcher new insight and understanding.

4.10.2. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an "analytical discussion of (one's) own biographical and theoretical perspective and how it can effect on participants and selectivity interpretation and the presentation of the research" (Elliott, 2005, p. 155). So, reflexivity calls the researcher to be self-reflective and to consider how one affects what one observes, hears and interprets. Reflexivity is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 210). In this study, I aimed to be explicit, self-reflective and critically aware of my role as researcher. I was rigorous and conscientious about the ways in which I performed data generation, data analysis and interpretation. As mentioned above, I am Libyan

and an international student; I continually interrogated and was critically evaluative of my role.

The role of the researcher involves his or her integrity, sensitivity, honesty and fairness (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Objectivity refers to the absence of bias and research which is neutral in terms of the researcher's effect on the study and fairness in data generation and analysis (Silverman, 2010). Lincoln and Guba state:

We recognise and affirm the role of the instrument, the human interviewer. Rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, we say the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact and understanding.

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 107)

In the present study, many techniques were adopted to minimise the impact of my role. In relation to the interview, I encouraged the interviewees to feel sufficiently comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas. The participants in the interview might give information to please the researcher which is referred to as 'behavioural adaptation' by Henn et al. (2006, p. 171). However, the intensive nature of the fieldwork produced a close researcher-participant relationship and a rapport of trust and familiarity with the participants, which an outsider might not have achieved. For instance, by interviewing the same participants three times for an hour each, we became familiar with each other. As discussed earlier, I also asked the interviewees if they had any questions and offered some of my own experience if appropriate in order to ensure they were comfortable sharing theirs.

I aimed to establish "balanced rapport" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 69) with the interviewees based on the trust that I was a patient and caring researcher. I listened to their stories and experiences, and I was curious and sensitive to what was said. I avoided interruptions to allow the participants to tell their stories and I encouraged them to continue via eye-contact and nods. I wrote notes about how

they expressed their experiences and their facial expressions. Therefore, when trying to interpret and make sense of their experiences, my self-reflection on how they seem to feel during the interview and how they reacted provided insights that enriched the research. For the interviewer, being sensitive and engaged in self-reflection are essential skills (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 129), because the interview is a site where people socially interact. Students were enthusiastic and appreciated the chance to talk in Arabic about their experiences with an attentive listener. They liked having somebody who was interested in them and what they were doing. Having the interviews recorded was important to check the reliability of the data since “recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record to which researchers can return” (Silverman, 2005, p. 21). I really attempted to keep the interpretation and data analysis balanced and fair by respecting participants’ voices. I have used quotations from what was said to illuminate the account, but tried not to take statements out of the context, I tried to give appropriate voice and sufficient space, avoiding any assumptions or preconceptions. In relation to the observation, I was aware, as discussed earlier, of my own subjectivities and of participants’ potential “reactivity” (Robson, 2011). Therefore, I aimed to reduce this by frequency, familiarity and the specificity of what was being observed.

Denzin and Lincoln state: “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 13). In this study, I cannot completely step outside the data analysis and interpretation, since, as said earlier, conducting a qualitative study means that being close to my participants, listening to their voices, sharing their stories and understanding what they are saying. Through interaction between myself and the participants, knowledge is constructed. Reflexivity refers to the fact that I am part of the social world in which I am engaging and part of the story I am telling (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This research is interpretive, and I have been self-reflective of my role in the research process. Bell points out that “it is difficult to see how bias can be avoided completely, but awareness of the problem and self-control can help” (Bell, 2005, p. 139). In this sense, there may be some bias, but here it is overt and explicit.

Reciprocity is about acknowledgement of our professional selves. It is about the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, how the researcher builds trust, maintains a relationship and shares power (Reid, 2013). It is a key to understanding reflexivity. In this study, the participants gave their time and adjusted their routines, so I planned to reciprocate. The rapport that the researcher builds with the participants needs to be controlled (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 69). Stacey warns that “the greater the intimacy and the apparent mutuality of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the greater is the danger of the exploitation of the participant” (Stacey, 1988, p. 24). In this study, I was aware of my relationship with the participants might lead to distortion of the data and of the knowledge emergent from the interview. I tried my best to maintain balance between respect for the integrity of the participants and what they were saying and my pursuit of knowledge. In ways, I expressed my respect for the participants. For example, I gave them tea and coffee before the interview and waited until she or he was seated. At the end of the last interview, I offered a small gift to express my appreciation and to mark the end of our relationship.

Lack of reciprocity leads to alienation in research, and this is because the researcher separates the participants from their words and uses those words to his or her own ends (Rowan, 1981, cited in Seidman, 2006, p. 100). Josselson claims ethical conflict when writing about his participants:

My guilt comes from my knowing that I have taken myself out of relationship with participants (with whom, during the interview, I was in intimate relationship) to be in a relationship with my readers. I have been talking about them behind their backs and doing so publicly. Where in the Jovchelovitch interview I had been responsive to them, now I am using their lives in service of something else, for my own purposes, to show something to others.

(Josselson, 1996, p. 70)

I concur the researcher gets more advantage than the participants. In this study, the reciprocity that I offered was my interest in the experience of the participants and the value I placed on participants' words. I respected their voices by presenting quotations from them in the findings chapters. The participants were given a copy of their transcripts in order to review them and see if they wished to exclude any part. The participants will also be informed and shared any publication or report that might arise from this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this member-checking, and they suggest that it has the potential to contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of any publication (see section 4.13.1.3 in credibility section).

4.10.3 Reflective diary

A reflective diary is a “form of reflective writing which researchers engage in during a project and through which they document their personal experience of the research process” (Borg, 2001, p. 157). Finlay (2002) and Gough (2003) emphasise the significance of documenting the research process stating:

Ideas that emerge from the research process should be documented. The construction of analytic or methodological memoranda and working papers, are vital importance. It is important that the processes of exploration be documented and retrievable.

(Finlay, 2002, p. 210)

In this study, a reflective diary had been utilised from the beginning of my PhD journey as a source of developmental data in which I recorded thoughts and ideas and my personal experiences during the research such as methodological decisions and the reasons for making them. I recorded notes about participants' reactions and my impressions of their response. Ortlipp points out that “keeping self-reflective diary is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695), and critical reflect on the research processes and practices. Knight (2002, p. 2) recommends researchers to use a reflective diary because it includes reflections that affect the research findings and on the significance of various influences. In the current study, a reflective diary was also used for reflection

which helped to deepen my understanding of many aspects of the research processes, and this will be evident throughout the data.

The reflective diary may also provide the researcher with an insight into the research process as Borg states:

Reflective writing can provide much insight into the personal and often implicit processes which researchers experience in their work and development, and that these written accounts have benefits both for the writer, as well as—where the writing is made public—for the reader

(Borg, 2001, p. 156-157)

However, it can be inferred that such a diary may also be significant for the reader, enhancing transparency especially where it describes in detail data generation and interpretation with the aim of making it visible to the reader because “being explicit about how interpretations and conclusions were reached, help readers to judge the trustworthiness of the research” (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 8). Janesick views reflective writing as “a tangible way to evaluate our experience, improve and clarify one’s thinking, and finally become a better scholar” (Janesick, 1998, p. 24). In this study, I recorded in my diary when I struggled with difficulties; where I evaluated some aspect of field work; and if I decided to modify earlier decisions. For instance, at the beginning I considered ethnography, but on balance I rejected this option because ethnography involves deep immersion with the group and participation within a master’s course over a period of time. I, however, needed to step back from the master’s class and interrogate my own background as well as theirs. In one sense I am part of the community, but in another sense I am a researcher. Therefore, I found case study to be more appropriate for this study. The diary did, however enhance my analysis and provide methodological insight (Borg, 2001, p. 174). According to King and Horrocks (2010, p. 134), utilising a reflective diary also enables others to scrutinise and to judge the quality of the research. In this study, being honest and informative about how I interacted with the participants in the field and taking time to record, reflect, review and incorporate information are practices intended to enrich the research and allow others to assess the quality of the study. The

diary helped me to provide reassurance to readers that I have approached all research aspects thoroughly and thoughtfully (Thomson, 2014). In other words, it was not only part of the research design and data generation, but also making meaning and sense of what I got.

4.11 Data analysis

Data analysis is a number of procedures in which the researcher moves from data generation to an explanation and interpretation (Gibbs, 2007). In this respect, Creswell states:

Qualitative data analysis consists of preparing and organising the data (i.e. text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion.

(Creswell, 2007, p. 148)

In the current study, data analysis was done manually and undertaken through identification of themes and codes which provided in-depth understanding of the issues being explored. The themes and codes were reviewed many times in an ongoing manner throughout the research. However, there is no particular time when data analysis should start (Stake, 1995, p. 71). I commenced it simultaneously with the data generation, and this minimised the problem of data overload, gave an opportunity to be familiar with the data, and for the emergent themes to be explored further in the remaining period of data generation. Boeije (2010) and Saldaña (2013) indicate that data analysis can be either deductive or inductive. A deductive approach is associated with reviewing a hypothesis, and it is used when the themes and codes are known in advance; whereas an inductive approach is about looking to the data and developing ideas from it, so themes and codes are drawn from the data. In other words, the researcher starts without any preconceived ideas about what will be found. In this study, an inductive approach was used.

Thomson (2014) suggests that when a researcher has got a lot of data; she or he should begin by analysing a small part of it. In the current study, I initially

undertook two interviews and an observation and, then, transcribed each. I took a quite small sample from my data and did some analysis on that. This enabled me to test out my coding system. I began to think how these codes could be synthesised into a smaller number. I looked for other issues coming out of those interviews and the observation that I might explore in future interviews and observations; and finally I also identified issues arising that I had not anticipated, but wanted to explore further in future interviews.

4.12 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was selected because it is flexible, and a generic approach that can be used with different conceptual frameworks and with descriptive and exploratory studies (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) add that thematic analysis has the potential to produce many interpretations of data and potentially give rise to more insightful interpretations than others approaches. Boyatzis (1998) shares Braun and Clarke's (2006) view that thematic analysis can transform the data into something meaningful. Thematic analysis is defined as a method for "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). In this study, I followed the five phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006):

Table 4.3: Phases of thematic analysis adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87)

Phase	Description of the process
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1-Familiarisation with data:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2-Generating initial codes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding interesting features of the data in a systemic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3-Searching for themes :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4-Reviewing themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5-Defining and naming themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

4.12.1 Familiarisation with the data

The first phase of data analysis was transcription of the interviews. From the beginning, I decided to transcribe all recorded interviews and not rely on making summaries of the interviews, or only considering the words, sentences or other utterances related to the focus of the questions. Although I appreciate that transcription is time-consuming (Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2012; Baker and Edwards, 2012), for this study, I did the transcription myself because it familiarised me with the data and gave me a sense of the whole picture before breaking it into chunks. When I was listening to the interviewees during the transcription stage, my diary reminded me of interviewee's facial expressions, tone of language and emotions (i.e. tears, smile, crying). The next stage, translation, has been explained previously in section 4.9. From the start of data generation, I cycled back and forward between the data. I was reading and re-reading it, writing memos, ideas and thoughts in the margins (see below). This process of reading and interpreting of the data continued throughout this study. I read each written transcript several times in order to immerse myself in the data, to seek a better overall understanding of each participant's experience and to identify themes, codes and sub-codes.

4.12.2 Generating initial codes

The next step towards data analysis was coding the data. Coding is a “way of indexing or categorising the text in order to establish framework of thematic ideas that capture something of interest and importance in relation to research questions” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 38). Codes refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). The codes are usually attached to chunks of words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs (Mile and Huberman, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998). It is important in assigning a code to raw data is that this segment should be meaningful in relation to the phenomenon under study. In this research, the codes were generated after reviewing the collected data several times in an iterative process. The codes were defined, described and re-written until I was assured of their appropriateness and inter-relatedness. For example:

Table 4.4: An example of codes applied to a short segment of data

Data extract	Coded for
The international students, with whom I worked, already had expertise, so I learnt a lot from them. Group work is helpful because a student might give an idea that you might not pick up in the lecture and in turn you might have an idea that others do not share. Thus, we complete each other. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)	1. Complementary contribution 2. Partial mutual engagement
British students are aware of critical thinking. I asked my British colleague to help me with critical thinking. She said with smile ‘That is fine. I know you are international student and you might not be familiar with this in your home country’. She helped me a lot; I learnt from her in	1. Situated learning 2. Learning specific skills 3. Interaction with mid old-timer

<p>how to evaluate an article and to provide a respectful critique of others' writing. (Sara, Education, interview 2)</p> <p>When I interacted with my Libyan colleagues who were anti-Gaddafi, we started fighting. Therefore, I prefer not to speak to them. (Sara, Education, interview 2)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of integration 2. Lack of mutual engagement 3. Avoidance of confrontation
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This is further exemplified in appendices 7 and 8. I employed a constant comparative method for developing and refining the codes as Denscombe states: "Comparing and contrasting new codes, categories and concepts as they emerge-constantly seeking to check out against existing versions" (Denscombe, 2010, p.116). By using the constant comparative method, the researcher does not lose sight of the data, or move the analysis away from the focus of the study (Denscombe, 2010). In this study, I read and re-read the data and the codes again and again to highlight the similarities and differences in the interviews and observations. I combined the codes into categories and added new codes to accommodate for the new generated data. I looked for the cases that represent the code and continued looking and interviewing until the data failed to provide further insight into the code; what Gibbs (2010) calls 'saturation'. Then, similar codes were grouped in categories from which themes could be derived and discussed in relation to the research questions.

The process of organising the data into codes is a significant "data reduction" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 10). This is because I selected things and left out others (i.e. narrow and deep), owing to my critical engagement and the reflexivity of process. I went through all the interview transcripts, assigning codes to chunks of data that were relevant to the general topics that I wanted to investigate in the study. Then, I combined the codes that carried the same idea. They were all highlighted. At this stage I wrote the codes in the margins and later I transferred

them to categories for coding tables. The codes and subsequent sub-code for this topic are as follows:

Table 4.5: Codes and sub-codes

<p>Data analysis codes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment and lack of security • Culture and gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Culture and risk (sub-code) • Currency and confidence • Unfamiliarity with the UK HE system • Challenge of independent study • The consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Antagonism (sub-code) ○ Avoidance of contact and limited integration (sub-code) ○ Political division and schism (sub-code) • Developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC) • Complementary contribution • Interaction with mid old-timers • Interaction with dominant old-timers • Learning and becoming • Adjustment and the core aspects of the Libyan Identity
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It took a lot of time to conduct the coding manually, but immersion in the data helped me to understand and assign the codes and sub-codes.

4.12.3 Searching for themes

In this stage, I read and re-read the codes that were generated in the previous stage in order to identify themes. According to Braun and Clarke:

Identifying themes involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded extracts within the identified themes. Essentially, you are starting to analyse your codes and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.89)

This stage requires thinking about the relationships between the different codes, sub-codes, themes and re-arranging and organising the coded chunks. In this study, grouping the relevant codes under the corresponding theme gave a broader sense of the data. At the end of this stage, I had “a collection of candidate themes, and sub-themes, and all extracts of data that have been coded in relation to them” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). There are two types of themes: 1) emergent themes and 2) a priori themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p. 88). In this stage, I identified themes generated from my interpretation of the raw data (i.e. emergent themes) such as autonomous learning theme and other themes emerged from my prior theoretical understanding and the framework (i.e. a priori themes), for example, the challenges, Libyan students’ adjustment and learning as social participation, and identity. This supported the interpretation of the data in relation to the four questions. Quotations from the data that relate to the themes were referenced and cross-referenced to prioritise their significance (Silverman, 2005, pp. 171-187). I started data analysis with one theme that I was interested in exploring i.e. ‘the challenges’. It is related to the first and second research questions: What are the main challenges that Libyan postgraduate students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict encounter? And to what extent do their previous experiences educationally, socially, culturally and politically affect their strategies for adaptation and development? Then, I continued the analysis with other themes: Libyan students’ adjustment and learning as social participation, autonomous learning, and identity.

4.12.4 Reviewing themes

This stage involves the refinement of the identified themes. The two main principles of Braun and Clarke (2006) were taken in account during the refinement stage. First, I recognised that “data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). In this stage, I followed the two levels that identified by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 91). For level one, I

reviewed the extracts of coded data under each theme in order to ensure their coherence and that they formed a meaningful unit of analysis. For level two, I continued reviewing and refining until I was satisfied that the themes captured the coded data and the extracts, and formed thematic map. I read and re-read the whole data in order to code any additional data within themes that I may have missed in the coding. At the end of this stage, I had a sense of how the themes fitted together and the story they told about the data. This is evident in chapters 5 and 6.

4.12.5 Defining and naming themes

The aim of this phase is to “define and further refine the themes you will represent for your analysis, and analyse the data within them” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). In this study, this was conducted by determining each of the themes and the aspects of data that each theme captures. I went back, read, re-read, organised and reorganised the coded data and the extracts into a logical and developmental story in relation to the aims and the research questions. Braun and Clarke recommend that the names of the themes should be “concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 93), so I aimed to achieve this. By the end of data analysis, I had four themes and twelve codes and four sub-codes as illustrated in table 4.5.

4.13 Judging the quality of the overall research (Trustworthiness)

Trustworthiness relates to goodness or quality criteria (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Qualitative research requires quality criteria that are different from those of quantitative research (i.e. the validity and reliability) (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). For example, King and Horrocks (2010) argue that validity and reliability are positivist criteria, and this challenges the qualitative researcher who deals with a reality that is changing and fluid. This is because the interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the subjective world of human experience (Smith, 1983). Smith states: “For social scientists, there is no objective reality which is separated from the people who participate in and interpret that reality” (Smith, 1983, p. 35). For qualitative researchers, there are multiple realities; therefore, for

an interpretivist, the truth is a matter of “coherence” (i.e. connected and consistence) rather than a matter of correspondence as for positivists (Sparkes, 1992, p. 30). In this study, I have reported the processes that I followed in data analysis for openness and transparency purposes. Having an eye to such tensions will hopefully assist in maintaining the integrity of the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest ‘trustworthiness’ criteria (qualitative criteria) as alternatives to ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ (quantitative criteria) as in the following table:

Table 4.6: Qualitative and quantitative criteria for judging the quality of the overall research adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 289–328)

Qualitative approach	Quantitative approach
Credibility	Internal validity
Transferability	External validity
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Guba and Lincoln’s criteria, although dated, are still valid and have been accepted by many writers such as (Shenton, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Denscombe, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010; and Creswell, 2012). Trustworthiness enabled the researcher to ensure that there is logical link between different steps of the research process. Any research is ultimately judged by its quality in terms of each part as well as overall. The trustworthiness criteria are detailed below:

4.13.1 Credibility

According to Merriam (1998), ‘internal validity’ is equivalent to ‘credibility’ and deals with the question, ‘how congruent are the findings with reality?’ The researcher determines credibility through strategies such as prolonged

engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, member checking and peer scrutiny of the study, assurance of honesty and auditing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These techniques are conducted in this study to increase credibility and to promote confidence.

4.13.1.1 Prolonged engagement and persistent observation

Prolonged engagement means “spending sufficient time to achieve certain purposes, learning the culture, testing of misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 301). Spending sufficient time in the field is significant to build a relationship of trust between the researcher and participants and to understand the context (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993). Qualitative researchers increase the worth of their findings by decreasing the distance between them and the participants (Krefting, 1991, p. 217).

In this study, by interviewing the same participants three times, trust was established through interaction as well as through persistence. Furthermore, the three-interview structure has the potential to enable the researcher to check for internal consistency (Shenton, 2004, p. 67). During the research, I utilised iterative questioning where I returned to previous questions that were answered by them through rephrased questions, and this helped me to identify any discrepancies within responses. With regard to the case study which lasted about a year, the extended time period provided me with full understanding of the issues being explored and enabled me to present them clearly and coherently. My role as an observer and my presence in a number of taught sessions helped me to reduce my influence on both the setting and participants. In addition, it assisted to build a relationship of trust and familiarity with the participants as they were familiar with my presence and less aware of being observed.

4.13.1.2. Triangulation

The use of multiple data sources is a strategy that enhances credibility (Krefting, 1991; Yin, 2009). In this study, interviews and observations were utilised to

generate data, and this allowed comparisons to be made between data. Providing different sources of data enabled me to minimise the potential distortion elicited by only one source and enhanced credibility through triangulation. As Crowe et al. state:

The use of multiple sources of data (data triangulation) has been advocated as a way of increasing the internal validity of a study (i.e. the extent to which the method is appropriate to answer the research question). An underlying assumption is that data collected in different ways should lead to similar conclusions, and approaching the same issue from different angles can help develop a holistic picture of the phenomenon.

(Crowe et al., 2011, p. 6)

Generating data by using more than one method assisted the researcher to build confidence in her findings, to view the topic from different angles, and therefore to get a fuller picture of the situation. For instance, the observation data (i.e. the impact of the context) contributed to confirmation and completeness of the interview data. The data from these multiple sources was then compared in the analysis process. "This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p. 554). Triangulation by generating data from multiple sources (i.e. interviews, observation, and diary) maximised the data and provided more understanding of the case under investigation. I contributed on several occasions over a period of time. In terms of triangulation, the observation informed the interviews and my interpretation.

4.13.1.3. Member-checking and peer scrutiny of the study

A copy of the translated transcripts was taken back to the participants to check if they considered the interpretation to be fair; if there was any part with which they might not be comfortable or wished to exclude; and if I had presented anything that they thought was inaccurate. This was an ethical and quality issue and served several purposes: 1) it gave the participants an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings or wrong interpretation; 2) it provided the researcher with an opportunity to assess what the participants intended by saying certain things; 3)

the participants had an opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretation, and to provide additional information; and 4) it put the participants on record as agreeing to the correctness of the researcher's account (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314; Creswell, 2012, p. 259). This assisted the researcher to strengthen the quality of the data analysis.

I mentioned earlier two bilingual persons (peer-review) back translated the transcripts from English into Arabic in order to reduce translation-related problems. Respect for participants in terms of language accuracy is an ethical responsibility as well as being important for the credibility of the data. As Shenton states:

The fresh perspective that such individuals may be able to bring may allow them to challenge assumptions made by the investigator, whose closeness to the project frequently inhibits his or her ability to view it with real detachment.

(Shenton, 2004, p. 67)

At various stages, I asked critical friends to review the process that I had undertaken. The constructive feedback that was offered by them was welcomed. All of these enabled the researcher to refine her methods, enhancing the rigor of the research design and to strengthen her arguments.

4.13.1.4. Assurance of honesty

Participants were given opportunities to withdraw from the study to ensure that the sample involves only those who were willing to take part. As discussed earlier in section 4.3.1, the case is not representative of all Libyan students; only those students who chose to take part. They may have a particular perspective on experience, but there is something to be learnt from their stories.

Confidentiality and anonymity had been emphasised during the interview to enhance the ethical position and to encourage participants to express themselves freely. Therefore, evidence suggests that participants talked about

their experiences without fear of losing credibility in the eyes of their tutors and without fear of political repercussions.

4.13.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to “to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups; it is the ability to generalise from the findings to larger populations” (Krefting, 1991, 216). The findings of a qualitative study are specific to a small number of individuals and a particular context (Erlandson et al., 1993; Merriam, 1998). Although it is possible to generalise from a single case, it is unlikely and generalisation was not the aim of this qualitative interpretive study. However, it is essential to consider Lincoln and Guba (1985), Stake (1995) and Denscombe (2010) who argue that, although each case is unique, readers may relate the findings to their situations if they see that they are similar to that described in the study. Thick description is one of the techniques that is utilised to support transferability (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 133).

In this study, I provided sufficient and dense description of the sample and the context from which they came and in which they are currently; the methods that were used to generate data; and the time period over which the data was generated in order to allow the reader to judge and assess whether the case might be similar to or applied to another case; whether the setting is like another which is familiar. Shenton (1994) has acknowledged that when different qualitative researchers offer results that are not consistent with one another, this does not mean one is untrustworthy, but they reflect ‘multiple realities’.

4.13.3 Dependability

Reliability is a measure of consistency (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2012). Denscombe identifies reliability as “if someone else did the research, she or he would have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions” (Denscombe, 2010, p. 300). For positivists, reliability is that, if the study was repeated with the same methods, in the same context and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. However, in social science and for

interpretivist, reality is always changeable and it is subjective (Hammersley, 2005), and this is due to the fact that humans change and shift (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) make clear that there is no validity without reliability and there is no credibility without dependability, so “a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). Here, it is possible to use techniques that relate to credibility to show that this study has dependability, and, to address this, I gave a detailed and thick description of the research process. I explained the rationale, the data generation and analysis, the conceptual framework, the context and the sample in order to allow the reader to develop understanding of the methods and their effectiveness.

4.13.4. Confirmability

There are two techniques to establish confirmability: they are an audit trail and a reflective diary (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 319). Halpern’s (1983, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) seminal work categorises an audit trail into:

- Raw data includes electronically recorded materials. Having the interviews recorded in this study was important to confirm the reliability and presence of the data; “recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record to which researchers can return” (Silverman, 2005, p. 21).
- Instrument development information includes pilot forms. Pilots of the questionnaire and interview questions were conducted to ensure the participants in the sample would be capable of answering and not misinterpreting the questions. Some items were removed after being pre-tested, and, after the refining process, the questions were ready to use for data generation.

Furthermore, confirmability is the extent to which researchers are explicit and aware of their influences on the data in the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton 2002). I used a reflective diary, as I explained in detail in section 4.10.3,

and described in detail my role as a researcher that includes reflexivity as discussed in section 4.10.2.

4.13.5 Coherence (methodological congruence)

Coherence applies to the fit between the research aims and the methodological paradigm, and between the particular research strategies and the research questions (Sparkes, 1992). In this study, I chose the paradigm (i.e. interpretive qualitative paradigm) which was appropriate to the research aims and questions. I adopted the most appropriate strategy within my chosen paradigm which was case study approach. I chose the methods for data generation that would enable me to answer my research questions and that were congruent with the paradigm and strategy employed. I justified my methodological selection. This is because the methodology has knock-on effects throughout the thesis. I provided a coherent, logical, concise and interesting story within themes and codes, and sufficient extracts to demonstrate the significance of each theme. Through appropriate examples, I illustrated the essence of the various points.

4.14 Summary

This study is a qualitative interpretive study to examine Libyan students' perceptions, perspectives, expectations and aspirations. The methods employed to generate data were questionnaires, interviews and observations. Demographic data from questionnaires was gathered initially for sampling. Semi-structured interviews with open-questions and themes were the main source of significant data because Libyan students were interviewed three times: at the beginning of the first semester, in the second and at the dissertation stage. The observation and reflexive diary gave the researcher a chance for an outsider and insider perspective. The research forms a case study because it focuses on Libyan master's students, seeking higher educational experiences, but coming from civil war and ongoing conflict.

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were utilised to identify the sample. One-to-one interviews were carried out face-to-face with the participants and they were recorded to allow others to check the existence of data. The nature of the

interaction between Libyan students and their colleagues (other Libyans, British and international colleagues) and tutors and Libyan students' participation in shared activity such as group work were observed in a number of taught sessions during the first and the second semesters. Permission, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, sensitivity and honesty are the ethical issues that were addressed in this study. The researcher is self-reflective and aware of her role as a researcher. Insider and outsider perspectives, reciprocity and reflective diary are all a significant in this study.

The data was generated in Arabic because it is the first language of Libyan students. Then, the data was transcribed and subsequently translated into English by the researcher. Data analysis was done manually and undertaken through identification of codes and themes. The data was analysed inductively, and thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The study was assessed by trustworthiness criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The next chapter will present the findings in relation to 'the challenges of Libyan students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict' theme. It will provide interpretation and discussion of the data in relation to the research questions and the theoretical considerations.

Chapter 5: The Challenges of Libyan Students as a Case from Civil War and Ongoing Conflict

5.1 Introduction

This research proposes that Libyans as international students represent a case. It suggests that their past experience and current situation offer particular difficulties and make their account of adapting to their master's course in the UK especially challenging. The following chapter weaves the story of the Libyan students' experience through their own words and perspectives. The data is organised in such a way that it addresses the research questions and is selected from more extensive individual interviews and observations in order to make the account coherent and cohesive. Unique features, however, are not ignored since it is just these features which represent the depth of the experience and demonstrate the uniqueness of the Libyan case. The analysis and the interpretation of the data are linked with the literature review and to elements of communities of practice theory that are relevant to this study. The chapter describes and analyses ethically sensitive stories willingly shared with another Libyan, the researcher, whom the participants knew had some appreciation of the implications of civil war and of the complexity of a traditional tribal society as well as of the demands of adaptation and the challenge of new learning. In the selection and analysis of the data, due consideration is given not just to past trauma, but also to the tensions of the present conflict and the new learning environment that students chose to highlight.

The process of data analysis in this study is not linear and systematic as it might be in scientific research, but is essentially an iterative process. The methodology chapter includes justification of the selection of thematic analysis and of the five steps followed (see section 4.12). Data analysis and interpretation in this chapter are based on close reading of all the data and are presented according to emergent and a priori themes. The identification of themes and codes provides depth and insight into understanding students' learning experiences and creating participants' stories. However, these stories are not produced according to individuals, but rather according to themes. In the

account, each individual makes several comments at different times. Even though their stories are fragmented, the synthesis is the story of the case. This chapter includes students' challenges, and these are divided into environment and lack of security; culture and gender, including culture and risk; currency and confidence; unfamiliarity with the UK HE system; independent study; and the consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict.

5.2 The challenges

The following section presents an analysis of the research group of Libyan master's students' perspectives about the challenges that they encountered within the master's community, and what they perceived to be the impact of their previous experiences.

5.2.1 Environment and lack of security

All the Libyan students in the sample considered that the civil war and ongoing conflict had had a negative effect on their previous education in Libya. For example, Nahla described a distressing and turbulent experience of higher education in Libya, including demonstrations against tutors who were pro-Gaddafi, and the threat of weapons on university campuses. During the unrest and chaos, there was also the closure of many universities:

There wasn't a week without a strike, a sit-in or protests on the university campus. Therefore, lectures were cancelled. To make matters worse, I didn't study two modules because their tutors were pro-Gaddafi and others chose not to teach because of the threat of weapons. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nahla reveals that, inevitably, the civil war and ongoing conflict had disrupted her learning. During the conflict, Libyans were divided by their allegiance, either pro-Gaddafi or anti-Gaddafi, and this created a climate of distrust between individuals and between tutors and students. During that time, there was a persistent culture of fear. Therefore, even after the initial conflict, Nahla was determined to escape from the ongoing unrest:

I went to Tunisia by car to apply for visa. That's enough, that's enough. We suffered too much from the current situation. I wanted to learn in a university with no weapons, no violence, no demonstrations, no expelling of tutors and no cancellation of lectures. Now, I am in Britain, so I can compensate for what was missed. Unfortunately, however, I still experience anxiety and have a feeling of fear. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 3)

It was clear that arriving in the UK was a relief for Nahla. She was so eager to leave that she did not wait for the British embassy to re-open in Libya, departing instead from Tunisia despite the dangers. Nahla continued, however, to feel anxiety and fear when she arrived in the UK, since, although she was in a very different environment, she still felt vulnerable. Typically, fear is something felt in extremis; one fears if there is imminent danger rather than fear being a perpetual state. The participation of Nahla in the master's community and how these feelings affected her will be explained in relation to the 'learning as social participation' theme.

Another student Aziza stated:

My sister was kidnapped during a lecture by an unknown person who had a weapon. He said 'He was security' [tears and cry]. He raped her on the university campus and nobody stopped him. It was awful [pause]. I didn't get as much reading done. I didn't learn everything that was on the syllabus. (Aziza, Business School, interview 3)

Aziza's comment illustrates that, during the conflict, university campuses which had been fairly safe places had become sites of risk and potential violence. She indicates that the conflict led to a collapse in security. Aziza described this shocking incident, but she was able to juxtapose that with the effect on her learning in her explanation. Learning is closely associated in her mind with violence. Aziza's sense of vulnerability did not disappear with a change of environment. In the UK, she was still apprehensive:

I am no longer in that unsafe place. But, even when I came to Britain, although Britain is not a place of war, I still feel fearful. I didn't go to university for month, I was scared of everything. I had no desire to meet and to speak to anyone. I couldn't sleep at night, reliving the scene of

what happened to my sister, the memory of the sound of the bombing and missiles, and the bodies of the dead [tears]. I delayed my start to January instead of September. (Aziza, Business School, interview 1)

Clearly, Aziza attributed her continued distress to the psychological impact of the conflict. Although she was no longer in that situation, her anxiety persisted and caused her to postpone the start of her course. It appears that she needed time. During the interview, when she talked about this particular incident, she had burst in tears. Ethical concerns were paramount in this study since, during this research, students were more emotional than I had initially anticipated and, as a result, their well-being was a priority (see section 4.10). Aziza's account exhibits some elements of what might be described as post-traumatic stress whereby a person re-lives a distressing experience as flashbacks during the day and as nightmares at night (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2013) and which can be a reaction to traumatic events (Ahmed, 2005). Wenger states: "It is not easy to erase our memories. We can forget events, but the marks they leave in the world can bring them back" (Wenger, 1998, p. 88). However, the Libyan students interviewed in this research had not forgotten past events; they were all too fresh in their minds. The 'marks' left were not just in the world, they adversely affected current experiences. The participants in their responses repeatedly used the word 'fear' which in Arabic is similar to English, and it is a multi-layered concept. They were fearful of disruption and attack in Libya, but in the UK, they feared the unknown. This later fearfulness might better be described as heightened anxiety about a new experience, but in the Libyan students' minds was manifest as fear.

In a similar vein, Ali's classroom experience in Libya had also been threatening and made him feel vulnerable:

In Libya, I was afraid of my colleagues because most of them had weapons. I was waiting for someone to pull the trigger on me in class. I used to kiss my parents every day because I might be killed in class (tears). (Ali, Education, interview 1)

Ali reveals that the widespread presence of weapons amongst his fellow students was an understandable source of fear and a disturbing feature of the civil war and ongoing conflict. In Libya, weapons are now commonplace, and the ongoing conflict is between militia fighting each other. Yet despite his concerns, Ali continued his education with the aim of coming to the UK. Distress was something that Libyan students shared during interviews, and it was certainly not unusual for participants in this research to express the sense of fear, threat and anxiety which they had experienced. Such pervasive feelings were among the many reasons that make Libyan students a case. When Ali initially came to the UK:

During the first days of my master's course, I was silent in class. I couldn't speak even for a minute. My tutor asked me 'Why?' I described to her my colleagues in Libya. (Ali, Education, interview 1)

International students starting their courses can initially be reticent due to unfamiliarity or a lack of confidence (Griffiths et al., 2005; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). It appears however that Ali did not want to interact with his colleagues in Libya. Even when in the UK, he was uncertain of fellow Libyans and, as a consequence withdrawn, wanting to avoid any confrontation. Silence was the simplest solution. However, his tutor played a role in assisting him:

Alhamdulillah [praise be to God], when I came to the class before the start of the lecture, my tutor reminded me that I am not in Libya and said 'Please feel free to talk, this is your opportunity to talk to your colleagues, it doesn't have to be about study; you can tell someone what you did yesterday'. (Ali, Education, interview 2)

Ali's comment reveals that his tutor encouraged his participation in class discussion. Reassurance and resilience were essential, but it was also a process that took time. Ali's tutor utilised a pedagogical technique to encourage him and others to participate in class discussion:

My tutor used yellow cards in front of each student to encourage everyone to speak before leaving the class. This was very useful; I began talking to my colleagues. At the beginning I felt like a strange person in the class, but I don't any more. (Ali, Education, interview 2)

It was clear that the tutor's support was crucial here encouraging Ali to become more willing to take a role in class discussion. This assisted his integration, and he began to feel like a member of the class rather than an outsider. This kind of strategy could be used in any situation, but it was particularly significant for Ali, who had been traumatised by his previous experience. This is in line with Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) and Wenger's (1998, p. 100) view that old-timers support and facilitate the experiences of the newcomers with regard to the development of knowledge and skill. In the context of this study, the tutor helped Ali to overcome the challenge of participation. The support of authority is one of the criteria for successful intercultural contact (Allport, 1954, cited in Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009, p. 465).

The designation of communities of practice as only comprising two discrete groups, old-timers and newcomers, can, however, be criticised (Hughes et al., 2007). In this study, there was a situation in which the community of practice was both diffuse and devolved in a complex structure. There is a community of practice that is the university, and there was the community of practice that comprised each student's master's course. Even within each course, there were different groups this research suggests. The tutors might be deemed the dominant old-timers; British students could be designated mid old-timers because they might be more familiar with the socio-cultural environment of British higher education and with the expectations of the course since their master's degree is in their home country. Finally, international students who had been there for a term have been designated in this research as mid-newcomers (see section 3.4.1). The following account will position the students in relation to their appropriate roles within the groups and also look at how their background affects them.

5.2.2 Culture and gender

The findings of this study reveal that the gender mixed classroom environment in the UK is a cultural challenge to many Libyan students, particularly the women. Female Libyan students such as Nora, Nahla, Amina, Sara, Fatima,

Aziza, Khoula, Laila, and Ghada had had no previous opportunity in Libya to interact with males, other than family members. Nora, for example, reported:

In primary and secondary schools, males didn't study with females in the same school; there were schools for males and others for females. We studied together only in university, but the class was divided into two groups: one for males and the other one for females. I didn't interact or sit together with males because of our culture. I just say 'Salam Alikom' [Peace be Upon You] and, if any male asked me, my response was restricted. You are Libyan and you know how people misinterpret the interaction with the opposite sex. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 3)

Nora describes the gender roles in the traditional Libyan culture. For her, although males and females might study in the same university and meet regularly, the relationship between them remains formal with only very limited association. For Nora, interaction between members of her master's community was affected by Libyan culture. It was not just the impact of traditional values, but also her concern, like Fatima's father, about the opinions of others:

In the UK, when my colleagues from mixed genders went to the library together to study, I didn't go with them. I am aware of other Libyans. If any of them saw me sitting with another male, my reputation would be undermined. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 3)

Nora was aware that in the eyes of other Libyan students sitting with males outside the master's class was not acceptable. Libyans would think that she had rejected her heritage and traditional cultural values whereby women should eschew men, avoiding eye-contact and displaying both deference and respect to them. Therefore, she was uncomfortable when with males:

I felt more comfortable when I interacted with females, but I tried to avoid eye-contact in interacting with males, particularly with Libyan males, because we understand each other. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nora said 'particularly with Libyan males' because she felt especially wary of her behaviour with them. According to the Libyan culture, it is impolite for a female to talk to a male or to argue with him, so in the master's community, Nora preferred being with other women and therefore avoiding the turmoil of

cultural dissonance. Observation (3.2) of Nora in class indicates that when given a task and asked to work in group, unless compelled to do otherwise, Nora would join a group of female students. My observation of the session also highlighted that discussion was taking place across the class, although they sat as separate groups: a group of women and a group of men.

In a similar vein, Fatima, who had been protected by her father whilst in Libya and accompanied by her brother to the UK, found that coming to the master's community and listening to western men were challenges:

At the beginning, when I came to the UK, I didn't understand a recording if the speakers were males. When speakers were females, I completed all of the tasks and got full marks. My ears are unfamiliar with male voices because I have never interacted with males in Libya [silence] because of our habits and customs. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

The above comment reveals that life in Fatima's Libyan village had been framed by traditional Libyan cultural values, including those that differentiate between males and females to the extent that communication between them was rare. For Fatima, initially, simply listening to males and understanding them was a challenge for her in the master's community. However, Fatima praised her British tutor who helped her to overcome her difficulty:

My tutor helped me a lot. She divided us into groups and she said 'You need to join a group mixed with males'. She also gave me CDs in which most of the speakers were males to listen to them. Alhamdulillah [Praise be to God] I overcame this difficulty. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

It was clear that here Fatima's tutor (dominant old-timer) played a significant role in helping her to address her unfamiliarity regarding the aural comprehension of male voices. Fatima's tutor was prepared to make specific allowances for her. Joining mixed groups was a direct strategy, but the CDs also offered an opportunity for independent learning and extending experience. Fatima's comment seems to be consistent with the view of Zhou et al. (2008) who identified cultural synergy in which a tutor might seek to understand

students' culture, interpret their behaviour and facilitate their interaction. Fatima also reported:

I just say 'Salam alikom' [Peace be upon you]. I prefer to learn and to build a relationship with females. All Libyan females are unfamiliar interacting with males in our country, our habits and customs don't accept that kind of interaction. (Fatima, Education, interview 3)

Fatima's response reveals that her relationship with male colleagues is formal, and confined to greetings. Like Nora, she felt more comfortable with women and, consequently whenever possible, chose the same sex groups.

Aziza also indicated that it was not just interaction with fellow countrymen which concerned her since she was also reluctant to attend a tutorial with her male tutor:

I didn't go to tutorials with a male tutor. I can't stay with him alone in a room. This is part of our habits and customs. I explained that to my tutor and I suggested my female friend accompany me or my husband, but he didn't accept that (silence and tears). I didn't ask questions or interact with this tutor. (Aziza, Business School, interview 2)

Aziza's comment illustrates that she felt unable to attend one to one tutorials and discuss tutorial feedback with her male tutor. For Aziza, the seating of different genders (one female and one male) in one room is socially and culturally unacceptable. It is not explicit however what Aziza's tutor was trying to do. Aziza felt he was unsympathetic since he rejected her suggestion that she be accompanied by another person. It seems that there was lack of "cultural synergy" (Zhou et al., 2008) here. Nieto (2010) and Tran (2011) emphasise that tutors should take into consideration international students' backgrounds and develop cultural awareness because "to reject or demean a person's cultural heritage is to do psychological and moral violence to the dignity and worth of that individual" (Pai et al., 2006, p. 22). It appears that Aziza expected the tutor, despite being a dominant old-timer, to adapt to her. Aziza's silence and crying while she was describing the situation were however signs that she was affected by the situation. Aziza's perception is in line with Lave and Wenger's

(1991) view that a community of practice can create barriers that inhibit the learning of newcomers. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 76) also demonstrate that an authoritarian relationship between old-timers and newcomers can undermine learning if newcomers are viewed as novices who should be instructed rather than as peripheral participants who need time and opportunity for development.

Teaching international students requires “sensitivity” and “cross-cultural awareness” (Healey, 2008, p. 347). To some extent, Aziza’s tutor might have been sympathetic, but he may also have wanted to encourage her to be more confident and independent. Aziza’s comment could be interpreted as the tutor trying to accommodate Aziza within the culture of the group by sharing the same experience as others, but that nature of the interaction was seen from Aziza’s point view as culturally insensitive. Culture plays a significant role in shaping the perceptions of both tutors and students, and this affects the teacher-student relationship (Li et al., 2002). Another possible explanation was that the tutor is not culturally neutralised; rather he has a culture as well and perceptions of how a student should behave. Burton and Kirshbaum (2013, p. 109) suggest “meta-awareness” of cultural differences assists students and tutors to reduce challenges and to build relationships. For Aziza, there was a gender barrier that adversely affected mutual engagement and limited her opportunity to participate, learn, and gain improvement through tutorial interaction. While Fatima felt her female tutor was supportive, Aziza felt that her male tutor was not. The concept of gender is very cultural: this is an issue of male and female as perceived by Libyan culture as opposed to British culture.

Arguably, according to Lave and Wenger’s communities of practice, there is a general sense that newcomers are the persons who will adapt and conform to old-timers. Yet Aziza as newcomer had expected her tutor to adapt to her. An academic community is different from Lave and Wenger’s view of community of practice because, as said earlier, roles according to Lave and Wenger are set by old-timers and newcomers should primarily conform to what exists. In academic communities, however, old-timers are likely to view themselves as being more facilitative and culturally sensitive, and therefore a tutor as a

dominant old-timer would have some responsibility to accommodate and ease the passage for a student. In this case, an academic community of practice, old-timers might operate in different and more flexible ways than Lave and Wenger's traditional view of community of practice. British academic culture probably would not recognise gender as a factor because it would assume whatever sex an individual was, students would be treated equitably. They might differentiate according to learning needs, but what they would not do is to differentiate according to gender. The data revealed that Aziza did however benefit from teaching sessions that were designed to support international students, and this will be evident in section 6.3 autonomous learning.

Gender as a factor which affects international students' participation in the new academic environment has not been significantly highlighted in literature. Although Morita's (2009, p. 443) study in Canada found that gender difference affected a male participant (Kota) in a significant way, her findings focussed on what she calls Kota's male perspective because Kota was interested in a particular university-industry collaboration, whereas his department preferred an alternative more feminist approach. Therefore, he chose not to participate in class because he felt that his ideas were not appreciated. Hodkinson and Hodkinson note that gender as an issue is not fully covered by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) as they state: "the significance of ethnicity, social class and gender in structuring both opportunities to learn...are underplayed" (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004, p. 1). This may be simply because when Lave and Wenger refer to CoPs, they are essentially located within a western social and cultural dynamic. Gender is not presented as significant as a consequence. It is conceived from a western rather than a Middle Eastern view like that of Libya where the cultural and social perspectives work together. In the context of this study, Nora, Fatima, and Aziza attribute the challenge associated with gender to their Libyan traditional cultural values. This is reinforced by the fact that the researcher, as a female, encountered some issues with data generation from males (see section 4.8.2.1 in Methodology Chapter). For Wenger, "mutual engagement requires interaction" (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). However, for these Libyan students, especially the young women,

tensions created by gender adversely affected their engagement and undermined relationships which were important for learning. Nora felt unable to socialise with her male colleagues outside the master's community. Fatima only had limited and formal contact with males; and Aziza refused to attend tutorials with her male tutor. Such behaviour indicates that integration was already an issue for the Libyan students culturally even before the political and international agenda emerged as significant. However, it is essential to say that it is not only Libyan students who might have this issue. It is a feature of Libyan students as a case, but it is not unique feature which makes them a case. As a feature of them as a case, however, some aspects might be, if not unique, certainly contextual.

5.2.2.1 Culture and risk

The findings of the present study show that participant females considered independence to be a challenge for them in the UK. In general, it is likely that many women from traditional Muslim societies will have relationships that are conditioned by the men in their lives. For Fatima, for example, life in her Libyan village had been framed by traditional Libyan cultural values, including those that differentiate between males and females:

My father took care of me more than necessary. He said 'This is part of our habits and customs. If I allowed you to do whatever you want, our reputation would be undermined.' (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

Fatima suggests that her father was over protective. She considered his attention as 'more than necessary' because she sought more independence. He, however, justified his actions through the family's reputation, and, as Fatima explains, he is referring to convention and the collective responsibility which are significant in Libyan society. If she functioned independently, other Libyan people would be critical. Therefore, since Fatima was not married, she was accompanied by her brother to the UK:

My brother came with me to the UK, because I wasn't allowed to travel alone according to our customs. But, he didn't stay with me in the country. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

Despite her father's concern, he had let her come to the UK. It is true that she was accompanied initially by her brother, but after that her father did not know what she was doing from day-to-day. In Libya, Fatima had had little freedom and was socially dependent on her father, as a result when she arrived in Britain:

I encountered fear in dealing with people, fear from new things. I had been in a box. I didn't know anything, and everything had been done by my father. I found myself needing to be responsible for everything; I didn't know even how to walk in the street. My father prevented me from walking on the street even if the place wasn't too far. He took me in his car. He guided me. Even all the documentation that related to my study, registration for a new semester, results, photocopy papers and, if I needed any document from my tutor, my father would go to speak to him, not me. My father said 'There is no security, no safety and kidnapping women is widespread in the country and on university campus.' Before, he didn't come with me to the university campus. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

This lengthy quotation illustrates that, before the war, Fatima's father had allowed her to attend university by herself; however, since the war, because weapons were widespread and university campuses were insecure, her father had become more protective. In Fatima's account, custom and practice are evident, but genuine risk was also a reason for Fatima's father being more protective. Fatima who came from unsafe place back in Libya was now also frightened in the UK. There was significant and real contrast between what she had experienced previously and her situation on arrival in the UK where she had to become responsible and independent. As a consequence, she was apprehensive and could not take part straightaway:

At the beginning, I encountered many challenges (tears). I found I had to be responsible for everything. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

If I wanted anything in a shop, I asked another person to say things instead of me. (Fatima, Education, interview 3)

Fatima reveals that initially she struggled with the independence even to the extent of asking other people to talk when she went shopping. She felt reserved which is a natural human reaction to unfamiliarity. Another legitimate interpretation is that she might not have had confidence in her language and may have thought others could express themselves better. Her comments suggest that she was apprehensive about being criticised. Although not explicitly stated, it can be inferred from what she says that a period of adjustment was necessary. Fatima could not suddenly become independent overnight from being monitored and accompanied everywhere to having to cope with everything.

5.2.3 Currency and confidence

Laila, Omar and Majed who were studying in the School of Computing and Engineering reported that the outdated curriculum they had experienced in Libya affected their learning in the UK. A lack of curricular continuity might affect a number of international students (Janjua et al., 2011), but Libyan students suffered particularly because of the interruption to study as a result of the civil war and ongoing conflict. For example, Laila said:

I was embarrassed when I said that in 2012, I had studied 'Pascal language'. It was dated and isn't used any more in computing. I am doing the "Designing Websites" module that needs knowledge of language programs such as Java to design a website. I didn't study these languages in Libya. My British and international colleagues studied that language. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Libya were in the early stages even before the 2011 conflict; however, the civil war has held back the ICT progress. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Laila's comment highlights how circumstances affected her. Access to the internet in Libya had also been frequently erratic or non-existent because of the number of power outages since the beginning of the conflict. Coming to the UK, Laila felt even more out of touch than other students from overseas, especially in a subject which is rapidly changing. She perceived the host students and other international students as being more informed since they had had access to more recent resources prior to arrival. Fuller et al. (2005) demonstrate that

newcomers bring their backgrounds to a community of practice, and these have an impact on the extent to which students are engaged to learn. In the context of this study, the data revealed that, Laila's prior educational experience adversely affected her participation in the master's community. Omar reinforced this when he explained that in Libya:

If you followed up the curriculum and the examination questions of the tutors for the last 10 years, you would find them the same; no updates at all. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 1)

Omar reveals that even prior to the initial conflict the curriculum was outdated, and that since then there had been relatively little opportunity to redress the balance.

The data indicated that for some participants, the impact of war was about feeling frightened; for other students such as Ghada, Ali, Majed and Amina, it was not really about fear; it was about a lack of resources. For example, Ghada, who came from a small village in the south of Libya to the UK, was visibly distressed when explaining her prior educational experience in Libya:

My last two years of study were in shipping containers. No internet, no library, we didn't have proper labs. One of the containers was used as a lab, and they brought us essential materials (silence). Believe me we used toxic gases without consideration of safety. Students went on strike and lectures stopped for a week (tears). They promised things would improve and there would be better facilities, but I finished my study without there being anything new (tears). (Ghada, Applied Science, interview 2)

Ghada's comment indicates the poverty of her prior educational experience and how the civil war and ongoing conflict had exacerbated this situation. When Ghada arrived in the UK, she was apprehensive:

Coming from a small village in Libya to the UK, it is a significant transition. I am in the Britain, I can now learn in a good place, but I feel nervous. In the laboratory, all the students were familiar with the devices apart from me. They said that they worked on them in their home countries. (Ghada, Applied Science, interview 1)

Ghada's comment illustrates that in her view studying in the UK was an opportunity to compensate for the limitations of the Libyan education system. However, she felt inadequate and perceived host students and other international students as experienced colleagues more familiar than herself with modern equipment. Ghada also considered herself even less familiar with the relevant equipment than some of her Libyan colleagues because she came from a rural rather than an urban area. In Libya, it is very common to find cities are better provisioned than villages in terms of services and facilities. She was however positive and motivated, 'I can now learn in a good place', although she recognised she had a steeper and more sustained learning curve than many of her peers.

Similarly, Ali explained the impact of the conflict on his learning:

In my city, many universities were destroyed during the war. So, classes were full with students from different universities who sat one behind the other. This prevented our interaction and sometimes I couldn't hear the voice of my tutor. I certainly couldn't ask questions in class. (Ali, Education, interview 3)

Ali reveals that many universities in Libya were destroyed during the 2011 conflict because they were commandeered by the previous regime as military bases. Students were ordered to vacate the premises and join other universities. This both increased class sizes and disrupted learning thus adversely affecting students' educational experiences. When Ali came to the UK master's community, he was not experienced in class participation. As discussed earlier in section 5.2.1, Ali had avoided interaction with his colleagues in Libya because he was afraid they might be armed or antagonistic. Rhema and Miliszewska (2012) mention the damage to many Libyan universities during the conflict; however, this study documents the human impact of the civil war and ongoing conflict on the educational experiences of individuals. When Ali started his master's course, he was full of praise:

I feel 100% comfortable in the class and university with the facilities in library, and high quality education. The interaction between my colleagues and tutors is easy. (Ali, Education, interview 2)

Ali reveals that he had access to good facilities and a well-equipped learning environment in the UK. He also comments favourably on the interaction between colleagues and tutors which could reflect the layout and fewer students in his master's classes, but might also be the product of a culturally different dynamic and more student-centred teaching and learning environment. Ali confirms Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that access to resources, old-timers (i.e. tutors as dominant old-timers), other members, and opportunities for participation are important in order to facilitate the transition from periphery to full participant. In the context of this study, Ghada and Ali's comments indicated that, although they were affected by their previous educational and political experiences, they were positive about the new experiences on their master's courses.

5.2.4 Unfamiliarity with the UK HE system

Both Nora and Laila were unfamiliar with the requirements and the core aspects of UK HE system when they came to the UK. Nora, for example, stated:

The UK education system was completely different from the education system in Libya, I didn't expect that. I came to the UK with closed eyes, so I felt stressed at the beginning. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 1)

Nora used the metaphor 'closed eyes' about her arrival in the UK to indicate her lack of knowledge about the UK HE system. In her comment, there was no explicit reason for her 'closed eyes'. It might be that because Nora came from a situation where there was civil war and ongoing unrest, she was so eager to leave that she did not prepare herself by searching comprehensively for information or attending a preparatory course prior to coming to the UK. Another possible explanation could be that, because of the number of power outages since the beginning of the conflict, Nora was unable to access sufficient information fully to understand relevant issues and concepts prior to coming. She presumably though knew something about the course even if she did not

know about the UK more broadly. She felt stressed when she entered the master's community and encountered the UK HE system.

Nora's view confirms previous studies about international students such as, Anderson (1994), who found that, for international students, stress is very common at an early stage owing to a lack of familiarity with the culture and academic systems. When international students encounter unfamiliar methods of teaching and learning and a new academic environment, they may face anxiety and frustration, lose confidence and feel unable to engage with the alternative context (Griffiths et al., 2005). Similarly, Ward's (2004) study about Japanese students in New Zealand also revealed that 'stress' rather than the 'honeymoon' stage suggested by Oberg (1960) is an initial reaction to transition. However, the effect of coming from civil war and ongoing conflict on students' unfamiliarity with a new academic system has not been highlighted in the literature so far. The data indicated that, like other international students, Nora was unfamiliar with the UK HE system and encountered stress during the initial phase of her course; however, coming from civil war and an ongoing conflict situation where there had been poor internet access had exacerbated her problems. Nora continued:

I expected the tutor to feed me with knowledge. I did not expect the learning will be independent and a student is responsible for his or her learning. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 1)

Nora indicates that she expected the requirements of the UK HE system to be similar to those of the Libyan education system. It appears that because she came from an education system that promoted a teacher-centred approach and spoon-fed knowledge, she did not anticipate self-study and student-centred learning which are the core aspects of the UK HE system. This confirms a previous study by Pitts (2009), who found that there is a gap between international students' expectations and the overseas experience which may lead to stress and distress. However, Pitts' study was different from the current study in that it was about a range of international students rather than a specific group and the focus was only on a short-term student sojourner abroad.

However, Laila said:

When I found the UK HE system focuses on academic writing, I was shocked. I asked previous international students to advise me, they said 'The most important thing is to write and to meet the deadline (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 1)

Laila's reaction reflected a lack of preparation and an unfamiliarity with the UK culture and academic system. It was clear that she did not expect to be required to do academic writing because her major was 'Advanced Computing' which includes practical skills. Therefore, she was left in a state of shock. This is consistent with the view of Janjua et al. (2011) and Subhash (2013), who found that international students bring their approaches and assumptions about learning to the new academic environment. However, there might be a gap between what they are familiar with in their home country and the expectations of the new environment, and this leads them to a state of shock. Laila came from the Libyan education system where students are required to write for the purpose of passing an examination. It appears that she did not get particularly helpful advice from her colleagues who had been in the master's community for a term or who had finished their course. This is because there is a whole culture and discourse around writing assignments in the UK. There are outcomes to meet, established criteria to address, formative assessment to accommodate and summative feedback to assimilate as well as, possibly, tutorials to incorporate. The focus is not only on the word limit and the submission date as Laila had been advised, although they are important.

If we were applying CoPs theory here, the previous international students (i.e. mid-newcomers) appear to have failed to provide guidance to a newcomer. It is not an obligation, however, but it is a theoretical consideration because Lave and Wenger (1991) indicate that old-timers support and facilitate the experience of newcomers. International students' unmet expectations are associated with poor assimilation (Khawaja and Dempsey, 2008). However, for Laila, it was not only about unmet expectations, but also about the unexpected. Laila was crying when explaining:

I came to the class only to swipe my card (tears). There is no benefit at all; my tutor just reads the slides. Once, he gave us an exercise to answer in class and I did it (silence). I expected him to praise me, but there is no encouragement at all. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Clearly, Laila did not settle easily into her life at university. It was support and recognition that she craved. Although her tutor provided her with information and knowledge, her expectations were not met. Laila expected acknowledgement and a more student-centred approach. People are often capricious in what they want and inconsistent in what they need at various times. Laila's view is different from Nora who had expected a more teacher-centred approach. A previous study by Burton and Kirshbaum notes this, stating:

It is known that some students from particular cultures prefer authoritarian and formal pedagogic techniques, whereas others prefer a freer, more participative, adult oriented approach.

(Burton and Kirshbaum, 2013, p. 114)

However, even within this there is variation, since, although Nora and Laila came from the same educational cultural background, they still had very different expectations of teaching and learning.

Nora and Laila did not attend a pre-session course before the start of their master's course. Laila explained,

I didn't attend the pre-session course. I was offered unconditional place in master's course because I had 6.5 in IELTS. At the beginning of the first semester, I was like deaf in the party. My colleagues who attended a pre-session course had an idea about the structure of writing, plagiarism, paraphrasing and referencing. I would like to recommend other student to attend a pre-session course in order to understand many concepts and aspects before entering their master's courses. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Laila's phrase 'deaf in the party' echoes a proverb common in Libya which is used by people to express a complete lack of understanding. Although Laila had the required IELTS score, this did not mean that she had appropriate knowledge about the norms and conventions of the UK education system. Academic literacy requires "disciplinary enculturation, specialised knowledge, and profound understanding of norms and conventions" (Casanave, 2002, p. 27). However, in the IELTS tests, students are required to write two tasks, but neither of them involves building an argument, or using citation and references. Therefore, Laila perceived attendance at a pre-session course to be significant in terms of having a general idea about the core aspects of the UK HE system prior to starting a master's course. Studying a master's course in the UK may require knowledge of the norms, conventions, and expectations of the British HE system, but it also involves adapting to new ways of understanding, knowing, organising and interpreting knowledge (Lea and Street, 1998). Academic literacy requires an in-depth understanding of practices within the new context as well as effective communication with fellow students. It cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts (Casanave, 2002). Therefore, situated learning and learning as social participation with colleagues and tutors within the master's community are significant for Laila and Nora in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills. This will be discussed in relation to 'developing intercultural communicative competence' section 6.2.1 and 'complementary contribution' section 6.2.2.

5.2.5 Independent study

The data suggests that Khaled, Khoula, Laila, Nora, Sara, Majed, Amina, Nahla and Omar all considered self-study a challenge for different reasons. They indicated that the Libyan education system promoted a teacher-centred approach and rote learning. For example, Nahla stated:

One of the challenges in my master's course was self-study because in Libya I attended lectures and listened carefully to my tutors and, then, I was assessed by exam (silence). I am familiar with that kind of learning. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 3)

Nahla reveals here that, in Libya, the tutor had been the main source of information. When Nahla started her course in the UK, she therefore found independent study a challenge:

At the beginning, self-study in the UK was a challenge. As you know Libya is in chaos, there are militia and widespread of weapons. Drugs and alcohol were sold on a university campus. Access to the resources was limited. Therefore, tutors evaluate us with exams. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 3)

For Nahla, coming from civil war and ongoing conflict, access to resources including the internet and libraries had not been easy. Nahla implied that Libyan tutors' awareness of the difficulties and lack of security prompted them only rarely to ask students to do research or to write independently. Nahla became a rote-learner who reproduced knowledge for examination. Therefore, when Nahla entered the UK master's community, she found independent study a challenge. Nahla perceived herself as a rote-learner because of civil war, but in fact instruction and memorisation are features of the Libyan education.

In a similar vein, Khaled indicated that his prior educational culture had been test-driven, and therefore his only previous writing was purely for the goal of passing examinations:

I am affected by silent culture. Teachers gave us hand-outs; we memorised them and write them in the exam paper. To make matters worse, the instability of the country, the spread of weapons in university and lack of internet don't encourage teachers to promote self-study. (Khaled, Education, interview 2)

Khaled reveals that he was a rote-learner even before the civil war and ongoing conflict. For Khalid, the main source of information in the Libyan education system was a teacher since only teachers have the right to speak in class and students should be silent (Zraa et al., 2012, p. 1620). Like Nahla, Khaled indicated that the country was in chaos. His university campus was insecure with internet connections being non-existent owing to the number of power outages that Libyans faced. Rhema and Miliszewska (2012, p. 151) emphasise

that power outages were and are one of the effects of the conflict. Therefore, he perceived tutors did not encourage autonomous learning; on the contrary, they preferred to use a teacher-centred approach.

Nahla and Khaled's views are in line with Tweed and Lehman's (2002) view that the core aspect of eastern learning is a teacher-centred approach. Bamford (2008) highlights independent study is problematic for international students in the UK. However, he does not elaborate further to discuss the reasons behind that challenge. His study is about international students in general rather than a particular group of students from a specific environment which is currently in a state of civil war and ongoing conflict. In the context of this study, the data revealed that independent study was challenge for Nahla and Khaled owing to the effect of their prior educational experiences. The data indicated that Nahla and Khaled were teacher-centred and rote-learners in Libya before the conflict, but that the civil war and ongoing conflict had exacerbated the problem. Nahla and Khaled accepted teacher-centred learning while in Libya and only became more critical once in the UK which will be evident in the complementary contribution section 6.2.2.

Other participants like Nora and Omar also described the emphasis on assessment by examination in Libya. For instance, Nora said:

In Libya, I didn't have opportunities to do presentations. All modules were 100% exams. Each module has two exams: mid-term exam and final exam. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nora continued:

In Libya, tutors didn't teach us how to stand in front of the class and present. Consequently, I lacked confidence. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 2)

The difference in teaching styles and approaches to teaching and learning between the home and the host university is reported as one of the challenges that international students in a Pakistani university encounter (Janjua et al.,

2011, p. 1360). In the context of this study, however, the data revealed that Nora lacked confidence in presentation owing to the difference in approaches of teaching and learning between Libya and the UK and her familiarity with assessment only by examination. For Nora, presentation was a skill that needed to be learnt, and this learning was assisted by her international colleagues' support:

My Japanese and Chinese colleagues booked a class to practise their presentations together. They invited me to come and attend with them while they were practising presentations and benefit in terms of observing. I learnt from them how to keep eye-contact and how to transfer any question that I am unsure about to the audience by saying 'I am not the only one who is expert in this room' (Nora, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nora and her colleagues developed and improved their presentation skills through mutual support, direct observation and situated learning. Such collaboration can assist in developing the relationship and increasing mutual engagement among members of the community.

5.3 The Consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict

This study's interviews and observations showed that the civil war and ongoing conflict had a social and political impact on the relationship between Libyans within the master's community. Internal factors affected relationships externally because individuals had different political and tribal loyalties. This section includes antagonism, avoidance of contact and limited integration and political division and schism.

5.3.1 Antagonism

Some students, such as Fatima and Khaled, chose to express neutrality in their attitudes toward the Libyan political situation. Fatima, for example, revealed that she was impartial but hopeful: *"I am optimistic 50% and that is all"* (Fatima, Education, interview 1) although it was clear from her facial expression and the tone of her language that she had reservations. During the third interview, Fatima explained:

Now, the tribes fight each other with weapons. During the old regime, when my tribe fought with another tribe; the problem wasn't solved by the law or by the weapons, but it was sorted out by the tribal sheikh. (Fatima, Education, interview 3)

Fatima's comment illustrates the tribal nature of Libya. For Fatima, before the conflict, people referred to 'tribal sheikhs' to adjudicate quarrels and relied on tribal connections more than the law and weapons for security and justice. According to Libyan culture, priority would be given to the elders in the tribe, and, only if they could not sort a problem, would one resort to law as a final solution. Previous studies by Zoubir and Rózsa (2012) and by Ahmed and Gao (2004) reinforce that Libya is a tribal country.

During observation (2.2) of a Master's TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) session, I noticed Khaled waiting outside the class before the start of a lecture. When I asked him why he did not join the group, he replied "I don't want problems. My relationship with my Libyan colleagues is formal; greeting and that is all." During a subsequent interview, Khaled explained and told me about his experience:

One of my new Libyan colleagues invited me to a café on the University campus. We discussed different issues about the political situation in Libya, but when he knew that I was from X city and specifically from The X tribe. He looked at me sarcastically and said 'You are greenish. I am from The X tribe in X city'. I explained to him that Gaddafi offered my tribe weapons and money to support him in the conflict, but we refused. I was in Libya during the conflict and both my tribe and my city stood on the fence, it was neither pro-Gaddafi nor anti-Gaddafi. The issue is that during the conflict all the Gaddafi loyalists escaped to X city to hide because of the geographical nature of the city. Unfortunately, he took the glass of water and poured it over my face and ran away (silence and tears). All the students in the café looked at me in surprise. Therefore, my interaction with Libyans is in 'Salam Alikom' [Peace be Upon You] (silence and tears). I prefer to interact with home and international students. (Khaled, Education, interview 3)

The lengthy quotation above indicates the tribal nature of affiliations after the conflict. Despite the death of Colonel Gaddafi, loyalties persisted along the lines

of the initial conflict, leading to sustained bitterness and antagonism between tribes in Libya. According to Khaled, X had tried to bribe various tribes to support him, but whether they succumbed or not did not matter. Assumptions about association were sufficient to have a negative impact on relationships with other tribes. Khaled tried to defend his tribe and city, but his colleague was unconvinced, and he insulted Khaled in public. He also used the term 'greenish' to describe Khaled because Gaddafi used green, the colour of Libyan national flag, as his emblem, and as a consequence green is associated with pre-conflict Libyan nationalism and with Gaddafi. Khaled had withdrawn from interaction with other Libyans as a result of the incident described above. His relationship with Libyan colleagues was purely formal, and, instead, Khaled sought more diverse friends. Omar also highlighted just how bitter and damaging the situation in Libya had been:

There were problems that resulted from the revolution and what X did in the cities in Libya. During the 17th revolution, X distributed money, cars and weapons among the cities that were loyal to him. He gave them the green light to kill, rape women, and to steal. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 3)

Omar was talking about what had happened during the initial conflict, but the legacy of this is ongoing conflict, anger, violence and resentment in the way in which people behave, making reconciliation difficult.

5.3.2. Avoidance of contact and limited integration

The majority of Libyan students indicated that the interaction between them and their Libyan colleagues was limited because they were on opposing sides during the initial civil war. Despite a shared experience of conflict, differences and disagreements emerged. Sara, for example, reported:

When I interacted with my Libyan colleagues who were anti-Gaddafi, we started fighting. Therefore, I prefer not to speak to them. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Sara's comment illustrates that she was pro-Gaddafi, and, therefore, she isolated herself from her fellow Libyans who had different affiliations because

she wanted to avoid confrontation with them. Prior to the conflict, tribal and political differences were not overtly significant, for instance, when I was a master's student before 2011, generally groups of Libyan students simply divided on a gender basis for cultural reasons. Similar to Khaled, Sara appreciated mutual engagement and interaction with host and international colleagues rather than the Libyans within her master's community:

Before the 17th revolution, I used to enjoy my life with Libyan friends, but I don't anymore. I prefer to join the international students or British students rather than other Libyans. I don't want problems. I sat with my classmates from Britain, China, Poland, and Spain in the library in the break times. We study together, we always discuss together. (Sara, Education, interview 3)

Nora revealed her own personal tragedy:

Sadly, the situation that I now saw depressed me; nothing new in Libya. The situation was worse than before. 'How nice to remember that palmy days!' My brother was killed because of the retaliation (cry and silence). (Nora, Education, interview 3)

Nora expressed her sadness and disappointment because despite the conflict and bereavement, she had not observed any progress since the fall of the old regime. It felt like her brother had died in vain. She even now inclined towards the past and Gaddafi's rule for security and safety reasons. Her comments reveal the extent of loss and trauma in a situation where there is no security and a widespread use of weapons. However, in the UK, Nora was fearful of her compatriots because her experience adversely affected her socialisation with Libyan colleagues within the master's community:

When you told me that you were Libyan, I was fearful of you and you must have been scared of me, weren't you, weren't you? I prefer not to interact with any Libyans. (Nora, Education, interview 3)

Only Omar said that:

I have two Libyan colleagues and, if I have any inquiry, I ask them. I feel they are able to understand me speaking in Arabic better than others. I never ever ask them about their political affiliation. I do not want to deepen my relationship with them. I do not have confidence in them. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Omar maintained a relationship with Libyan colleagues to some extent because he was diplomatic and subtle. For him, it was better to seek assistance from Libyans because they had a lot in common, such as the same language, a similar background and a shared education system. However, his comment revealed that his relationship with his Libyan compatriots was very superficial, and it did not reach a level of integration and mutual engagement owing to lack of trust. For many others, however, there was a climate of distrust between individuals as demonstrated by Nahla in 5.2.1. Clearly, this political division is something that is relevant and significant, and, although it is not necessarily unique, Libya as a country is new to political divisiveness, and tribal loyalties with political ideology are a volatile mix in Libyan society.

5.3.3 Political division and schism

Some students such as Ali, Amina, Nora and Khoula reported that after the fall of the Gaddafi regime, many political parties emerged in Libya and everyone had loyalty to his or her own party which affected their participation with Libyan colleagues within the master's community. The political groups are different from tribal loyalties. For example, Ali reported:

I am loyal to 'Justice and Democracy Party of Libya' and 'Liberal Party'. One of my colleagues is loyal to 'National Front for Salvation of Libya Party of Libya', while the other one is loyal to 'National Solidarity Party of Libya'. I didn't speak to any of them because we are in opposition. I prefer to keep distance. (Ali, Education, interview 3)

Ali's comment reveals that his Libyan colleagues did not accept or respect others' ideology or political leanings and were antagonistic when talking about different political opinions. Therefore, he preferred to isolate himself from other Libyans. Ali's comment is different from the view of Wenger (1998, p. 75) who argues that a community of practice can include different people (young, old,

liberal and conservative), and diversity does not preclude homogeneity. On the contrary, Ali isolated himself from his fellow Libyans because they all had different political loyalties.

Political discourse in Libya is in its infancy. For these students, the memory of the conflict was fresh, and, because it is still going on, people were passionate about their affiliations, but often had different positions or individual interests. It was not just a question of solidarity because they came from a particular ethnic national group since, even within each group, there were differences. In the literature review, Lee (2009) suggests that it is common for international students from the same cultural background on the same course to have regular interaction. Social support from co-nationals may reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation for newcomers because it can offer emotional and spiritual support (Maundeni, 2001; Fontaine et al., 2010). International colleagues and friends of the same nationality usually assist each other to reduce stress and enhance their psychological well-being. For instance, Pitts stated: "Within a co-national network, sojourns are able to refine and create new expectations for study abroad through everyday talk. This process reduces expectation gaps enabling sojourners to adjust over time" (Pitts, 2009, p. 450). However, the findings from interviews and observations during this research demonstrate that Khaled, Omar, Nora, Sara, Ali and Fatima's experiences were all different, and, where there has been civil war and is ongoing conflict, this can adversely affect mutual engagement and integration even within a new community. According to Wenger (1998), mutual engagement is the basis for building a relationship between members of a community because it requires regular interaction, but the Libyan situation in this research was complex.

Some students such as Fatima, Khaled and Ghada reported that they were not accepted by their Libyan colleagues from different cities owing to their loyalty to different Libyan governments. Fatima, for example, said that:

My Libyan colleagues who are from X city don't accept me in their group. They prefer to work together in shared activities in class and they also work together in group in the library.' (Fatima, Education, interview 3)

Fatima's comment reveals division between Libyan students owing to having two opposing governments in Libya. For Fatima, this might be because, during the initial conflict, X city was the second city in Libya that rose up against the old regime, or it might be that people from X city consider themselves as those who had initiated and led the war and should be rewarded as a result. All Libyans are Muslims, but during the civil war and ongoing conflict, many parties had emerged, and there were different loyalties, alternative governments and opposing forces (i.e. either Dignity or Dawn Libya). People from X city who consider themselves pro X party had loyalty to the X government and Dawn Libya; whereas people from a different city such as Fatima consider themselves liberal and had loyalty to the X government and Dignity Libya. It appears that, because each group had different beliefs and ideologies, neither accepted the other, and Fatima felt rejected. People often disagree, but it is the implications here that are significant. Like Sara and Khaled, Fatima sought diversity:

I prefer to listen to Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish students. I like to know how other international students think. So, I can learn something or I can teach something. (Fatima, Education, interview 2)

5.4 Summary

Libyan students represent a case because they come from a civil war and ongoing conflict situation and they are motivated to learn, but, within that case, there was fragmentation and alienation because of the ongoing conflict in their country. Fragmentation and its legacy are actually part of the baggage they brought with them and are a feature of the case. Fragmentation was part of a shared experience. Wenger acknowledges that "a community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island of intimacy insulated from political and social relations. Disagreement, challenges, and competition can all be forms of participation" (1998, p. 77). For Wenger, a community may experience a form of conflict, competition and opposition rather than agreement and mutual

engagement. Wenger is aware of conflict, and he warns of its harmful effect (Wenger, 1998, p. 85), but he does not give any analysis, interpretation of the origins, forms or effects of conflict (Jewson, 2007, p. 71). The only conflict that is really highlighted in CoPs is “generational encounter” between newcomers and old-timers (Wenger, 1998, p. 101), rather than the conflict that might emerge between newcomers. Similar however to generational encounter, in this study, gender was a source of tension when exacerbated by social and cultural factors. For instance, most female participants found that socialisation with males was challenge that hindered their integration and mutual engagement as has been discussed in section 5.2.2. Nora was unable to work with her male colleagues outside the master’s community, Fatima found that listening to western males was a challenge, and Aziza refused to attend tutorials with her male tutor. However, the data also suggests that there was conflict between newcomers themselves, rather than just between newcomers and old-timers, and this is not highlighted by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). The findings here indicated that, owing to the civil war and ongoing conflict, there was avoidance of contact and limited integration between Libyan students because they were on opposing sides during the initial conflict. For instance, Sara isolated herself from her Libyan colleagues, and Omar did not extend his relationship with his fellow Libyans. The data also show that everyone had loyalty to his and her own party and government and he or she did not accept or respect others’ ideology or political affiliations. The schism between Libyan students affected their relationships within the master’s community adversely, but it made them seek others. There is something in the complexity of the Libyan situation in terms of its tribal loyalties, its history and its political divisiveness that was unique.

Exploring the experiences of Libyan students in this sample, the data indicated that two factors most significantly affected the community and achievement of its functions that Wenger historically established for a community of practice. These are gender and the civil war and ongoing conflict. The idea of CoP informs thinking in certain kinds of way, but it needs greater flexibility than was originally envisaged by Lave and Wenger who had a particular perspective on it.

Libyan students are not a community, they are a case, but they still fit into the master's community.

Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 64) describe the process of legitimate peripheral participation as a linear and straightforward process by which newcomers move from the periphery to become full participants, and eventually and gradually form part of the community. However, they do not sufficiently address the challenges that newcomers might encounter in all communities of practice (James, 2007). Previous studies by Ward and Masgoret; (2004); Major (2005); Campbell and Li, (2008) discuss the challenges that international students, particularly Asian students, encounter in a new academic environment and different socio-cultural context, but whether there are specific challenges for students such as civil war and ongoing conflict are not highlighted in the literature. The findings of this study reveal that the Libyan students in the sample of the present study encountered challenges in the master's community such as environment and lack of security, culture and gender which included culture and risk, currency and confidence, unfamiliarity with the UK HE system, challenges of independent study, and the consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict. The data indicates that some of these challenges are general to all international students such as unfamiliarity with the UK HE system, currency and confidence and the challenge of independent study, whereas other challenges such as environment and lack of security, culture and gender, including culture and risk, and the consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict may be specific to this group of Libyan students.

Lave and Wenger (1991) treat newcomers as "tabula rasa" (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66). Newcomers bring their previous educational experiences (Fuller et al., 2005) and these may have an influence on the dynamics of community of practice (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004 b). However, the extent of the impact of the previous cultural, social, and political backgrounds of newcomers and its effect on their participation in a community of practice are not significantly

highlighted in the literature so far. James (2007) demonstrates that newcomers bring with them formed knowledge, skills, values and experiences to the new context, but he does not elaborate further to analyse the kinds of experiences that newcomers might bring and the extent of its impact on their participation. The findings revealed that participants such as Ali, Aziza, Fatima, Laila, Ghada, Majed, Omar, Amina, Nahla, Khaled, Nora, Khoula and Sara brought their previous educational, cultural, social, and political experiences to the master's community, and these experiences adversely affected their participation. All the participants believed the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya had had a negative effect on their educational experience not just in Libya, but also in the UK. Aziza delayed her start; Ali felt unable initially to participate in class discussion; Fatima considered independence and lack of confidence as challenges; Laila felt out of touch and perceived host students and other international students as being more experienced; and Ghada was unfamiliar with laboratory equipment. Nora and Laila did not know what to expect from the UK HE system. Khaled, Khoula, Laila, Nora, Sara, Majed, Amina, Nahla and Omar all considered self-study a challenge at the beginning of their master's course. They had been rote learners in a teacher-centred environment before the revolution, but the civil war and ongoing conflict exacerbated the problem.

The relationship between female participants and their male colleagues, particularly Libyans may be limited to formal greetings for social and cultural reasons. Traditional Libyan culture and its concern for reputation are the main reasons, according to Nora, Fatima and Aziza, for the reserve. Learners bring with them attitudes, experiences, and life histories (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004; Billett, 2007), and these are quite likely to affect their participation in the master's community. The data indicated that participants as newcomers nurtured negative attitudes towards opposing forces during the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya, and these attitudes affected their participation and relationship with Libyan colleagues within their master's community as in the case of Nora. There was antagonism between Libyan students, such as Khaled and his Libyan colleague, because of the tribal nature of the country and the legacy of the conflict and violence. As a result participants like Sara and Nora

preferred to isolate themselves from their fellow Libyans. The data show that Sara wanted to avoid any confrontation with those who were on the opposing side during the initial conflict, whereas Nora felt fearful of her Libyan colleagues owing to a previous traumatic experience. During the conflict, Libyans were divided by their allegiances either pro-Gaddafi or anti-Gaddafi, and this created a climate of distrust between individuals as demonstrated by Omar. For the first time, after the fall of the regime, many parties emerged in Libya, and everyone had loyalty to his or her own affiliation so much so that they did not accept or respect others' ideology as Ali reported. A participant like Fatima was rejected by her fellow Libyans as a result of her belonging to a different city and having loyalty to a different party and opposing government. Consequently, this limited integration hindered the mutual engagement and the support that might typically be received from compatriots. This study highlights a particular case which is different from many other previous studies about the experiences of international students (Maundeni, 2001; Lee, 2009; Pitts, 2009; Fontaine et al., 2010).

It is noteworthy that some of the challenges that Libyan students encountered in the master's community were only during the initial period as Heggins and Jackson (2003), Campbell and Li (2008) and Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) demonstrated. However, other challenges particularly those related to the culture such as gender and the effect of the civil war and ongoing conflict on the relationship between Libyans continued adversely to affect participants' integration with their colleagues within the master's community. However, the presence of Libyan students in a multicultural classroom is likely to be significant in the acquisition of knowledge and skills through situated learning and social participation in shared practice with host and international colleagues and tutors. Libyan students could acquire the core aspects of the UK HE system and build their unique identities as an ultimate goal of learning as social participation anticipated by Wenger (1998). The nature of the interaction between the participants in this study and their British and international colleagues on the one hand, and between them and their tutors on the other hand and the impact of that on their learning and identity will be discussed in

detail in the next chapter in relation to the theme 'Libyan students' adjustment and learning as social participation'.

Chapter 6: Libyan Students' Adjustment and Learning as Social Participation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the nature of the interaction between Libyan students and their British and international colleagues, and between Libyan students and their tutors within the master's community. It demonstrates how these Libyan students acquired knowledge and skills through social participation in shared practice with colleagues and tutors within the master's community and the effect of that on their identity. As in the previous chapter, data analysis and interpretation are presented according to emergent themes and a priori themes. The identification of themes and codes provides depth and insight into understanding students' learning experiences and creating participants' stories. However, as stated in the previous chapter, these stories are not produced according to individuals, but rather according to themes. In the account, each individual makes several comments at different times. Even though their stories are fragmented, the synthesis is the story of the case. I have drawn out the themes, but alongside that there is a thread which is significant and developmental, and it relates to identity.

This chapter includes Libyan students' adjustment and learning as social participation and is divided into developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC); complementary contribution; interaction with mid old-timers; and interaction with dominant old-timers. It also includes autonomous learning and identity and that section is divided into learning and becoming, and adjustment and the core aspects of the Libyan identity.

6.2 Libyan students' adjustment and learning as social participation

The findings of this study indicate the participants' views on diversity in the master's community. This section is divided into: developing intercultural communicative competence, complementary contribution, interaction with mid old-timers, and interaction with dominant old-timers.

6.2.1 Developing intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

The findings suggest that some students such as Nora, Khaled, Sara, Omar, Ghada and Amina felt that being part of a multicultural class and having interaction with different nationalities assisted them in developing aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Nora, for example, explained how her experience in Libya and her experience in the UK were different:

I studied in Libya with some students from Palestine and Sudan, but I viewed them as second class. My relationship with them was formal; greeting and that is it. In the UK, I met and interacted with Kurdish, Japanese and Chinese students, and this was the first time. This helped me to get rid of negative views towards others. Studying with international students is fantastic. We always interact with each other and exchange ideas and thoughts in groups and in the lecture. We respect each other, although we are different in nationality and religion. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 3)

It was clear that in Libya, Nora did not have much opportunity to meet or to interact with many other international students. Libya is an underdeveloped country, and, at a time of civil war and ongoing conflict, few international students chose Libya as a destination for study. Although Nora had an opportunity to study in Libya with students from neighbouring Arab countries, her comment reveals prejudice as she stereotyped them and had limited interaction. This might be because she did not have an opportunity for shared activity since the Libyan education system is teacher-centred. Working with others co-operatively can help students to accept differences (Thomas and Sanderson, 2009). However, Nora's experience in the UK is different because there she was a member of a multicultural classroom; and she reveals mutual engagement between herself and her international colleagues because they collaborate routinely in class.

According to Wenger (1998), mutual engagement requires regular interaction because during this time members negotiate the meaning of their practice. It appears that the mutuality between Nora and her international colleagues assisted Nora to develop respect towards people from other cultures and to acquire two essential components of intercultural communicative competence:

becoming more open-minded and being empathic towards others. Intercultural interaction affects the relationship within in-groups and out-groups (Yue and Li, 2012). It could be that because she was herself an international student in the UK, she learnt the real meaning of being an international student. For example, it appears that she learnt ways of engaging with others and she developed certain expectations about how people treat each other and work together. Nora's view is consistent with the view of Leki (2001), who pointed out that collaboration and mutual engagement may help to undermine and eradicate stereotypes about other cultures, and this is because intercultural interaction has the potential to assist the emergence of new ideas (Evanoff, 2006). Lave and Wenger (1991) recognise the impact of learning as social participation in shared practice on one's competence (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66), but they do not elaborate. In the context of this study, Nora developed two aspects of intercultural communicative competence as a result of mutual engagement with newcomers and mid-newcomers in the master's community.

A significant number of students in this study indicated that their expectations before arrival were fulfilled by coming to the UK. For example, Khaled said:

I achieved my expectations and more, I expected British people to respect time and to be explicit with you and I found that. I expected the education system in the UK to be high and it is. I found all things I was looking for and more. (Khaled, Education, interview 3)

This had a positive effect on his learning and encouraged him to take full advantages of the opportunities that were available to him:

By interacting with my international colleagues, I learnt to listen to different points of view and how to respect others' opinions. This also gave me an opportunity to practise my language and encouraged me to build confidence. (Khaled, Education, interview 2)

Khaled illustrates that his presence in a multicultural classroom is significant. Clearly, he appreciated the opportunity to interact with other international students. It appears he too developed essential aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) since he improved his English language

competence, developed his interpersonal communication skills and identity as he becoming more confident, and had enhanced empathy towards other cultures. Appreciation of diversity (Soria and Troisi, 2014, p. 262), respect for others and empathy (Hiller and Wozniak, 2009), the ability to understand and speak in academic English, and the ability to communicate with others in appropriate way (Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 169) are all essential components of ICC.

Nora and Khaled's views are in line with Williams (2005) who suggested that students who study abroad have enhanced intercultural communicative skills (i.e. open-mindedness, empathy, developing English language competence) after their semester abroad, and this is due to their exposure to different cultures. Their views are also consistent with a recent study by Mellors-Bourne et al. (2013) who found that working with others in a multicultural classroom can assist students in acquisition of aspects of intercultural communicative competence. This change is significant for all international students because ICC enables individuals to live and effectively work with others from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communicative competence has the potential to develop insight into self and others and promote awareness of intercultural experience (Alred et al., 2003). Wenger (1998, p. 75) has argued that diversity as a "matter of homogeneity" makes engagement in practice possible and productive. However, his argument about diversity is that a community of practice could include young and old, conservative and liberal members who might see each other daily. They may work together, talk with each other, exchange opinions and information, and this affects each other's understanding. There is not the language in CoPs theory to discuss diversity in terms of newcomers and mid-newcomers who come from different cultural backgrounds and the influence of their intercultural interaction on their competence. In the context of this study, the data indicates that Nora and Khaled developed the essential aspects of intercultural communicative competence because of their membership in the master's community and mutual engagement with international colleagues. Yet, in the circumstances of this case, engagement did

not seem to extend to people from their own country as explained by 'The Consequences of the Civil War and Ongoing Conflict' in section 5.3.

The findings revealed that a significant number of Libyan students such as Nora, Khaled, Sara, Fatima, Amina, Nahla, Ali and Omar had come to the UK in order to develop their knowledge and skills and to take that back to their home country. For example, Nora whose brother was murdered and who felt fearful of her compatriots, stated:

At the beginning, I did not intend to study a master's course. I am not the main applicant, I came with my husband. What happened and is happening in Libya motivated me to study (tears) and to speak to my Nigerian and Chinese colleagues to learn. I want to develop myself for the sake of Libya. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 1)

Nora's comment reveals that, since she was initially a dependent, study was optional. However, she was motivated to extend her knowledge and enhance her skills in order to contribute to the rebuilding of a new Libya, and this encouraged her to make the decision to study herself. Khaled also said:

The Libyan situation motivated me to study hard and to interact with my male and even female British and international colleagues in order to learn and to develop myself. I would like to share the knowledge and skills gained to serve my country. (Khaled, Education, interview 3)

The vision of a new Libya was also significant for Khaled, and it encouraged him to dedicate himself to his study and seek engagement with mid old-timer, newcomer and mid-newcomer colleagues, regardless of gender. He said 'even females' indicating that, although in Libyan his interaction with females might be limited for cultural and social reasons, his motivation to learn was so strong that it did not prevent his integration and socialisation with females in the UK. For international students, motivation is essential to overcome the challenges of intercultural experience (Anderson, 1994; Kim, 2001). Lave and Wenger (1991) also highlight that motivation can affect the CoP's atmosphere, shaping relationships and creating a unique environment for learning. However, it was also aspirational for Khaled. It seems that it is not just people's motivation, but

also their willingness, their ability, their motivation to learn, their behaviour, attitudes and their commitment that are all involved in shaping relationships and creating environment for learning.

For Nora and Khaled motivation played a significant role in encouraging them to interact with their colleagues to acquire knowledge and skills in order to share in rebuilding a new Libya. People can share a history of confrontation and antagonism, but that does not necessarily preclude reconciliation. Libyan students have different views politically and socially, but it might be hoped that the fragmentation does not obviate the possibility of them coming together in the future especially since they share social and cultural experiences and core values, including hope for Libya's future. Their master's courses and postgraduate study gave them a shared goal, a shared aim, a shared desire to succeed. Yet their behaviour and comments suggest other view.

6.2.2 Complementary contribution

The majority of the students in the sample indicated that they learnt through social interaction and participation in shared practice with international students (mid-newcomers) and tutors (dominant old-timers) in a situated context. For example, Laila, who was struggling with the "Designing Websites" module which required specialist knowledge of language programs, reported that working in a group with mid-newcomers was significant:

The international students, with whom I worked, started in September and already had expertise, so I learnt a lot from them. Group work is helpful because a student might give an idea that you might not have picked up in the lecture and in turn you might have an idea that others do not share. Thus, we complete each other. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Laila's comment illustrates the advantages of learning as social participation in shared practice with international colleagues within her master's community. She confirms the view of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Colley et al. (2003) that learning as a process of social participation enables newcomers to learn from more experienced colleagues, and this learning is "intimately bound up with the

social context in which it is situated” (Colley et al., 2003, pp. 474-475). Laila emphasised the value of group work, offering “complementary contributions” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) because all members within her group complemented each other’s competence, and learnt from each other rather than each member working through everything by him or herself. This is in line with Wenger (1998, p. 152) “our competence gains its value through its very partiality...It is a certain way of being part of a whole through mutual engagement”.

As a result, learning does not only focus on the ability of an individual, but it depends on the abilities of others in a community of practice (Hammersley, 2005, p. 6). Wenger also emphasises that “mutual engagement is partial in the context of shared practice...it is more important to give and receive help than to try to know everything yourself” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Arguably, mutual engagement involves both a student’s competence and the competence of others in order to contribute to the collective knowledge of members within the community. Therefore, even for a cohort coming, as the Libyans do from a conflicted background in all its complexity, the fact that Laila could say that, when working with other students, ‘we complete each other’ was really interesting. She was actually talking about international students rather than the whole group, but it remains a very powerful statement. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) ideas of old-timers are not involved and the newcomers are perhaps developing an independent community of practice. She continued:

We spent most breaks together and involved in discussions. We learn together and we become friends. We visit each other on occasions and we are always in touch. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Laila perceived that informal meetings within the group and interaction on regular basis (i.e. mutual engagement) were part of her learning as well as being sustained and social. Askill-Williams and Lawson (2005) point out classroom activities such as discussion increase students’ motivation; however, there is limited evidence in previous literature about the specific communicative practices that assist international students to adjust and adapt to a new

academic environment. Thomas, 2007 (cited in Thomas and Sanderson, 2009, p. 7) also highlights that there is lack of academic evidence in the previous literature about the experiences of postgraduate students, particularly the nature of the interaction amongst students from different cultural backgrounds.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learners learn by building social relations with others through their 'co-participation' in shared practices (Fuller, 2007, p. 19). For Laila, attainment of a level of informality helped her to build a relationship with her colleagues which reinforces Wenger's (1998) view that mutual engagement is the basis for building the relationships that are essential for a community of practice (Moule, 2006, p. 134). When people from different cultural backgrounds negotiate the meaning of their practices with each other, mutual engagement can be achieved (Berry, 2005). It was clear that mutual engagement between Laila and her international colleagues was beneficial to her learning because the daily routine of interaction with her peers assisted Laila to construct knowledge and to develop relationships. Encouraging students to extend their learning through collaboration and interaction supports their academic success and equips them for lifelong learning (Skalicky and Brown, 2009). This might be because cooperative learning provides a supportive learning environment and scaffolds learning for newcomers as a developmental process. However, it is noteworthy that Laila did not only learn through social participation and mutual engagement with her international colleagues, but she also learnt individually and independently, and this will be discussed in the autonomous learning section 6.3.

This research also illustrates that not only did some students such as Nahla, Khaled, Ghada, Amina and Fatima favour group work, they also expressed their disappointment that the education system in Libya had not offered them such shared practices and learning as social participation. This reflects their meta-learning: the learning about learning that allowed them to be critical of their educational experiences in Libya. Previously they would have been compliant and just accepted whatever was delivered to them. For example, Nahla stated:

Working in group with my international colleagues who had been in a community for a term and tutors in the laboratory encouraged me to keep my attention focused without feeling bored. I was interacting and listening at the same time, and the time passed without looking at my watch. I learnt many things and gained a new knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, we lack that in Libya. In Libya, we learn to get score marks and grades. You won't get any practical knowledge, unless you see things in practice, how they are happening. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nahla is another student who reveals that she learnt through social participation and interaction with international colleagues and tutors in shared practice within her master's community. She emphasised her enjoyment by using expressions such as 'without looking at my watch', 'without feeling bored' and focusing on 'interacting and listening'. Nahla's comment indicated that, not only did she enjoy learning as social participation, but she also acquired knowledge and skills through working together with her international colleagues and tutors in shared practice and situated learning. As newcomers engage with their colleagues in certain practices, their skill and knowledge develop (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 64). It seems that Nahla learnt by using devices and tools in the laboratory. This is in line with Lave and Wenger's argument that situated learning involves learning by doing (Hammersley, 2005, p. 14) and interaction with old-timers (Fuller and Unwin, 1998, p. 160).

According to Goodyear and Zenios (2007, p. 7), students should be able to engage in "epistemic tasks" to develop their "higher order skills". They claim that learning is like playing a game which can be done by playing with others who are more skilled and experienced than you are. In the same way, Nahla worked with mid-newcomers and dominant old-timers, and this was a step toward becoming part of a knowledge-building community. The value of participation with other members is manifest in "becoming part of the community" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 111). Nahla also made the distinction between learning for summative assessment in Libya and learning for acquiring skills and competence in the UK, the latter being important for lifelong learning. As discussed in relation to the 'challenges' theme, because of the poor learning

environment and ongoing unrest in Libya, the Libyan education system did not promote learning by doing or practising. Nahla also reported:

I told my mother 'I came to the UK as ignorant, although I attended computer and English language courses in Libya'. Here I have gained new skills and knowledge that I had never heard before. I learnt many things through working with my international colleagues and tutors in the laboratory. I became a different person. (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 3)

Although Nahla tried to improve herself by attending courses prior to coming to the UK, they were not especially useful to her. Nahla's response indicated that it was not just limited knowledge and skills, but she also defined herself as 'ignorant'. This conceptualisation is powerful and derogatory. Nahla is so dismissive of her previous experience that she accords it no value. However, her experience in the UK was different in that she sees herself as acquiring knowledge and skills through learning as social participation with her colleagues (mid-newcomers) and tutors (dominant old-timers) within her master's community, reinforcing Lave and Wenger (1991) and Hammersley (2005) who emphasise the significance of social interaction. Social interaction with international colleagues and tutors was also significant for Nahla in terms of constructing her identity (i.e. becoming). Nahla's view about becoming accords with Lave and Wenger's (1991) assertion: "learning implies becoming a different person...to ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

Similar to Laila, Khaled highlights the partiality of mutual engagement (mentioned in the first paragraph of this section):

In Libya, we didn't have group work. The tutor didn't like students to work with each other, but this is wrong. Each student has certain skills and if she or he is competent in one subject, he is likely to be weak in another. In working together with Chinese, Italian, Malaysian, and Egyptian we complete each other. I strongly believe in completion not in competition. (Khaled, Education, interview 2)

Khaled criticised the pedagogical approach in Libya because it did not encourage learning as social participation in shared practice. It appears that he recognised the latter's advantages. Like Laila, he also highlighted "complementary contributions" (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) in which the competence of each student is part of the whole group and, as Wenger states, mutual engagement which is 'partial' in shared practice. The participation of Khaled in the master's community and the effects of learning as social participation with international colleagues on his intercultural communicative competence are explained above in 6.2.1. What was surprising was that the majority of students in the sample did not perceive group work as a challenge; on the contrary, the above data suggests that they enjoyed learning as social participation and wanted the Libyan education system to incorporate that kind of learning. These students' responses are different from the findings of Trahar and Hyland's (2011) study where group work was considered a challenge to international students. In the context of this study, the data indicated that, although some Libyan students in the sample found participation in the master's community initially difficult, they considered that their presence in the master's course and social interaction in shared practice with mid-newcomers and dominant old-timers were significant for their learning. The range of responses indicated that Libyan students were willing and keen to participate in various wider group configurations. Most international students have, at least to an extent, the solidarity of their national or ethnic group (Andrade, 2006; Zhou et al., 2008; Bodycott, 2015), but because many of these Libyan students were fragmented and alienated from their compatriots, this pushed them into other multicultural groups in a way which had its own advantages.

6.2.3 Interaction with mid old-timers

The data illustrated that the Libyan students as newcomers brought different expectations and attitudes with them to the master's community and that individual dispositions varied. Some students such as Sara and Nahla became more positive towards the British after spending time in the UK and interacting with people here. For example, although Sara came from a politically volatile environment marked by ongoing conflict, she was nevertheless anxious about

coming to the UK, particularly because of what she had heard about alcohol consumption:

I thought British people might attack me, if they had been drinking alcohol but I found the opposite. (Sara, Education, interview 1)

Sara had a misconception that the consumption of alcohol always led to violent behaviour. When asked, however, why, given this apprehension, Sara chose to study in the UK, her answer was entirely pragmatic:

British people are native English speakers and, as you know, my major is English language. It is only three hours flight from Manchester to Tripoli airport. It takes only a year for a master's. (Sara, Education, interview 1)

Proximity and the desire to learn motivated her choice. However, when she arrived in the UK, she found that those around her were not only friendly, but expressed concern for her situation:

My British colleagues and tutors came to me before the start of the lecture and asked about my family whenever there was chaos in Libya. Tutors were supportive while I was pregnant. (Sara, Education, interview 1)

She continued:

My English colleague and tutors, whom I interacted with, didn't look at me as a stranger; they are polite. They weren't annoyed with me because I was not white or because I was wearing the 'Hejab' [head scarf] and 'Abaya' [long black dress]. Three of my British colleagues are Muslims. (Sara, Education, interview 1)

Sara reveals that she felt she was treated equitably and did not face discrimination for being Muslim, and that she benefited from Britain being a multicultural and multiethnic country where there are laws about equality and equity. Tutors and students are quite likely to be used to working with other nationalities and with students from different backgrounds while at university. As Universities UK (2014) notes and Higher Education Statistic Agency (HESA)

(2014) shows there is an increase in the number of international students who choose the UK as their study destination. Macias and Dolan (2008, p. 3) indicate that the behaviour of tutors has a significant effect on students' learning experiences since international students need an academic environment where they feel motivated, valued and included. According to Macias and Dolan (2008, p. 8), in the UK, tutors are often welcoming and feel "privileged" to have an "international learning environment" because it is an opportunity for cultural exchange and internationalisation. For Sara, her colleagues and tutors treated her as a human being regardless of her religion, culture and colour. She was seen as a legitimate and welcome member of the community, rather than as an outsider. She was also shown understanding:

My tutors gave me a week off when I was worried about my family because there was chaos in Libya. This encouraged me to learn because I felt I was not alone in this world; there are people who understand my situation. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

My tutors accepted my excuses when I was late because I was taking my daughter to school. My tutor said 'This is completely understandable', and this changed my negative views towards the British people completely and encouraged me to integrate more. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Sara's comments reveal that her tutors were sympathetic to her situation, and this had a positive effect on her participation and integration with her colleagues and tutors within the master's course dissipating, any initial negativity. As stated in chapter 5, Lave and Wenger (1991) describe newcomers as "tabula rasa" (Fuller et al., 2005, p. 66); however, the findings of the current study illustrate that individuals can have prejudices that might undermine their participation within the master's community, but these attitudes may change in a positive environment. This is in line with Fuller et al. (2005, p. 63) who point out that, although newcomers bring dispositions to the community, these dispositions can change through interaction and other life experiences. The positive effect of participation for Sara with her British colleagues and tutors within the master's community will be described and analysed in the following examples.

This study indicates that although they had good experiences in group work, only four participants, Sara, Majed, Khoula and Ali, spoke explicitly of a positive relationship and experience with their British colleagues. For example, Sara reported that she had an opportunity for interaction with British colleagues when her tutor divided them into groups of mixed nationalities:

British students are aware of critical thinking. I asked my British colleague to help me with critical thinking. She said with smile 'That is fine. I know you are international student and you might not be familiar with this in your home country'. She helped me a lot; I learnt from her in how to evaluate an article and to provide a respectful critique of others' writing. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Rightly, Sara perceived host students might be more familiar with this core aspect of the UK education system, and, in this instance, Sara's British colleague was very helpful. For Sara, critical thinking was a challenge and she needed to learn how to address it. In doing so, aspects of situated learning that might not be available in textbooks assisted her to develop her critical thinking skills through observation and collaboration with her peer. Lave and Wenger (1991) give an example of a Yucatan midwife who learnt from her mother through observation and behaviour modeling. They also add that peripherality provides newcomers with more than observation; it involves participation as a way of learning the culture of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95); however, Sara learnt from direct explanation. Lave and Wenger emphasise that learning, when situated, cannot be separated from social relations (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Interaction with host students may provide an opportunity to learn specific skills (Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward et al., 2001). However, it is important to say that British students are not in the master's community to teach international students, but the central issue of a community of practice is about exchanging thoughts and ideas, and this will be argued in the following examples. The idea of a community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation are not just about the learning of newcomers, but also about a "reciprocal relation between persons and practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 116). As discussed in the framework chapter, although all of students were relative newcomers, I use the term 'mid old-timers' to refer to those who are

more established in the socio-cultural environment, in this case, the British students. Sara also explained that she had difficulty with time management and sought further advice from another student:

I couldn't meet the deadline, so I had an extension. I was using paper and pencil to paraphrase the authors' words (smile). One of my Kurdish colleagues, who had been there for a term, said 'Stop handwriting as this is too time-consuming'. She recommended that I save notes and articles on a stick and then copy and paste. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Although time management is not just about technology, clearly this advice had an impact on Sara and reveals that she was very much part of a learning community in which she felt able to turn to her peers for assistance. This is consistent with Lave and Wenger (1991) and Billett (2007) who demonstrate that the behaviour and interest of individuals who work together shape social relationships and the conditions that create a unique atmosphere for learning. When necessary, Sara continued to seek support from more established students:

I asked other international students who had been there for a term. They told me 'This tutor prefers certain references as they are appropriate to master's level; avoid those that are more appropriate to undergraduate level'. This helped me a lot in my writing. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

This is in line with Hughes and Wisker (1998) and Bamford (2008) who highlight that a student who has already completed a year or a term can provide support for a more recent student to cope with his or her new academic experience. Sara also added that peer-feedback on her writing was useful:

When I finished any part of group assignment, I showed it to the leader of the group who is my British colleague. She gave me some suggestions to work on, and this was very helpful. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Sara valued another perspective on her work, which encouraged her to justify her ideas, and strengthen the coherence of the group assignment. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) and Wenger (1998, p. 100) emphasise old-timers' support in facilitating the experiences of newcomers with regard to the development of

knowledge and skill. Similarly, Unwin highlights “the notion of a newcomer embarking on a journey supported by old-timers” (Unwin, 2007, p. 101). However, in the context of this study, learning and the sharing of experience is a complex process. The data revealed that Sara learnt from her international colleagues who had only been there for a term the (i.e. mid-newcomers) and also from British students who were more familiar with the socio-cultural environment (i.e. mid old-timers).

Another example of peer-feedback is Majed. Observation (3.3) of Majed in class indicated that he went to his British colleague to show him a couple of pages from his assignment. The British colleague gave him some comments and he also asked Majed to feel free to contact him. The British colleague also showed some powerpoint slides for a presentation to Majed and asked for comments. Majed responded, suggesting the font was too small; there was too much information on some slides, and that there should be a reference list at the end. Majed’s view is consistent with the findings of Burton and Kirshbaum (2013, pp. 115-116) who suggest that peer-feedback assists students to support each other and to develop their ideas and knowledge. Sadler (2010) states that peer-feedback also improves the quality of student writing. It seems that there was mutual understanding and acceptance between Majed and his British colleague, and this relationship could contribute to their development and learning as members of the same community.

In her first interview, Khoula reported:

When I joined the British group, I didn’t feel welcome. Two of them said ‘You aren’t with our group. You should join the other group’. They didn’t want to include me in their group. It might be because I had a ‘Hejab’ [head scarf]. I don’t know (silence and cry). I hated myself that time. (Khoula, Business School, interview 1)

This is about perception. Khoula assumes that this is discrimination, but there could be a legitimate explanation, for example, regulating group size or addressing special interests. She was directed to an alternative. The original group might also have been friends who chose to be exclusive, while the tutor

may have been aiming to differentiate learning, by mixing or separating people who started in January with people who had started in September in order to scaffold learning. For Khoula, however this incident was distressing. She assumed prejudice, but in fact observation (1.1) highlighted that what really happened was those students were part of a defined group, and Khoula had misunderstood where she supposed to sit. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise the significance of having legitimate access for newcomers to learn. Wenger states that “newcomers should be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members” (Wenger, 1998, p. 101); however, it appears that access was hard to earn in the case of Khoula:

When my tutor noticed that, he smiled only (Khoula, Business School, interview 2)

Khoula assumes her tutor is reacting to her experience but does not perceive the same level of discrimination as she had felt. However, in the second semester, an observation (2.3) of this class showed that the tutor asked Khoula to join a group of British students in a discussion about the ‘Economic Crisis in the World and its Effect on the Banks’. During the subsequent interaction, Khoula raised the point that ‘Islamic banks aren’t affected by this crisis because they don’t take interest’. She had started participating and contributing her thoughts and ideas to the group. The comment about ‘Islamic banks’ works on two levels: firstly, it introduced something which was new to British students who were unaware that a bank might function in this way. Secondly, it was also a topic about which she was knowledgeable and could talk with authority. The British students were open and interested, and a group dynamic evolved. One of her colleagues said: ‘I am happy we are working together on the project. This is an interesting topic.’ At the end of the session, the group exchanged e-mails in order to share articles and references and to keep in touch. They also arranged future meetings. This confirms previous studies of Andrade (2006) and Lillyman and Bennett (2014) who demonstrate that the presence of international students in a course potentially extends the knowledge and enhances the experience of host students. Tutors and students can gain a more internationalised perspective (Macias and Dolan, 2008, p. 4). International

students also might bring different competencies to a new academic context (Ryan and Carroll, 2005).

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that participation in a community of practice, for example by international students, offers an opportunity for newcomers to become full members. Macias and Dolan demonstrate that “International students can be an invaluable asset if we facilitate and value their participation in the learning community” (Macias and Dolan, 2008, p. 4). Here, Khoula did become part of the group in the discussion about banking. Although her tutor played an essential role in assisting her integration by creating a small group involving British and international students, it was her own contribution rather than the tutor that made the difference between this success and the previous failure to integrate.

It appears then that the interaction between Khoula and her colleagues reduced tension and encouraged her to get involved more widely in class discussion. This was beneficial for all concerned:

It was one of my mistakes that I isolated myself. (Khoula, Business School, interview 2)

Clearly, Khoula blamed herself because she chose disassociation over what she perceived to be potential rejection. It appears that she needed encouragement to participate and see herself as a member of the group. In this sense, identity involves a constant negotiation that is never fixed. Khoula needed an identity shift to view herself as part of the group rather than as separate, but this had to be negotiated over a period of time, reinforcing the notion of identity as a process (Wenger, 1998; James, 2007).

Similarly, Ali, who started in January, faced a challenge because he found a group of British students who had already been there for a term (mid old-timers):

The British group that started in September didn't give an opportunity to us who started in January to speak. They sat next to each other and they didn't permit January starters to join that group. (Ali, Education, interview 1)

It is noticeable that he did not say 'the group', but rather labelled the group 'the British group', so he actually introduced another layer of distinction between himself and the other individuals. The group might have been all British as he explained, but the reason for that is not explicit. Friendship groups can be exclusive and mid old-timers may be unsupportive to newcomers. Ali however felt marginalised, despite his desire to be involved and integrate with his British colleagues. For Wenger (1998), the legitimate peripheral participation should be legitimised by old-timers; however, according to Ali, the British students who were further in their study (mid old-timers) did not facilitate his participation. Ali's comment is in line with Lave and Wenger's (1991) argument that a community of practice may create barriers that inhibit the learning of newcomers rather like, as stated earlier, Aziza's negative perception of her tutor section 5.2.2. However, during a third interview, Ali acknowledged that his tutor took control and managed the group dynamic effectively:

My tutor asked the group who started in January to join the other group who started in September. This helped me a lot to learn and to integrate with them. (Ali, Education, interview 3)

It was clear that the tutor as the dominant old-timer monitored the activity and encouraged integration. Integration can be pursued successfully both by international students who have interests in interacting with host students, and by the host country which promotes diversity (Berry, 2005). Ali reveals that sitting with mid old-timers (i.e. British students) proved to be an effective technique for his learning. For Ali, mid old-timers support and facilitate newcomers' experience. He explained:

Two of my British colleagues invited me for a cup of coffee and they asked me about my published paper and we discussed it together. We both interested in conflict, I am interested in the conflict in Libya and they are interested in post-conflict in Ireland and South Africa. They

wrote notes and I also wrote notes. We also arranged other meetings and exchanged e-mails. (Ali, Education, interview 2)

Ali's response illustrates that he was successful learner. The invitation of his British colleagues and the willingness of Ali to interact with them indicated mutual acceptance. He and his colleagues discussed issues that concerned their study, an activity which is likely to be useful to host students too, and which could move Ali from the periphery to the centre of the CoP. In other words, mid old-timers might learn from Ali, and, in turn, he could learn from them. Ali as a newcomer and the British colleagues as mid old-timers arranged informal meetings and engaged in discussion in which they had the potential to extend their knowledge and learn from each other.

Newcomers bring skills that allow old-timers to widen their understanding (Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Fuller et al., 2005), and they also bring skills that old-timers may not have, so that they are able to learn from newcomers (Fuller and Unwin, 2004) through engagement (Fuller et al. 2005, p. 61). However, the notion that old-timers might learn from newcomers is not addressed by Lave and Wenger (1991), and this is possibly because they treat newcomers as the "tabula rasa" (Fuller et al. 2005, p. 66) mentioned earlier. In this study, the data revealed that both Khoula and Ali become part of the group because as newcomers they brought new knowledge with them to the master's community, and this assisted their colleagues (i.e. mid old-timers) to have more engagement, and to broaden their knowledge and understanding, stimulating ideas on both sides. This confirms previous studies, for instance, that the interaction between international students and local people can contribute to the construction of new knowledge (Ryan, 2011, p. 642) and provide an internationalised perspective (Hooley and Horspool, 2006, p. 3), however, this study had elaborated further to explore the nature of the relationship between international students (i.e. Libyan students in the context of this study) and host students.

Some students, however, had misconceptions about host students because they had hoped that their British colleagues in particular might assist them. For example, Nora said that:

I interacted with Asian and Nigerian students and exchanged ideas, but I didn't do so with British students. Once, I asked one of my British colleagues to explain a point to me, but she said 'I haven't got time, come back later, lunch time, busy; I come from another city'. They attend lectures and always leave directly. Unlike the other international students, my British colleagues are unhelpful because they do not need me. (Nora, Applied Science, interview 2)

Nora's comment reveals that, perhaps predictably, the international students' community was easier to access than the British students' community. Obviously, international students do have a lot in common such as being second language learners and coming from a different cultural background. Newcomers often form groups together and socialise after work because they have the shared experience of being newcomers (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Nora; however, used an unhelpful binary 'I and they' to express the distance she felt, and this may have led to lost opportunities for mutual exchange of ideas with British colleagues. Nora believed the British student provided excuses to avoid contact, but that assumption is based on limited evidence.

Nora's view is similar to the Asian students who found that it is a challenge to make friends with host students in New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2008). So despite the potential benefits of interaction with host students, it is often limited (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009). Chalmers and Volet (1997, p. 92) indicated a misconception that, in Australia, Australian students consider Asian students do not like to mix with them and vice versa. In the current study, host students may be more familiar with aspects of the environment and the style of learning since their master's degree is in their home country, however, with widening participation, some British students also need to adjust to various academic practices associated with a master's degree, even if, typically, they do not require as much adjustment as international students (Kim, 2011, p. 285). British students are learners themselves, and, as master's students, they are just as likely to be nervous and unsure. This is slightly different from the concept of an 'old-timer' as designated by Lave and Wenger because an old-timer would be saying 'I already know these things, so I will tell you what to do'. In this study, they are distinguished as 'mid old-timers'.

Furthermore, this research has indicated that, despite appropriate IELTS, English language competence remained a challenge for Omar and Amina when they entered the master's community. This is not a surprising outcome because it is evident from the literature that language is one of the greatest challenges for international students when in a new academic environment and socio-cultural context (Janjua et al., 2011; Singh, 2013; Subhash, 2013 and Aldoukalee, 2013), see section 2.3.2. However, the findings here indicate that there were additional language issues for older students such as Omar and Amina. For example, Omar who was in his forties said:

In Libya I only started learning English when I was at the university. I didn't learn at school. In 1986, when I was seven years old, students were ordered to come out in large crowds and to burn English school books. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

This reveals that Omar did not have an opportunity to study English language at primary, preparatory and secondary schools which are the basic stages in the Libyan education system because Gaddafi's regime blocked the learning of English from 1986 to 1992. Omar's opportunities to learn English had therefore been undermined, and he indicated his frustration since, although teaching English restarted at the beginning of nineties, resources were impoverished as a result:

In 1993, English was reintroduced to the education system when I was in my second year at university. But even then it was frustrating. There was a lack of teaching aids and few trained teachers. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

In addition, Omar tended to be critical about the English teaching he had received in Libya. He felt it was teacher-centred and he had not been given an opportunity to practise his English:

I attended English language classes in Libya, but they were boring. The teacher speaks most of the time. There were no activities, no facilities and no opportunities to interact in English. (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Starting the master's course, Omar felt unable to communicate fluently and effectively with British colleagues:

I couldn't communicate with my British colleagues effectively. I can't order the sentence structure and keep the conversation carrying on. So, I try to avoid interaction with them (Omar, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Omar's comment reveals that his English language competence undermined interaction and adversely affected relationships with British colleagues. Mutual engagement and integration between Omar and his British colleagues within the master's community were inhibited, and this is quite likely to constrain opportunities for learning and for the exchange of ideas and thoughts on both sides. Omar's view is in line with Singh's (2013) findings that communicating ideas fluently is the most difficult language issues (59.9%) for international students in HE system. Singh's quantitative study does not however elaborate further to explore the reasons behind the difficulty of communicating ideas fluently and its social effect on building relationship with host and international colleagues. In the context of this study, the data revealed that Omar avoided intercultural interaction with his British colleagues because he felt unable to communicate fluently and effectively with them.

Amina who was in her forties was also critical of the grammar-translation method she had experienced in Libya:

Before coming to the UK, I attended two English courses, but the focus was on grammar and the teacher was using Arabic language [smile] all the time. (Amina, Applied Science, interview 2)

Amina indicated that she had had the intention and the desire to develop and improve her English, but, although she attended English language courses prior to coming to the UK, they were not especially useful to her in terms of developing her English language ability. This might be because she did not have an opportunity to practise her English through social participation in

shared activity. When Amina entered the master's community, she felt therefore that she was unable to socialise with her British colleagues despite her desire to do so:

I want to make friends with the British students, but my English language prevents me. So, my relationship with my British colleagues is limited in hello and hi. (Amina, Applied Science, interview 1)

Amina's lack of confidence and/or limited English language competence contributed greatly to her difficulty in building relationships with British colleagues. Lack of "deep integration" (Lewthwaite, 1996, p. 167) and lack of "meaningful relationship" (Russell e al., 2010, p. 236) were evident to her.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that language relates to an individual's ability to participate legitimately and competently in a given community of practice. They also add that language is essential to gain access to activities and to manage interactions, but they do not elaborate further to discuss whether limited language ability can affect newcomers' socialisation and integration with mid old-timers which might in turn limit the opportunities for learning and the advantage of their presence in a community of practice. Subhash (2013) found that language barriers prevented international students from socialising with host students. However, he is talking about language barriers rather than a lack of confidence or English language competence. Arguably, language competence is concerned with knowledge of the language and the ability to produce meaningful texts that are appropriate to a situation; whereas language barriers refer to second language learners who may struggle to communicate what they want or how to get information. However, it is important to say that sometimes people use the term 'language barrier' to mean poor language competence.

However, when Omar and Amina talked more about their relationships with their colleagues, they explained that they did interact and socialise with their international colleagues. Amina, for example, reported:

Working in group outside the class helped me in my study because they explained things that I didn't understand. We always meet together and we explain to each other any unclear points. My group work contained students from India, Iraq, Pakistan, China and Japan. I prefer groups that include international students because they understand my situation further as they are international as well. (Amina, Applied Science interview 2)

Here Amina reveals that her English language ability did not undermine her engagement and integration with other international colleagues. If Amina committed a mistake in grammar, pronunciation or sentence structure, she felt less embarrassed in front of her international colleagues because, all being SLL, they had a lot in common. She assumed British colleagues would be more critical although had not actually experienced such a reaction, and indeed they were sympathetic and understanding with regard to Sara, Fatima, Ali and Majed. However, Amina's perception adversely affected mutual engagement and undermined her relationship with British colleagues. Although her collaboration and interaction with other international colleagues in shared practice were significant for her learning.

Norton (2000) and Zacharias (2010) demonstrate that language competence and confidence are essential because they help international students to have access to different social networks. International students often have language challenges, and this tends to limit their access to intercultural opportunities (Zacharias 2010); however, it depends on how one addresses those challenges. Omar chose to isolate himself from his British colleagues and Amina was formal and disassociated. This suggests that it was not only English language competence that inhibited Omar and Amina's integration and engagement with their British colleagues, but also their perceptions and assumptions about those British colleagues as opposed to other international students which were significant.

6.2.4 Interaction with dominant old-timers

All the participants in this sample explained that their Libyan cultural values and classroom norms were different from those of the UK host culture. For example, Fatima was quite distressed when relating the following incident:

Once I forgot to say 'Dr.' to my Libyan tutor, so he became angry and asked me to write 'I am sorry ten times'. I felt small, it was an insult, and I couldn't stop crying that day (tears). (Fatima, Education, interview 2)

Fatima indicates that the traditional relationship between Libyan tutors and their students in Libya is hierarchical, and she made it clear that students have to be careful in their interaction. Titles are used to acknowledge authority. In Fatima's case, the punishment for failing to acknowledge this was demeaning and had a negative effect on her sense of self. Her words 'insult', 'small', and 'crying' reinforce its significance. Fatima's perception seems to be consistent with the seminal work by Nydell (1987), who argued that in Arab society formal titles are important to demonstrate status for example between tutors and students due to a culture that encourages respect and obedience to older people. Fatima's Libyan tutor was not just insisting on being called doctor because he was older; he was insisting on being called doctor as an acknowledgement of prestige. Fatima, however, was humiliated to the extent that she considered leaving university:

My tutor in Libya described my writing as rubbish and destroyed my written paper in class in front of the other students (tears in her eyes). They laughed. (Fatima, Education, interview 2)

The above comment reveals that Fatima's tutor was determined to impose his authority on her and as a result to belittle her publicly. It also indicates the nature of the academic relationship and students' subservience in Libya. When Fatima came to the master's class in the UK, she found tutor and student relationships to be very different from that which she had experienced:

Tutors in the UK are friendly. We called each other by first names. Learning in the UK is interesting. It doesn't seem like compulsory work. We share lunch together in the breaks and interact with each other. In class discussion, the tutor sits next to the group, listens to them and shares thoughts and ideas with them. We built a relationship. This encouraged me to learn in a comfortable environment. (Fatima, Education, interview 2)

Fatima's comment indicates that the relationship between students and tutors in the UK is generally non-authoritarian. For Fatima, this assisted the establishment of rapport and promoted her learning. Interaction between tutors and students is shaped culturally according to the host country and a university's conventions and traditions (Campbell and Li, 2008, p. 388). The hierarchical relation plays an essential role in creating either opportunities or barriers for learning (Fuller et al., 2005). In the context of this study, the equitable relationship between Fatima as newcomer and her tutor as dominant old-timer was significant for both of them and promoted learning as social participation in shared practice. Equality is one of the criteria of Allport's intercultural contact theory whereby individuals from different cultural backgrounds might feel accepted (Allport, 1954, cited in Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009, p. 465). Lave and Wenger utilised the term 'apprenticeship' and called for a broader perspective to replace the stereotypical image of master-apprentice relationship to one that encourages participation in communities of practice. Wenger (1998) suggests a move from master-student relationship to one that promotes participation and identity formation (Unwin, 2007, p. 109). The non-authoritarian relationship was something that Fatima appreciated.

Some students such as Fatima, Khoula, Majed, Ali, Nora, Ghada, Amina, Omar, Aziza and Khaled had positive attitudes towards British people and their culture before coming to the UK. For example, Fatima said:

I expected all people to be friendly. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

The above quotation illustrates that Fatima had high expectations of British people. What is surprising is her naivety because she made the point of stating 'all' people. However, when she arrived, there was an incident in which she was intimidated and abused:

I was victimised. While I was waiting for my order in a café; two young girls aged between sixteen and eighteen squeezed juice on my Hejab [head scarf] and ran away. I felt insulted. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

Fatima's experience was distressing. Her immediate assumption was, however, that the two teenagers did this because she was Muslim, and that this was prejudicial abuse. For Fatima, certainly it was humiliating and personal, and the incident made her revise her views of British people. Fatima's comment is consistent with the view of Smith (2013) who makes the point that bullying and intimidation make victims feel anxious and vulnerable, and may undermine confidence, or cause depression, anxiety and physical illness, resulting in anger, frustration and demotivation (Acas Organisation, 2014). Bullying and harassment can be related to religion, nationality, race, or age, or can be completely random, but the issue is that the actions are unacceptable to the recipient (Acas Organisation, 2014). However, Fatima contrasted this behaviour with that of the people whom she had met at university and within the master's community:

To be honest, many British people are respectful and kind. Tutors both in the pre-sessional course and in the master's are respectful and treat me with the greatest respect. British students keep the door open for me, and if we meet at the door, they say 'after you'. (Fatima, Education, interview 1)

Now, she says 'many British people', so she is less naïve and more measured in her estimations. She recognised that 'many', especially people with whom she came into contact within her master's community and the wider university, were not prejudiced and offered several situations where British people showed her respect and politeness.

Another student Ghada stated:

In Libya, I was listening to my tutor in the lecture. However, it happened once I supplied a word which my tutor could not remember. She became angry, she said 'Stop, do not complete to me' (silence and tears). On the contrary, my tutor encourages me to speak and to give my opinion by eye contact, nodding and saying carry on (smile). I feel more comfortable here. (Ghada, Applied Science, interview 2)

Ghada's comment emphasises that the Libyan education system is teacher-centred. In Libya only teachers have the right to speak in class, and students should be silent (Zraa et al., 2012, p. 1620). In contrast, Ghada's tutor on the UK master's course encouraged her by using non-verbal signals to prompt her to take part in class discussion, which in turn had a positive impact upon her learning. It seems that the relationship between Ghada and her tutor is mutual in the sense that they shape each other's experiences of meaning. Ghada added:

My British tutor was very helpful. She said 'I was a student in France, I understand the challenges that international students encounter'. This pushed me to ask questions inside and outside class and through e-mails. (Ghada, Applied Science, interview 2)

Ghada's tutor tried to equalise her relationship with international students by identifying with them and showing sensitivity and sympathy to their situation. Ghada felt that her tutor understood that international students had specific needs because she herself had been an international student. For Ghada, this encouraged her to seek clarification whenever she needed.

Fatima and Ghada's comments are consistent with Vygotsky (1978) and Nieto (2010) who emphasise the tutor's role in facilitating students' learning experiences and creating a comfortable learning environment. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) and Wenger (1998, p. 100) also highlight old-timers' support and the need to facilitate the experiences of the newcomers with regard to the development of knowledge and skill. In this case, Fatima and Ghada as newcomers were supported by their tutors as the dominant-old timers to join class discussion and to participate in the master's community.

A significant number of students such as Sara, Fatima, Omar, Nora, Khaled, Ali and Majed reported that they learnt through tutorial feedback. For example, Sara said:

Based on my tutor's written feedback in the 'Second Language Learning' module, I made the necessary amendments before the deadline. Imagine, if I hadn't received this constructive feedback, I would have failed the module. I and my colleagues like tutorials because you do not know whether you are in the right direction or not without tutorials. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Sara's comment indicates that she was given constructive tutorial formative feedback on a small section of the assignment before the summative assessment was completed. It is clear that this assisted her to learn. Sara perceived the tutor's constructive feedback was significant because it indicated the strengths and weaknesses in her writing and what she needed to do as a result in order to pass the module. The evidence is, however, that students like tutorials. They welcome individual support and they appreciate reassurance that they are on the right lines, so they can progress.

Burns and Foo's (2012, p. 48) study about formative feedback for international students suggests that it enables students to understand the expectations of the new academic environment; it allows a learning dialogue between a student and teacher; it gives students direction and increases their confidence in future assignments. It also promotes engagement; and makes assessment criteria more transparent which is significant for all students, particularly international students. International students are often unfamiliar with the academic skills required in the new academic environment such as critical skills, academic writing, and independent study (Burns and Foo, 2012); therefore, formative feedback is crucial. According to Ferrell (2012, p. 8), feedback focuses on students' performance, and it assists their success. Feedback is the most effective and powerful tool for students' progression and achievement (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004, cited in Burns and Foo, 2014, p. 75). Feedback is part of the scaffolding that assists students to improve and to learn (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2010, cited in Burns and Foo, 2014, p. 75). In the context of this study, the data indicated that Sara, as an international student, was unfamiliar with the academic practices in her master's community. However, a significant aspect of her learning was tutorial feedback and the learning dialogue with her tutor in one to one tutorials. Communities of practice include encounters

between newcomers and old-timers, and this is considered as an aspect of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In this study, encounters come in many different ways both through interaction inside and outside the classroom and through tutorial comment. Sara, however, did not only learn through social participation with international and British colleagues and tutors within the master's community (see 6.2.3), but she also learnt from teaching sessions within the wider university community:

I am very enthusiastic and motivated; I am attending staff development sessions and drop-in session. I go and ask my international and British colleagues if I don't understand any point. I also don't hesitate to ask my tutor via e-mail and in class, if I have any inquiry. (Sara, Education, interview 3)

Sara reveals that a strong motivation to develop and improve herself prompted her to seek assistance whenever she needed it from the mid old-timers, mid-newcomers and dominant old-timers within her master's community. It appears that Sara was inspired to seize every opportunity to learn and to develop her knowledge and skills even outside her master's community.

6.3 Autonomous learning

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the participants not only learnt through social participation with their colleagues and tutors within their master's community, but they also learnt individually through employing different strategies. For example, Laila, who was struggling with the "Designing Websites" module that required specialist knowledge of computer language programs reported:

I started reading about 'Java' to form basics to myself, to understand from my colleagues when we discuss together in groups and to add something. I listened to lessons on the YouTube and read journal articles. (Laila, Computing and Engineering, interview 2)

Laila employed individual strategies to develop and improve her knowledge and to contribute to the group because learning as social participation depends on the ability of the learner to contribute in order to enhance experience and develop competence (Wenger, 1998, p. 203). She perceived mutual engagement as partial because she felt that it was important to receive and give help in shared activity as demonstrated by Wenger (1998, p. 76). It also suggests that a student can only participate with the CoP when she or he has an adequate corpus of knowledge. In a similar vein, Nahla said: “I understand from the lecture first, then I memorise” (Nahla, Applied Science, interview 3). Nahla’s comment reveals that she was strategic learner because she used both the characteristic of surface approach to learning (i.e. memorisation) and the characteristic of deep approach (i.e. understanding or comprehension). It appears that her view is in line with Shaheen (2012) who found that the strategic approach is not a distinct approach like surface and deep approaches, but it is concerned with students’ ability to move between deep and surface approaches. Ghada and Ali reported that they used observation and modelling techniques. For example, Ghada stated:

I looked at the assignments of previous students and how they used quotation and I imitated that. (Ghada, Applied Science, interview 2)

Laila, Nahla and Ghada’s views are different from Lave and Wenger (1991) who view the group as essential for learning, so individuals learn by interacting with others, rather than individually. As discussed in 3.3 in the framework chapter, Lave and Wenger’s concept of a community of practice moved beyond the standard paradigm of learning as individual ability and cognition (Hammersley, 2005, p. 9). Lave and Wenger’s view of learning as social participation emphasises the learning that takes place inside the community and ignores the significance of learning outside of it (Österlund, 1996). In the context of this study, the data revealed that Laila, Nahla and Ghada learnt through both social participation with their colleagues and tutors within their master’s community as explained in section 6.2.2, but they also learnt individually broadening their knowledge and developing themselves in order to contribute to the group.

Aziza, Khoula, Sara and Fatima reported that they benefited from teaching sessions that were specifically designed to support international students. For example, Aziza who had refused to attend tutorials when the tutor was a male stated:

The courses that I attended such as building an argument, presentation skills, academic writing, and paraphrasing were very useful. Staff development sessions such as time management, how to be assertive, data analysis, preparing slides, and academic writing sessions were very helpful to gain new skills. (Aziza, Business School, interview 2)

Aziza appreciated the fact that the university takes into account the presence of international students and their specific needs. Although these courses were optional for international students, Aziza wanted to improve and chose to attend a number of sessions. Aziza perceived these support sessions within the wider university community as being useful in terms of acquiring skills. She also reported that talking one-to-one with her colleagues outside the classroom was helpful:

One-to-one talk with my classmates outside the class was helpful to understand the requirements of the course and to ask them to give me their opinion about my presentation. (Aziza, Business School, interview 2)

This interaction assisted her to gain information about the course and to get feedback on her presentation. Clearly, this strategy was critical for Aziza because it might have been difficult to communicate with her colleagues during the regular class time. Kota in Morita's (2009) study also found one-to-one talk with his colleagues significant.

Another student Khoula who learnt through social participation with her British colleagues within the master's community stated:

The teaching sessions that I attended were effective. I learnt building an argument and the structure of writing such as introduction, main body, and conclusion. I learnt how to avoid plagiarism and how to use APA in referencing. (Khoulou, Business School, interview 2)

Aziza and Khoula's views are consistent with a previous study by Hager (2005) who disagreed with Lave and Wenger' argument against learning as a product to be acquired and their emphasis on learning as a process of participation. He suggests that learning as a process of social participation and learning as a product to be acquired are not "mutually exclusive" because learning as social participation involves both process and product. According to the "standard paradigm", learning is seen as an individual matter and depends on the presence of a qualified teacher in order to transfer codified knowledge to learners (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p. 97). Therefore, learning is seen as a knowledge product to be acquired (see the fourth paragraph in section 3.3 in the Framework Chapter 3). In the context of this study, the data indicated that Aziza and Khoula not only learnt through a process of social participation with their colleagues within the master's community, but they also acquired knowledge and skills (i.e. product through a teacher) via teaching sessions within the wider university community.

6.4 Identity

As suggested in the literature review, identity emerged as a developmental process or as a point of change. Identity is a layered and at times contested concept (Hall, 2003). It is fluid and not fixed (Curtin, 2006). The following discussion is concerned with Libyan students' perceptions about the effects of being a member in the master's community and learning as social participation with their colleagues and tutors, and it uses Lave and Wenger's (1991, p. 53) phrase "construct identity" as part of what might occur within the context. It is divided into learning and becoming, and adjustment and the core aspects of the Libyan identity.

6.4.1 Learning and becoming

The findings of this study suggest that the majority of Libyan students reported that being members of an overseas multicultural class and interaction with British and international students extended their knowledge and affected their identity. For example, Fatima is a woman who in the past had had little freedom

and was socially dependent on her father. For her, coming to the UK was significant:

I became sociable and my confidence increased because I am interacting with Chinese, Kurdish and Greek colleagues in class. (Fatima, Education, interview 3)

Fatima suggests that being a member of the master's community and having the opportunity to learn as social participation with different nationalities assisted her to construct her identity, 'becoming sociable and confident'. Identity is socially defined because "it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities" (Wenger, 1988, p. 151). This confirms Hebrok's (2011) view that identity is social because it is constructed via interaction with others. As stated earlier, Wenger acknowledges that "what makes engagement in practice possible and productive is as much a matter of diversity as it is a matter of homogeneity" (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). For Wenger, diversity is also that communities of practice include young and old, liberal and conservative, who interact and affect each other's understanding. There is little theoretically in CoPs theory to inform aspects of diversity in terms of different cultural backgrounds or an environment for intercultural identity construction. Although Siljanen and Lämsä's (2009) study was about expatriation and it was conducted in Israeli-Palestinian context, they found that individuals construct their identity through intercultural interaction with others. Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) highlight that students in the UK HE system also have an opportunity to interact with people from other cultures, and this is likely to facilitate the emergence of intercultural identity. However, they do not discuss the nature of the interaction between international students and their host colleagues and its effect on identity. Fatima added:

I discussed with my English tutor in tutorials. I tried to make points more explicit to my tutor, and I asked questions that I couldn't ask in class. My tutor listened to me and gave me new thoughts and ideas. He recommended references to read and websites. This assisted me to be independent. (Fatima, Education, interview 2)

Fatima describes opportunities for interaction with her tutor in one to one tutorials. She revealed that the tutor created a good atmosphere for her to learn. The interaction with tutors assists international students' understanding of the requirements of the course (Tran, 2011). As discussed earlier, hierarchal relationships can play an essential role either in creating opportunities or barriers for learning (Fuller et al., 2005). In the context of this study, Fatima's tutor as a dominant old-timer assisted her learning and contributed to the construction of her identity (i.e. become independent learner) as a master's student. This is in line with Lave and Wenger's view (1991, p. 53) about "becoming". It appears that Fatima's tutor understood that she had the intention to learn and to develop herself as an autonomous learner. Those in power can facilitate the experiences of newcomers and may contribute to the construction of identity. In this sense, Fatima learnt and constructed her identity through social interaction with her English tutor. Fatima also stated:

I do everything by myself; I live without my father nearby. (Fatima, Education, interview 3).

Fatima's independence and her capacity to cope with practical demands were essential to building her identity and autonomy. During observation and the third interview, it was obvious from her language and actions that Fatima had become more self-sufficient and confident. Lave and Wenger (1991) consider that identity is social, and it is created as a lived experience of participation in a community of practice. In the literature, Hebrok (2011) refers to identity as social because it is constructed through interaction with others within specific communities. In this study, Fatima not only constructed her identity as a master's student through social participation with her international colleagues and tutors on the course as evidenced above, but she also constructed her identity outside the master's community as a result of encountering and living in a new socio-cultural context. Therefore, identity formation can be within the community of practice or outside the community of practice or more likely both. Fatima may have lived by herself, but her life was a "lived experience of participation" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151) through friends, lectures, seminars.

In a similar vein, Khoula reported,

I became a different person, the challenges changed me. I became independent because when the Libyan embassy stopped funding me, I worked as a teacher in my house. (Khoula, Business School, interview 3)

Khoula reveals that she changed because, like other international students, she encountered challenges in the new academic environment and the socio-cultural context. Learners construct their identity when they experience both the familiar and the unfamiliar (Wenger, 1998). For Khoula, her financial challenge and her work as a private teacher to fund herself contributed to her becoming independent. Wenger (1998, p. 193) linked identity formation with practice and he points out that identity is an integral aspect of a social learning and cannot be separated from practice, community, and meaning. However, CoPs theory does not address the fact that individuals may construct their identity through encountering challenges or unfamiliarity outside a community of practice. This may be simply because Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) view identity as embedded in a context in which learners co-participate. A previous study by Gill (2007) demonstrates that Chinese postgraduate students also construct their identity when they encounter the unfamiliar. However, although both studies were conducted in UK universities, Gill does not focus on the implications of a new socio-cultural context.

6.4.2 Adjustment and the core aspects of the Libyan identity

For some Libyan students like Majed, Sara, Khaled, Fatima and Amina, although their heritage and the Libyan traditional cultural values were part of their identities, they modified this temporarily while in the UK. For example, Majed stated:

I am interacting with Chinese, British and Nigerian males and females in discussion and group work activities. If I were in Libya, I would never interact with females. (Majed, Computing and Engineering, interview 3)

Majed's response reveals that his presence in a multicultural classroom is significant for his adjustment. For Majed, being a member in the master's community requires engagement with both males and females in shared practices. This confirms Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that membership requires participation according to the values and traditions that organise the community of practice. When newcomers engage with their colleagues in shared practices, "their skill, knowledge and enculturation develop" (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 64). For Majed, the context (i.e. the master's community) played a significant role in his acceptance of interaction with females despite the fact, as stated in the culture and gender section 5.2.2, the interaction between males and females is socially and culturally unacceptable in Libya.

Sara also reported a challenge to her cultural positioning:

I asked my male tutor to stand in the corridor or to leave the door open in order not to be in isolation, but he was reluctant as he said 'Why?' I explained to him, but he was unconvinced. I informed my husband that my tutor was reluctant, so I accepted to attend with him one-one tutorial. (Sara, Education, interview 2)

Sara reveals that she disregarded one of the Libyan traditional cultural values (i.e. being with the opposite sex in same room). For her, leaving the door open or standing in the corridor might have been more acceptable, but, unlike Aziza, she was prepared to compromise. Sara recognised that her tutor wanted to encourage her to be more independent and confident, so she agreed to the arrangement although, before doing so, she sought her husband's agreement in order to protect her reputation and to show conjugal respect. A community of practice can exclude newcomers who are unable to fit in, particularly those with a strongly established culture and a sense of being (Colley et al., 2007). There is not the language in CoPs theory to suggest that newcomers may bring traditional cultural values to a community of practice, nor that these can be modified by that community of practice and through learning as social participation in shared practice. In this study, the data indicated that while Majed and Sara both brought their traditional Libyan cultural values with them to the master's community, they disregarded some of them in order to learn.

For Libyans, religious values are also core aspects of almost all the participants' identity regardless of their age and gender. For example, Amina who was in a party with her colleagues on a university campus reported:

There were beer and dancing at the party, but I didn't share the drinking and dancing. I attended the party without taking off my 'Hejab' [head scarf] and I prayed 'Magreb' [prayer]. I was and still pray on time in the Faith Centre, fasting Ramadan, and wearing my 'Hejab' [head scarf]. (Amina, Applied Science, interview 3)

Amina's comment illustrates that the hejab; praying on time, not drinking alcohol and fasting at Ramadan were all still essential manifestations of her Libyan Muslim identity. For her, these are core elements that have not changed despite the impact of living in a new socio-cultural context and being a member of the master's community. However, it also appears that her religious values did not prevent Amina's integration with her colleagues as evidenced by her attendance at the party where she confronted the unfamiliar, but did not compromise her behaviour.

Ali also indicated:

Once my female colleague wanted to shake hands, I said 'Sorry I don't shake hands with females'. I was embarrassed because her face became red. Then, she asked me 'Why? Is it for hygienic purposes?' I said 'our prophet Mohamed didn't shake hands with women and I am committed to that'. She said 'Yes I understand now'. (Ali, Education, interview 1)

In Libya, not shaking hands with the opposite sex is deemed to be quranically motivated. However, Ali's cultural sensitivity does not extend to how other people might feel about this. He seems to be unaware that his behaviour might be construed as offensive, or that this might affect his ability to interact successfully. Ali explained his socialisation with his colleagues in the master's community:

I am interacting with females and males inside and outside the class. We work together in groups. In our religion, it is not prohibited to talk to females, but it should be with boundaries. We go on trips together; we send each other e-mails, and we support each other if anyone gets a referral in assignment. (Ali, Education, interview 1)

Ali's religious identity did not appear, however, to inhibit his integration or mutual engagement and regular interaction between him and his colleagues regardless of the gender, but he is only willing to participate on his own terms (perhaps owing to his core values). What is happening here is layered and complex. Amina and Ali's views reveal that they were selective; taking from the host values that which was pertinent to them. An individual need not adopt the whole host culture, but there can be "selectively" whereby some values are endorsed while others are not (Evanoff, 2006, p. 425). James (2007) demonstrates that newcomers bring with them values to the new context, but the nature of these values, whether they are religious, cultural or social, might affect newcomers' participation within a community. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) also did not address the significance of the religious values that newcomers might bring with them to a community of practice and its effect on their integration and socialisation with their colleagues. This may possibly be because religion was not a significant consideration when they developed their theory in the way the other aspects were. They offered a western perspective, where, at that time, religion did not have instrumental prominence. In the context of this study, Amina and Ali brought their religious values with them to the master's community; however, these values did not inhibit their participation, engagement, and integration with colleagues. On the contrary, their views showed acceptance and mutual engagement with others.

6.5 Summary

All participants in this sample came to the UK with a unique motivation; they came to develop knowledge and skills which they could take back to a new Libya, and this positively affected their participation in the master's community. Nora and Khalid developed essential aspects of intercultural communicative competence as a result of having mutual engagement and interaction with international colleagues in shared activity within the master's community. For

instance, Nora became more open-minded and developed empathy towards others, and Khaled developed his interpersonal communicative skills; improved his English language; developed empathy, and constructed his identity. Nora and Khaled's perceptions are in line with Williams (2005) and Mellors-Bourne et al. (2013); however, Nora and Khaled's views about diversity are different from Wenger's (1998) view. Furthermore, the data revealed that, when working with international colleagues in shared activity, Laila and Khalid felt they completed each other because everyone had a skill that others might not have, demonstrating the partiality of mutual engagement that Wenger (1998, p. 76) cited. The data also illustrated that Nahla and Khaled favoured group work activity and were critical of the Libyan education system for its lack of learning as social participation. For instance, Nahla acquired knowledge through situated learning that involved learning by practising and interacting with more experienced colleagues (i.e. dominant old-timer and mid-newcomers) in shared practice in the laboratory. Nahla's perspective is in line Lave and Wenger (1991) and Hammersley's (2005) view of the significance of knowledge and skills and capabilities that are developed through social interaction with others within a community of practice. The data also revealed that Nahla had become a more competent and confident student owing to learning as social participation with more experienced colleagues and acquiring knowledge and skills, and this is consistent with the view of "becoming" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

Libyan students in the sample of this study brought dispositions with them to the master's community. For instance, Sara was concerned about the consumption of alcohol; however, she recognised through interaction that this was an over-reaction. Sara also sought assistance, whenever she needed it from mid old-timers, mid-newcomers and the dominant old-timer. For instance, Sara received support with regard to critical thinking skill from a British colleague; while she received advice on her handwriting from an international colleague; she also benefited from tutorials with her tutor, and participated in sessions within the wider university community. Majed benefited from peer-feedback offered by his British colleagues, and, in turn, his British colleague also received feedback

from Majed. Such an environment has the potential to promote the mutual engagement that is essential for building the relationships which are important for learning. Khoula and Ali also brought new knowledge to the master's community, and this promoted their integration with British colleagues, widening knowledge and stimulating ideas on both sides. Students' perceptions are in line with Hooley and Horspool (2006); Andrade, (2006) and Lillyman and Bennett (2014); although this research has extended awareness of the nature of interaction between international postgraduate students and host students in shared practice.

Only four participants, Sara, Majed, Khoula and Ali, had an opportunity for interaction with their British colleagues in the master's community. The data illustrated assumptions made by international students about their British colleagues. For instance, Nora felt her British peers created excuses in order to avoid interaction with her, which undermined mutual exchange of ideas and integration. The data also indicated that confidence or English language competence adversely affected Omar and Amina's integration and engagement with the British students within the master's community. For instance, Omar felt unable to communicate fluently and effectively with his British colleagues, so he segregated himself from them. Amina perceived her relationship with British colleagues within the master's community as essentially formal and felt that her English language competence inhibited socialisation. Issues around English competence also suppressed Omar and Amina's mutual engagement and integration with their British colleagues within the master's community. Although Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) highlight the significance of language in communities of practice in terms of gaining access to activities, managing interactions, and participating legitimately and competently in community of practice, they do not discuss this in relation to second language newcomers whose socialisation, engagement and integration with mid old-timers might be affected. Diversity, in terms of newcomers and old-timers who come from different cultural background, is largely ignored in communities of practice theory. Although the findings of this study about language issues are consistent with the findings of Subhash (2013) who points out that language

undermined socialisation with host and international students, and Aldoukalee (2013) who found that English language is one of the main challenges for Libyan students; however, the reasons behind that challenge are not highlighted. This study revealed that there were additional issues for older Libyan participants such as Omar and Amina with regard to learning English in Libya such as 1) Gaddafi's regime blocked the learning of English from 1986 to 1992; 2) poor resources, and 3) traditional methods of teaching English language. However, English language competence did not inhibit Omar and Amina's mutual engagement and integration with their international as opposed to British colleagues. Amina thought that her international colleagues might be more sympathetic about her English use because they too were second language learners.

Fatima and Ghada perceived that a more egalitarian relationship with their tutors in the UK was significant in creating a comfortable atmosphere beneficial for learning. For instance, Fatima, who described an authoritarian relationship with her tutor and students' subservience in Libya, appreciated the respect and mutuality of the relationship with her tutor in the UK. While Ghada who had endured a 'silent' culture in Libya described how her tutor encouraged her to participate in class by using non-verbal signals. Fatima and Ghada's perceptions of their experiences in the UK are in line with Vygotsky (1978) and Nieto's (2010) views. The data also indicated that Sara and Fatima, Omar, Nora, Khaled, Ali and Majed learnt through constructive tutorial feedback. Their views are consistent with Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) views about the encounter between newcomers and old-timers.

Participants, however, did not only learn through social participation with their colleagues (i.e. mid newcomers and mid old-timers) and tutors (dominant old-timers) within the master's community, but they also learnt and acquired knowledge and skills individually through employing different strategies. For instance, listening to YouTube and reading articles, as reported by Laila; understanding and memorisation, as Nahla stated; and observation and modelling as mentioned by Ghada. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger

(1998) see the group as essential for learning. However, evidence from the data above revealed that Sara, Aziza and Khoula not only learnt through learning as social participation with their colleagues within the master's community, but they also through teaching sessions within the wider university community. Students' views are consistent with Hager (2005) who emphasises that learning as a process of social participation and learning as product to be acquired are not mutually exclusive.

The majority of the participants in this research constructed their identity as a result of being members in the master's community and learning as social participation in shared practice with British and international colleagues (mid old-timers and mid newcomers) and tutors (dominant old-timers). For instance, the data indicated that Nahla constructed her identity 'becoming a different person' owing to acquiring knowledge and skill through situated learning that included learning by doing and interaction in shared practice with international colleagues and tutors in laboratory. Fatima felt that she constructed her identity "becoming" sociable, confident and independent both through learning as social participation with international colleagues in share activity and through having an opportunity for social interaction with her tutor in tutorials. Fatima and Nahla reinforce the significance of Lave and Wenger's (1991) "becoming". However, the data revealed that Fatima did not only construct her identity through learning as social participation with international colleagues and tutors within the master's community, but she also constructed her identity outside the master's community as a result of living alone in a new socio-cultural context. However, this does not mean that she constructed her identity 'becoming independent' individually because her life is quite likely to be a "lived experience of participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 151) through friends, lectures, seminars all of whom might help in creating independence. Khoula also indicated that she constructed her identity 'becoming' independent owing to encountering challenges in a new socio-cultural context. Like Fatima, Khoula constructed her identity both outside and inside the master's community through learning as social participation. She changed through a number of different experiences and in a number of different ways. Fatima and Khoula's views are

consistent with Hebrok (2011) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) belief that identity is social because it is constructed through interaction with others within specific communities. However, Wenger (1998) does not focus on identity construction outside the master's community such as living in a new socio-cultural context or encountering new challenges.

Although heritage and traditional Libyan cultural values were part of their identities for Majed, Sara, Khaled, Fatima and Amina, they all modified this temporarily in some ways. For instance, Majed and Khaled interacted with their female international colleagues in shared activity because their presence in the master's community required that involvement; Sara was prepared to sit in a room with a member of the opposite sex. CoPs theory does not address the impact of traditional cultural values in communities of practice nor the significance of their modification in a community of practice.

However, in this study, the Libyan students' religious values were core aspects of their identity and did not change despite the impact of living in a new socio-cultural context and being members of the master's community. For instance, wearing the hejab, praying on time, not drinking alcohol and fasting at Ramadan were all still essential aspects of Amina's Muslim identity; however, this did not prevent Amina's integration with her colleagues nor her attendance at a party. Moreover, Ali's refusal to shake hands with the opposite sex did not seem to prevent his socialisation with colleagues. On the contrary, his comments reveal engagement and interaction on regular basis. James (2007) suggests that newcomers bring values to a new context, but he does not give any analysis or interpretation of these values whether they are religious, cultural or social and to what extent they might affect newcomers' participation in a community. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) also did not highlight the religious values that newcomers might bring with them to a community of practice and its effect on their integration and socialisation with their colleagues. Lave and Wenger do not explore the nuances of relationships within communities of practice that might have a surprisingly significant impact on a community of practice. It is important in a global context to think about how communities might

prioritise religion or culture as factors that are significant to their identity even in a learning environment. It appears however that this has not been prioritised in the literature so far. In the context of this study, the data revealed that Amina and Ali brought their religious values with them to the master's community; however, these values did not prohibit their participation, engagement and integration with their colleagues. On the contrary, their views showed adaptation, acceptance and mutual engagement with their others.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This qualitative study set out to explore the learning experiences of Libyan students studying master's courses at a UK university in terms of their intercultural adaptation and identity. This study tells the story of students who came to the UK, seeking postgraduate experience, after enduring civil war and from a situation of ongoing conflict in Libya. This research has investigated these Libyan students' perceptions and perspectives of their experiences in the UK higher education system; it has explored the impact of their previous educational and socio-cultural experiences on the HE acculturation process and on their learning. It has evaluated the nature of the interaction between these Libyan students and their colleagues during shared activity; and it has considered their perceptions of identity and of change. This research was an interpretative study, with semi-structured interviews being the main source of significant data, and observation informing the interviews. CoPs as conceptual framework has informed my thinking and understanding of Libyan students' experience. Chapter 5 and 6 set out the data under broad headings, and this chapter refines the discussion of the data and synthesises the argument with respect to the conceptual framework and the research questions:

- 1) What are the main challenges that Libyan postgraduate students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict encounter?
- 2) To what extent do their previous experiences educationally, socially, culturally and politically affect their strategies for adaptation and development?
- 3) How do Libyan students adjust and adapt to an overseas academic environment?
- 4) How do Libyan students' experiences in the UK affect perceptions of their identity?

This chapter presents the findings and implications with respect to the research questions. Then, it discusses the limitations of the study; further considerations; and the contribution to CoPs theory.

7.2 The findings and implications

This section synthesises the significance of the findings in answering the research questions and briefly discusses how these findings add, differ or support those of others in the literature. I start the discussion of conclusions with the first and second research questions because they are interrelated.

1) What are the main challenges that Libyan postgraduate students as a case from civil war and ongoing conflict encounter?

2) To what extent do their previous experiences educationally, socially, culturally and politically affect their strategies for adaptation and development?

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) as a linear progress from peripheral to full participant. However, this research suggests that Libyan students' commitment to their master's courses was not a straightforward trajectory from peripheral to full member; it was influenced by their prior experiences, their social and political positioning and their cultural situation. International students bring with them experiences, knowledge formed and constructed historically, a range of skills, and predetermined values to the new context, and these inevitably have an impact on their participation and, potentially, on the dynamics of any community of practice of which they might be part. In particular, this study revealed that prior circumstances, specifically the impact of their country's civil war and ongoing conflict, despite its physical distance, had a continuing and adverse effect on many Libyan students' involvement in the UK master's course. For instance, Nahla continued to feel anxiety and fear when she arrived in the UK; Aziza delayed the start of her master's course owing to what might be post-traumatic stress, and Ali, uncertain of his peers, felt unable initially to participate in class discussion (see section

5.2.1). This study's participants in their responses repeatedly used the word 'fear'; they were fearful of attack and disruption in Libya, but in the UK, they feared the unknown. This latter fearfulness might better be described as 'heightened anxiety' about a new experience, but in these Libyan students' minds was manifest as fear.

Previous studies about international students such as Griffiths et al. (2005) found that, when international students encounter unfamiliar methods of teaching and learning and a new academic environment, they may face anxiety and frustration, lose confidence and feel unable to engage with the alternative context. Oberg (1960) sees intercultural adaptation as a linear developmental process and he goes on to describe the process of moving to a new culture in four stages: 'honeymoon, stress, recovery, and home'. However, most of the Libyan students in this study did not experience what might be described as a 'honeymoon' stage on their arrival in the UK. As people coming from a civil war and ongoing conflict, they had not forgotten past events; they were all too fresh in their minds. Newcomers inevitably bring with them knowledge and often ways of learning to a new context (James, 2007); but they also bring life histories and perhaps prejudices that have been previously acquired (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004; Billett, 2007). This research has also signified how trauma and fear might affect students and also impact on their participation in a new academic environment.

The Libyan students in this study like many other international students were unfamiliar with aspects of the UK HE system, including academic literacy and independent study. They indicated that: 1) in Libya access to resources including libraries had not been easy with internet connections being almost non-existent owing to power outages; 2) the country was in chaos, and university campuses were often insecure and weapons commonplace, and, finally, 3) Libyan tutors' awareness of the difficulties and lack of security encouraged restraint in the demands they made upon students especially with regard to research or independent initiative. Bamford (2008) highlights that independent study is frequently problematic for many international students in

the UK; however, this study revealed that this was an especial challenge for several of these participants owing to the implications not just of their prior educational experiences, but also of the social and political environment from which they came. Libyan students had traditionally been teacher-centred and rote-learners before the revolution, but the civil war and ongoing conflict had further undermined development and exacerbated constraints around opportunities for more flexible learning options.

However, Wenger's most recent definition of CoPs highlights the significance of regular interaction, "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2015, p. 1). For Wenger, historically, CoPs consist of three main components: 1) mutual engagement, 2) joint enterprise, and 3) shared "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions and concepts" (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). Mutual engagement, however, emerges as the most important aspect, according to Wenger (1998), because it is the basis for building a relationship. Members negotiate meanings of practice on a regular basis, but the Libyan situation in this research was complex. Libyan students as a group formed a not insignificant part of the master's cohort, but the findings presented in chapter 5 strongly indicate that the civil war and ongoing conflict had a social and political impact on relationships between Libyans within master's courses and that this adversely affected their view of themselves as a cohesive community. The research reveals that there was 1) antagonism; 2) avoidance of social contact and educational interaction, and 3) political division owing to tribal loyalties, recent political schism and the legacy of the initial conflict. This failure to collaborate and network hindered mutual engagement and undermined the support that might normally have been expected between compatriots. This offers an alternative perspective to Wenger's view of diversity (i.e. liberal and conservative) is a "matter of homogeneity" (Wenger, 1998, p. 75), because this study indicates that differences in affiliations and loyalties can preclude homogeneity. People often disagree, but it is the implications here that are significant. Although the schism between Libyan students adversely affected their relationships with each other,

it made them seek an alternative shared learning experience with colleagues from elsewhere.

Several other previous studies about the experiences of international students such as Andrade (2006); Zhou et al., (2008); Lee (2009); and Bodycott (2015) highlight that it is very common for international students to incline towards friends from the same nationality because they are likely to have a similar background and share the same first language and a familiar culture. Some other studies such as Pitts (2009); Dunne (2009); Maundeni (2001); Fontaine et al., (2010); Curtin et al. (2013) highlight the benefits of having such communication with colleagues and friends of the same nationality (see section 2.3.2 coping strategies), and suggest it has the potential to assist international students to develop the confidence that is essential for temporary adjustment. However, for the Libyan students in this study, the memory of the conflict remained current and prominent because it is still ongoing. People were passionate about their affiliations, so much so that they situated themselves in distinctively different positions. It was not even just a question of alternative ethnic national groups since, even within each tribe, there are differences. One of the criticisms of CoPs is that they emphasise homogeneity and consensus rather than difference and conflict (Anderson and McCune, 2013). According to Jewson (2007, p. 71), Wenger is aware of conflict, and he warns of its harmful effect, but the only dissonance that is traditionally highlighted in CoPs' theory is "generational encounter" (Wenger, 1998, p. 101) between newcomers and old-timers, rather than any notion of an antagonism that might emerge in more complex and nuanced structures between newcomers themselves as a result of division and hostility.

Similar to generational encounter, gender can also be a factor that might affect the relationships between newcomers and old-timers. This research suggests that the gender mixed classroom environments in the UK were a cultural challenge to many Libyan students, particularly the women. For example, Nora felt unable to socialise with male colleagues outside the master's classroom;

while Fatima found even listening to western males difficult and to an extent incomprehensible because she was not attuned to male cadences. As a result, she kept her distance and confined her relationships with male colleagues to formal greetings. In Aziza's case, it even affected her interaction with the 'dominant old-timer', her male tutor since she refused to attend tutorials solely with him. These responses inevitably influenced integration, socialisation, mutual engagement and the building of many of the relationships that are essential to learning. Wenger believed that: "mutual engagement requires interaction" (Wenger, 1998, p. 74); but this research questions the extent and nature of that interaction for different cultural and ethnic groups. Libyan traditional cultural values and concerns about reputation and the opinion of others appear to be the main reasons for gender challenge for all females.

In the literature, Morita's (2009) study in Canada does mention that gender affected a male international student in a significant way; however, this study highlights the significance of culturally related gender difference as a factor which might significantly affect international students' participation in a new academic environment and their integration with their colleagues and tutors. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004, p. 1) note that the significance of gender is underdeveloped by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) (see section 5.2.2 culture and gender). This may be because when Lave and Wenger refer to CoPs, they are essentially located within a western social and cultural dynamic, and gender is not presented as significant as a consequence. However, reorientation to a Middle Eastern perspective like that of Libya where the cultural and social contexts work together with religious values, and gender has a specific and substantive resonance. Yet, it is important to emphasise that it is not only Libyan students for whom this may be an issue. It is a feature of Libyan students as a case, but it is not a unique feature which makes them a case. Some aspects may, though, be both contextual and conditioned, and, as a result, be especially significant for Libyan students. Independence was a challenge for many Libyan female students in the UK. Like many other women from a traditional Muslim society, their relationships and engagement had been habituated by the men in their lives. Women from a war torn country, however,

like Fatima who considered her father over protective, may find it difficult to differentiate between what might be motivated by custom and practice and that which could also be motivated by an evaluation of genuine risk. The females in this study coming to the UK experienced a real contrast between their previous lives and their situation on arrival in the UK where they had to be responsible and independent. Therefore, some they were inevitably apprehensive and experienced not so much a 'honeymoon' period as a culture shock which necessitated a period of adjustment and acclimatisation.

Arguably, a community for these Libyan students is complex and multifaceted. This study indicates that two factors affected the learning environment and that which Wenger historically established for a community of practice; these were their perceptions of the political divisiveness and the gender (as explained above). These two factors adversely affected co-national mutual engagement, although as students they share a common purpose to succeed in their master's course. This study reveals that they interacted with other groups where politics and gender seemed to be less significant, and, therefore, they were able to engage in an alternative community of practice within the learning environment. For further discussion, see the research question 3.

Since Lave and Wenger (1991) describe the LPP as a linear trajectory from peripheral to full participant, little attention is given to the challenges that newcomers might encounter in CoPs and, according to James (2007), they are not therefore fully addressed. In the literature, however, Ward and Masgoret (2004); Major (2005); Ryan and Carroll (2005); Hooley and Horspool (2006); Ryan (2011); Campbell and Li, (2008) discuss the challenges that international students encounter in a new academic environment and a different socio-cultural context. This study suggests that the main challenges that this group of Libyan students faced in the master's community were those associated with the environment and their feelings of insecurity; issues pertaining to culture and gender that included risk; the challenge of independent study; unfamiliarity with the UK HE system, and finally the consequences on each individual of the civil

war and ongoing conflict. The study indicates that while some of these challenges such as unfamiliarity with the UK HE system and the challenge of self-study may be common to many international students, others such as feelings of insecurity, culture and gender, and the consequences of the civil war and ongoing conflict may all be especially acute for this group of Libyan students.

Cultural synergy, however, is complex. For a tutor to be alert to the fact that there could be undercurrents between groups of students that might undermine aspects of learning, she or he needs to know something of students' backgrounds and experiences. This is consistent with Zhou's (2008) view of cultural synergy in which a tutor seeks to understand students' culture in order to interpret their behaviour and facilitate their interaction. Although teaching international students requires "cross-cultural awareness" and "sensitivity" (Healey, 2008, p. 347), according to Lave and Wenger's communities of practice theory, there is a general sense that newcomers are the persons who will adapt to old-timers. This research, however, highlights how an academic community may be different from Lave and Wenger's established view of a community of practice because roles, according to Lave and Wenger, are set by old-timers and newcomers should primarily conform to what exists. In western academic communities, though, those in authority such as tutors are likely to view themselves as being more facilitative and culturally alert; and therefore, if construed as a dominant old-timer, might assume some responsibility to ease the passage for an international student although this may not extend to specifics which contravene fundamental western values such as gender equality or integration. Thus, in an academic community of practice, old-timers might operate in different and more flexible ways than in Lave and Wenger's original notion of community of practice.

According to Hughes et al. (2007), the notion of CoPs is a tightly bounded relationship between newcomers and old-timers, but they do not elaborate further. This current study, however, revealed that there was a situation in which the community of practice was both diffuse and devolved in a complex

structure. There were different groups within an established community. I distinguished the groups in this study as follows: tutors as dominant old-timers; British students as mid old-timers because they are likely to be more familiar with various aspects of the UK HE environment and with the expectations of their course; international students who had been there for a term as mid-newcomer; and only the newly starting international students just as newcomers.

3) How do Libyan students adjust and adapt to an overseas academic environment?

Significant to adjusting and adapting is social interaction and relationships which are developed even within the short space of transitional time within a master's course. Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight the significance of locating a learner in a CoP in order to acquire knowledge and skills through social interaction with others and by building relationships. In this study, Libyan master's students were in a multicultural classroom (i.e. host and international students), and this was significant for them. The interaction between different groups of students offers an alternative medium for learning (Anderson and McCune 2013). The point as far as Anderson and McCune (2013) are concerned is that a community of practice might be a useful framework to analyse learning in higher education, but only if we look at the positions students occupy and if we regard practice as knowledge communication. The findings in chapter 6 indicate that the majority of the participants learnt through social interaction and participation in a shared practice with international colleagues (i.e. newcomers and mid-newcomers) and tutors (i.e. dominant old-timer). For example, Laila who was academically undermined by the outdated curriculum and impoverished resources in Libya felt that working with others from alternative cultural backgrounds played a significant role in her development because different individuals each had diverse skills experientially and intellectually. As a result, members within a group complemented each other's competence, learning from each other, and generating through their exchanges "partiality of mutual engagement" (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). This study reveals that having informal often smaller shared

interest or circumstance meetings within a group and daily interaction were also significant for many participants as they contributed to building relationships that were essential for learning. Practice in CoPs is knowledge generation and about learning to be a master's student; it nevertheless needs to be contextualised within a discipline because different disciplines require different kinds of knowledge and different sorts of master's students. For those in Engineering and Applied Science like Laila, it was not just about having access to more modern equipment or recent technology, but the new knowledge and enhanced understanding which resulted from this.

Situated learning involves engagement, activity and interaction with old-timers (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Colley et al. (2003) emphasise the importance of learning as social participation in which newcomers learn from more established colleague. A student who has only been in a community for a term can nevertheless provide support for a recent member (Bamford, 2008). This study highlights that learning by practising and social interaction with more experienced colleagues (i.e. mid-newcomers) and tutors (i.e. dominant old-timer) in a shared activity were significant for almost all of the participants with regard to acquiring knowledge and skills that were essential for their master's course. This study also indicates that some Libyan students enjoyed and favoured group work activity, and, as a result, they were critical of their own Libyan education system for its lack of opportunity for learning as social participation. Comments and criticism like this suggest that they had acquired a degree of meta-learning or learning about learning which allowed them to be more evaluative of and reflective about their past and current learning experiences. For these Libyan students, who might previously have been compliant and just accepted whatever was delivered to them, learning to be master's students was not just about acquiring a discipline specific epistemology but also about their place and role within a learning environment and about respect for the depth and extent of each individual contribution. The significance of meta-learning is that it has the potential to improve performance and deliver autonomous learners as well as, according to Drucker (2007), to encourage self-empowerment and self-confidence; to promote continuous reflection and criticality about the most appropriate and valid

information sources; and to develop personal awareness and self-management. These Libyan students acquired meta-learning through situated learning. This is not to say that they did not find participation in the master's group initially difficult, as discussed in relation to the first and second questions, but the research suggests that they were willing and keen to participate in different learning configurations. One reason for this could be that, while some international students have the solidarity of their national or ethnic group (Andrade, 2006; Zhou et al., 2008; Lee, 2009; Bodycott, 2015), the Libyan students' social fragmentation and political alienation encouraged them to seek alternatives and to develop relationships within multicultural groups. Owing to schism within the national group, the Libyan master's students intentionally formed alternative communities of practice. Within the community of learning, there is a network of communities of practice which share solidarity, meaning and significance. Arguably, intentional development is a feature for some communities of practice because a community of practice is about ownership and agency which might involve the intentional development of communities within the communities. Intention is an aspect of a community of practice if it is viewed in a more nuanced way because for participants in a community to have some ownership, there must be intention.

However, regardless of the discipline, only a few Libyan students suggested that they had a particularly positive relationship with their British colleagues (mid old-timers). For instance, Sara highlighted the significance of having mutual engagement and interaction with host students in terms of her acquisition of specific skills such as critical thinking. She had sought elucidation from host students, believing them, rightly or wrongly, to be more familiar with the approach, requirements and expectations of the master's learning outcomes and assessment criteria since the degree was in their home country. Other participants emphasised the significance of having an opportunity for interaction with host students in class discussion (for example, Khoula) and informal meetings outside the community (for example, Ali) in terms of becoming part of the group. This is because these Libyan students (i.e. Khoula and Ali) as newcomers brought a new knowledge to the CoP and this assisted their host

colleagues to widen their knowledge. This cultural exchange has the potential to contribute to internationalisation. Andrade (2006) and Lillyman and Bennett (2014) highlight that the presence of international students in a course can enhance the experience of host students, and it can contribute to the construction of new knowledge (Ryan, 2011, p. 642). However, to date no research on the nature of the interaction between host and international colleagues in shared practice appears to be done. This study, though small, indicates that the interaction between each of the four participants who engaged with their host colleagues reduced tension, encouraged integration and engagement, extended knowledge and stimulated the ideas of each. However, it is important to say that the interaction between international students and host colleagues (mid old-timers) is complex, fluid and multifaceted cultural dynamic. Sometimes it works; and sometimes it does not.

Chalmers and Volet (1997, p. 92) indicated the misconceptions of both Australian and Asian students who believed neither wished to mix with the other. While Asian students themselves suggest that they find it a challenge to make friends with host students in New Zealand (Campbell and Li, 2008). This study also highlights that there could be assumptions about the host or international relationship because some participants, such as Nora, believed, on the basis of limited evidence, that her British colleagues fabricated excuses to avoid contact. Nora expected them to be responsive and to explain points which were unclear to her. However, not all host students have the confidence and competence to do this and may themselves need to adjust to the various academic practices and standards associated with a master's degree. British students are learners themselves, and, as master's students, they are just as likely to be unsure and nervous and therefore may not choose to take on that role with any other students. Individuals have a complex relationship with their fellow students; they may only want to share ideas with those whom they consider friends or they may prefer to work independently; they might see learning as competitive rather than collaborative.

Despite appropriate IELTS, some more mature participants indicated that a lack of confidence or competence in their English language ability adversely affected their integration, mutual engagement and the establishment of relationships with their host colleagues within the master's community. In the literature, it is evident that language is one of the greatest challenges for international students in a new academic environment and socio-cultural context (Janjua et al., 2011; Singh, 2013; Subhash, 2013). Although Aldoukalee's (2013) research about Libyan doctorate students in the UK does identify language as a challenge, this study goes on to reveal some of the reasons for this. More mature participants such as Omar and Amina highlighted social and political as well as educational circumstances. They described how: 1) they only started learning English when they were at university level in Libya owing to the fact that the previous regime blocked the teaching of English between 1986 and 1992; 2) although teaching English had restarted at the beginning of nineties, resources were poor; and 3) traditional methods of teaching English such as grammar-translation persisted rather than more communicative approaches and learning through a process of social interaction in shared activity. According to Zacharias (2010), poor language competence or a lack of communicative confidence inevitably limits intercultural interaction. However, this research suggests that the impact of this depends on how one addresses those challenges, for example, Omar chose to isolate himself from his British colleagues and Amina perceived her relationship with them to be very formal and limited to greetings.

Lave and Wenger (1991) highlight the significance of learning to speak the language of a particular community of practice for newcomers in order to be legitimate peripheral participants as the aim is "to learn to talk as a key to legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 109). However, this study highlights that a lack of confidence and/or English language competence can affect newcomers' socialisation and integration with mid old-timers which might in turn limit the opportunities for engagement, integration and building the relationships that are essential for learning. What is significant, however, is that this study showed that these more mature participants interacted and socialised with their international colleagues. They assumed that British

colleagues would be more critical of their language and more aware if they committed a mistake in grammar, pronunciation or sentence structure, and, as a result, they felt less embarrassed and more willing to speak English in front of their international colleagues because all being second language learners, they had a lot, including concerns about competence, in common. Thus, this study suggests that it was not only English language ability that inhibited students' integration and engagement with their British colleagues, but also their perceptions and assumptions about those individuals as opposed to other international students studying abroad like themselves which were significant.

There is a sense in which communities of practice do not fully look at the nature of the relationships in terms of power. Initiative can play an essential role in creating opportunities for learning through pedagogical and methodological creativity and facilitation. However, for some students, especially those from traditional societies, hierarchy is about instruction rather than intervention. The findings in this study indicate that these Libyan students perceived their own country's education system to be both hierarchical and authoritarian with titles being used to reinforce difference and as an acknowledgement status and prestige. However, when they joined their master's courses, they appreciated the less formal relationship with tutors because it was significant in the establishment of rapport and in creating a more dynamic and interactive atmosphere beneficial for learning and the co-construction of knowledge. Tutorial feedback and the learning dialogue with tutors in one-to-one tutorials were significant for the participants' learning because both offered an opportunity to familiarise themselves with academic practices within their master's community but in ways that were personalised and which did not make them feel exposed or ignorant. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) point out that CoPs include encounters between newcomers and old-timers, and this is considered as an important aspect of learning. This study reinforces that those encounters can in practice emerge rather than be constructed, offering alternative ways of interacting both inside and outside the classroom and through tutorial comment. Wenger states: a "community builds relationships that enable collective learning and practice anchors the learning in what people do" (Wenger, 2004, p. 3). In

Wenger's terms, master's courses could be seen as communities of practice because informal social interaction and learning are taking place despite the fact that there might also be supervision and interference from dominant old-timers (i.e. the tutors).

Libyan students however did not only learn through situated learning with their colleagues and tutors, but they also learnt and acquired knowledge and skills individually through employing broader strategies and techniques to develop their knowledge and to contribute to the group. The capacity to take this initiative suggested that these students had acquired a degree of confidence and control with respect to their learning; an important development since, according to Wenger (1998), learning as social participation depends on the ability of the learner to contribute to the enhancement of experience and be aware of the maturation of competence. This suggests that a student can only fully participate within the community of practice when she or he has a sufficient corpus of knowledge. Libyan students therefore like many other international students also learnt through teaching sessions within the wider university community. As discussed in chapter 3, the concept of a community of practice moved beyond the standard paradigm of learning as individual ability and cognition. The term "standard paradigm" (Beckett and Hager, 2002, p. 97) refers to a traditional transmissive pedagogy of product and acquisition, validating learning in a formal educational setting such as university where learning is seen as an individual matter dependent upon the presence of a qualified teacher. For Lave and Wenger, formal teaching is not as central as learning as a process of social participation (Colley et al., 2003). However, this study reinforces that learning as a process of social participation and teaching (i.e. a product to be acquired) can exist together.

4) How do Libyan students' experiences in the UK affect perceptions of their identity?

An essential aspect of CoPs theory is identity construction. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), identity is social because it is constructed through interaction

with others within a CoP. In CoPs, learners learn how to engage with others; develop certain expectations about interaction; cultivate ways of working together; and the recognition how to treat each other. We become “who we are” by being able to engage in relations with others because “our competence gains its value through its very partiality” (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). This study reveals that the majority of the participants constructed their identity (i.e. becoming) as master’s students through learning as social participation in shared activity with international colleagues and tutors within a master’s community. In doing so, some, such as Nahla, acquired knowledge and skills and became a ‘different person’, while others, such as Fatima, became ‘sociable, confident and independent learners’. Lave and Wenger state: “Learning implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 53). One of the factors that appeared to contribute to Libyan students’ development and to the construction of their identity was their presence in a multicultural classroom and the perceived benefits of the resultant experience of diversity. Circumstances may have prompted their willingness to engage with this since, as stated in relation to the third research question, the fragmentation and limited engagement with other Libyans encouraged interaction and social relationships with those from different cultural backgrounds in order to learn and extend themselves as master’s students.

It was evident that diversity was significant because some participants acquired aspects of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as a result of their membership in the master’s community and having mutual engagement with different nationalities in shared practice. ICC is significant for all students, particularly Libyan students in the context of this study because it assisted them to eradicate prejudice and stereotypes towards others from different cultural backgrounds. Currently and tragically, Libya is a society in chaos and a country in turmoil, so international students rarely choose Libya as a study destination. As a result, in their own country, Libyan students did not have much opportunity to meet and work with those from different cultural backgrounds. So, previously, when they met students from other neighbouring countries, the Libyans were

inclined to resort to stereotypes and assumptions. However, in a shared activity, working with others from different cultural backgrounds can allow greater understanding of others and “reflection” on “self through others” (Ryan, 2011, p. 636).

In the literature, Siljanen and Lämsä (2009) and Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) highlight that intercultural interaction with others from other cultures may facilitate the emergence of intercultural identity. Wenger (1998, p. 75) has argued that diversity is a “matter of homogeneity” that makes engagement in practice possible and productive. He added that diversity in a community of practice may include:

Young and old; conservative and liberal; some outgoing, some introverted. They are different from one another and have different personal aspirations and problems...they work together, they see each other every day, they talk with each other all the time, exchange information and opinions, and very directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine.

(Wenger, 1998, p. 75)

However, this research highlights the significance of diversity in terms of newcomers, mid-newcomers and dominant old-timers who come from different cultural backgrounds and the influence of their mutual engagement in shared activity on the emergence of intercultural identity.

Libyan students, however, did not only construct their identity as master's students through a process of social participation in shared activity within the master's community, but they also evolved or developed their identity outside the master's community as a result of living in a new socio-cultural context and encountering and dealing with the unfamiliar. Being able to live alone and coping with challenges were essential for building some participants' identity, particularly unmarried females who had had little freedom in Libya and had been socially dependent on their male relations owing to 1) custom and practice and 2) a circumstantial perception of risk. According to Hebrok (2011), identity is social because it is constructed through interaction with others within specific

communities; however, this study indicates that participants constructed their identity as master's students via both social participation with their international colleagues (mid-newcomers) and tutors (dominant old-timers) within the master's community as stated earlier and outside the master's community owing to their existence and participation within a new socio-cultural context. Therefore, identity construction can be within the community of practice or outside the community of practice or more likely both. Although unmarried females may have lived by themselves, their lives were a "lived experience of participation" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151) through lectures, friends and casual acquaintances all of which in its way contributed to a sense of independence.

As stated in chapter 3, identity in practice is "an experience of the familiar and the unfamiliar" (Wenger, 1998, p. 193). This is significant because Libyan students shaped their identity through practices in which they engaged and others in which they did not. Fenton-o'Ceevy, Brigham, Jones and Smith (2015) suggest "a core challenge of identity work is the need to maintain a continuous sense of self in the face of threats to identity across landscapes and over time" (Fenton-o'Ceevy et al., 2015, p. 45). Many of the Libyan students were open to development and to adaptation even within the short time of their stay within the UK, but they were able to maintain a 'sense of self' with respect to their core Islamic identity, manifesting flexibility with regard to social and cultural relationships, contextually bound by the landscape, while also being open up to new ways of thinking.

Libyan students' traditional cultural values and their heritage were part of their identity, but some of them modified this temporarily while in the UK. Membership of a master's community often necessitates engagement in a shared practice according to the values and traditions of a CoP since according to Colley et al. (2007); a CoP may exclude newcomers who are unable to 'fit in'. The presence of Libyan students in the master's community played a significant role in modification of some of their traditional Libyan values such as interaction with the opposite sex for males and attending tutorials with a male tutor for females. Wenger highlights the significance of "reconciliation" to maintain a degree of

“coexistence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 160); however, reconciliation can be challenge for learners who come from one culture to another.

Religious values, however, were core aspects of almost all the participants’ identity regardless of their gender and age. This research reveals that these religious values had not changed despite the impact of living in a new socio-cultural context and being members of the master’s community. What is significant is that they did not inhibit the participants’ integration and socialisation with their colleagues because the participants showed mutual engagement and continuous interaction. James (2007) argues that newcomers bring values to a new context, but he did not give any analysis or interpretation of these values and the extent of their impact on newcomers’ participation in CoPs. CoPs theory does not address religion’s impact on participation in CoPs. This may be because CoPs is essentially a western, however, in a global and multicultural society, communities need to acknowledge difference and embrace the diversity which is significant for identity.

There can be different forms of trajectory in CoPs and according to Wenger (1998, p. 154), they are: 1) Inbound trajectories in which newcomers join the community to become full participants in its practice; 2) peripheral trajectories in which by choice or necessity newcomers interact with the community without making a commitment to becoming full members, and 3) outbound trajectories such as the ones offered by schools, points to forms of participation outside the current communities. The Libyan students might have started with an identity that was based on traditional cultural values; however, because of their experience in UK higher education and on the masters’ course and their meta-learning, they entered a different trajectory which may affect where they position themselves in the future.

Fenton-o’Ceevy et al. (2015) mention that for the “sojourner participation is still provisional and temporary, but there is a deeper commitment to the meaning of academic practices and to their implications” (2015, p. 46). This can be linked to what they call “negotiating challenges to identity” and the fact that there might be

in fact different levels of engagement and alignment within the community of practice, so that individuals can identify practices which do not fit with their previous experience, but embrace those which fit while recognising that the immediate future trajectory may not necessarily give them the same space. Fenton-o'Ceevy et al. also talk about "claiming a legitimate peripheral role that would allow (him/her) to learn" (2015, p. 56). This might be what happened as far as the Libyan students were concerned (i.e. a process of change and the process of maturation which was individual and peripheral rather than absorption within a community of practice). Their position on the periphery may have been the position which best suited their own identity, allowing them to maintain some elements of core values and also to distinguish themselves in terms of their otherness.

7.3 Limitations of the study

This study is significant because it focuses on the perceptions, perspectives and experiences of a group of Libyan students who are studying master's courses in the UK HE system. It is a story of students who came to the UK at a particular point in time after civil war and from ongoing conflict in Libya. Although this is a study that focuses specifically on the learning experiences of people coming from this situation, the study is not without limitations. For example, the specificity of the case means that generalisation is not possible although there might be features which are recognisable in similar circumstances (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Crowe et al., 2011). As discussed in section 4.13.2, I provided thick description of the sample and the context from which they came and in which they are currently; the methods that were utilised to generate data; and the time period over which the data was generated allowed a more comprehensive account in order to allow other people to judge whether the case might be similar to or applied in another case.

Another limitation is that the findings of this study are not representative of the experiences of all Libyan master's students in the UK or other contexts because, as discussed in section 4.3.1 they document only those students who chose to take part, but nevertheless tell a relevant story about international students in general and Libyan students in particular. Moreover, the data generated in this

study were based on participants' perspectives and perceptions about their experiences and identity which are individual and authentic. It does not, however, claim to be representative. Although the sample for this study was a relatively small group of Libyan master's students, they were interviewed three times; once in the first semester, once in the second semester and finally during the dissertation stage in order to monitor change and development during the educational experience. Observation was also employed to monitor the impact of context; to inform the interviews; and to gain a fuller picture. The gender was unbalanced, however, in the interview sample as the number of females was higher than males. As a result, it placed greater emphasis on gender as an aspect, but it did cover Libyan students in different disciplines and schools.

The interviews and observations that were used to generate data are not without issues; however, the researcher employed various strategies and techniques in order to reduce any adverse effects on data generation (see 4.8.2 and 4.8.3). Furthermore, a qualitative study requires using methods that promote close contact between the researcher and the participants. However, I was aware of my potential subjectivity and I continually interrogated and critically evaluated my role (see sections 4.10.2 and 4.10.3). This is an interpretive qualitative study which suggests a subjective reality and in which there are multiple realities and the text cannot be designated simply as true or false. In other words, my interpretation is one of many possible interpretations, but it is one informed by my insider and an outsider perspective (see section 4.10.1).

7.4 Further considerations

Based on the findings of this research, the current study has highlighted many possible future directions. The current study was conducted at a university in the north of the UK. Further research about the experiences of the Libyan master's students with regard to their intercultural adaptation and identity in other areas of UK might be undertaken to confirm its results and to extend knowledge of the topic under investigation.

This study demonstrated that the civil war and on going conflict from which Libyan students came had an impact on their experiences in the UK. The

research goes on to suggest that there is a need to understand the context from which international students come since it may significantly affect students' expectations, experiences and outcomes in a new academic environment. Such an understanding would offer helpful insight for academics in order to enhance the international student experience and enhance acculturation and adaptation.

Since this study has addressed the effect of Libyan students' previous educational, cultural, social, and political experiences on their participation in a new academic environment, this research also suggests that it is crucial for tutors to gain a meta-awareness of cultural differences because it has the potential to assist tutors and students to build relationships that can minimise challenges and promote a shared perspective. By gaining such meta-awareness, flexibility can be shown in meeting students' needs and facilitating interaction and shared learning.

Universities are eager to recruit international students and many tutors are often welcoming and feel "privileged" to be an "international learning environment" (Macias and Dolan, 2008, p. 8) because it is an opportunity for cultural exchange and internationalisation. Tutors as dominant old-timers can play a significant role in assisting international students to gain legitimacy and ensure their meaningful participation in their courses. Therefore, they should make pedagogical adjustments and creative means to support the learning needs of international students such as encouraging their participation in class; providing support through constructive feedback and tutorials, and non-authoritarian relationship. They should also be aware of relevant cultural and religious values, and that there is a need for intercultural sensitivity and cultural synergy. The significance of cultural sensitivity is that it can assist tutors and students to understand, appreciate and accept cultural differences, whereas cultural synergy endorses mutual efforts from both tutors and international students to understand each other's cultural traditions and values in order productively to interpret behaviour and their learning dynamic.

Evidence suggests that regardless of having a good IELTS score, pre-sessional preparation courses are of great value, especially for those international students coming from a culturally alien context in order to enhance students' learning experiences and to prepare them for a new academic environment and socio-cultural context. IELTS does not incorporate academic literacy such as critical thinking which is a significant feature of western HE in some disciplines. Situated learning and learning as social participation in shared practice with host and international students inside or outside classroom should be encouraged by tutors through asking students from different cultural backgrounds and alternative stages to work together in order to enhance each other's experiences and to learn from each other. It was evident that international students could learn the core aspects of the UK HE system through working with host and other international students in a shared activity. Situated learning and learning as social participation are significant for all students in terms of acquiring knowledge and skills; enhancing understanding, acceptance and willingness to accommodate others, and it is also important for life long learning.

Students' responses indicated that they favoured learning through social interaction with their colleagues and tutors in shared activity, and they appreciated tutor to student relationship and tutorial feedback in the UK, but they were critical of the Libyan education system for its lack of learning as social participation. These participants believed that tutors in Libya need to use shared activities such as group work; offer tutorials and feedback to support their students. Also, they should maintain less authoritarian relationship with their students since this study highlights its significance in creating dynamic and enjoyable atmosphere for students' learning and establishing a relationship that is essential for learning.

Since the participants reported that non-existent internet; outdated curriculum; traditional equipment in laboratories; and traditional methods of teaching and learning in Libya adversely affected their educational experience in the new academic environment, this study has emphasised the need for investment in resources, in facilities, technology, and access. It also indicates the need for

teacher training in relation to autonomous learning; social interaction and shared activity; and academic literacy and critical thinking if Libya wants to develop a generation who is open-minded and able effectively to build their country. The current political situation may preclude this initiative but it remains vital to the Libyan future.

7.5 Contribution to communities of practice theory

This research contributes in a number of different ways. Most importantly, it looks at academic learning environments and examines the factors that might both help and hinder them in terms of becoming a community of practice. They clearly have aspects of communities of practice in terms of situated learning, shared goals, and commitment to learning. However, as a learning community, it is not a simple trajectory from newcomers to old-timers. Learning communities are more complex and nuanced than that would suggest. Within a learning community, there are individuals at different stages according to their learning, and there are also different interactions and meaning-making according to backgrounds and social and political positioning that any individual might bring to a learning community. So, while it is true to say that a learning environment has the potential to be a community of practice, initially it might contain a number of separate and distinct learning communities, as individuals group together and support their learning and interact purposively. What is then significant is for the tutor who might be construed as the dominant old-timer to manage the process pedagogically in a way that is both critically and culturally resonant, and, in doing so, create a community of practice which will allow diffuse trajectories. Some may go from newcomer to old-timer, but others may stay on the periphery, and, in this sense, it is a legitimate peripheral position in so far as that is where they want to be. International students in particular are going back to their own countries, and they will take their learning and use it in whatever ways are socially and culturally appropriate.

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Appendix 1: Division between Dignity and Dawn Libya

Operation Dignity includes supporters from eastern tribes.

Operation Dawn Libya includes the Muslim Brotherhood Party.

Appendix 2: Questions for questionnaire

I am a PhD student. I am currently investigating “The Learning Experiences and Learning Expectations of Libyan Master’s students at a UK university: Intercultural Adaptation and Identity”. The aims are:

- to evaluate the experience and expectations of Libyan students studying in the UK in the wake of conflict,
- to explore the perception of their previous educational and socio-cultural experience in the HE acculturation process and their learning,
- to investigate the experiences and adaptation of Libyan Master’s students to a Western learning environment, and
- to consider their perceptions of identity and of change.

I should be grateful, if you would spare 15- 20 minutes to fill in this Questionnaire. You do not need to include your name. Also, you have the right to withdraw from this survey at any time, if you feel uncomfortable. The data obtained will be used only for research purposes. All data will be anonymised and kept securely and strictly confidential.

I greatly appreciate your participation in this research. Finally, I would like to thank you for your support, help, and co-operation. I genuinely appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Kamila Algwil,

PhD Research Student, University of Huddersfield

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- 1-Please underline the appropriate answer about your gender (male/female).
- 2-Would you mind telling us your status (single/married/ Divorced/Widowed)?
- 3-Would you mind telling us how old you are?
- 4-To help us classify your answers, would you mind telling us:
 - a- The name of your school.....
 - b- Your subject area.....
- 5-When did you start your course (e.g 1 / 2012 – month and year)?
.....
- 6-Do you study your bachelor degree in the UK?
.....
.....
- 7-Could you say how long have you been in the UK?
.....
- 8-Do you study out of Libya before coming to the UK? If so where?
.....
.....
- 9-Do you attend any courses before your enrolment to the master's course?
.....
.....
- 10-If you attended courses before your enrolment to the master's course, are they helpful in your master's course?
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your time in completing this Questionnaire.
Your input is valued highly.

Appendix 3: Questions for interview 1

1- Can you tell me about your attitudes towards British culture and people? The initial thoughts and how they develop in the few weeks you have been here.

a. Why do you study maser's course in the UK?

2-Do you encounter any challenges in the master's course?

a. If so, can you tell me about your challenges that you encountered in your master's course?

b. And in your opinion what are the reasons of these challenges?

c. Please tell me whether or not you overcome these challenges?

d. Can you tell me how do you overcome these challenges?

3. Do you have knowledge about the core aspects of the UK HE system before you come to the UK?

a. Can you tell me about your experience?

Appendix 4: Questions for interview 2

1. Can you tell me what is the most academic challenging skill speaking, listening, reading, or writing?

a. Why do you think this skill is challenge?

2. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your tutor?

a. If so, do you think the interaction with your tutor is helpful?

b. Can you tell me about your experience in interaction with your tutor in your master's course?

3. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your British colleagues in the master's community?

a. If so, can you tell me about your experience?

4. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with international students?

a. If so, can you tell me about your experience?

Appendix 5: Questions for interview 3

1. Do you feel that you have changed after spending two semesters in the master's study?

a. If so, can you tell me in what way you have changed?

2. Do you feel that you have developed your knowledge and skills after the master's experience?

a. If so, can you tell me in what way you have developed?

3. Do you interact with your Libyan colleagues?

a. If so, can you tell me how the interaction between you and your Libyan colleagues supports you, particularly you have a lot in common such as the same language, culture and the same background?

4-Can you tell me about your thoughts and plans in relation to going home?

5-Can you tell me about your attitudes towards the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya?

If you have any question or you want to say something, please do not hesitate.

Appendix 6: Sample of observation: field notes

Example: 2.2= the first two means the page and the other two means the number of observation

Time: 12:00

Number of observation: 2

Class: TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

Khaled was waiting outside the class before the start of a lecture. I don't want problems. My relationship with my Libyan colleagues is formal; greeting and that is all.

Time: 9:00

Number of observation: 2

Class: Applied Science

Observation of Nora in class indicates that when given a task and asked to work in group, unless compelled to do otherwise, Nora would join a group of female students. They sat as separate groups: a group of women and a group of men, discussion was taking place across the class. The women showed a strong character and they challenged men quite strongly.

Time: 9:00

Number of observation: 1

Class: Business

The observation of Khoula reveals that she misunderstood where she supposed to sit. She wanted to join the British group. The British students did not say 'you are foreign or you can not sit with us', but they directed her to another group.

Time: 9:00

Number of observation: 3

Class: Business

The tutor asked Khoula to join a group of British students in a discussion about the 'Economic Crisis in the World and its Effect on the Banks'. Khoula raised the point that 'Islamic banks aren't affected by this crisis because they don't take interest'. She had started participating and contributing her thoughts and ideas to the group. The British students were open and interested, and a group dynamic evolved. One of her colleagues said: 'I am happy we are

working together on the project. This is an interesting topic.' At the end of the session, the group exchanged e-mails in order to share articles and references and to keep in touch. They also arranged future meetings.

Time: 8:35

Number of observation: 3

Class: Computing and Engineering

Before the start of the lecture, Majed went to his British colleague to show him a couple of pages from his assignment. The British colleague gave him some comments and he also asked Majed to feel free to contact him. The British colleague also showed some PowerPoint slides for a presentation to Majed and asked for comments. Majed responded, suggesting the font was too small; there was too much information on some slides, and Majed also recommended his colleague to put a reference list at the end.

Appendix 7: Example one of analysis of the interview

Interviews with Fatima (pseudonym)

First interview

A. Why do you choose to study in the UK?

B. At the beginning, I want to travel to Egypt because it is near Libya and my family can visit me. Then, I changed my mind; [I decided to go to the UK because my subject area is English. The UK is my dream since childhood].

Comment [S1]: Reason for choosing the UK as a destination for study.

A. How do you find the UK and British people?

B. I drew a beautiful picture in my mind about the UK from films; I did not expect the UK to be different from the picture in my mind in terms of people's behaviour. [I was victimised. While I was waiting for my order in a café; two young girls aged between 16 and 18 squeezed juice on my Hejab [head scarf] and ran away. I felt insulted. Also, it happened once a lady at the immigration desk was passive and treated me badly and she said 'You have to renew your visa from Libya, not from here'. It was Ramadan and I have just arrived from Libya. I started crying, but she did not care. However, [to be honest, many British people are respectful and kind. Tutors both in the pre-sessional course and in the master's are respectful and treat me with the greatest respect. British students keep the door open for me, and if we meet at the door, they say 'after you']].

Comment [S2]: Intimidation and abuse, incident

Comment [S3]: Positive attitudes towards British people

A. Do you encounter any challenges in your study?

B. I encountered many challenges that relate to study and others have no relation with the study. I expected to focus only on my study, but I found myself focusing on many other things. My first concern was how to get unconditional offer for me and my brother who came with me. [My brother accompanied me to the UK, because it wasn't allowed to travel alone according to our customs. But, he didn't stay.

Comment [S4]: Libyan traditional culture, gender

[At the beginning, I encountered many challenges (tears). I found myself I have to be responsible on everything. I do not know how to walk in the street. [My father took care of me more than necessary. He said 'This is part of our habits and customs. If I allowed you to do whatever you want, our reputation would be undermined. When I came to the UK, I encountered fear in dealing with people, fear from new things. I had been in a box. I didn't know anything, and everything had been done by my father. I found myself needing to be responsible for everything; I didn't know even how to walk in the street. My father prevented me from walking on the street even if the place wasn't too far. He took me in his car. He guided me. Even all the documentation that related to my study, registration for a new semester, results,

Comment [S5]: Independence challenge, culture shock

Comment [S6]: Over protective father, Libyan traditional cultural values, collective responsibility

photocopy papers and if I needed any document from my tutor, my father would go to speak to him, not me. My father said 'There is no security, no safety and kidnapping women is widespread in the country and on university campus.' Before, he didn't come with me in university campus.

Comment [S7]: The effects of lack of security, civil war and ongoing conflict, genuine concerns

At the beginning, I have gender challenge. I studied with males at the university in Libya, but I never deal with them and in class they have their own queue and females have their own queue. I just say 'Slam Alikom'. When I came to the UK at the beginning, I didn't understand a recording if the speakers were males. When speakers were females, I completed all of the tasks and got full marks. My ears are unfamiliar with male voices because I have never interacted with males in Libya [silence] because of our habits and customs. My tutor noticed that she asked me and I replied 'My ears are unfamiliar with listening to males because I am not familiar in interacting with male'. I have no problem listening to my tutor who is male in class, but I can't interact and understand, if the speaker is a male.

Comment [S8]: Previous educational experience, cultural effect, limited integration with the opposite sex

Comment [S9]: Gender challenge, Libyan traditional cultural values

A. What is your opinion about the chaos in Libya?

B. I am optimistic 50% and that is all [silence].

Comment [S10]: Reservation

A. Do you attend pre-session course before the master's course?

B. I attended 8 weeks pre-session course and this was useful. The pre-session course was useful. I learnt how to write academically, analyse article, how to give my opinion and build an argument, referencing, idioms, plagiarism, and writing essay.

Comment [S11]: A period of adjustment

A. Do you overcome the challenges? Can you tell me how?

B. My British tutor was very helpful. She said 'I was a student in France, I am understandable of the challenges that international students encounter'. This pushes me to ask questions

Comment [S12]: Equality tutor-student relationship

At the beginning, I preferred to sit with females and not others, but I changed. My tutor helped me a lot. She divided us into groups and she said 'You need to join a group mixed with males'. She also gave me CDs in which most of the speakers are males to listen to them. Alhamdulillah [Praise be to God] I overcame this difficulty. I started listening to CDs and step by step I developed and broke the barrier. I became speaking to males and say to myself 'why I do not speak to males they are not going to eat me, so why not try' I broke the barrier and Alhamdulillah many things changed on me. These things are due to culture, not Islamic values because Islam does not prohibit interaction with males. We are controlled by Libyan culture and customs more than our religion. I broke the barrier, but with conditions with conditions the confidence that my family gave and respect to myself and others. If I were in Libya, I would not interact with my male colleagues. I was closed

Comment [S13]: Dominant old-timer's technique

Comment [S14]: Interaction with the opposite sex, gender, Libyan traditional cultural value

Comment [S15]: The effect of overseas experience, the impact of the socio cultural context, the impact of being a member in master's community, adjustment with regard to interaction with the opposite sex

and self-contained. I put myself in a box for many years. I had an idea in my mind that the other gender (male) is selfish and dangerous. I fear of them. This is not because I had bad experience with them. Since childhood, I did not play with males. Now, I am not the previous Fatima. I am responsible for my own. I always raise issues and have opinions and thoughts. I always pray to Allah to protect me, no father watching me here, but me and Allah. We are Libyans and you know how Libyan mentality thinks if I do not return with certificate, so it is important for me as I am single to come back with my certificate and to good reputation.

Comment [S16]: Previous social and cultural effect

A. Can you tell me about your experience in shared activities with your colleagues in the master's course?

B. I do like to listen to different views of others in group work. Sometimes you have your own opinion and you do not see the other angles. I listen to others; I ask myself 'Why I don't think in this way'. I feel I am closed eyes. I look only in straight forward line. Sometimes you feel this student does not have ideas, but when you listen to him or her, you find the opposite. I prefer to listen to Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish students. I like to know how other international students think. So, I can learn something or I can teach something.

Comment [S17]: Group work activity, learning as social participation

Comment [S18]: Seek out diversity

In Libya, we don't have group work or discussion with the tutor. We have a teacher who stands in the middle of the class and says everything and leave the class. If a student interrupted him or her, she or he says 'You can ask at the end of the lesson'.

Comment [S19]: Libyan educational system, lack of learning as social participation in Libya

Comment [S20]: Teacher-centred class in Libya

In the UK, I admired with the methods of teaching and learning, especially the activities, such as group work and discussion and the U setting. The U setting facilitated the contact between me and other students who sat on the other side. In Libya, we sat one behind the other and even the contact between you and your colleague was difficult. I couldn't hear the tutor's voice. Many universities were destroyed during the initial conflict; therefore, classes are full with students.

Comment [S21]: The effect of civil war and ongoing conflict, previous educational experience.

Second interview

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your colleagues?

B. I respect others as I like others to respect me 'eye to eye and age to age' in our religion and in our Libyan culture 'treat other as you like others to treat you'.

A. What is the most academic challenging skill?

B. The most academic challenging skill is academic writing because you need to read references. You need to bring an author who supports this point and another author who is against this point and then you need to give your opinion. This is critical

Comment [S22]: Academic writing challenge

thinking skill which is ignored in the Libyan education system. In Libya, we rely too heavily on memorisation either from the books or tutors' hand outs and then we are evaluated by exam. I don't like memorisation. In Libya I understand first, then I memorise. In the new Libya, my sister who is studying English language told me that her tutors are from India who studied in Western universities, they teach them how to read and write critically and they ask them to write 150 words report as first step. When I heard that, I became happy, motivated and enthusiastic to study hard. This means that it is permissible now to apply our master experience in the UK and I will find Libya waiting for me to share in rebuilding. My sister told me that their tutors asked them to read about a certain topic on the website and to access an article. They started using net access in teaching and learning. Most of tutors who teach in Libyan universities have an overseas experience; they are Iraqi, Indian or Libyan. My sister told me that tutors change their style of teaching this year.

Comment [S23]: Previous educational experience, rote learning

A. How you overcome the challenges?

B. When I find a book which mentioned a specific point that I am looking for, I look for the reference list of that book to find out the references that used. This helped me a lot to find out other authors who emphasise this point. Then, I look for the reference list of another book and so on until I collect many references that support a specific point. Alhamdulillah [praise be to God], I was happy after discovering this strategy because it helped me a lot by building a strong argument and saving time. I finished my assignments a week before the deadline. My tutor said it is a competitive piece of writing. The Facilities of the university helped a lot. 24 hours library, electronic websites such as summon, up to date books, request service if the book not available, they bring to you in a week". The continuous interaction between me and other students was significant because we exchange thoughts and ideas, references and articles. I seek advice from students who have been there for a term. My friend is a student in another university, they have special website for researching, and she helped me a lot by getting an access to many articles. Also, when my tutor gives us the reference list for a module, I go to the library to borrow the books. If I wait until the time of writing, then I am not going to find any.

Comment [S24]: Autonomous learning

Comment [S25]: Mutual engagement

Comment [S26]: Mid-newcomers' support

Comment [S27]: Dominant old-timer's support

A. Do you expect that you are going to encounter challenges? Can you tell me about your expectations?

B. I did not expect the challenges that I encountered at the beginning. When I came to the UK, I am still closed, I can't understand. I encounter difficulty in getting an appropriate accommodation. Then, I started looking for unconditional offer. At the

Comment [S28]: Culture shock

beginning, my brother comes with me to the UK, because it is not allowed to travel alone according to Libyan customs. "Where your brother stays, stay with him" my father said. Then, when my brother didn't get an offer in the same university where I am studying, he came back to Libya. I explained to my father all the challenges that we encounter, so he allowed me to stay alone in the UK.

Comment [S29]: Libyan traditional cultural values

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your colleagues in shared activities? Can you tell me about your experience?

B. I am not shy in class, I discuss freely and fluently in class. In Libya, I was listening to my tutor in the lecture. However, it happened once she missed a word, I completed to her. She became angry, she said 'Stop, do not complete to me' (silence and cry). On the contrary, my tutor in MA TESOL encourages me to speak and to give my opinion by eye contact, nodding and saying carry on (smile). I feel more comfortable here). I do like to have an opportunity to speak in class. I do not like tutors who interrupt me because my ideas will be lost.

Comment [S30]: Teacher centred approach in Libya, lack of interact and learning as social participation

Comment [S31]: Learning as social participation in the UK, student-centred approach

A. Can you tell me about your experience in group work activity?

B. I encountered a challenge in group work once when male student appointed himself a leader of the group. When we discussed with each other and each student in the group gave his or her opinion, then we wanted to discuss in the class. The leader of the group gave only his opinion and ignored others. Then, I said to my tutor that I want to speak. I explained the viewpoints of other students and my point of view. Then, the male student interrupted me and said 'I strongly this agree with all of you'. Our tutor noticed that she recommended him to respect others' opinion and to do it in a polite and respectful way.

A. Do you an opportunity for interaction with your tutor?

B. One-one tutorial is good to discuss my feedback, rather than discussing my feedback in public, and this also available in Islam, 'if you want to recommend one, recommend him or her in private'. I discussed with my English tutor in tutorials. I tried to make points more explicit to my tutor, and I asked questions that I couldn't ask in class. My tutor listened to me and gave me new thoughts and ideas. He recommended references to read and websites. This assisted me to be independent. In Libya, once I forgot to say 'Dr.' to my Libyan tutor, so he became angry and asked me to write 'I am sorry 10 times'. I felt small, it was an insult, and I couldn't stop crying that day [tears]. My tutor in Libya described my writing as rubbish and destroyed my written paper in class in front of the other students [tears in her eyes]. They laughed. On the contrary, tutors in the UK are friendly. We called each other by first names. Learning in the UK is interesting. It doesn't seem like compulsory work.

Comment [S32]: Dominant- old timer's role in identity construction, tutorial feedback, formative assessment

Comment [S33]: Tutor-student relationship in Libya

Comment [S34]: Students' subservience in Libya

we share lunch together in the breaks and interact with each other. In class discussion, the tutor sits next to the group, listens to them and shares thoughts and ideas with them. We built a relationship. This encouraged me to learn in a comfortable environment. My British tutor was very helpful. She said 'I was a student in France, I am understandable of the challenges that international students encounter'. This pushes me to ask questions.

Comment [S35]: non-authoritarian relationship between tutor and student

Comment [S36]: Equality relationship

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with British colleague?

B. I don't have an opportunity to communicate with British students in class. Out of class, I interact with them only for the purpose of information. They do not prefer to speak to me. Once I am sitting in computer room in library, I was writing mail, I do not know how to write '@' because the computer was "apple mac" and I am not familiar with it. English student was sitting beside me, I said please can you show me where the key "@" is, she looked at me angrily and said sorry I cannot speak with you sorry. I hate myself.

Comment [S37]: Lack of interaction with British colleagues, difficulty in accessing British community

A. Do you have knowledge about the core aspects of the UK HE system before you come to the UK?

B. There is difference between cities and rural areas in Libya. I studied in two places in urban and rural cities. Teaching in cities was better than rural areas in terms of availability of the resources. The teacher asked us to prepare dialogue and practise it in class and recommended some sources because there was library in the university. He also brought CDs to listen and gave activities. However, in rural areas there was no library, not listening lesson, and no speaking opportunity. I came to the UK with a very little knowledge and basics.

Comment [S38]: Unfamiliarity with the UK HE system

There is difference in teaching and learning between the UK and Libya that I do not expect. I came with closed eyes, I came with closed eyes, and even I did not know about IELTS anything, just its name. I blamed myself for that why I did not research on Google, why I did not ask different people who had an experience in the UK. It happened once I asked a tutor who studied in the UK, but he drew a black picture to me, and this disappointed me and made me pessimistic. Therefore, I decided not to ask any one, I will go and see by myself.

Comment [S39]: Lack of knowledge about the UK education system

Before starting master, While I was sleeping, I was thinking am I going to succeed or not? Will the study be difficult or challenge? When I wake up, I feel I still need time to sleep. The doctor said 'It is stress'.

Comment [S40]: Stress at the initial phase

Third interview

A. Do you feel that you change after two semesters in the master's course?

B. To be honest, Fatima in 2012 is not the same Fatima in 2013. I 'changed' my character, I 'was' 'self-contained', 'closed', 'I can't walk in the street'. If I want anything in a shop, I ask another person to say things instead of me. When I went to visit my family in Libya, my family said 'You changed not the previous Fatima'. Now I take role in discussion with my father, mother and sisters, and give opinion. Now 'I can speak' in public and give my opinion. No matter whether they take into consideration or not, no matter, the most important thing is that I can speak. I became sociable and my confidence had been increased because I am interacting with British, Chinese, Kurdish and Greek colleagues in class. I reached to a certain level of knowledge. I can answer my students' questions in the future.

Comment [S41]: The effect of learning as social participation with different nationalities (mid old-timers and mid newcomers), identity construction

A. Do you plan to back to Libya?

B. I am waiting for the moment that I back to Libya to apply my overseas experience. I will give students an opportunity to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions because I used to a tutor who did not an opportunity to speak in class. I will give students a specific topic and ask students to discuss it. I will take group work activity in which I will divide students into groups from the beginning, mixed group male and female. I do not want to have a problem as mine in listening to male. I want to help students to get rid of teacher-centeredness that I used to it in Libya. I will ask students to write a report and recommend websites. I want to give them an idea about the British Education system and IELTS. Also, I will take tutor-student relationship in Libya, respect of time, independent learning, tutorial in mid of the term and constructive feedback.

A. Do you feel that you are going to be able to apply your master's experience in these circumstances in Libya?

B. There were problems in my city "Bani-Walid", I came to class but I did not know what the teacher said. I am crying unconsciously. I explained to my tutor. She always asks me about my family. I told my father, I want to stop; my family encouraged me to continue. Tutors were understandable of my situation, but the immigration desk and international office do not, I came from Libya because I want to renew my visa. I want to study in London initially, but I arrived late because of the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya.

A. Can you tell me about your attitudes towards the civil war and ongoing conflict Libya?

B. Libyans divided into two parts pro-Gaddafi and ant-Gaddafi. I am always thinking about the security situation of the county. They start using technology such as I-pad and face book for chatting, but the technology is not used for learning and personal development. This requires orientation. The civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya disappointed me. I want to teach in comfortable and secure place. I heard that one student captured in the lecture because he was Gaddafi loyalist. Imagine If I was teaching in class, this situation would happen to one of my students. The tribes fight each other with weapons such as the fight between 'Zawia' and 'Wershafana' in the West and Tawerga and Misrata. During the old regime, when my tribe fought with another tribe; the problem wasn't solved by the law or by the weapons, but it was sorted out by the tribal sheikh.

Comment [S42]: The tribal nature of Libya

I was happy with the elections, I didn't elect, I do not know how. I like the change, but it is not in this way. Libya is rich country, but we are not going to improve or develop like gulf countries. Gaddafi started giving scholarship to students overseas and you cannot deny that and Saif Islam started in the reform process, but we didn't give him an opportunity.

Comment [S43]: Negative attitudes towards the situation in Libya

I was wearing Abaya [long dress conceals the shape of the body], but now I am wearing jeans and tunic. I am still wearing Hejab and pray on time. I interact with my British and international colleagues and give them gifts and cards in occasions.

Comment [S44]: Islamic values and socialisation with colleagues

I differentiate between the Islamic values and the Libyan cultural habits and customs. I forward Islam on Libyan habits and customs. For example, interacting with male is not prohibited in Islam and women were asking the Prophet Mohammed about various topics. I broke the barrier and forwarded Islam on the others. For example, some students might want listening without music because in Islam Music is prohibited. Also, I remember my tutor bring a video from YouTube where there was kissing which is not accepted according to Islam and the Libyan culture. I had award with my tutor and she said 'I cannot cut that part'.

Appendix 8: Example two of analysis of the interview

Sara

First interview

- A. Can you tell about your expectation about British people and its culture?
 B. Before arriving to the UK, I thought British people might attack me, if they had been drinking alcohol but I found the opposite.

A. Why do you choose to study in the UK then?

- B. British people are native English speakers and, as you know, my major is English language. It is only three hours flight from Manchester to Tripoli airport. It takes only a year for a master's.

A. Do you still have these negative attitudes towards British people after spending time in the UK?

No, my British colleagues and tutors came to me before the start of the lecture and asked about my family whenever there was chaos in Libya. Tutors were supportive while I was pregnant. My English colleague and tutors, whom I interacted with, didn't look at me as a stranger; they are polite. They weren't annoyed with me because I was not white and wearing 'Hejab' [head scarf] and 'Abaya' [long black dress]. Three of my British colleagues are Muslims.

My tutors gave me a week off when I was worried about my family because there was chaos in Libya. This encouraged me to learn because I felt I was not alone in this world; there are people who understand my situation. My tutors accepted my excuses when I was late because I was taking my daughter to school. My tutor said 'This is completely understandable', and this changed my negative views towards the British people completely and encouraged me to integrate more.

A. Do you have a general knowledge about the core aspects of the UK HE system?

I started studying pre-session course with the events in Libya. I was stressed and crying, tutors were empathetic to the conflict and gave me a week off. I did not expect the conflict. There is no connection with my family. I did not know whether they are dead or live. I am attending lessons, but when I back home I try to call them and watch Jazeera Channel to be up-dated. I felt selfish as I was studying while Libyans were killing. It was horrible. The 8 weeks pre-session course played a significant role in my master study. The course gave me confidence in myself and ability. I learnt outlines and structure of writing, referencing that I had never heard before, paraphrasing and how to avoid plagiarism. I practiced power point presentations and speaking in public in front of many students. I learnt the reliable and valid source, researching about journal article because I did not know that the journal article can also be used as reference.

A. Do you encounter any challenges in your master's course?

B. I planned to start my master in September 2011, but I couldn't travel to the UK because my city "Ben Walid" was the worst as pro-Gaddafi escaped to it, so it was blocked and the airlines stopped. I couldn't travel to the UK until liberation and independence in October 2011. When I arrived to the UK to start the master course, all the master courses started. My psychological state was low, stressed and very tired. I stayed one month at home in the UK, I have no desire to see or to speak to anyone. I cannot sleep at night, the bombing, the sound of guns and missiles, bodies of the dead still in my memory. I decided to start in January 2012.

Also, meeting the deadline is challenge, when I start writing, I do not know the right outline and structure. I took two weeks to prepare the outline and arrange my thoughts and ideas before starting. Most time, I couldn't meet the deadline, so I take extension [laugh]. The most academic challenging skill is writing because you need time to read journal articles and books. Researching articles on line takes five days and sometimes

Comment [S1]: Misconception, negative attitudes before coming to the UK, newcomers' dispositions

Comment [S2]: Pragmatic answer

Comment [S3]: Developed positive attitudes after interaction

Comment [S4]: Familiarity in working with international students, treat as a legitimate member

Comment [S5]: Sympathetic tutors

Comment [S6]: The effect of dominant old-timer's behaviour on her learning

Comment [S7]: The effect of dominant old-timer's behaviour on her integration and developing positive attitudes

Comment [S8]: Pre-session course as a period of adjustment

Comment [S9]: The effect of the initial conflict 2011

Comment [S10]: Post-traumatic stress

Comment [S11]: Academic writing challenge

Comment [S12]: Academic writing challenge

I save them, then I find out they are inappropriate to my area of concern, so I do not use them. Critical thinking is challenge at the beginning because I didn't study that during my bachelor degree.

Comment [S13]: Previous educational experience effect, unfamiliarity with critical thinking

My husband does not work and he does not like the UK. He is sociable and likes to join to Libyans. I go to the library every day and he takes care of my son all the day. He was stressed and had an influence on my study that I thought to suspend, but my mother encouraged me to continue. She said 'You should bring your certificate'. I do not live near Libyan families for purpose because my husband is strongly pro-Gaddafi. If he meets other Libyans who are ant-Gaddafi, he will argue with them and will fight each other. Therefore, I prefer to live near British people rather than Libyans to avoid any problems that might happen. When I hear any person that she or he Libyan, I feel scared. The civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya affects Libyans' relationship because they divided into two parts pro-Gaddafi and ant-Gaddafi. My husband's relative is killed during the conflict by ant-Gaddafi troops.

Comment [S14]: The impact of the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya on students' relations in the UK, the effect of the civil war and ongoing conflict on Libyan students outside the Libyan context

A. Do you overcome your challenges?

Comment [S15]: Motivation

B. The motivation is important to cope with the challenges. The UK is advanced country, I want to learn English from the native speakers of English, I want to get MA degree, and English is global Language.

A. Can you tell me how you overcome the challenges?

B. To save time, I go to the 'index' to look for the word, for example, 'game' because I want to use game in the assignment of Methodology module; I go directly to the page number. I learnt this strategy from the pre-session course. I am struggling with using academic words, for this reason I use 'proof reading' as a strategy because I have no time for revision. I want to meet the deadline or the extension. Sometimes instead of using "the bus goes to the city Centre"; I write "the bus go".

Comment [S16]: Autonomous learning

Comment [S17]: Grammar structure challenge

Library facilities were very useful; I spend hours reading in the library. Sometimes I spend hours reading at night because I could not read when my children wake up.

Comment [S18]: Autonomous learning

I started in January; I was happy and felt sorry at the same time. If I started in September; I feel they would take care of me more. I started with group who started in September. I felt lost at the first month. They have background how to write rational and lesson plan. The entire group knows each other, I felt as if strange. I was shy; I was setting with the group who started with me in January, One student from Libya and two Chinese. The tutor asked us to join to other groups who started in September and try to interact with them. This helped me to interact with them.

Comment [S19]: January starter

Comment [S20]: Dominant old-timer's role in integration

Group work was very helpful. Every student gives his or her ideas and we discuss together. Master's degree depends on students and their reading rather than on of the tutor's ideas. Then, we discuss with the tutor in the whole class. This encourages me to pay attention because I am interacting and listening at the same time, and this is useful because I enjoy and the time goes without looking at my watch and I am learning by modern methodologies. However, the Kurdish group that started in September didn't give an opportunity to us who started in January to speak. They sat next to each other and they didn't accept other nationality to join that group. In my second semester when this group finished, I felt more comfortable and got more opportunity to discuss.

Comment [S21]: Learning as social participation, complementary contribution, participation in shared activity

Comment [S22]: Advantages of shared activity, advantages of learning as social participation

Comment [S23]: Un supportive mid-newcomers, assumption, learning as social participation is not without challenges.

A. Do you have knowledge about the core aspects of the UK HE system before you come to the UK?

B. In the Libyan class, students don't have an opportunity to speak, students don't listen to CDs, and teaching methods of English were wrong; we do not use songs, cards and games.

Comment [S24]: Teacher-centred approach in Libya

I expected the tutor to feed me with knowledge. I did not expect that learning is independent and a student is responsible for his or her learning. Sometimes I ask myself why the tutor does not give us his or her thoughts and ideas instead of the group discussion. This might be I am influenced by teacher-centeredness in Libya.

Comment [S25]: Different expectation, unfamiliarity with the UK HE system

I did not expect to write 6000 thousand words and to read a number of references. I did not expect to paraphrase the authors' words because in Libya we do not write. I did not expect that there is a critical thinking skill until I studied "Methods of Enquiry" module. Academic writing is challenge in the master's course. In Libya, I didn't write much. I wrote only a project in my fourth year at University, but my writing was mainly copy and paste with a list of references on the last page.

Comment [S26]: Different expectation, unfamiliarity with the core aspects of the UK HE system

Our curriculum in Libya includes activities and practices, but the teachers do not give them to students. Teachers have no idea about the modern methodologies. The challenges in Libya are: lack of trained tutors.

Comment [S27]: Different concepts of plagiarism between the UK HE system and Libya, academic writing challenge

Second interview

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your British colleagues in the master's community?

B. Yes. Of course I have.

A. Can you tell me about your experience?

B. I have got an opportunity to interact with British people, they were my neighbours. They give me advices when my son was sick, to take care of the garden, slowdown of the television sound at night, and to smile and play with children even if you are tired. They visit me. I have an opportunity for interaction with my British colleagues in the class. I have got an opportunity to speak with British students in the Library. They helped me in typing because at the beginning I was not familiar with technology as you know in Libya we do not use it too much. Also, I asked two British students to help me to have an email because I am not familiar with that and I need it urgently, to be honest they helped me with smile. I know they were surprised from their facial expressions, but they said 'That is completely understandable'. I have also an opportunity to speak with them in class when the tutor divides us into groups. I join to their group and we discuss with each other. We exchange emails and we are in regular contact. They are intelligent in critical thinking because when they read the article, they highlight it for example this is critical thinking, this needs more justification, the author is not clear about this point. I learnt from them how to assess the article and how to criticise other authors in respectful way. The academic skill tutor also helped me in critical thinking. She gave me an article as an example and she asked me to look at the literature review. This authors writes...but that author critics that. From my point view, critical thinking is a skill, practicing with English students and academic skill tutor helped me to broaden my thinking. I arranged three sessions with the academic skill tutor and I was recording her after her agreement. Then When I back home, I listened to the recording more than once. I compare and contrast between the two articles in methodology, literature review, analysis, and the results. I passed the module Alhamdulillah [Praise be to Allah]. The British students are aware of critical thinking. I asked my British colleague to help me with critical thinking. She said with smile 'That is fine. I know you are international student and you might not be familiar with this in your home country'. She helped me a lot; I observed and imitated her in how to evaluate an article and to provide a respectful critique of others' writing. The tutors said that the master is independent study and I realised for the first time that master is independent. My tutor also said that if you have any question or enquiry, send me an email and feel free to ask for tutorial. I started depending on myself step

Comment [S28]: Positive attitudes towards English students, interaction with English students outside the master's community

Comment [S29]: Interaction with mid old-timers, mutual engagement

Comment [S30]: Learning outside the community, formal teaching

Comment [S31]: Learning as social participation, mid old-timer's support, situated learning

by step. In the second semester, I became independent and professional than in the first semester. I do not like to speak in class because I am shy and I prefer to listen to what are said and compare that with my thoughts and ideas. Sometimes, I blame myself if another student said the idea or answer because I have the same answer and the idea, but I cannot speak in public. I am aware if my answer was wrong, they would laugh at me.

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your tutor?

B. Yes.

A. Can you tell me about your experience?

B. The tutor used more than one way to encourage students to speak. For example, she used yellow cards in front of each student and each student should speak before leaving the class. Tutorial with my tutor rather than in class, I feel free to talk to my tutor. In tutorial, I feel more comfortable with females rather than males because they were sympathetic and understandable to my situation, especially when I was pregnant. If my tutors were males, I would not feel comfortable to speak freely to them. Once I asked my male tutor to stand on the corridor or to leave the door open in order not to be in isolation, but he was reluctant as he said 'Why?' I explained to him, but he was unconvinced. I informed my husband that my tutor was reluctant, so I accepted to attend with him one-one tutorial.

Comment [S32]: Dominant old-timer's technique to encourage interaction

Comment [S33]: Gender issue in tutorial, adjustment with regard to setting with the opposite sex in one room, cultural effect

Comment [S34]: Gender challenge

A. Do you have an opportunity for interaction with your international colleagues?

B. Yes, I interact with my international colleagues.

A. Can you tell me about your experience?

A. I couldn't meet the deadline, so I had an extension. I was using paper and pencil to paraphrase the authors' words (smile). One of my Kurdish colleagues, who had been there for a term, said 'Stop hand writing as this is too time-consuming'. She recommended that I save notes and articles on a stick and then copy and paste. I asked other international students who had been there for a term. They told me 'This tutor prefers certain references as they are appropriate to master's level; avoid those that are more appropriate to undergraduate level'. This helped me a lot in my writing. When I finished my part of group assignment, I showed it to the leader of the group who is my British colleague. She gave me some suggestions to work on, and this was very helpful.

Comment [S35]: Mid-newcomer's support, interaction with international

Comment [S36]: Mid-newcomer's support, mid-newcomer facilitates the experience of newcomer, unique atmosphere

Comment [S37]: Peer-review

In the second semester, I have two female friends from China. Most of my time with them, they recommend books to read, we discuss together. I send emails to them. I take an appointment with my Chinese colleagues to meet in the Library to discuss with each other about assignments. We reserve a room and discuss together for an hour every week. My husband always reminds me not to sit near males and not to talk to them, especially Libyan males because they will talk about you in Libya and distort your reputation. My husband also advises me not to take off my coat even in the hot weather, this affects me negatively because sometimes I do not feel comfortable in class and I feel stressed when I connect my husband's words and our culture. However, I am interacting with Chinese, British and Nigerian males and females in shared activities. If I were in Libya, I would never interact with males.

Comment [S38]: Learning as social participation with mid-newcomers, mutual engagement

Comment [S39]: Gender issue, cultural effect

Comment [S40]: Gender issue, the effect of the context, adjustment with regard to interaction with the opposite sex.

It is necessary to interact and respect other cultures in order to achieve coexistence and harmony and not say Muslims are hard and ignorant. At the same time, we have to select from the British culture the positive things such as, they have commitment to their jobs, they wake up early in the morning, respect of the time and their reading

while they are on train or bus, and this affects me personally that I always take newspaper or a book to read while I am in a bus or train.

A. Can you tell me about your relationship with your Libyan colleagues? How it assists your adjustment?

B. When I interacted with my Libyan colleagues who were anti-Gaddafi, we started fighting. Therefore, I prefer not to speak to them. My relationship is formal in 'Salam Alikom'. That is all (reserve and silence).

Comment [S41]: Limited integration

Third interview

A. Can you tell me about your thoughts and plans in relation to going home?

B. When I back to Libya, I am going to teach English in the right method. When I will back to Libya, I will not give the meaning of a word directly; I will explain the meaning in English and use signs and acts in order to let students guess the meaning, rather than giving the meaning in Arabic. I will use games. I will give students an opportunity to speak and I will increase talking time. I will give students two journal articles and ask them to read for the next lecture. I am motivated to teach at university in Libya because I have more confidence that I am able to plan a lesson and to use activities and games.

Comment [S42]: Perceptions about going home

A. Do you feel that you have changed after spending two semesters in the master's study? Can you tell me in what way you have changed?

B. The life in the UK taught me to be independent, especially when you have children.

Comment [S43]: Identity construction, the effect of the new sociocultural context on identity construction

A. Do you feel that you have developed your knowledge and skills after the master's experience?

B. Yes.

A. Can you tell me in what way you have developed?

I learnt to use technology in the UK. I was using paper and pencil to right my thoughts and ideas and paraphrase the authors' words. I changed after this experience, I worked as a teacher in Libya for 3 years, then I stopped and I hated teaching for restrictions from the head of the division. Now, I like teaching and I will do my best to teach by using modern teaching methods. My knowledge has been developed, I feel confident in my ability, my views to other cultures have been developed, I became empathetic towards others.

Comment [S44]: Identity construction

Comment [S45]: Developing aspects of intercultural communication competence

A. Do you interact with your Libyan colleagues? Can you tell me how the interaction between you and your Libyan colleagues supports you, particularly you have a lot in common such as the same language, culture and the same background?

B. Before the 17th revolution, I used to enjoy my life with Libyan friends, but I don't anymore. I prefer to join the international students or British students rather than other Libyans. I don't want problems. I sat with my classmates from Britain, China, Poland, and Spain in the library in the break times, we study together, we always discuss together.

Comment [S46]: The effect of the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya on the relationship between Libyan, lack of mutual engagement, seeking diversity

A. Can you tell me about your attitudes towards the civil war and ongoing conflict in Libya?

B. I was in Libya last month; there is no security in Libya. I feel Libya is changing. I am very enthusiastic; I am attending staff development sessions and drop-in session. I go and ask my international and British colleagues if I don't understand any point. I also don't hesitate to ask my tutor via e-mail and in class, if I have any inquiry. In Libya, if a tutor wasn't qualified, students would protest against him or her. This is a challenge for the tutor because they need to be well-equipped and well-prepared to meet students' expectations and needs.

Comment [S47]: Strong motivation, the effect of the 2011 revolution, freedom of expression

Appendix 9

1. <http://iafor.org/issn-2188-1162-the-european-conference-on-education-2015-official-conference-proceedings/>

2. Scottish Journal of Arts, Social Sciences and Scientific Studies ISSN 2047-1278
<http://scottishjournal.co.uk>