

## Norah in Ireland: The Identity Development of a Saudi Woman during Study Abroad

DOI: 10.26379/IL2020001\_007

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### Abstract

When learners study languages abroad, they confront new social and cultural contexts that affect identity negotiations, and hence, personal growth. Despite a burgeoning interest in study abroad (SA) research on the role of SA experiences on a second language (L2) identity development, current research has given little attention to the identity development of Saudi students in SA contexts. This article addresses this issue by focusing on the identity development of a Saudi female learner, Norah, during a six-month SA sojourn in Ireland. Data were longitudinally collected using semi-structured interviews every two months over a six-month time-span, and the qualitative analysis was conducted in light of the positioning theory. Overall, the findings showed that the participant deepened her love for her country and religion, she was more enthusiastic about interacting with international students than members of the local community and felt that SA allowed for significant personal development. These conclusions suggest the benefits of SA for students' personal development regardless of native cultural attachment and differences in religious faith.

### Keywords

*study abroad, identity development, social integration, personal development, female Saudi SA student*