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Languages, Cultures and Linguistics

Non-Traditional Language Learners: Exploring The Factors Affecting Engagement In Online Learning At A University Level In Saudi Arabia

By

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Abstract

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND LINGUISTICS

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

Non-Traditional Language Learners: Exploring The Factors Affecting Engagement In

Online Learning At A University Level In Saudi Arabia

Amera Ali Alharbi

The most significant disruption to education systems in living memory was caused by the covid pandemic (Hussein et al., 2020). E-learning before Covid pandemic has become an attractive approach to students with different characteristics as non-traditional learners. They study alongside full or part-time work, have family commitments, or are older learners. Studies report diverse findings about the motivation and engagement of this student body (Alshebou, 2019; Arjomandi et al., 2018; Gately et al., 2017, Novotný et al., 2019, Rothes et al., 2017; Sánchez-Gelabert et al., 2020). Due to a scarcity of non-traditional students' motivation studies (Rothes et al., 2017) and engagement studies (Rabourn et al., 2018), this qualitative case study aims to understand non-traditional language learners' motivation and engagement in online learning during uncertain times, Covid pandemic. Researchers have acknowledged the connection between motivation and engagement (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012) and declare that learners' motivation affects the quality of their engagement (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Lawson & Masyn, 2015). As a result, this study aims to fill gaps and employ a motivational framework that has not been used in L2 studies: Maehr's (1984) Personal Investment Theory (PIT) to pave the way to understanding participants' motivation (goals and self) and exploring how language learners' engage following Redmond et al. (2018) the engagement model in online learning. The participants were six female students who studied foundation level at a Saudi university and adopted a blended pedagogical approach. Due to the worldwide shift to online learning, those learners in this academic year were unique in being the only learners who experienced solo online learning at the university. Data sources include surveys, engagement self-report, interviews, observation, and blackboard analytics.

The findings reflected that the lockdown situation tended to exacerbate a number of the existing inequalities apparent in OL which affected learners' learning motivation and engagement experience. The motivation framework supports understanding the learners' goals and sense of self. The findings showed that the participants had multiple goals while learning in the research

context. In addition, many contextual factors impacted their self-views. The analysis of the non-traditional five engagement dimensions for the engagement model stressed the interplay of these dimensions (cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and collaborative) in language learners' experiences in online learning. At the cognitive level, online learning affected students' comprehension and enhanced learners' self-regulation skills. The approach also impacted participants at the behavioural level regarding their participation, focus and careful listening, persistence, and self-working on activities. Mixed emotions were evident in the participants' emotional engagement during their online learning experiences. To communicate effectively in the online learning environments, the participants created a social community that enables them to engage socially with classmates and collaborate to support one another's learning. This helped them have a sense of belonging in the online community. The findings showed contextual factors influencing non-traditional language learners in online learning in this specific context. While self-efficacy was the central theme in the internal factors, the teacher was the critical factor in the institutional factors that affected student engagement in online learning.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I, Amera Ali Alharbi, declare that this thesis entitled

NON-TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS: EXPLORING THE FACTORS AFFECTING
ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL IN SAUDI ARABIA

and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;

- 1- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- 2- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- 3- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- 4- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- 5- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

Signature:

Date:

Dedication

For the soul of my favourite and most beloved parents, thank you for nurturing the spirit of learning in me. Without you, my lovely husband, my sweet sons and my daughters, I would not have the courage to finish this study and would not have been able to continue. Without you, my beloved sisters, brothers, nephews, and nieces, I would not have the patience and power to face the challenges.

I dedicate my thesis, life, and heart to all of them.

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My gratitude also goes to the research context, Saudi Electronic University, who supported me with flexible access to collect the needed data for this project. My most resounding recognition goes to the participants who donated time and effort to respond to many tools in this study and enriched the research with their thoughts and ideas. Without their cooperation and understanding, this study would not be possible.

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Lastly, on a personal note: I wish my parents were alive to kiss their heads and hands and share the news of my success; without their belief in me, this thesis would not see the lights.

Abbreviations

Bb Blackboard

BL Blended learning

COI Community of Inquiry

EFL English as a foreign language

EMI English as a Medium of instruction

FCY First Common Year

F2F Face-to-face

L2 Second/foreign language

LL/LLs language learner/s

NTSs Non-traditional students

OL Online learning

PIT Personal Investment Theory

SEU Saudi Electronic University

TSs Traditional students

VC virtual classroom

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The number of non-traditional students (NTSs) returning to university worldwide has risen sharply in recent years (Lin, 2016). According to Markle, writing in 2015, the US National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) expected enrolments of students aged 25 to 34 years and 35 and older to increase by 28% and 22% respectively, in comparison with 12% for traditional students (TS) aged 18 to 24 years from 2008 to 2019. Researchers are interested in exploring NTSs because, despite having jobs and family responsibilities they are nevertheless motivated to undertake academic studies (Alshebou, 2019). According to Vanslambrouck et al. (2016) and Kara et al. (2019), NTSs are characterised by a variety of backgrounds, goals, motivation, and learning styles that make them a heterogeneous group. Although there is a considerable amount of research on the motivation and engagement of TSs, much less is known about NTSs (Rabourn et al., 2018; Rothes et al., 2017).

This study focuses on motivation and engagement because researchers have acknowledged their connection (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). The complexity of determining clear definitions of motivation and establishing dimensions of engagement has led to some confusion as to how the constructs relate to each other. For example, scholars such as Finn and Zimmer (2012) relate motivation to affective engagement because both are internal and affect behaviour. Other scholars view both constructs as distinct but related (Akbari et al., 2016; Christenson et al., 2012; Eccles & Wang, 2012; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Ng et al., 2018). While motivation is connected to interrelated beliefs and emotions which affect individual behaviour, engagement in an educational context focuses on participation and involvement in learning activities (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). Saeed and Zyngier (2012) concluded that motivation is essential for student engagement, which justifies the use of motivational and self-determination theories to examine student engagement (Reeve, 2012; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012). Engagement has been called an 'observable manifestation of motivation' (Kindermann, 2007, p. 1888), and both constructs are essential for promoting academic learning (Akbari et al., 2016).

The next part of this chapter provides the background, significance, and rationale for studying the motivation and engagement of NTSs in online learning (OL). Specific details of the research context are then given, along with the reasons for recruiting female students as participants. The

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chapter concludes by identifying the research aims and questions, and summarising the overall structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background

Trowler (2015) considers the term 'non-traditional' as a chaotic concept whose edges are vague and indicate no standard definition (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). However, at the very least, term expresses the idea that 'non-traditional' students are different to 'traditional' students in that they have not followed the standard educational timeline of pursuing further or higher education (HE) immediately after leaving school. Bowers and Bergman (2016) point out that the terms 'adult' and 'non-traditional' are often used interchangeably in research, but these authors define adult learners as 24 years or older, while NTSs are those who have postponed college or university enrolment after high school, have full-time jobs, or attend part-time college. Some researchers cite work and life experience as unique elements of the NTS experience (Chen, 2017; Toynton, 2005), while others choose age as the defining characteristic (Wyatt, 2011). In their discussion of the classification of NTSs in the literature, Arjomandi et al. (2018) and Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) list the defining variables as age (more than 23 years), different backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, whether they are first-generation students in their family, and employment status. As well, NTSs are characterised by different risk factors for dropping out than traditional students. In the current study, NTSs are defined as either students over 24 years old, or students who have taken at least one gap year after high school, and have part or full-time employment and/or family and financial commitments.

Blended learning (BL) and online learning (OL) were used in this study because the research context is a university which uses BL as a pedagogical approach but was forced to shift entirely to OL during the Covid pandemic. At the end of December 2019, the Chinese government announced rising cases of a new infectious coronavirus disease, Covid-19 (Chahrour et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020). In March 2020, The World Health Organization declared the disease a pandemic after reports of over 150,000 cases worldwide (Chahrour et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020). The Covid-19 crisis affected everyone's lives as countries introduced travel restrictions and mass closure of public places with large gatherings, such as gyms and movie theatres (Sahu, 2020). OL suddenly started to become the only possible teaching modality as educational institutions and schools worldwide began to close their doors to face-to-face classes with students. In this extraordinary situation, students had no choice but to learn online, regardless of their learning preferences. Students' subsequent reflections on this experience have now begun to appear in recent research, for example, by Hazaymeh (2021) and Rifiyanti (2020). The current study was also affected by SEU's policies and restrictions in fighting the virus. The initial plan for this research was to focus on the

BL context and compare students' engagement in F2F classes on campus with virtual (i.e. online) classes (VCs). However, the project shifted to an alternative scenario: the online-only learning environment, which was a new experience for all of the students, teachers, and researchers at this blended-learning university.

OL fast became an area of research interest during the pandemic. De George-Walker and Keeffe (2010) have stated that technology integration serves to 'promote student learning and engagement, improve access and flexibility and address organisational and institutional imperatives in higher education' (p.1). It enables teachers to shift from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred approach (Mehring, 2016). Moreover, technology integration into daily life and education is reported to equip learners with lifelong learning skills, such as being active and self-directed in learning (Kaur, 2013; Knapper & Cropley, 2000). Although these attributes may encourage students to engage further in the learning environment, learning through technology might be a barrier for some students at the outset rather than supporting learning more flexibly if there is inadequate support, which might affect their engagement. Markova et al. (2017) highlight that despite the popularity of OL among researchers, practitioners, and students, the online approach may not suit all learners since students vary in their motivation, attitudes and learning styles and might face challenges during learning via this approach. For example, many of the NTSs who were parents became responsible for their children's home-schooling and online class attendance during the Covid pandemic. The situation became more complex when these NTSs were also working in part- or full-time employment. Despite the difficulties at this critical time, many NTSs decided to return to study because they were motivated by particular goals. With the challenges they faced in engaging with learning, it was highly likely that their motivation and engagement would be affected by a range of factors that either increased their persistence to learn or forced them to drop out.

Some of the available research on student engagement has endeavoured to understand why school-age students drop out of school and to help schools improve students' learning experiences (e.g., Christenson et al., 2012). Investigating student engagement is essential in revising and improving pedagogical methods for better student outcomes, and may have positive consequences for predicting student achievement (Reeve, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), enabling foreign language learning (Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Reeve, 2012; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), shaping students' social and psychological experiences (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012) and supporting practitioners and policymakers in interventions and improvements (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Reeve, 2012). Lawson and Lawson (2013) and Lawson and Masyn (2015) have revealed certain assumptions about engagement that appear in the motivation literature, and point out that the

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construct is open to improvement via intervention. I agree with Reeve (2012) and Ben-Eliyahu et al. (2018) in their assertion that engagement and motivation should be studied jointly, because motivation affects the quality of engagement. Thus, in this study, I aim to investigate NTSS' motivation and engagement in their social context, and I use a motivational theory from educational psychology with an engagement framework in OL to understand learners' engagement in an online language course.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The enormous increase in online learning in HE has led to studies paying attention to its different aspects, such as the pedagogies appropriate to online study, student and faculty satisfaction, and overall quality of the online experience. Because of their different characteristics to TSs, it is likely that NTSS would have unique responses to OL that no doubt differ from others. There is significant research from before the pandemic that deals with e-learning (Al-Qahtani & Higgins, 2013; Arrosagaray et al., 2019; Gambari et al., 2017; Jee & O'Connor, 2014) and NTSS' learning experiences (Bergman et al., 2014; Flynn et al., 2011; Markle, 2015). Since the pandemic, research has focused on learners' experiences and perceptions of online learning during the Covid years of 2020–22 (Budur 2020, Laili and Nashir 2021, Muthuprasad, Aiswarya et al. 2021), and on the physical and mental health of online learners at this time (Chaturvedi, Vishwakarma et al. 2021, Idris, Zulkipli et al. 2021, Wieczorek, Koodziejczyk et al. 2021). However, there are some gaps in the published literature, and the current research aims to contribute to the growing body of research by focusing on the motivation and engagement of NT university students learning online during the Covid pandemic.

Studies have examined NTSS from different perspectives (Alshebou, 2019; Boiché & Stephan, 2014; Novotný et al., 2019; Pedrotti & Nistor, 2019; Rothes et al., 2017; Stephan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013) and vary in their findings on motivation in NTSS (Alshebou, 2019; Gately et al., 2017; Novotný et al., 2019; Vanslambrouck et al., 2016). For example, Novotný et al. (2019) conclude that NTSS are mostly intrinsically motivated, while Gately et al. (2017) contend that they are more extrinsically motivated. Alshebou (2019) and Vanslambrouck et al. (2016) found that NTSS were driven by both types of motivation, although their participants were from different contexts. Studies on NTSS engagement are generally quantitative (Arjomandi et al., 2018; Rouborn et al., 2018) and comparative with TSs. As research on NTSS engagement is rather lacking to date, there have been calls for deeper investigation into NTSS motivation and engagement with respect to OL (Buelow et al., 2018; Hu & Li, 2017). Little is known about the barriers this group of students face in engaging with OL (Safford & Stinton, 2016), and the high significance of motivation and engagement in learning suggests that it would be valuable to apply a qualitative approach,

especially with regard to the aims of OL to provide NTSs with a flexible environment to meet their heterogeneous needs (Vanslambrouck et al., 2016). This study contributes to the field by focusing on NTSs' motivation and engagement in the context of online language learning in HE during Covid pandemic.

Another contribution concerns the theoretical framework used in this study. In reviewing the research on second language (L2) motivation, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) call for explorations of motivation through a complex view. The current study explores learners' motivation by considering them in their sociocultural context, and is inspired by Zoltán Dörnyei (2019), one of the pioneers of L2 motivation, who recommended that further research be done on the importance of engagement in language learning. This study focuses on language learners' (LLs) motivation through the lens of Maehr's (1984) Personal Investment Theory (PIT). L2 motivation has attracted growing interest by language learning researchers in many of its different aspects. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, until now, there is very little empirical research that looks at second language learning through the PIT framework. The theory highlights the role of culture in understanding students' motivation and is considered a comprehensive framework for understanding different aspects of motivation (sense of self, goals) in learning in a specific sociocultural context.

For many reasons, an online language course is suitable for investigating NTSs' motivation and engagement. First, it is a relatively new strategy that is frequently applied in HE, and its effectiveness needs to be better understood, particularly after the Covid pandemic. Second, it enables NTSs to enrol in university to pursue a degree as it provides flexibility (Boelens et al., 2017). Third, student engagement is a critical factor in the effectiveness of online learning. Finally, students in various learning contexts respond differently to technology integration. NTSs juggle many roles in life alongside their studies and this study explores their engagement stories in OL. The findings of this study may enable a better understanding of NTSs' challenges during their learning and could hold useful and practical implications for HE institutions.

Researchers have drawn attention to the pre-Covid academic inequality among pupils from various socioeconomic backgrounds that is caused by the digital divide (Asmelash 2019; Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Steele 2019). Some scholars currently contend that a variety of factors, such as students' access to and competency with digital technologies, self-regulation skills in online environment, and teachers' readiness, capacity, and pedagogical practices for online teaching, made academic inequality worse in the Covid-induced emergency online learning environment (Asmelash 2019; Doyle, 2020; Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Steele 2019; Outhwaite, 2020). Learners in online environments may have already experienced academic inequalities which were then

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widened by the shift to wholly online teaching during the Covid pandemic. Researchers are therefore currently encouraged to investigate the nature of these inequalities in online learning with a view to supporting students, particularly NTSs. Thus, my research proposes a line of inquiry to investigate what motivated the NTSs to return to education and what affected their engagement during the online English course, in order to understand the complexities of their online learning experiences during the crisis. I also investigate the contextual factors that shaped and influenced their motivation and engagement. In aiming to contribute to the ongoing discussion of OL in this way, I frame my investigation within two bodies of literature. The first is grounded in PIT in order to understand motivation, the second acknowledges and builds on one of the frameworks used to analyse learning engagement in OL. This study attempts to fill gaps in the literature on motivation and engagement in online learning, especially in its use of PIT, a framework that has been underused in learning motivation research. The significance of the study lies in its attempt to understand NTSs' experiences of OL and what fostered or hindered their learning motivation and engagement during the unusual times of the Covid lockdowns.

1.4 Study Rationale

As a Saudi citizen, I value the importance of learning English in Saudi Arabia (SA), and as an English language teacher in tertiary education, I can fully agree with assertions that Saudi students of English as a foreign language (EFL) tend to under-perform, not only in F2F classes but in OL as well (Al-Khairi, 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Javid et al., 2012). Learners' success in independent language learning through technology and online activities depends on their self-motivation and autonomy (Reinders, 2014; Wichadee, 2018). Arabai (2017) finds, however, that Saudi EFL learners are non-autonomous and low language achievers. Javid et al. (2012) assert that Saudi EFL learners have much poorer standards of English than other Arabic and Asian students, despite the Saudi government's effort to improve English learning and teaching (Al-Khairi, 2013; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). This situation is undoubtedly related to factors specific to the Saudi context that affect LLs' motivation and engagement.

My interest in this group of learners grew through working at a blended-learning university. As a female language teacher working with TSs and NTSs in my first year at the university, I observed the difficulties NTSs experience in learning English via a blended modality. These might be practical, personal, or cultural barriers, in addition to social and academic obstacles. Many of them have to make special arrangements before enrolment, including childcare and transportation, as some need to commute long distances. Also, some students do not engage fully in face-to-face (F2F) English classes, others drop out after a few weeks, and yet others fail the course. Gale and Parker (2014) and Kahu and Nelson (2018) describe the first year at university as

a critical period for TSs due to the transition experience from secondary to HE. Transitioning and adapting into a student role can be even more complicated for NTSs, as they have often taken gap years after high school, or have had many years of family responsibilities or employment before deciding to return to education. A certain level of competence in English is required by many universities before students are allowed to study at undergraduate level, and many students experience intense motivational pressures to pass English modules as well as English entrance exams before they can enrol in an undergraduate programme (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017).

My interest in NTSs is very much connected to the fact that I was one too, twenty years ago. Despite my lack of engagement in classes at the time, I was strongly motivated to be an excellent example to my children, and I successfully graduated in English studies. My husband had tried hard to persuade me not to enrol, partly because he held only a high school certificate at that time — many Saudi men do not like their wives to have higher qualifications — but I am glad to say he failed in his efforts. I also faced other barriers to university; for example, as well as being an 18-year-old fresher student, I was also a new mother with a child. University proved to be a completely different learning environment from high school: I had traditional lectures with international staff but very little exposure to the target language. There was inadequate support for understanding the university assessments, and we had limited formal interactions with the teachers, and no other resources for improving language skills. There was little compassion or understanding from the tutors. Once, I missed a midterm assessment because I had just given birth to my first child. The teacher told me that she herself had gone straight back to university three days after delivering a child, and went on to berate me for missing the exam. This attitude is in alignment with Bowl's (2001) finding that HE pays little attention to the circumstances of NTSs. He highlighted the social (family, work) and academic barriers (time management, understanding assignment instructions and regulations) that NTSs may face during their studies.

My doctoral study at the University of Southampton formed a turning point for me in finding academic support and understanding of my circumstances as a mother temporarily living away from my husband and family home. My PhD journey was not just an academic journey but also developed me personally and spiritually. As a non-traditional international learner, I faced many academic, personal, and emotional challenges during my studies, some of them arising from my situation as a mother living away from home during the Covid lockdown. I was forced to be separated from my husband and elder son due to flight restrictions, although I had my 5 children with me. That my supervisors and the university showed understanding of my situation motivated me to overcome the challenges and engage in research and I was excited to explore more about how NTSs were coping with learning English in the lockdowns in other contexts.

1.5 Research Context

1.5.1 Overview of SA

SA is located in the southwest corner of Asia, and Riyadh is the capital city in the central region. The official language is Arabic; however, English is a foreign language in many sectors. According to Al Lily (2011), Saudi culture is based on tribal and Islamic ties, making it difficult to distinguish between Islamic law and Arabic cultural norms. In addition, SA has different regions: central, eastern, western, northern, and southern and people from other areas perform distinct regional collections of cultural practices. Even though Islam plays a significant role in defining culture and its norms in Saudi society (AlMunajjed, 1997; Al-Saggaf, 2004; Yamin, 2013), some of these cultural norms are not part of Islamic teaching, as gender segregation in education and other workplaces. Recently, both genders have worked together in many workplaces; however, the norm is still in educational institutions.

The second feature is public and private domains. According to Almunajjid (1997), the public domain is exclusively a male domain, where men engage in economic, political, and religious activities, while the female domain is the private and domestic domain prescribed to women by society and linked to the house and family. Another norm in Saudi Arabia is that tribes and family are regarded as essential elements of a person's social face and identity. One's name and family name are significant, and most people go to considerable lengths to remove any potential stigma from their family name (AlMunajjed, 1997). Thus, according to the state's regulations, Saudi women are known for being religious, modest, and family-oriented (le Renard, 2008).

1.5.2 Female Status in SA

With the recent changes the country has witnessed, this section focuses first on common norms related previously to females in SA society, followed by a presentation of changes to these norms. Later, the section sheds light on Saudi female status in education.

1.5.2.1 Status in Society

As described earlier, Saudi females represent the private domain and expressing their position in public might be challenging (Fierke & Jørgensen, 2001). One of the fundamental rules for Islamic women in SA was the idea of male guardianship (Hamdan, 2005). This means that previous law required a male guardian for every woman, regardless of age. Young and mature females needed permission before doing any single activity, such as obtaining ID cards, travelling, relying on men to present them in many governmental systems or even verifying their identity in banks as

females used to cover their faces. This tendency affected women's choices even in their choices in marriage, university majors and finding suitable workplaces. It is also notable that Saudi females previously had no right to participate in politics. In addition, this might create another norm imposed not by state law but by social and governmental practices: the imbalance between males and females (Doumato, 2010). This imbalance could be related to either the gender segregation system or male guardianship that limited females' opportunities in many matters in life, mainly related to their future. An example of the imbalance was closing specific majors to women at universities that are male-dominated fields (Doumato, 1992). Despite all that, others believed this segregation was advantageous for women who were not competing with their male counterparts on jobs. The segregation created more women-only places at all country levels (Hamdan, 2005).

Women's status in Saudi society began to change as many Saudi females started pursuing their rights to take part in breaking social restrictions (Keyes, 2013). A notable and remarkable victory for women began with the blessing of King Abdullah. He allowed thirty women to join Shura Council in 2013 as the King was supporting females to take a role in developing the country (BBC, 2013; Guerin, 2015). Another example is an ambitious Saudi female pilot, Hanadi Al- Hindi, who earned her pilot license in 2013, although Saudi women were banned from driving cars. She was awarded a 10-year contract to fly Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal's private plane (Shoshana, 2017). In 2015, women were allowed to vote and run for office in municipal council elections (Guerin, 2015). In addition, rapid reforms have recently been made concerning several of the main goals of the Saudi Vision 2030 development plan, which Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman revealed in 2016. Saudi vision 2030 pointed out that Saudi women are the main asset for the kingdom's future:

Saudi women are yet another great asset. With over 50 per cent of our university graduates being female, we will continue to develop their talents, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of our society and economy (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016).

These reforms can be seen in women's empowerment (Aljohani & Alajlan, 2020) and raising Saudi women's employment participation from 22% to 30% (Aldossari & Calvard, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2019). In an attempt to empower women and create a balance between both genders, new measures are taken to address segregation issues in Saudi Society. For instance, the policy banning women from driving was ended in 2017. In sports, women have had the right to attend live matches since 2018, and physical education (PE), which was unsuitable for women in the

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Saudi education system, will be implemented at all levels of education. All these reforms encourage females to further their studies for a bright future.

1.5.2.2 Status in Education

Hamdan (2005), in her discussion of Women and Education in Saudi Arabia, stated that boys' schools were initiated in the 1945s, while women received little informal training. According to Hamdan (2005) and Al-Sudairy (2017), this training focused on learning Muslim Holy Book (Quran) and understanding how to be successful wives and mothers. During the same period, The Ministry of HE in the kingdom granted bright men, not women, opportunities to study abroad due to the immorality of women travelling alone (Hamdan, 2005). After her request was rejected, Fatina Amin Shakir, a young Saudi woman, appealed to King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and had the opportunity to obtain a PhD at that time (Hamdan, 2005). Later, King Faisal and His wife, Iffat Al Thunayan, promoted women's education in the kingdom by establishing a school in the royal place and enrolling their daughters (Al-Sudairy, 2017; Hamdan, 2005). 'Men and women, said Iffat, were equal in the eyes of God' (Hamdan, 2005, p.50). According to Al-Sudairy (2017), enrolling King's daughters in the school was a strategy to convince the royal family and Saudi people of the importance of women's education. Despite opposition to women's education, the Saudi government was firm in its belief in the need for education for both genders for a nation to be modernised (Al-Sudairy, 2017). Thus, the government started gradually with informal schools in the 1950s and formalised girls' schools by 1960 (Hamdan, 2005).

Conservative religious scholars approved the education of women under some conditions (Hamdan, 2005). According to Hamdan, an example of these restrictions was that girls' curriculum should be based on religion and Saudi social customs, as non-religious studies might be dangerous. Schools must be surrounded by high walls and guarded by older men to check the identity of those who enter the schools until girls are picked up by brothers or fathers (Al-Sudairy, 2017; Hamdan, 2005). The General Presidency of Girls Education (GPGE) was established during King Faisal's reign (Al-Munajjed, 1997) to enable the supervision of religious authorities. This leads to a gender segregation system in SA in education, the workplace, and all aspects of life.

Women learning at schools and universities were under the Department of Religious Guidance (administered by GPGE until 2002) to fulfil the actual purpose of women's education, which is preparing them for suitable jobs that match their nature as teaching, nursing and good wives and mothers (Hamdan, 2005). In 2002, GPGE and the Ministry of Education were merged due to public and government outcry over a tragic fire incident. The incident ended with the death of 15 girls-students at an intermediate school in Mecca -in which students were trapped in an unequipped building. Religious police discouraged firefighters from entering the building as teachers and girls

were not covering their heads (Hamdan, 2005; Mazawi, 2005). Since then, men's and women's education in the Kingdom has been supervised under one ministry despite the segregation in buildings (Mazawi, 2005).

Riyadh College of Education, built in 1970, was the first Saudi HE institution for women (Hamdan, 2005). Later, three more female campuses at three leading universities were established in Jeddah and Riyadh (Rawaf & Simmons, 1991). Despite the expansion of universities, there were no sufficient female instructors to teach female students. Thus, some courses must be delivered with the support of male instructors. The social practices of Saudi culture influenced one method of distance learning in Saudi Arabia. According to Baki (2004), male instructors taught female students when female instructors were unavailable through videoconferencing. I experienced this when I learnt at the English Department at the University of Dammam in 2000. The female supervisor supervised female students to ensure that every student focused and listened, as there was no physical contact between female students and their male instructors. In case of questioning, a female could communicate with a male instructor using an available phone in class. In addition, male instructors could randomly check names to see if students were focusing.

With progress in expanding women's education at all levels in SA, there was a massive increase in high school graduates who wished to join HE. Education institutions were the only sociable place for Saudi females without close supervision (Alwedinani, 2016), which might be the reason for several female enrolments in HE at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite development in women's education in the Kingdom, women were not allowed to study engineering and politics, which forced some families to send their daughters abroad to major in subjects that were not available to women in SA (Hamdan, 2005). One example is King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) was the only university where women were not admitted. To improve education in the kingdom, the government proposed a five-year development plan for 2005-2009. Among its goals, the government sought to enhance the quality of HE to meet job market requirements by providing technical and vocational training (Pawar, 2014).

Limited spaces were a barrier faced by HE in Saudi Arabia (Alkhazim, 2003). To overcome this issue, the government allowed the founding of private universities (Al-Sudairy, 2017). From one private university in 1999, there are 41 private colleges and universities in SA (Ahmed, 2019). According to Al-Sudairy (2017), female students prefer private universities, which offer majors such as engineering that were not available in public universities, despite their high fees. However, many challenges still face female learning in HE. One of these challenges was the age in applying to Saudi universities; an applicant's high school certificate should not exceed five years. It

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is worth mentioning that recently to comply with vision 2030, the government announced the abolition of the five-year requirement for graduation to enter Saudi universities (Aljaber, 2021).

Another challenge was some practices at universities. Women before had to provide university when they applied for a consent form from their male guardian about their approval for their daughter to study in this major. Fortunately, this consent is not taken recently. Another challenge was regarding remote universities from female homes. Despite those some higher learning institutions have built accommodations for female students, women who travel far from home for study purposes must not stay alone but with their relatives, according to Saudi culture (Alwedinani, 2016). The situation was not better for those who lived in university accommodations, as they were not allowed to leave.

Saudi government recognises that effective national development cannot be accomplished without supporting women. Thus, regarding women's majors at universities, it is worth mentioning that many are open for women in private and public universities. In addition, the prestigious KFUPM university endorses women's graduate studies education to serve the needs of Saudi Vision 2030 in empowering women to contribute to research and leadership (The University Board, 2020). Moving from being under male management, women have started to have significant positions in the country. In 2006, the Saudi government appointed Dr Aljohara Al-Saud as rector of Princess Nora Bint Abdulrahman University, the first female university in SA (Al-Sudairy, 2017). This encouraged other universities to follow the step when Dr Fayza Al-Hammadi was selected as Vice President for Female Student Affairs at King Faisal University (Al-Sudairy, 2017).

To sum up, the HE system in SA is showing a sense of commitment to reaching international standards in developing curriculum, teaching, learning, and research as it seeks to prepare learners to compete globally (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Saudi female NTSs are aware of changes happening in SA. Those learners are not living the traditional life they used to have, where culture allows fewer opportunities for women. They are experiencing rapid change in their culture, society, and educational system. With this history of female status in the country and education, this study could be an example against that background where changes occur, and more venues are available for females.

1.5.3 Saudi Electronic University (SEU)

Many countries have addressed the enrolment of students with financial or social issues that might hinder their learning. In the UK and Australia, for example, there have been attempts to widen participation and create 'open' universities to create opportunities for different groups of

students from depressed socioeconomic backgrounds and other minority groups to enjoy learning (Macdonald & Stratta, 2001). In SA, one of the crucial objectives of the National Transformation Program (Ministry of Education, 2019) is to secure reasonable, fair, and comprehensive education for everyone and to develop lifelong learning opportunities for all members of society. Following a BL approach, SEU was launched in 2011 to achieve this goal and as a solution for those students who want to further their education. Unlike at other universities in the Kingdom, there are no admission requirements for Foundation Year at SEU, which enables mature students and parents (who may only have secondary education) to access further undergraduate study. However, to proceed to undergraduate programmes at the end of the first year, students must provide evidence of English language competence (through in-house tests and external qualifications), as all programmes at SEU are taught in English. This practice is like most universities in the Kingdom, as the government has noted the importance of English as the language of 'science and technology, business and commerce' (Alhaisoni & Rahman, 2013, p. 113).

BL is a unified educational style for all colleges and foundation years at SEU. 25% of total course time is determined for F2F classroom learning, with the remaining 75% online; students interact with virtual classrooms (VCs) and online content and use the online platform (Blackboard, Bb). Alshathri (2016) expressed that SEU has cooperated with several universities from other countries 'to ensure that not only is providing flexible and unique but also to ensure quality and support for the skills acquired by students to be relevant to the global job market' (p.95). However, this new blended context is not without challenges. A local newspaper reported that 90% of foundation students in SEU's Al-Medina branch have failed to complete study to several accusations by students (Alharbi, 2014). Among these accusations was the inability of SEU to find solutions for difficulties such as lack of communication, frequent changes in curriculum and unachievable pass marks (Alharbi, 2014). SEU has argued that this percentage is natural, given the unconditional acceptance for all high graduate students, who may discover later that they might be deficient in some subjects, such as mathematics, computer science and English (Alharbi, 2014). SEU has different branches across the country. Current research is in a single-sex student body focusing on different groups of female students, many of whom have gap year/s after high school, and/or family responsibilities and/or full- or part-time jobs.

1.6 Research Aims and Questions

This study aims to connect a motivational theory in educational psychology and engagement framework to understand L2 students' motivation and engagement in a sociocultural context to understand contextual factors that affect NTSS' motivation and engagement in online learning.

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The thesis explores how NTSs motivate and engage in learning in an online language course. To accomplish this, first, the study focuses on NTSs' motivation through the lens of Maehr's (1984) PIT in an online mode. Then, the engagement framework of Redmond et al. (2018) is used to understand learners' engagement in OL.

The followings are primary and secondary questions:

1. What is NTSs motivation for learning English online?
 - a. In what ways do NTSs' goals shape their motivation to learn English online?
 - b. In what ways do NTSs 'sense of self' influence their motivation to learn?
2. What does NTSs' engagement look like in learning English online?
 - a. How do NTSs demonstrate cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative, and social engagement in learning English online?
3. What contextual factors might hinder or promote NTSs' engagement in learning English in an online course?

To answer these questions, the study employs a mixed-methods case study approach which is mainly qualitative, to track NTSs and explore their motivations, engagement and contextual factors that affect their learning in an online language course.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The thesis is divided into six chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the study and its significance and provides an overview of the research context, aim, and questions.

Chapter 2 presents the notions that underpin the study. It explains theoretical and conceptual frameworks, justifies using PIT as a motivational theory in L2 engagement studies and reviews the relevant literature. The chapter also justifies the use of Redmond's engagement model.

Chapter 3 details the paradigms of the current study and the research design, and describes the process of the thematic analysis along with the inclusion criteria of this qualitative study and its ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: provides detailed stories of participants' motivation and engagement and highlights the main themes that answer the research questions about how NTSs motivate and engage (cognitively, behaviourally, emotionally, collaboratively, and socially) in online English classes and contextual factors that might affect their engagement.

Chapter 5: provides a discussion of the main findings in answer to the three research questions.

Chapter 6: concludes by summarising the findings and the study contributions, highlighting implications and limitations and making suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 Non-Traditional Learners' Motivation and Engagement in OL

2.1 Introduction

With the advent of internet technology, educational institutions now have fascinating new opportunities to promote and encourage learning at all levels, including for NTSs. Examples of these opportunities are blended and online learning (BL and OL). Most HE institutions worldwide now offer flexible delivery models to enrich the learning experience and achieve institutional accountability and efficiency (de George-Walker & Keeffe, 2010). This can be promoted by implementing BL in HE, as in the research context. However, change in circumstances can radically shift modalities of working and studying, as evidenced by the emergency shift to OL during the Covid pandemic years of 2020–22.

The previous chapter outlines the reasons for focussing on motivation and engagement in exploring how female Saudi Arabian NTSs approached learning English on an online university course. This chapter introduces the ideas and concepts that underpin the research methodology adopted by this study, and provide the framework used for the data collection and analysis. The chapter starts by reviewing the literature on motivation and engagement to establish theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the current study in understanding NTS motivation and engagement in OL. Then we move on to explore the specific context of OL and the challenges surrounding its rise in use during the Covid pandemic years, and finally the hegemonies of OL.

2.2 Motivation in Learning

Motivation as a construct has attracted the attention of researchers for decades and has a wide range of definitions that express its different contributing factors. Since a variety of meanings has been attached to the concept of motivation over the years, it is frequently understood to be a 'broad umbrella' term (Dornyei, 2001, p.1). Despite this, many researchers (Dornyei, 2001; Brophy, 2010) have tried to adopt standardised definitions that emphasise direction and intensity (Dornyei, 2001), as well as express the element of learner choice to pursue objectives and the amount of effort put forth to do so (Brown, 2014). The observable components of motivation can help to explain why students 'do what they do', which is an otherwise rather abstract notion (Brophy, 2010), and self-reflection can help students understand the reasons behind their studies.

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According to Dornyei and Otto (1998), motivation in learning can generally be understood as the dynamic shifting of personal desires and wishes that drive the actions necessary for learning to occur. Heckhausen (1991) offers 'goal-directed behaviour' as another description of motivation that drives learner engagement. In the context of foreign language learning, Ellis (1994) broadly defines motivation as the amount of effort students make to acquire a new language based on their needs or desires. Nunan (1999) concludes that motivation in second language learning is a combination of the learner's desire to achieve the overarching goal of learning a language and their positive attitudes and efforts towards the process of learning.

Motivation is a powerful tool that steers the choices students make and determines the amount of effort and engagement they devote to the learning process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). While acknowledging the validity of other definitions, as a researcher I stand with the views of Maehr and Meyer (1997), for whom motivation is a theoretical notion that describes a variety of behavioural components, including specific 'goal-directed behaviour'. These components include direction, initiation, intensity, quality, and persistence, and are relevant both inside and outside of the classroom since they shape the initial motivation to learn and bring it to active life. In their theory of motivation, Maehr and Meyer (1997) replace the term motivation with 'personal investment', which refers to the specific actions performed by people when they desire to achieve a goal, and represents a particular viewpoint on the causes, processes, and nature of motivation. The main concern when investigating motivation should therefore be not whether people are or are not motivated in a particular situation, but rather when and how people allocate their time, skill, and resources to achieving their goal. Maehr and Meyer named their model personal investment theory (PIT).

Researchers sometimes distinguish between the different facets of motivation, such as internal desire, or the cognitive arousal that prompts someone to act in a certain way to accomplish a goal. For example, Ur (2009), with specific reference to language learning, discusses the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; i.e., the desire to engage in learning for its own sake as opposed to reasons derived from external incentives. Ur also contrasts the notions of integrative and instrumental motivation, which are the desire to identify with and integrate into the target-language culture, and the wish to learn the language for purposes of study or career promotion. More distinctions can be found between global, situational, and task motivation, where the first refers to the learner's overall orientation towards language acquisition, the second deals with motivation shaped by the learning environment as a whole, and the third describes ways in which the learner approaches the particular task at hand (Ur, 2009).

Brown (2014) and Dörnyei (2001) pointed out three approaches to studying motivation: behavioural, cognitive and constructivist. In the behavioural approach, the individual is motivated

because they expect a reward, and past experiences of such rewards may help to achieve positive reinforcement. In the cognitive approach, motivation is driven by basic human needs: exploring new ideas or skills, causing changes, stimulating many factors, and enhancing the ego. Motivation is influenced by an individual's choices and degree of effort to approach or avoid achieving outcomes. Unlike behavioural and cognitive approaches, which focus on individual behaviours, the constructivist perspective values social context and personal choices. In this approach, personal decisions are carried out within a cultural and social context, influencing an individual's preferences as individuals do not exist in isolation. The following sections summarize the theories of L2 motivation and goals before expanding on personal investment theory (PIT), which forms the theory of motivation that guides the current study.

2.2.1 Summary of Motivation Theories

In the late twentieth century, L2 researchers proposed theories arguing the distinction of L2 motivation from other types of learning (Ushioda, 2012). A possible reason for the proposal is the influence of the attitudinal dimensions of L2 language and community on L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Research into L2 motivation can be divided into different phases: the socio-psychological period, cognitive period, and process-orientated period (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) highlighted that the process-orientated period can be developed into a fourth phase: a socio-dynamic period which reflects current thoughts of L2 motivation research. The discussion in the following section will present different views of motivation in those periods from the static, process, and dynamic perspectives in L2.

2.2.1.1 The Static View of Motivation

2.2.1.1.1 Gardner's Socio-Psychological Model

Robert Gardner and his associates in Canada proposed one of the most influential theories in L2 learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that individuals' attitudes toward L2 and its community could positively or negatively influence L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2001). In his model, Gardner highlighted two types of orientations (goals): integrative and instrumental orientations. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) and Dörnyei (2001), integrative orientation comprises positive attitudes toward the L2 group and culture and a wish to be involved in social interaction with the L2 community, while instrumental orientations involve acquiring L2 to attain particular goals, a degree, or a job.

Gardner (1985) highlighted integrative motive in his socio-educational model, which refers to 'motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings toward the community that

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speaks that language (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 50). The integrative motive has three components: first, 'integrativeness', which refers to an interest in L2 and attitudes toward the L2 community; second, attitudes towards learning situation, which reflect L2s' attitudes towards language teachers and L2 courses; and third, the desire, effort, and attitudes towards learning. All these components can be measured in the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985). Although the model influenced L2 motivation, it was subject to criticism.

The first criticism concerns the integrative aspect, the most researched facet of Gardner's model. It appears in different forms in the socio-psychological model: integrative orientation, integrativeness and integrative motive (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei, 2003; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Dörnyei (2003) stated that there are no parallels in mainstream motivational psychology for the notion that results in variation in researchers' comprehension and thus affect research findings. Researchers may have different understandings of integrative motivation. Moreover, some instrumental or integrative orientations can lead to ambiguity by being subject to different interpretations (Al-Hoorie, 2017). For example, one of the instrumental orientations, learning a second/foreign language to help travel abroad, might be interpreted differently.

Another criticism is related to the learning context. According to Al-Hoorie (2017) and Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006), interaction with native speakers becomes less meaningful with the spread of World English. Integrative motivation in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context might differ from that in EFL settings. According to Gardner's socio-psychological model, integrative motivation has a positive disposition towards L2 groups in contexts where English is used as a second language. In contrast, it has a minor role in environments where English is used as a foreign language. In EFL, learners are learning a language they are required to learn and may have different attitudes about it. Therefore, instrumental motivation might influence L2s' behaviours.

Although Gardner's socio-educational model is derived from the previous model to be applied in the educational system (Ushioda, 2009), Kim (2005) observed that the old socio-educational model (1985) gave importance to social context, which was not evident in the modified version (1995). The model focussed on the individual's attitudes, and little attention was paid to other people and social interactions, which are essential in language learning (Kim, 2005). Some scholars, such as Dörnyei (2001), highlighted the insufficiency of the model to explain the dynamic nature of the L2 motivation process, while Crookes and Schmidt (1991) commented on the socio-psychological tradition in a seminal critique and called for new cognitive perspectives on L2 motivation research in a classroom context (Dörnyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2009). Oxford and Shearin (1994) called for expanding the theoretical framework by embracing certain concepts from psychological theory. Such a call led to a shift in researchers' thought and a new period born in L2

motivation based on the practitioner-validated concept of motivation in education (Al-Hoorie, 2017; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda, 2009).

2.2.1.2 The Cognitive and Process View of Motivation

After criticism of the socio-psychological model, there was a 'need to bring language motivation research in line with the cognitive revolution in mainstream motivational psychology' and 'to move from the broad perspective of ethnolinguistic communities and learners' general disposition and attitudes to language learning and sharpen the focus on the more situated analysis of motivation in specific learning contexts' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 46). The researchers in this period focussed on analysing motivation in actual learning contexts, as those contexts are considered motivational factors. The two influential theoretical frameworks are those of Williams and Burden (1997) and Dörnyei (1994).

2.2.1.2.1 Williams and Burden's Social Constructive Framework of L2 Motivation

Motivational changes over time are one of the challenges highlighted in researching L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In the process-orientated period, motivation is viewed as a process (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In an L2 classroom, a LL will not maintain a consistent attitude towards learning for months or years, and many factors might cause this fluctuation in students' motivation. Thus, it is essential to include the time (temporal) dimension in studying motivation.

Marion Williams and Bob Burden (1997) considered L2 motivation a multidimensional construct and offered a detailed framework of motivational components (cited in Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the authors' approach is influenced by social cognitive traditions. In other words, a LL's motivation is shaped by individuals and other factors, such as context, culture, and social situation. The researchers grouped the motivation influence in the framework into two categories: learner internal and external factors, which might be examined quantitatively and do not provide a complete description of the dynamics of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001).

2.2.1.2.2 Dörnyei's (1994) Three-Level Framework of L2 Motivation

Dörnyei 's (1994) three-level framework is an excellent example of conceptualising motivation in language classrooms. It provides motivational strategies and is expanded to include the temporal dimension in the Process Model of L2 Motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001). The framework illustrates three levels of understanding motivation in an educational environment: language level, learner level, and learning situation level. Language level represents aspects of

languages, such as culture, community and intellectual elements, and pragmatic values associated with L2 (Dörnyei, 2001). While learner level refers to individual characteristics in learning L2 in classrooms, learning situation level 'is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of L2 learning within a classroom setting' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 51). Situation-specific motives are related to course, teacher, and group. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the first two levels are influenced by Gardner's and Clément's theories, while the third is influenced by educational psychology.

Despite the effectiveness of the model described in the literature as classroom-friendly, three levels focus on orientation (integrative and instrumental), self (LLs) and the educational environment without concentrating on how L2 learners' culture might influence these facets of meaning. L2 researchers will examine LLs' different levels in a specific context without highlighting the importance of cross-cultural similarities and differences.

2.2.1.2.3 The Dörnyei and Otté Process Model of L2 Motivation (1998)

Another recent and comprehensive process model of L2 motivation was developed by (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The researcher's goals were to 'organise the motivational influences of L2 learning along a sequence of discrete actional events' and 'to synthesise several different lines of research in a unified framework, thereby constructing a non-reductionist, comprehensive model' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 65). Two dimensions in models are action sequence and motivational influences. Action sequence represents hopes which are transformed first into goals, then into actions to achieve goals and then into an evaluation. At the same time, motivational influences are forces and power influencing behaviours (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The behavioural process in the model is divided into three phases: the 'preactional' phase (what motivates LLs to the choice which precedes the action), the actional phase (what motivates LLs to act), and the 'postactional' phase (how LLs evaluate activity) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The model's motivational influences on different actions can boost or condemn learning depending on practical implementation by affecting goal setting, intention formation, initiation of intention, executive motivational influences and postactional evaluation (Dörnyei, 2001).

Although this model helps investigate L2 motivation as a process, it has some drawbacks. LLs have other social roles outside the classroom, which might affect their learning. In his reflection on the process model of L2 motivation, Dörnyei (2005) highlighted some limitations in conceptualising the dynamic nature of L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). First, in the process model, researchers can focus on specific action processes; however, in language classrooms, there is no way to comprehend the beginning or end of learning or if there is any interaction with other learning processes. Second, the model considers the actional process to occur in isolation,

although learners may be engaged in different actional processes. Kim (2005) stated that the model sufficiently explained successful L2 motivation but not unsuccessful L2 experiences and the learners' demotivation in learning languages.

Kim (2005) pointed out that most L2 motivation research in this period applied cross-sectional study and called for longitudinal research to provide a complete description and rich interpretation. It is possible to have LLs who lack motivation and show high motivation later or vice versa (Kim, 2005). Ushioda (1998) argued that quantitative research in this period did not present the dynamic nature of L2 motivation as a qualitative approach (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Findings of her longitudinal qualitative study of twenty Irish learners of French at a university in Ireland stressed that students' positive learning experiences influenced their motivation more than their learning goals, as the latter could take time to develop (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) expressed that the global spread of English as an international language and the need to conceptualise interaction between motivation and social context from a non-linear model shifted L2 motivation research to a new: the socio-dynamic phase.

2.2.1.3 The Dynamic View of Motivation

The dynamic view in the current period is a complex dynamic system. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the complexity of this approach is associated with the movement of a double pendulum in which two or more elements become incorporated with each other and change simultaneously. Acknowledging the limitation of the processing period, researchers consider the complexity of learners' motivation and shift their views of LLs in isolation to contemplate the importance of self and context. LLs are individuals who have social lives and bring those circumstances to the classroom, which might affect their learning process. Therefore, the person-in-context view pays attention to self and context in the learning process.

2.2.1.3.1 Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self-System

Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System was an attempt to uncover the problematic concept of Gardner's integrativeness. Al-Hoorie (2017) stated that 'because Gardner's integrativeness was conceived of as an effective factor, Dörnyei (2010) tries to uncover its cognitive underpinnings through reinterpreting it into the ideal L2 self' (p. 2). The model is considered a comprehensive framework synthesising the main dimensions of language learning motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Dörnyei's framework was influenced by Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory and Markus and Nurius's (1986) 'possible selves' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). On the one hand, LLs may feel uncomfortable when they experience discrepancies between the actual self, ideal self

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(aspired to achieve) and ought-to self (expected to achieve). Possible selves, on the other hand, 'are visions of self in a future state; they represent individual's ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 80). Dörnyei's framework considers LLs' motivation from three primary perspectives: ideal L2 self, 'ought to' L2 self and L2 learning experience (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

In an extensive database of published articles from 2005 to 2014, Boo et al. (2015) found that the model is the predominant framework in L2 motivation. However, the framework gives little attention to the influence of context on LLs' motivation. Thus, Ushioda (2009) proposed her model, focusing on individuals and their contexts.

2.2.1.3.2 Ushioda's Person in Context Model (2009)

Unlike the traditional linear approach to studying motivation, which traces the effects of different variables or cause-and-effect relationships, the relational approach focuses on the complexity of other relationships in a phenomenon (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Ushioda (2009) proposed a relational approach to understanding motivation through self and individual. There is a need to understand LLs' motivation by integrating different selves and identities shaped in learners' cultures and contexts. Motivation in this approach is seen as 'emergent' from the interaction between individuals and their society (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

The model supports understanding the context and interrelationship of the individual and learning environment in L2 motivation. Even though Ushioda's model represents a learner's motivation in a particular context, its focus was on the different identities of the individual (which is not the aim of the current study), as being a LL is one aspect of people's social identities. Moreover, goals are not clearly expressed in that model. As many L2 research use goal theories from educational psychology, the next section highlights the common theories employed in L2 or learning.

2.2.2 Goal Theories

Goal theories fall under cognitive theories in psychology, which view motivation as innate in an individual's cognition and beliefs, influenced by many social and environmental factors (Dörnyei, 2001). The 'need' and 'drive' concepts have been replaced by 'goal' concepts (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Students plan to study and invest their learning at different institutions for different goals, and LLs have their language plan (Nduwimana, 2019). Students' goals play an important role in reflecting reasons for students' engagement or disengagement in various activities (Pintrich, 2000). Research attention in this period (the cognitive period) has focussed on three areas: goal

setting, goal orientation (achievement goal theory), and goal content and multiplicity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory is conceptualised as 'human action is caused by purpose, and for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice' (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 11). Goals may differ according to the degree of specificity, difficulty, and goal commitment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2001). Even though this theory is designed for the workplace, it has been used in educational settings with a focus on the role of goals in students' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Achievement goal theory is a social cognitive theory that aims to understand students' reasons for engaging in academic achievement activities (Ganotice & Yeung, 2016; Pintrich, 2000). According to theory, two kinds of goals motivate students to learn in institutions: mastery and performance goals. Mastery goals (labelled self-referenced goals; task focus) focus on a task or learning (King & Ganotice, 2013; King et al., 2012). Performance goals (labelled other-referenced goals, ego goals, or ability goals) encourage students to reflect on their competence with others (Ganotice & Yeung, 2016; King & Ganotice, 2013; King et al., 2012). Later, approach and avoidance were added as dimensions of mastery and performance, shaping four types of achievement goals: mastery approach (improve an individual's skills), performance approach (demonstrate competence to others), mastery avoidance (avoid the loss of an individual's skills) and performance-avoidance (avoid demonstrating incompetence to others) (King et al., 2013; King et al., 2012).

Achievement goal theory is used extensively in the literature, suggesting mastery goals are positively associated with students' achievement and outcomes, while performance goals reflect uneven results (Hulleman et al., 2010; King et al., 2013). However, investigating achievement goals in different cultures raises the complexity of students' goals and the theory's limitations (King & Ganotice, 2013). The main focus of the theory is competence-linked between mastery and performance goals, and there is no focus on other types of goals, such as social goals, which are salient in collective cultures (King et al., 2013; King & Ganotice, 2013). Moreover, in mastery and performance measures in literature, items neglect the significance of other people, such as parents, teachers, and friends (King et al., 2013). King and Ganotice (2013) stated theory is criticised for its individualistic focus on goals and failure to consider social and extrinsic goals, which are influential in goal-oriented groups.

Unlike previous goal theories—goal setting and goal orientation—which focused on an individual's achievement, goal content and multiplicity stressed that students might be motivated by other goals unrelated to competence, achievement, or academic performance (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Wentze's (2000) work investigates what students try to achieve through the

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content of their goals and provides insightful observations by raising the importance of integrating multiple goals to understand students' motivation in educational institutions. Non-academic goals, such as social or extrinsic goals, can motivate students to learn and should be explored.

To sum up, goals are not shaped in isolation; an understanding of context and culture is essential in motivation research, and these can be interpreted via the PIT model. I argue that applying PIT to research on L2 motivation may enrich our understanding of its complexities, as LLs have different goals in collective cultures to master an FL, mainly if it is required to further their university studies. Examining LLs' motivation through the lens of PIT is significant as the model presents both sense of self and goals as critical components of shaping meaning in learners that might affect their motivation and engagement. Previous western models of L2 motivation (Appendix A) do not highlight the importance of other goals in L2 motivation. The application of these models to ESL contexts would not be the same as for EFL contexts. LLs in both contexts have different goals and senses of self which are shaped through the facilitating conditions of their contexts. King et al. (2019) point out the issues with models that do not include cultural context and propose a framework (2.3.2.1) that presents a schematic representation of theory in L2/FL learning. The following section discusses PIT and its relevance as a framework for the current research study.

2.3 Theoretical Models of Motivation Underpinning this Study

2.3.1 Personal Investment Theory (PIT)

Personal investment theory was developed with a view to considering cultural context when researching motivation in learning (Maehr, 1984), and emphasises the importance of meaning in student motivation. Maehr and Archer (1985) defined the term personal investment as

'the underlying meaning of patterns associated with motivation. When behavioural direction, persistence, performance, continuing motivation, and variation in activity level are observed, a person is investing his or her resources (time, talent, energy) in a certain way' (p. 7).

PIT is an integrative and multifaceted framework for examining achievement motivation that understands multiple factors influencing learning (King & Ganotice, 2014; King et al., 2019; King & McInerney, 2012). According to King et al. (2012), PIT is a social cognitive theory that can explain students' engagement and disengagement through understanding three crucial facets of meaning: the facilitating conditions (action possibilities), sense of self and perceived goals. In any

educational context, these three core concepts are influenced by contributing factors, such as information about possible actions, teaching-learning situation, personal experience, age or life stage and sociocultural context, as presented in Figure 1.

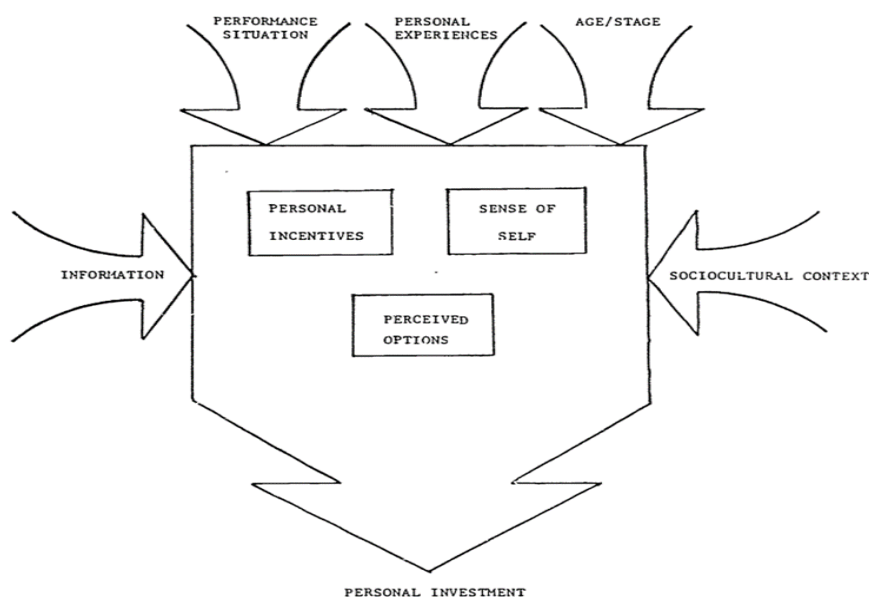


Figure 1 Personal Investment Model (from Maehr & Archer, 1985)

The first facet of meaning in PIT is facilitating conditions. The latter refers to behavioural possibilities available and appropriate for a person in a given situation (King & Ganotice, 2014; King & McInerney, 2012). According to Gray-Lee and Granzin (1997), these might be perceived barriers or opportunities, where the former represents limited options, and the latter represents the supported options. King and McInerney (2014) highlighted that facilitating conditions could include various social-cultural factors, such as negative/positive influence, support of parents, teachers and peers, religion, socioeconomic status, and regional differences. In addition, King et al. (2018) asserted that the effect and valuing of schools are among facilitating conditions which can influence an individual's engagement in learning.

The second facet of meaning in PIT is the sense of self, which refers to more or less organised collections of perceptions, beliefs and feelings related to the individual (King & McInerney, 2012). The first component of the three types of sense of self is a reliance associated with Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a learner's belief in their ability and capability to accomplish a specific goal (Bandura, 1997), while self-reliance refers to a student's self-confidence within an academic setting (King & McInerney, 2014). Second, a sense of purpose relates to the importance of education in a student's life (King & McInerney, 2012). Third, self-concept refers to cognitive and emotional beliefs (Csizér & Magid, 2014) that students have about their abilities in an educational setting, either positive or negative self-concept (King & McInerney, 2012).

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The last facet of meaning, perceived goals, refers to goals students seek to achieve when they join an institution or perform specific activities. PIT proposes a different set of goals, which are different to achievement goal theory, which focuses on mastery and performance. King & Ganotice (2013) presented McInerney and colleagues' hierarchical, multidimensional model of motivational goals to understand the broad range of goals. There are eight specific first-order goals: task, effort, competition, social power, social concern, social affiliation, praise, and token. These can be grouped under four general goals: mastery, performance, social, and extrinsic. According to King and Ganotice (2013), this model is an extension of traditional achievement goal theory. It presents a wider set of goals that are thought to be applicable across many cultural contexts. Applying western theories of motivation to Asian and eastern cultures may not reflect the same findings as in a western setting because of cross-cultural differences. To elaborate, King and McInerney (2014) have asserted that personal choice is the primary facilitator of intrinsic motivation and engagement in self-determination theory in western culture. However, this is not the case with Asian students, who often trust others to make choices. Social goals have driven collectivist cultures such as Asian (Chinese) culture to highly value academic achievement (Cheng & Lam, 2013), unlike western cultures, which consider social goals unhealthy as they reflect extrinsic motivation (King & McInerney, 2014).

Regarding self-efficacy, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2016) highlighted the limitations of psychological and educational theories that value individualistic merits in comprehending the high-level achievement of Asian students. All these limitations can reflect differences between western and non-western cultures in motivational achievement theories. However, culture can mean different things to different people. There is a need to be cautious about generalising about culture and society as these things are constantly changing, as in the situation of the current research context. Thus, it is essential to have a theoretical framework to pursue an understanding of cross-cultural variations in LLS' motivation.

PIT pays attention to the role of culture in students' learning (King & McInerney, 2014). All facets of meaning in PIT are etic (in all cultures) but can be emic (specific) according to the context (King et al., 2018; King & McInerney, 2014). L2 researchers Dörnyei and Ushioda have highlighted the importance of context in shaping an individual's (LL's) motivation, while King and McInerney (2014) assert that 'these three components of meaning are dynamically constructed in context to determine and shape the students' decisions to invest in the academic enterprise or not' (p. 178). Therefore, PIT can be a 'middle path between the extremes of cultural relativism, which argues that all forms of cross-cultural comparison are invalid, and cultural absolutism, which raises the status of pseudo-etic constructs derived from Western theorising into universal norms' (King &

McInerney, 2014, p. 194). Using the theory in L2 motivation research might enrich the understanding of LLs' engagement in an OL/BL environment.

Ganotice and Yeung (2016) investigated the influence of achievement goals on Filipino students' sense of self, facilitating conditions and outcomes. Researchers justified the worthiness of using PIT for specific reasons. First, the theory includes different types of goals as social goals, salient in Asian settings, unlike in western settings. This justification coincides with King and Ganotice's (2013) reflection on the importance of social and extrinsic goals proposed in PIT in addressing the limitations of traditional achievement goal theory. Second, researchers stressed the framework's effectiveness in understanding the role of facilitating conditions and perceptions of self in students' achievement and engagement. King et al. (2013) investigated the PIT model's cross-cultural applicability in the Philippine context using construct validation techniques from both within- and between-network approaches. Researchers concluded that mastery goals were a reliable predictor of learning outcomes. Even after adjusting the effects of mastery and performance goals, social goals could still predict a sizable variance. In another study, King et al. (2012b) pointed out that social goals significantly predict academic engagement. Researchers advised scholars to look at social goals that might be more important in cross-cultural contexts rather than concentrating on mastery and performance goals. King and Ganotice (2013) found that mastery, performance, and extrinsic goals correlated positively with academic success. Social and external goals impacted how students felt about school and education. The findings confirmed the hierarchical and multidimensional model of student motivation's cross-cultural validity in a non-western setting.

2.3.2 PIT in L2

The term 'investment' was used in L2 motivation theory by Norton Peirce (1995). Norton Peirce (1995) argued that L2 motivation might not conceptualise the relationship between the individual and social world as no developed social identity theory incorporates LLs and language learning context. The author argued against using the term 'investment' rather than motivation to comprehend LLs' complicated relationship with the target language. Collecting data from immigrant women in Canada, Norton Peirce (1995) illustrated how, under some conditions, immigrants created, responded to, or resisted opportunities to speak English. The author argued that learning English in that context (Canadian) was expanded to include a socio-political aspect and was considered a substantial personal investment for social success in the host country (Kim, 2005). Darwin and Norton (2021) explain that 'while motivation is a psychological construct that focuses on conscious and unconscious factors, investment is primarily sociological and focuses on how histories, lived experiences and social practices shape language learning' (p.1). Darwin (2019)

clarifies that investment ‘involves how learners invest in their learning at particular times and in particular settings, as they engage in a range of social interactions and seek a wider range of material and symbolic resources’ (p.247). However, the present study does not aim to explore LLs’ identities; instead, it seeks to understand their overall engagement experiences in the online community and social and cultural factors that might affect investment by focusing on their motivation through the lens of PIT.

PIT theory is considered an integrative framework that sheds light on all the facets that shape students’ academic motivation: self, goals, and contextual social environment. Although previous studies on self-concept in foreign-language learning have highlighted its dynamic nature (Mercer, 2011; Rubio, 2014) and motivational goals, little is known about using the PIT model in online language learning. In this thesis I argue that using PIT as a theoretical framework may help to understand the complexity and dynamics of NTS motivation and engagement in blended learning or online language courses in complex cultures such as in Saudi Arabia. Due to the limited amount of available research that uses the PIT theory as a framework in L2 motivation, the following section presents the PIT framework applied by King et al. (2019) to L2 and empirical studies in L2 motivation, which focus on self, goals, and context.

2.3.2.1 PIT Framework in L2/FL (King et al., 2019)

In a recent paper entitled ‘Personal Investment Theory: A multi-faceted framework to understand second and foreign language motivation’, King et al. (2019) explained the limitations of L2 motivation research in all three facets of meaning in PIT. Researchers proposed a framework which combines facilitating conditions, a sense of self and perceived goals in L2/FL learning. As shown in Figure 2, facilitating conditions can be a set of options that help LLs invest their learning in the classroom from the perspective of the positive or negative impact of one’s family, teacher, peers, school environment and socio-cultural norms. In the article by King et al. (2019) on the PIT framework, consideration of sense of self includes positive self-concept, negative self-concept, ideal and ‘ought-to’ self. However, King et al. (2019) argue that student self-concept in other subjects might affect their self-concept in L2/FL and suggest examining the relationship between them. Perceived goals represent the last facet in the framework, and they are not restricted to mastery and performance goals, as there are also social and extrinsic goals to learn L2/FL. Social goals refer to ‘the degree to which a student is motivated by affiliation or social concern’, while extrinsic goals reflect ‘the degree to which a student is motivated by praise or reward’, which is different from a performance as a student is motivated to compete with others (McInerney, 2008, p. 872).

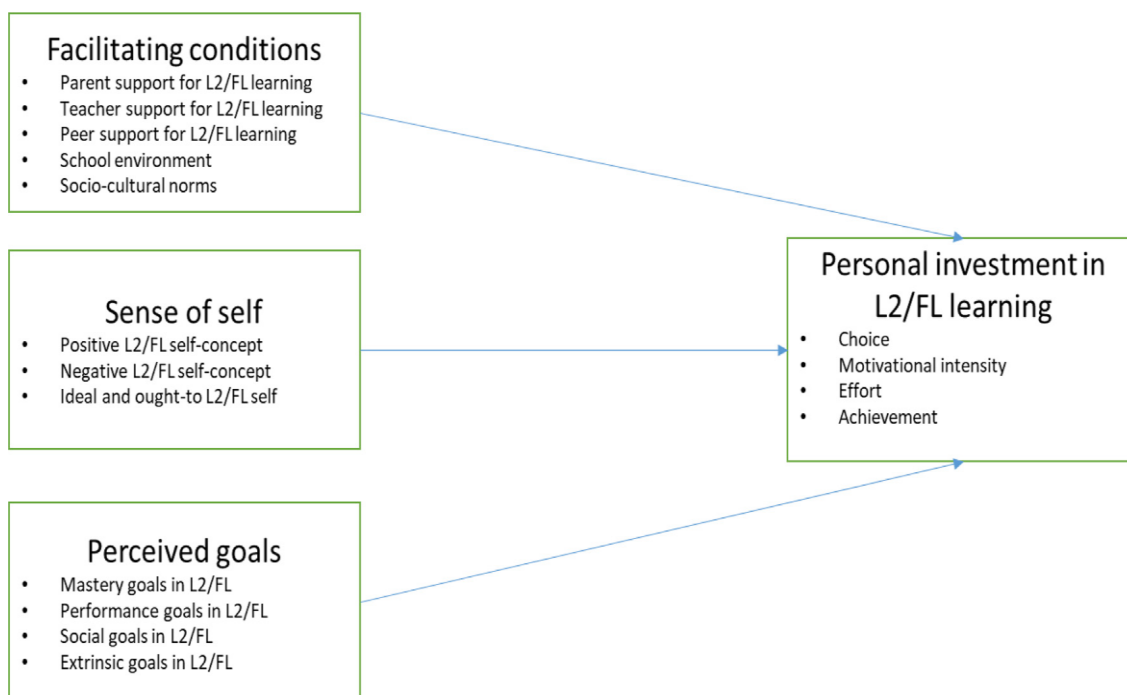


Figure 2 PIT framework in L2/FL (King et al., 2019)

Da Silva (2016) explained how PIT theory was ideally suited to the analysis of EFL motivation in Japan. According to Da Silva, the theory is ‘sensitive to the emic aspects of different cultures, focusing on what motivates people rather than whether they are motivated or not, and the outcomes of the personal investment are also multiple, including achievement, personal growth, and life satisfaction’ (Da Silva, 2016. p. 310). Inspired by Da Silva’s (2006) application of PIT in studying the motivation of female Japanese EFL students at university level (Appendix B Appendix B), Figure 3 is based on Maehr’s PIT and presents essential aspects of the social, cultural, and educational context in Saudi Arabia for NTSs learning English as a foreign language that supports in analysing the current study data.

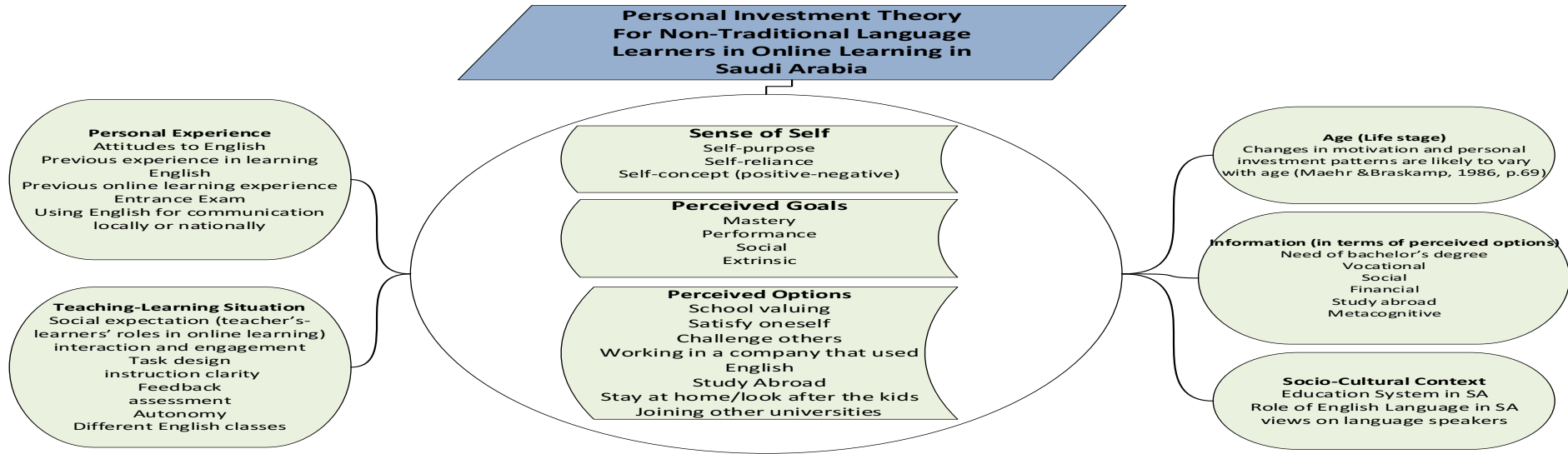


Figure 3 PIT and the contextual factors that influence motivation and engagement

2.3.2.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Due to the lack of L2 that explored PIT, I need to focus on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for data analysis. According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, the degree of self-determination has the biggest effect on how well a language is learned. To become self-determined, learners must have a certain level of agency, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). A learner who is self-motivated has internalised motivation to the point where additional external motivation can further elevate the existing degree of intrinsic motivation. In contrast, extrinsic motivation factors may hinder a learner's ability to create their own intrinsic motivation if they lack self-determination and have little intrinsic motivation (Dornyei, 2001).

Self-determination theory emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation as well as acknowledging the extrinsic variables that influence learner motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dornyei, 2001). According to Harmer (2001), intrinsic motivation originates from within the person; for example, a person may be motivated by their enjoyment of the learning process or their wish to feel better about themselves. Motivation that originates from outside sources, on the other hand, is known as extrinsic motivation. Examples include the need to pass a test, the desire for financial gain, or the prospect of future travel. Some researchers assert that intrinsic motivation outweighs extrinsic motivation in educational institutions (Thohir, 2017), and many believe that intrinsic motivation produces better learning results than extrinsic motivation. However, the majority of LLs participating in learning tasks in an EFL programme are motivated by extrinsic motivation (Dorney, 1994).

In view of the lack of published research that examines other types of goals in learning, the PIT model would appear to be appropriate to the language learning context as it separates out interesting facets of motivation and enables a more specific analysis of the factors involved in successful language learning.

2.3.3 Related Studies

L2 literature is rich with studies that examine different facets of meaning in PIT theory individually or by combining two components. For example, a great deal of research attention has focussed on various influential frameworks in L2 motivation 2.2). Despite the abundance of L2 motivation research, King et al. (2019) have stated that PIT theory is not used in L2 research and encouraged researchers to use theory as a framework for understanding LLs' motivation. PIT studies focus on adolescence in school settings in the collective cultures (Ganotice et al., 2013; King et al., 2013;

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King et al., 2012a; King et al., 2012b; King & Ganotice, 2013; King & McInerney, 2012). Besides, the only studies on L2 motivation at university level that applied theory as a framework were in the Japanese context (Da Silva et al., 2006; Da Silva et al., 2008; Da Silva, 2016). In his thesis, da Silva (2005) designed the Inventory of University Motivation (IUM) for university study in general and the study of EFL based on McInerney's Inventory of School Motivation (ISM). ISM is an exploratory survey measuring the components of PIT in Maehr's theory. ISM has been validated in various contexts, such as Filipino, Chinese, and Australian (King et al., 2012a; King et al., 2013; King & Ganotice, 2013; King et al., 2012b). The IUM, on the other hand, has only been validated in the Japanese context (Da Silva et al., 2006; Da Silva, 2016; Da Silva & McInerney, 2005). To understand NTSS' motivation to learn English online, I use IUM in the current study (details in 3.7.1.13.7.1.1).

LLs are motivated to learn for different goals. Researchers recently have aimed to understand LLs' goals and their relationship to demotivation '...flip side of motivation' that 'reduces the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an on-going action' (Jahedizadeh et al., 2016, p.2). For example, Allahdadi et al. (2016) examined 125 EFL learners at two universities in Iran to investigate the role of goal orientation in students' demotivation. While mastery-orientated students sought to master L2 skills, performance-orientated students preferred to outperform others, and avoidance-orientated students chose to hide their lack of ability. Results show that types of goals critically influence students' demotivation and achievement. Through the demotivation scale and achievement goal questionnaire, it was revealed that there are positive and significant relationships between avoidance goal orientation and students' lack of interest and experiences of failure.

On the other hand, there are negative meaningful relationships between lack of interest and experience of failure and mastery and performance goal orientations. This point coincides with the Jahedizadeh et al. (2016) study, as two factors affect students' mastery goals. Among contextual factors in previous research, which played roles as demotivators and were significantly related to learners' performance and avoidance goal orientation, are teachers, characteristics of classes and classroom materials. The two previous studies explored LLs' goals from a western perspective in their studies (mastery and performance goals). However, in a collective context, as the literature reveals, other types of goals, such as social goals, affect LLs and might impact their motivation. Cultural and contextual factors must be examined in a mixed methods approach to conceptualise motivation.

L2 researchers used different goal theories in EFL contexts to incorporate self with goals as facets of meaning. Hosseini Fatemi et al. (2013) applied goal-setting theory to examine 93 EFL students'

motivation and self-efficacy. Giving participants essay choices (two) with different goals (A: six paragraphs with six references; B: five paragraphs with five references; and C: four paragraphs with four references), findings revealed that students with the most self-efficacy (intrinsically motivated) chose a challenging goal, while extrinsically motivated students chose moderate goal and unmotivated learners chose easy goal. Nasrollahi-Mouziraji & Birjandi (2016) utilised achievement goal theory (mastery and performance, approach, and avoidance) to investigate the effects of listening self-efficacy, goals, and task value on students' self-regulation.

Even though Ushioda (2009a) highlights the influence of context on L2 motivation, most studies examine contextual factors and focus on one dimension. In contrast to PIT, which stresses the importance of their integration to understand Ls' motivation (King et al., 2019). Kim (2009) highlighted the impact of contextual and social factors on forming L2 selves. Following Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Engeström's (1999) activity theory, Kim analysed the L2 selves of two South Korean ESL learners in Canada under the pseudonyms Woo and Joon. Although both learners were learning English to obtain jobs in Korea, participants reflected this instrumentality (a future career in the home country) differently. In Woo's case, instrumentality was linked to his goal and then incorporated into the ideal L2 self through the participant's experience in daily communication with his homestay owner.

Conversely, Joon did not have specific personal goals for learning English, and this instrumentality was not adequately internalised and thus reflected the prevention aspect of extrinsic motivation, which makes up L2 ought self. The researcher analysed the participants' self-systems from a social-cultural perspective and concluded that the two L2 selves are not antithetical. Meaning 'instrumentality in learning an L2 can be merged into either the ideal L2 self or the ought-to L2 self, depending on the degree of internalisation' (Kim, 2009, p. 291). Constructing a learner's positive, competent, promotion based future L2 self relies upon many sociocultural factors, such as support from the community.

Moskovsky et al. (2016) conducted a study with 360 participants in Saudi Arabia to investigate the association between L2MSS and L2 accomplishment. Components of the L2MSS were not consistently associated with achievement, as judged by learners' reading and writing assessments in this study. The finding demonstrated that self-reported motivation does not necessarily translate into behaviour (what participants said they did could not represent what they did). Kim (2009) examined participants' goals and selves from a social-cultural perspective; however, the context was ESL, which is different from EFL. In addition, participants in Kim's study had goals to study English, and they travelled abroad to practise the language in an authentic context

(Canada). The situation might be different to LLs in their home country, who are forced to master the language to further their studies in a new learning environment with technology.

2.4 Engagement in Learning

2.4.1 Definition and Dimensions

Astin (1984) developed the 'involvement' theory of engagement, in which engagement means 'the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience' (p. 518). In this definition, Astin implied that engagement includes behavioural (physical), cognitive and emotional components (psychological). According to Astin's (1984) definition, an engaged student spends time and effort studying and interacting with peers and faculty, while a disengaged student does not. Finn and Zimmer (2012) asserted that disengaged students neither participate in school activities nor have any feelings of value or belonging, which might lead them to drop out or fail their studies. Despite increasing, research on engagement in recent decades, Eccles and Wang (2012) argued that there are variations in scholars' definitions of engagement, which leads to difficulty grounding the construct.

Henrie et al. (2015) stated that engagement studies could be through different activity levels at different times. Some scholars adopt narrower definitions by conceptualising engagement in academic activity using motivational models (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Others prefer a broader meaning to include students' engagement experiences in an institution, achievement, interaction with peers and teachers, institutional activities, and overall learning experience (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Research in HE indicates that student engagement determines students' successful learning experience in university study (Arrosagaray et al., 2019). Engagement is considered a multidimensional construct (Appleton et al., 2006; Fisher et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013). The number of dimensions of construct varies among researchers. A review of the literature shows that the construct can have two, or three (Appleton et al., 2006), four dimensions (Appleton et al., 2006; Reeve, 2012) or five dimensions in OL (Redmond et al., 2018). The term student engagement in this thesis means the actual cognitive, behavioural, affective, collaborative, and social interactions students invest in learning English in an online mode.

Fin's (1989) participation and identification model can reflect the first group's view of two dimensions. In the participation/identification model, Finn highlights the behavioural dimension (active in class and school) and the emotional-affective dimension (sense of belonging/valuing learning). The second group views the construct as having three subtypes; however, there are variations in the classification. For example, Fredricks et al. (2004) stated that engagement has

behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. While Svalberg (2009), in her model, engagement with language (EWL), highlights the importance of cognitive and affective dimensions and replaces the behavioural with the social dimension as LLS work collaboratively with peers in social interaction (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Another group (four dimensions) includes either academic engagement (Ariani, 2012) or agentic engagement (Reeve, 2012) in addition to previous primary subtypes (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural). The last group (five dimensions) points out that, unlike the traditional classroom, engagement in OL has a fifth collaborative component besides the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social dimensions (Redmond et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Frameworks for Understanding Engagement

Kahu (2013) and Kahu et al. (2015) categorised approaches to understanding students' engagement in literature: the behavioural approach studies students' behaviour and teaching practices; the socio-cultural approach focuses on social factors which affect engagement; the psychological approach views engagement as an internal process in the individual; and constructive approach studies students' identities in an educational context (Kahu et al., 2015). Kahu (2013) clarified the limitations of the previous approach in her attempt to conceptualise students' engagements. Later, Kahu (2013) proposed a psycho-social framework that examines complex engagement processes, focussing on different influences—individual, institutional, and social contexts—combining behavioural, socio-cultural, and psychological approaches to provide rich comprehension of student experiences. The framework has been criticised for not explicating what students engage with (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015), which resulted in a revision to include an 'educational interface' (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Kahu and Nelson (2018) have noted the importance of the 'educational interface' as students are agents in learning and experiencing the world. The framework conceptualises engagement as a construct in the educational system. It consists of four psychological constructs which might mediate engagement: self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being.

Other frameworks for investigating engagement in other instructional modes such as blended and online learning is the Community of Inquiry (CoI), one of the most influential frameworks in OL (Daspit & D'Souza, 2012; Garrison, 2016; Garrison et al., 2010). Garrison et al. (1999) developed a comprehensive framework that supports researchers investigating OL communities. The framework consists of three presences: cognitive, social, and teaching, that help deep learning to occur when these three presences overlap in the educational experience (Akyol et al., 2009). These presences are based on learning and adult learning theories (Meyer, 2014) to emphasise the importance of critical thinking and collaboration to build effective OL communities (Akyol et al., 2009) and encourage learners in these communities to be active learners (Figure 4).

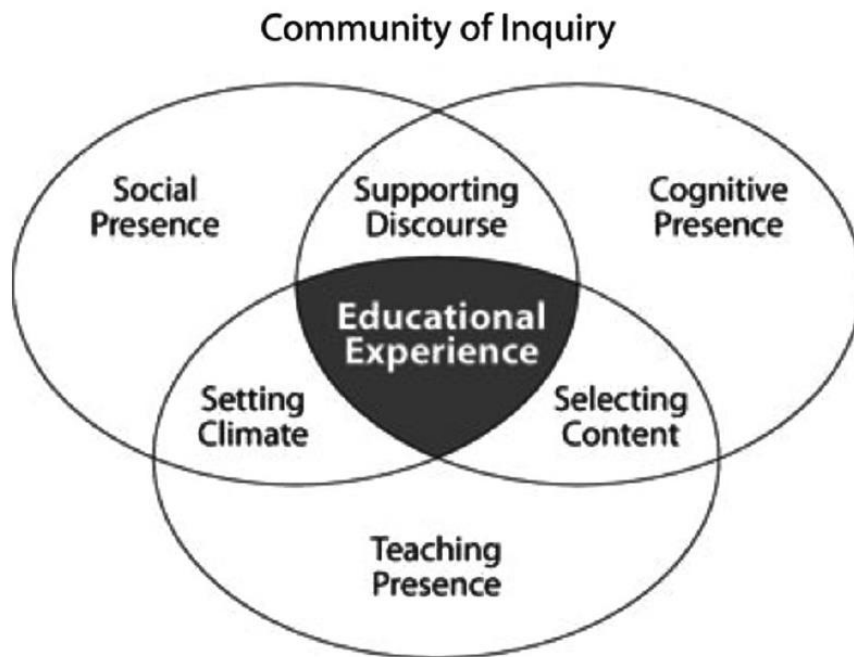


Figure 4 Community of Inquiry Framework (Meyer, 2014)

Cognitive presence refers to the extent to which learners can construct knowledge through sustained communication, and it is a significant component of critical thinking that is necessary for HE (Garrison et al., 1999). Garrison (2009) defined social presence as participants 'identifying with the community, communicating purposefully in a trusting environment, and developing interpersonal relationship' (p.7). The significance of this presence relies on the nature of communication that educators sustain in these communities to promote critical thinking among students (Garrison, 2009; Meyer, 2014). Both cognitive and social are influenced by the last critical presence, the teaching presence (Shea & Bidjerano, 2009), which refers to the teachers' roles and learning instructions in the learning community that can be determiners of students' satisfaction and perceived learning (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). According to Meyer (2014), the presence is significant as it supports learners with structure and leadership. Integrating these presences is supposed to promote students' engagement, and having a cognitive, social, and teaching presence is not enough to build community and construct knowledge through reflection and interaction (Meyer, 2014).

Meyer (2014) acknowledges that several researchers have suggested changes to the COI. In their re-examination of the model, Shea and Bidjerano (2010) argued that COI could not capture the certain collaborative activities essential to learner-centred OL strategies. Therefore, learning presence (Shea et al., 2012) is integrated with other presences in the previous model to develop the learning community by shedding light on learners' self-regulation strategies and social activities. Garrison and Akyol (2013) refute the last position and consider it as a breach of

fundamental principles of the COI framework because the model is constructed on collaborative-constructivist methodologies that are inclusive of both individuals (self-regulated) and distributed (co-regulated) experiences. Garrison and Akyol (2013) incorporate a metacognitive perspective into the COI framework to acknowledge a recent shift in metacognition theory that has experienced a transition from individualistic models to a more socially situated orientation. COI is an informative and supportive framework for understanding student engagement in OL communities; however, this study aims to explore the engagement of NTS inside and outside classes. In addition, the COI does not focus on the emotional side, which is critical in NTSs' learning experiences due to the challenges they face during their study with other commitments. I argue that the COI framework makes understanding NTSs involvement in OL communities easier. However, NTSs might engage differently in the educational experience's overlap of the three presences—cognitive, social, and teaching—as numerous internal and external factors affect the participant's perception of involvement. Thus, COI supports the analysis of understanding engagement in classes. Still, it is also essential to integrate a framework that can provide a general understanding of learners' engagement in online communities and outside learning environments.

Halverson and Graham's (2019) model reflects that engagement in BL is influenced by learner characteristics and learning experience, which, in turn, will affect learning outcomes. According to the authors, cognitive and emotional engagement are critical factors for understanding students' engagement in BL. On the one hand, cognitive engagement 'comprises several first-order factors, some of which indicate the quantity of cognitive engagement, others the quality' (Halverson & Graham, 2019, p. 153). Factors which indicate the quantity of cognitive engagement are attention, effort, and time on task.

In contrast, factors which highlight the quality of cognitive engagement are cognitive and metacognitive strategies, absorption, and curiosity (Halverson & Graham, 2019). On the other hand, emotional engagement in human-computer integration concerns feelings which reflect boredom, flow, confusion, happiness, and frustration (Halverson & Graham, 2019). In their framework, researchers divided emotional engagement into positive engagement (happiness, enjoyment, and confidence) and negative engagement (boredom, frustration, and anxiety). Before the pandemic, the study aimed to utilise this model to understand engagement in the blended university; however, the shift to OL evoked me to search the literature and become aware of a more comprehended engagement model, Redmond et al. (2018) engagement model in OL.

In reviewing the literature, Redmond et al. (2018) proposed a framework to understand student engagement in OL (Figure 5). In their framework, researchers highlight the importance of five

elements of engagement in OL: cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and collaborative. The cognitive, behaviour and emotion are common elements in investigating engagement in literature. The other two elements, social and collaborative, are essential to understand LLs' engagement in OL. According to Greene (2015), cognitive engagement is a superordinate construct with basic strategies for thinking about what one is learning, reflections on how to learn best, and exerting mental effort to facilitate strategy and reflections. Ng et al. (2018) stated difficulty in observing cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement in literature is questioning, exchanging ideas, and making evaluative comments (Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

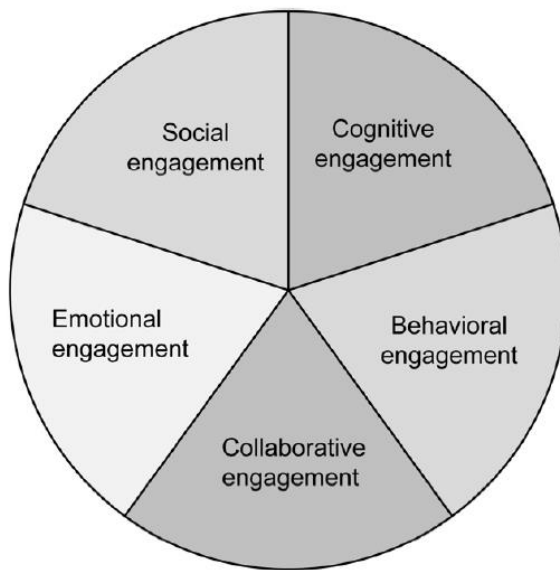


Figure 5 Online engagement framework in higher education (Redmond et al., 2018)

The second component is behavioural engagement. Researchers have clarified the differences between cognitive and behavioural engagement. Eccles and Wang (2012) state that cognitive engagement can be measured by effects such as learners' abilities to provide information, ask and answer questions, contribute, enhance an idea, explain concepts, justify arguments, and evaluate situations. Behavioural engagement, however, focuses on the less visible effort expended in mind (Appleton et al., 2006). In OL, blackboard analytics can support understanding learners' behavioural engagement. Although these analytics are relevant to understanding learners' presence in the learning environment, they provide a very restricted and superficial analysis of student engagement (Robinson & Cook, 2018). Examples of observable behavioural aspects are attendance, participation, and assignment completion (Fredricks et al., 2004). While some studies showed that better behavioural engagement leads to better grades (Handelsman et al., 2005; Koç, 2017; Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013), other studies found that this was not the case for some learners (Davies & Graff, 2005). It is worth noting that attendance is not considered an indicator of

behavioural engagement in this study as the students were required to attend classes and missing more than 25% of lessons resulted in a denial to pass at SEU. Students might participate in online courses following university regulations; however, there might be no accurate indicators of their engagement in learning. Yehya (2020) highlights challenges in measuring behavioural engagement indicators in e-learning environments as inaccuracy of students' time on activities when they browse other websites.

Emotional engagement is the third component, and can be either positive or negative. Over the last three decades, several studies have shown that affective variables significantly impact second language learning and performance (Williams and Burden, 1999; Dörnyei, 2003). Artino (2007) declares that positive or negative emotions such as enjoyment, confusion, and embarrassment are most likely to influence students' engagement and persistence in learning. Many studies in the literature showed that positive feelings in OL are associated with persistence (Fathali & Okada, 2016; Yu et al., 2020) and interaction with peers, teachers, and content (Molinillo et al., 2018; Lai, 2019; Yu et al., 2020). Recent studies have acknowledged how positive and negative emotions experienced by online learners inhibit or support the learning process (Zembylas, 2008, Ge et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2020; Angelaki & Mavroidis, 2013; Pretz et al., 2010; Liew & Tan, 2016; Moss, 2004, von Prümmer, 2005; Frenzel et al., 2018).

Redmond et al. (2018) stress the importance of social and collaborative engagement in online communities in an engagement framework. According to researchers, social engagement means 'participation in academic as well as non-academic activities which occur outside the virtual classroom' and creating purposeful relationships with others' (Redmond et al., 2018, p.191). Collaborative engagement, on the other hand, means 'the development of different relationships and networks that support learning, including collaboration with peers, instructors, industry, and the educational institution' (Redmond et al., 2018, p.195). According to COI, social presence with cognitive and teaching presences is fundamental in an OL environment (Garrison, 2009). Without a social presence, learners might experience the isolation that might affect their learning (Dolan et al., 2017; Angelaki & Marvroidis, 2013; Muliya et al., 2020; Serdyukova & Serdyukov, 2006; Pittaway & Moss, 2014). Many studies highlighted the importance of student-teacher interaction in OL (Barak et al., 2016; Angelaki & Marvroidis, 2013). Social presence and interaction can be through different platforms, such as social networks or media. According to Dolan et al. (2017), the discussion about engagement and community building in OL is incomplete without including the role of social media. To understand the complexity of engagement in online education, the comprehensive framework by Redmond et al. (2018) is the focus of the current study.

2.5 NTSS' Motivation and Engagement

Researchers investigate NTS motivation quantitatively and qualitatively from different perspectives (Alshebou, 2019; Boiché & Stephan, 2014; Novotný et al., 2019; Pedrotti & Nistor, 2019; Rothes et al., 2014; Stephan et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013). Studies examining NTSS provided varied findings that contrast their learner motivation with those of TSs in HE. While Adams and Corbett (2010) found that TSs and NTSS attend school with the same goals and motivation, Bye et al. (2007), Novotný et al. (2019), Rothes et al. (2014, 2017) and Sánchez-Gelabert et al. (2020) found that NTSS have more intrinsic motivation. Through the lens of self-determination theory in a Czech context, Novotný et al. (2019) compare particular types of academic motivation using the Academic Motivation Scale between TSs and NTSS. The regression analysis shows that NTSS have a high value for intrinsic motivation and a low value for extrinsic motivation compared to younger learners. This finding contrasts with Vanslambrouck et al. (2016) qualitative study interviewing nine adult learners in blended courses (online and F2F components) in Belgium. The participants in the latter study reflect multiple motives to persist in adult education; however, their primary motives are linked to controlled motivation. Similarly, in a mixed-method study based on a theoretical framework of the feminist perspective, Alshebou (2019) investigated female adult learners' motivation at a Kuwaiti university. The survey results show that participants reflect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with an emphasis on extrinsic motivation. In another study in the ESL context in Australia, Gately et al. (2017) found that adult Sudanese students are motivated extrinsically.

Rothes et al. (2017) examine autonomous and controlled motivation profiles and their impact on 188 adult learners from two Portuguese urban areas. The cluster analysis and multivariate analysis of covariance reveal different effects of the four motivational groups (high quantity, good quality, low quantity, and poor quality) in self-efficacy, engagement, and learning. Students with good quality and high-quantity motivation group scores are higher in learning strategies and engagement than the poor quality and low-quantity motivation groups. In contrast, only the excellent quality group scored the highest self-efficacy score. Besides, there was motivational variation according to gender, educational level, and occupational status. In Rothes et al. (2017) study, female adult learners were overrepresented in excellent quality groups.

Studies have pointed out that NTSS demonstrate more engagement and motivation than TSs (Arjomandi et al., 2018; Rouborn et al., 2018). In an exciting and inspiring study, Arjomandi et al. (2018) use Kahu's (2013) conceptual framework of engagement to analyse and compare different groups of students (TSs and NTSS) in terms of psychological influence, engagement, and proximal consequences. Using quantitative methods with 220 undergraduate students majoring in business

in Australia, results showed that NTSs demonstrated greater and higher engagement and motivation than TSs. Rabourn et al. (2018) analysed data from the 2013 and 2014 administrations of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which measures all first-year students' experiences at US universities. The findings show that NTSs are more academically engaged than TSs. In addition, despite their little interaction with faculty and peers, the NTSs have a positive perception of interacting with others. This is similar to the work of Fryer and Bovee (2016) in an EFL Japanese blended learning context, who examined the effect of teacher support, prior experience with smartphones and computers and prior subject competence on student motivation. The results show that teacher support is found to have a direct effect on student motivation for e-learning. According to the researchers, teacher-supportive efforts in the first weeks of the academic year might long affect student motivation.

In terms of this body of learners' engagement, adult learners do not learn entirely independently, even in blended or online courses, and they interact with teachers and peers, which might affect their learning motivation. Akbari et al. (2016) looked at the influence of social networks on students' language learning processes, motivation, and engagement. The researchers designed a quantitative study to examine forty Iranian PhD students living in Schengen countries with an experimental group of twenty students using social media networks Skype and Facebook. In contrast, the control group attended only F2F language classes. The findings showed that students in the experimental group had more motivation and engagement than those in the control group by the end of the course and had positive attitudes towards using technology in language learning compared to the control group. The researchers agreed with Reeve (2012) that engagement and motivation predict students' outcomes.

Şahin Kızıl (2014) investigated the effectiveness of blended courses (both online and F2F components) by exploring the perceptions, engagement, and satisfaction of 68 LLs in Turkey surveyed for two consecutive semesters. In the study, the researcher used engagement statements concerning flow elements (emotional and cognitive engagement). The findings show positive reflections on the blended learning experience in improving students' language skills and engagement. However, engagement is not static and may increase or fluctuate over time. In a quantitative comparison of students' engagement between different blended courses, Madriz and Nocente (2016) assert that in many disciplines, participation is more noticeable in the second year at university than in the first. These studies indicate that NTSs are motivated to learn despite variable engagement levels, as both motivation and engagement may fluctuate during the learning experience.

Wyatt (2011) found that training NTSs in technology use improved student engagement and learning outcomes; however, many current online and blended learning courses do not prepare students for a technology-heavy learning environment. This was notably the case during the emergency shift to OL during the Covid pandemic in 2020, and it is likely that many students felt unsure about their ability to achieve in the new, wholly online learning culture. Research into student motivation and engagement in online English learning during the pandemic is urgently needed for many reasons. Students' ambivalent or negative attitudes towards online learning have, unsurprisingly, been shown to negatively affect their motivation and engagement, therefore knowing how to motivate and engage students in the online classroom is critical to the quality and effectiveness of this mode of delivery (Ferrer et al., 2020). Recent studies have shown that in many cases, the sudden switch to online learning in 2020 compromised students' learning experiences and lowered motivation, interest, enthusiasm to learn and engagement in classes (Agung et al., 2020; Maican & Cocorada, 2021; Mese & Sevilen, 2021). On the positive side, online instruction potentially offers a very flexible approach to learning, especially for NTSs, who are often part-time students with commitments other than course attendance. However, little is known about how this group engages in OL while simultaneously fulfilling their other roles in life. Thus, exploring motivation and engagement in online learning via qualitative/mixed methods is a way to increase our understanding of their experiences and to identify the associated problems and hindrances.

2.6 Online Learning (OL)

Many terms in the research literature are connected to the use of technology in delivering learning: distance learning, e-learning, digital learning, and OL, to name a few (Clark & Meyer, 2016). Before reviewing online learning, it helps to outline the pedagogical approach of the research context. At the university where the study took place, all courses are offered with an entirely blended approach, i.e. blended learning (BL) is the established mode at the institutional level (Graham, 2009). Christensen et al. (2013) define BL (Figure 6) as a

'Formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home' (p.7).

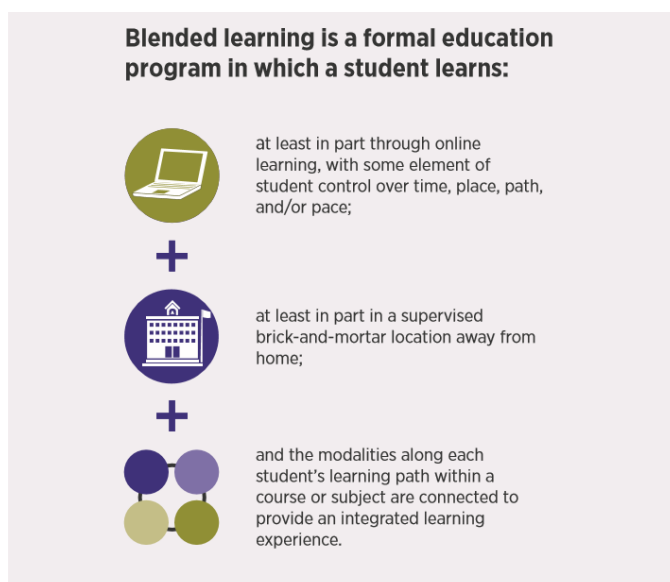


Figure 6 Definition of blended learning (Christensen et al., 2013. p.8)

However, it is important to note that due to the government lockdown policies imposed during the Covid pandemic in 2020, the SEU changed its delivery approach to solely online learning, with no in-person F2F interaction. The following section presents an overview of the literature dealing with OL before exploring the wholesale switch to OL that took place in HE institutions during the Covid pandemic. I then examine the hegemonies of OL and their implications for the study context in terms of learning inequities.

2.6.1 Effectiveness of OL

Singh and Thurman (2019) analysed many of the different ways online education is defined and discovered common elements among them in a piece of longitudinal research involving a systematic literature review spanning thirty years (1988-2018). The researchers found that while all definitions mentioned the use of technology to deliver instruction and increase engagement, none of them reflected the point of view of the learner; however, they concluded by offering several meanings of OL that integrated certain aspects of learner experience. In light of this, the definition I will use is based on one of the definitions proposed by Singh and Thurman (2019) which I felt expressed the nature of the OL used in the study context during the pandemic:

'Online learning is defined as learning experienced through the internet/online computers in a synchronous classroom where students interact with instructors and other students and are not dependent on their physical location for participating in this online learning experience' (Singh & Thurman, 2019, p. 15).

The effectiveness of online learning depends on many factors. One is how well courses are designed according to pedagogical principles such as active learning, constructivism, situated

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learning, collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and recourse-based learning (Nichols, 2003). In these models, learners are transformed from passive to active by discussing collaboratively with peers, engaging with an instructor who monitors instead of lecturing, and connecting information to their experiences. In addition, as technology becomes integrated with education, university-level students could become autonomous learners and take responsibility for their learning (Alsowat, 2016). To create successful online environments, Meyer (2019) acknowledges the three parts in OL of what materials are presented, how they are delivered and why there is a change in learner's knowledge through the instructional objectives. Meyer (2019) concludes, from reviewing the history of instructional technology, that there is a need to adopt a learner-centred perspective. According to Meyer, it is essential to consider how technology may be modified to facilitate human learning as opposed to a technology-centred perspective that considers how we can force humans to adopt the most cutting-edge technology. Another factor behind the popularity and effectiveness of OL is the social presence, a prerequisite element of the community of inquiry framework in synchronous online classes (Garrison et al., 1999). This feature enables learners to feel they belong to the learning community and are not isolated in a virtual environment.

Although the field of OL and its effectiveness has been under investigation recently and shows development, the work of researchers in OL will never be done as it is always considered a new approach to someone (Meyer, 2014). The studies mainly focus on students' acceptance, satisfaction and perception (Artino, 2007; Yukselturk & Yildirim, 2008; Hassan et al., 2013), performance and outcomes (Al-Qahtani & Higgins, 2013; Deschacht & Goeman, 2015), persistence (Blackmon & Major, 2012; Brown et al., 2015; Halim, 2021; Holley & Oliver, 2010; Risko et al., 2012; Smith & Schreder, 2021; Yang et al., 2017), participation (Abdullah et al., 2012; Davies & Graff 2005; Handelsman et al., 2005; Koç, 2017; Tayebinik & Puteh, 2013; Yang, 2011), autonomy (Albogami, 2022; Benson, 2013; Lamb, 2011; Lai, 2019; Lewis, 2014; Mısıır et al., 2018; Mutlu & Eröz-Tuğā, 2013; Muliyah et al., 2020; Rahman, 2020; Suvorov, 2017; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011), and comparing the approach to other learning modes (Means et al., 2013; Deschacht & Goeman, 2015). Student engagement in OL is correlated positively with student satisfaction, persistence, and academic performance (Martin & Bolliger 2018; Meyer, 2014).

Many studies point out that NTSs prefer to attend online courses to obtain degrees due to the advantages of OL (Kuo & Belland, 2016; Robinson & Cook, 2018). The first advantage is flexibility, which helps overcome massive group size problems (Kaur, 2013; Sharpe et al., 2006) and supports NTSs who need to manage time and family commitments (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010; Boelens et al., 2017; Dziuban et al., 2005). Students varied in their satisfaction with online courses. For example, Hassan et al. (2013) found that students were broadly satisfied with online programmes,

while a study by Yukselturk and Yildirim (2008) revealed the opposite, where students were satisfied at the beginning then sharply declined throughout the end of the program. Researchers found that self-efficacy and interactions are the most factors behind students' satisfaction with OL (Artino, 2007; Gunawardena et al., 2010; Kuo et al., 2014; Li et al., 2018; Reardon & Bertoch, 2010; Stephen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2013; Yukselturk and Yildirim, 2008). Another advantage of OL is the availability of video recordings that gives students the control, convenience, and flexibility to engage with learning materials at their own pace (Scagnoli et al., 2019) and supports the development of EFL skills (Hasan & Hoon, 2013; Indahsari, 2020; Palenque, 2016). A study in online dental learning reflected that the recorded lectures are valuable resources supporting student learning (Alfallaj et al., 2021). Other studies examined pre-recorded video in OL. Islam et al. (2020) compare two types of online instruction to determine the benefits and drawbacks of both types of online education. Because of their flexibility, convenience, and educational efficiency, pre-recorded video lectures are favoured over live Zoom lectures, according to a study of 26 undergraduate students at Yonsei University in South Korea. The researchers concluded that learning through video lectures, on the other hand, depends on students' motivation to work through materials on their own. Scagnoli et al. (2019) concluded that video lectures (recordings) significantly affect the OL experience in terms of student satisfaction and learning impact. Results indicate that (1) media familiarity, (2) integration of videos with other educational materials, and (3) the student's educational level can all influence how students evaluate video recordings in OL.

Another common theme under investigation was comparing students' performance and outcomes in different learning modes. To compare how well students learned multimodal literacies in F2F and online courses, Bourelle et al. (2016) examined assessment results from three sections of English 102 (two online and one F2F) at the University of New Mexico. To address this, the authors employed a mixed-method approach. The quantitative data from students' grades on their e-portfolios and qualitative data analysed student quotes and reflections to highlight differences. The results showed that online students outperformed F2F students in academic performance. They hypothesised that this difference might be due to the 12 brief pieces of formative feedback online students received from their instructors, which were more challenging to provide in F2F classes due to time constraints.

Several studies have indicated the positive impact of educational technology on student engagement (Chen et al., 2010; Junco et al., 2011; Kahn et al., 2017). Using an online engagement methods questionnaire, Martin and Bolliger (2018) looked into how students perceived engagement strategies in OL environments. Findings showed that learners liked learner-instructor engagement strategies the most among the three interaction categories described by Moore

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(1993). Regular announcements, email reminders, and grading guidelines received the highest marks from students in this category. Icebreakers and group projects were the most effective engagement strategies for learners-learners, and real-world projects and structured or guided talks were the most helpful types of learner content.

However, DeNoyelles et al. (2014) assert that a lack of student engagement in some online classes fails to promote higher-order thinking outcomes. DeNoyelles et al. (2014) provided methods for using online asynchronous discussion boards to foster meaningful debate and student interaction. The researchers urged teachers to set an example of social presence by being more approachable and offering timely criticism or support. Additionally, they recommended that different instructional strategies be used to improve critical thinking and peer facilitation (DeNoyelles et al., 2014). Using the COI model, Cho and Tobias (2016) compared learning outcomes in three sections with a discussion thread requirement. No participation in the discussion was necessary for the course in one part. A discussion thread was introduced as a course requirement in the other two parts, although only one allowed instructor participation.

Additionally, Cho and Tobias (2016) discovered that students' social presence within an OL community is greatly influenced by their interactions with the teacher. Both Cho and Tobias (2016) and DeNoyelles et al. (2014) conclude that prompt instructor feedback is essential for creating an online community. Interaction might be a factor of many factors that affect students' engagement in online communities, and it is necessary to comprehend the challenges learners might face in online learning environments.

2.6.2 OL Challenges

Online pedagogy is very different to F2F because it needs to be prepared specifically for that modality. The traditional F2F methods need to be modified and online visual and auditory resources found. Lack of preparation will result in poor student motivation and dissatisfaction with the learning experience.

There is much existing research that examined the challenges involved in online learning prior to the Covid pandemic. In a review of e-learning in HE, Maarop and Embi (2016) divided obstacles into four categories: institution, instructors, students, and technology. Regarding institutional challenges and issues related to policy, technology, and support. Instructor challenges connect to different problems in implementing technology as increased workload, increased investment of time, digital literacy, appropriate blend (if the course is a blend) for their classes (Maarop & Embi, 2016), and changing their teaching mindset (Ramos et al., 2011). The third challenge relates to students as an essential factor in the learning process. Maarop and Embi (2016) assert that

student participation and engagement are critical in e-learning, as shown by their satisfaction ratings (Medina, 2018).

Many studies have reported that students are not meeting the requirement in terms of study self-discipline (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010), self-efficacy (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015; Baxter, 2012; C, akirog'lu, 2014; Farrell & Brunton, 2020; Genç et al., 2016; Jameson and Fusco, 2014; Kassem, 2015; Macari et al., 2005; O'Shea, 2016; Payne, 2019; Rahimi & Abedini, 2009, Raoofi et al., 2012, Ruegg, 2018), time management, autonomy (Kenney & Newcombe, 2011) or ICT (Umoh & Akpan, 2014). Regarding language teaching, Marsh and Johnson (2014) highlight some of the challenges as learner motivation, autonomy, prior poor language learning experience and student perceptions of OL as extra work rather than an integrated part of the learning process. Finally, challenges connected with technology are related to internet connection faults and limited bandwidth access (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010).

A number of existing studies identify and explore the particular challenges faced by NTs in HE (Alajlan, 2013; Alshebou, 2019; Busher et al., 2015; Kara et al., 2019; Lin, 2016; Mercer, 2011). We start by looking at some which do not necessarily involve OL, and move on to those that deal specifically with this form of learning. Lin (2016), for example, reviewed the literature associated with primary challenges experienced by NT female students in the US and their barriers to HE from 1970 to 2015. The researcher found that women's commitment to multiple roles (mother, wife, employee, student) correlated with lower self-confidence in academic studies, and that insufficient family and social support were the main barriers to this group of students. This is similar to Mannay and Morgan's (2013) four case studies of mature female students that show how care obligations directly affected their ability to achieve academically. One of the students drew attention to the conflict between her caring duties and her studies, and eventually dropped out. According to Mannay and Morgan, she felt that she had lost her validity as a mother and wife because she was not contributing financially, and not spending 'enough' time with her children or cleaning her home (2013, p 62-63).

The findings above are in line with Markle's (2015) mixed study, which examined factors influencing learning persistence in NT female and male students in the US from a role theory perspective. Markle concluded that women face high levels of conflict as they try to integrate and fulfil their roles of motherhood and ideal student. The study revealed that inter-role conflicts sometimes led full-time female students to consider withdrawing; however, they often did maintain the will to persist, overcome the obstacles, and graduate.

The identification of persistence as an important trait in NT student learning is highly relevant to the OL context. Persistence is vital in order to complete an online course, and the concept can be

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understood as an antonym for attrition because it lowers the drop-out rate. Fang et al. (2017), Finnegan et al. (2008), and Hart (2012) point out that persistent learners, sometimes known as ‘completers’, are those who successfully complete online courses, while non-persistent learners, sometimes known as ‘dropouts’ are those who do not complete a course. Persistence has been studied as a dependent variable that is influenced by psychological and social factors such as self-motivation, engagement, and financial support (Hart, 2012).

Many recent studies have drawn on Cross’s 1981 model of barriers to adult learning and applied them to contemporary contexts (Alshebou, 2019; Saar et al., 2014; Shepherd & Nelson, 2012). According to this model (Cross, 1981), three barriers stand in the way of learning: institutional, situational, and dispositional. Institutional barriers refer to institutional practices that prevent participation, such as lack of flexibility, high fees, and entry requirements (Saar et al., 2014). Situational barriers are related to issues raised by the environment or situation, such as childcare, work responsibilities, and health issues (Alshebou, 2019). Dispositional barriers relate to personal internal characteristics such as self-efficacy and attitudes to learning (Shepherd & Nelson, 2012). These categories are very similar to those identified by Kara et al. (2019) to classify the main challenges of adult learners in OL. They divide learning barriers into internal (individual’s characteristics and skills), external (work and domestic environments) and program-related barriers (program context).

In our current times the additional responsibilities taken on by adult female NTSs in different contexts might set up further barriers to motivation and engagement in learning, and this may be particularly relevant to the online environment. Despite the positive features of technology integration in daily life and education, OL may present an obstacle for NTSs if the lack of adequate support affects their engagement with the online modality (Blackmon & Major, 2012; Brown et al., 2015; Halim, 2021). Vanslambrouck et al. (2016) and Adams and Corbett (2010), for example, found that NTSs prefer F2F over OL. Researchers in their reviews suggest exploring NTSs’ barriers to learning in HE (Kara et al., 2019; Lin, 2016). It is worth noting that some obstacles might be context-specific, such as returning to study after a long gap or at an older age, as in the current research context (Alajlan, 2013; Osman, 2003; Shousha, 2021).

Although Hoic-Bozic et al. (2008) recommend that transition to online learning should involve blended learning, the F2F component was not possible during the pandemic. NTSs who were already trying to manage learning and personal life during these uncertain and challenging times experienced additional stress and workload as a result of that change (Houlden and Veletsianos 2020). The insufficient preparation and rapid transitions brought about by the pandemic affected many people emotionally. Vigo et al. (2020) point out that although technology can maintain a

degree of social communication between people who are in quarantine or socially distancing, physical separation is highly likely to have a negative effect on emotional well-being and sense of self. During the early days of the pandemic, researchers, students, and parents the world over experienced much fear and anxiety about the implications for education. On the one hand, many educators felt unprepared to deliver content digitally, and were uncomfortable about taking their teaching online. On the other hand, students were worried about interruptions to learning progress, skills acquisition, and assessments, particularly if they lacked the technological skills needed to access online materials or classes. Many parents found it stressful and challenging to secure laptops, computers, and sufficient internet access for their children and themselves. Lau and Lee (2021) surveyed parents about their children's distance learning and screen time, and found that children struggled at home with distance learning tasks because of lack of interest, limitations in their home environment, or inability to engage in learning autonomously.

Solutions to the education crisis were many and various. In the current study context, in a bid to reassure students and their families, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education announced that students in schools could advance to the next grade without continuing their learning online. University students had the option either to have their university assessments revised or to postpone their studies.

At the time of data collection for this research there was a great deal of uncertainty about when the pandemic would end. The Saudi Ministry of Education therefore announced the implementation of online learning for schools and online theoretical courses at universities for the first seven weeks of the academic semester 2020/2021 (Nasrallah, 2020). Later, after a close evaluation of positive cases in the Kingdom, the education minister declared a distance learning extension until December 2020 (Harvey, 2020). The urgent transition to e-learning for all groups in schools and universities was challenging for people who were used to traditional, in-person ways of learning. On a personal note, as a researcher and single mother I found that managing my three children's online education was an enormously difficult task. After monitoring the children's progress, I was exhausted at the end of the day and lacked the time to work on my project. The Covid pandemic affected students' lives worldwide, and every student has their story to tell, particularly those with the additional life commitments of NTSS.

2.6.3 OL During Covid Times

'Stay safe, stay home' was commonly heard and read via different media and social networks during the outbreak of Covid-19 and it was predicted that life after Covid would never be the same again (Holcombe, 2020; Whiteside, 2020). According to Adnan (2020), Hoq (2020), and

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Murphy (2020), businesses and organisations worldwide were affected by the spread of the virus, and the education sector was no exception.

In this crisis, Coronavirus Disease Advice for the Public (2020) provided advice to protect self and others from the disease. It was advised to maintain a social (physical) distance of at least one meter from other people. As this proved impossible for the traditional (in-person) pedagogies of schools, colleges, and universities to follow (Dhawan, 2020), they were forced shut down their campuses to follow social distancing measures (Toquero, 2020). As a result, the switch to online learning was made, and its stratospheric rise in use and popularity has meant that it continues to feature as an option in many educational programmes worldwide (Murphy, 2020). Online teaching and learning forced universities all over the world to rapidly adapt in spite of their lack of technological infrastructure, resources, and training (Literat 2021). Coping with inadequate support and hurriedly designed online courses, faculty and students were required to transition online within days. The challenges were enormous: school administrators and teachers in many countries began to record lessons, deliver live classes, and use any OL resources and applications they could find to communicate with learners and parents (Chang & Yano, 2020).

Analysis of HE responses to the crisis (Crawford et al., 2020) reported variations in university responses across twenty countries. This variation was associated with many challenges and obstacles as universities were unprepared for such an immediate transition. For example, in Australia, universities responded differently; while some followed social distance measurements and reduced social gatherings, others started designing digital curricula (Crawford et al., 2020). On the other hand, Malaysia prohibited OL in HE (Crawford et al., 2020) due to dissatisfaction among students, parents, and institutions. Some universities showed rapid progression between extremes due to adopting B/OL (Crawford et al., 2020). According to teachers' responses in the piloting phase, SEU, study context, shifted from F2F classes to online classes smoothly and reflected an excellent example compared to other universities locally.

Three years on from the start of the pandemic, researchers seek to understand the effects of OL on learners' experiences and perceptions of their education (Budur, 2020; Laili and Nashir, 2021; Muthuprasad et al. 2021) as well as its effects on physical and mental health (Chaturvedi et al. 2021, Idris et al. 2021; Wieczorek et al. 2021). For example, Garris and Fleck (2022) investigated 482 US undergraduates to evaluate a course that ran during the transition to OL. Overall, the transition was viewed negatively, because after being moved online the courses were perceived as less engaging, less interesting, having a lower learning value, requiring less focus and effort, and including less cultural material. The more positive views included courses being seen as more adaptable to students' requirements. Online self-efficacy, emotional well-being, computer

anxiety, online student engagement, and student views of instructor trust with the transition to online learning were all consistently associated with resulting course assessments and grades.

With regard to language learning, many scholars have focused on exploring students' thoughts about their online experience during the pandemic. For example, Mese and Sevilen (2021) asked twelve English preparatory school students in Turkey about their experiences of online EFL learning and its effects on their motivation. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and students' creative writing on the positive and negative sides of online education. The results showed that students were on the whole dissatisfied with online education as they were unable to interact with their peers, and some found it challenging to maintain self-discipline at home. The learning environment, course materials, and structure of the online classes were additional elements that contributed to the decline in student motivation.

Another study that examined students' perceptions of online learning during the pandemic was conducted by Agung et al. (2020). The study included sixty-six students from the English Language Education Study Program in Indonesia. Their research found that the majority of students lacked enthusiasm for online classes and that students struggled with internet connections due to a lack of infrastructure. However, they were pleased with the feedback they got from their professors while they were studying online.

Maican and Cocorada (2021) also examined how students felt about learning a foreign language online during the coronavirus pandemic. The researchers used both quantitative and qualitative techniques in their study, which included Romanian university students majoring in languages other than English, such as Spanish, German, and French. Students' feelings towards online foreign language learning included both positive and negative views, and students also expressed their concern and worry about their lack of improvement in foreign language abilities, as well as the limited interaction they had with their classmates and instructors on the online platform. Additionally, they mentioned issues such as anxiety, trouble concentrating, headaches and migraines, and feeling too shy to engage fully in class because of their level of language proficiency.

The Covid-19 crisis has taught us some lessons. To sustain the learning process, OL has proved to be a practical delivery approach despite the challenges of rapid transition in the escalating crisis. Some HE institutions are still not well prepared for OL, and it is necessary to set up vital infrastructure for OL to handle any future difficulties in this post-Covid era. In addition, as researchers we need to focus on NTs in OL in the extreme situation of the Covid crisis, where they might have other work than roles they used to have in ordinary life. Thus, the current study contributes to the knowledge in exploring those students' online engagement experiences in

learning English, which is considered an essential course to further their future study at university in this crisis.

2.6.4 OL Hegemonies

The popularity of OL exceeds the effectiveness and challenges of the approach, which include problematising OL from critical theory perspectives (Marandi et al., 2015). Researchers acknowledge that technology is not neutral (Godwin-Jones, 2012; Marandi et al., 2015; Gunawardena, 2014). From a broader perspective, OL environments come with a collection of power hegemonies that need considering when investigating them, as these environments are 'controlled in understated but powerful ways by a myriad of stakeholders' (Marandi et al., 2015, p.387). According to Gramsci, cultural hegemony is a subtle form of political dominance through ideological dominance, in which the governing classes successfully convince the rest of the population to accept a subordinate role in a system that serves their interests (cited in Helm et al., 2012). In education, power is hegemonic and is 'possessed by an authority' that denies different and alternative perspectives (Hinkleman & Gruba, 2012). As the current study context is an online one, it is essential to examine the hegemonies that exist, particularly with reference to the changes to instruction methods forced by Covid pandemic.

The context of online pedagogy has its own power hegemonies that are shaped by institutional policies and regulations which learners cannot challenge or find alternatives to. In this context there are also technological hegemonies, i.e., the hegemonic effects and implications of the technology chosen by the institution in terms of hardware, software, and tools deemed necessary for learning and teaching (Lamy & Pegrum, 2012; Marandi et al., 2015). Educational technologies are frequently limited in terms of the types of skills they support or the ways in which they can be used to learn; for example, online or digital evaluation of language skills and subskills is rather restricted. The technological hegemonies that have arisen over the past two decades exert control partially via the high expenditures required for equipment, dictating who can gain access to the latest advancements and putting poorer users and societies at an educational disadvantage. Students and their teachers may be forced to buy or update software or hardware, which can be problematic, particularly when doing so conflicts with other priorities like paying for learning materials or a better instructor (Marandi et al., 2016).

In setting up their online learning infrastructures, universities and colleges find themselves with a limited choice of learning management systems (LMS), the most popular being Blackboard, Moodle, and Canvas. The popularity and dominance of these platforms has set up LMS hegemonies which teachers and their students can find hard to break away from, despite the fact that efforts in this direction can reveal the existence of more user-friendly and customizable

options for the requirements of individual OL programmes (Godwin-Jones 2012). In a recent study, Swerzenski (2021) critically analysed virtual learning environments in order to better understand the pedagogy they produce on camera use in OL. Schwenck and Pryor (2021) interviewed fifteen US preservice teachers enrolled in synchronous hybrid courses. The study aimed to explore the teachers' opinions on camera usage, engagement, and connectedness during the courses, and the findings highlighted important issues of interaction accountability, distractibility, and lack of engagement.

Other hegemonies that influence OL concern what Larry Irving calls the 'digital divide', referring to inequalities in people's power and capabilities to access and use ICT due to different geopolitical, demographic, and socioeconomic conditions and circumstances (Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Asmelash 2019). For example, according to Steele (2019), digital inequality is clearly visible between communities in urban areas and those in rural settlements, between socioeconomic groups, between nations with less and more economic development, and between educated and uneducated communities. To Steele (2019), the digital divide appears clearly in the gender divide, social divides, and the universal access divide. Other scholars have highlighted other dividing factors such as age (Friemel 2016) and race (Floburg 2018).

Cultural expectations play a part in creating the gender divide in learning; for example, the female NTS participants in the current study often bore more family responsibilities than their male counterparts, especially during the Covid lockdowns, when they took on the task of homeschooling their children. Although the research context was initially intended to investigate student engagement in the university blended approach, the sudden shift to online learning highlighted the socioeconomic aspect of the digital divide in terms of the challenges faced by students whose individual financial and family circumstances did not guarantee equal access to OL technology. In general, online learners can find their progress compromised by issues of slow bandwidth, inadequate or outdated hardware, or restricted access to subscription-based material due to financial pressures (Preez & Le Grange, 2020). Variables such as internet access, data devices, technological know-how, and dependence on various teaching pedagogies and levels of involvement all potentially affect inequalities in online education (Doyle, 2020; Outhwaite, 2020; Steele 2019).

In the context of the current study, SEU uses the Blackboard platform as its learning management system (LMS). The implementation of LMSs in a conservative culture such as Saudi Arabia may be problematic for cultural reasons (Hockly, 2016; Maarop & Embi, 2016), such as that Saudi learners are on the whole used to the traditional lecture model in HE and find it difficult to adopt new learning models such as OL (Khalil et al., 2020). It is also worth noting that teacher and student

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willingness to use their cameras during OL affects interaction and engagement, which eventually contributes to the overall learning experience (Ellingson & Notbohm, 2012; Hartsell & Yuen, 2006; Lonie & Andrews, 2009; Rudd, 2014; Schwenck & Pryor, 2021). In reviewing the use of synchronous and asynchronous video in online classes, Rudd (2014) concluded that video streaming is a valuable asset for teachers, as students found it helped bridge the gap between traditional instruction and OL. On the other hand, Tonsmann (2014) found that when both teachers and students stopped using a camera, it did not negatively affect learning. In the research context, camera usage might be problematic in conservative Saudi communities, particularly on female campuses, despite recent changes in Saudi society. In short, the cultural factors surrounding the reluctance to use technology and the internet might influence Saudi EFL learners' engagement in OL (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010; Alrabai, 2016).

It is interesting to consider linguistic hegemony in the context of OL, as it is also a form of cultural hegemony (Parajuli, 2022) in which the dominant language variety shapes culture and cultural values. Linguistic hegemony is 'the social, cultural, political, economic, and educational dominance of a particular language variety over and above other languages and language varieties' (Reagan; 2014) and is a powerful hegemony within the research context as 'the rise of linguistic hegemony entails the use of a specific language variety in institutions' (p.95). Gaffey (2005) made the claim that English can be a tool of western imperialism that maintains its hegemony by influencing the local languages and societies. Yet the global use of English as the primary language of teaching in science and technology classes at HE institutions continues to rise (Safari & Razmjoo, 2016) and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) policies are widespread in educational institutions (Parajuli, 2022). In our competitive and globalised world, it is generally believed that EMI is required to improve educational quality and employability (Parajuli, 2022); however, many scholars (Rana, 2018; Sah & Li, 2018) have challenged the effectiveness and efficiency of EMI in various educational settings.

In the research context of English language learning at SEU, English is the language of instruction in all of the programmes and courses. As well as acknowledging the importance of English as an international language (Alrabai, 2014; Allahdadi et al., 2016; Nduwimana (2019), I would agree with Al-Kahtany et al. (2016), Al-Kahtany and Alhamami (2022) and Parajuli (2022) that the power policy of employing EMI can restrict learners' chances of furthering their education if they are unable to achieve institutional entrance requirements in English competency.

2.7 Conclusion

Motivation and engagement are significant aspects of the learning experience and understanding one construct can support understanding the other. In this chapter, I have provided an overview of motivation in psychology and L2 research. With regard to L2 motivation, there is a paucity of research literature on L2s' motivation through the lens of PIT in L2 studies. In addition, the chapter presented student engagement, its dimensions, and the different frameworks to examine it. Although many frameworks have been developed to investigate the construct of motivation in diverse educational contexts, the current study found Redmond et al. (2018) a suitable framework focused on significant elements in OL. The next chapter presents the research methodology used in the current study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological approach and research design through which the research questions are explored and answered. It begins by stating the aim of the study, the research questions, and the instruments used. The ontological and epistemological assumptions informing this inquiry are then discussed, with the research design outlined along with its connection to the methodological orientation of the study. In presenting the research context, the criteria for participant selection and details of the pilot phase are also described. The following sections elaborate on the various instruments utilised during the study and give details on data collection and data analysis procedures. Finally, this chapter explores some of the more significant issues and challenges that arise in qualitative studies, such as the researcher's positionality, trustworthiness of the data, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Summary of the Research

As discussed in the literature review, motivation and engagement are complex constructs, and it follows logically that an understanding of motivation supports an understanding of the type and quality of engagement. This chapter aims to clarify the research methodology and tools that were chosen for understanding the complexity of NTLLs' motivation and engagement in online learning. Table 1 below presents a summary of the study in terms of the research questions, the aim of each question, the research instruments, and the data analysis methods.

Table 1 Summary of the Research

No	Research Questions	Justification	Instruments	Data Analysis
1	What is the motivation of non-traditional students (NTS) for learning English online? a. In what ways do goals shape their motivation to learn English online? b. In what ways does sense of self influence their motivation to learn?	Identifying student motivation to learn English online, in terms of goals and sense of self, enables an understanding of their engagement in online language classes.	PIT survey (1,2) Interviews (1-2)	Thematic Analysis (i.e. deductive, top-down)
2	What does engagement look like for NTSS learning English online? a. How do the students demonstrate cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative, and social engagement in learning English online?	Answering this question in terms of the five components of engagement enables an understanding of the engagement experience for this group of learners in online language classes.	Self-reporting Class observations Interviews (1,2) Blackboard Analytics	Thematic Analysis (i.e. deductive, top-down)
3	What contextual factors might hinder or promote NTSS' engagement in learning English in an online course?	Answering this question identifies the principal factors that affect participant engagement in either positive or negative ways.	Self-reporting Class observations Interviews (1,2) Informal chat	Thematic Analysis (i.e. inductive, bottom-up)

3.3 The Research Paradigm

Research in applied linguistics and educational studies can be based on different paradigms. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that frame the researcher's world view and understanding of reality (Mertens, 2012). It is fundamental for researchers to understand and be able to justify the paradigm they use and their philosophical position; otherwise, the quality of the research could be negatively affected. Each paradigm is supported by a number of philosophical assumptions (Creswell, 2013). According to Merriam (2009), selecting the proper paradigm is the fundamental first step, since it directs the subsequent research decisions at all stages. The different paradigms represent ways to investigate the nature of knowledge and how to approach it (Cohen et al., 2007) and they are based on different philosophical ontological and epistemological considerations (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007).

The current study is most in alignment with a social constructivist worldview that is moderated by pragmatism. The pragmatic paradigm prioritises the researcher's thorough understanding of the target phenomenon (the 'what') and the regulating/contributing mechanisms (the 'how'). According to Mertens (2015), pragmatism denies the notion that a single scientific technique can produce a single 'truth'. The pragmatic worldview supports insider (-emic) and outer (-etic) perspectives and provides a philosophical framework for mixed-methods research. The following section presents the theoretical assumptions underpinning this paradigm.

3.3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Position

Ontological considerations refer to the nature of social entities and different assumptions about the nature of reality. The current study is in line with the position of social constructionism, as defined by Bryman (2016). Social constructivism aims to understand individual behaviours by taking into account context and social interactions, that reflect the multiple realities of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). In the context of the current study, social constructivism will be used to elucidate the nature of participants' engagement in online learning. This position takes the view that social phenomena and their meanings are changed through social interaction, and that there is a need for specific knowledge in order to understand these social meanings. I am interested in the social-constructivist paradigm which is based on the concept that our understanding of the world is a product of the mind and is arrived at both individually and collectively. This understanding is constructed and modified through our social interactions as well as our independent observations of the natural world. With regard to second language (L2) learning, it is important to acknowledge that it is a socially constructed process, and that most

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studies examining L2 investment tend to follow a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach (Darvin & Norton, 2021; Duff, 2014). NTLLs make their meaning of motivation and engagement in learning English online differently according to their social interactions in the learning environment, particularly in challenging times such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-22.

Epistemological positions reflect assumptions and beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the relationship between knowledge and the enquirer. The current study follows the interpretive paradigm, as it proposes a different view of a required strategy 'that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions' (Bryman, 2016, p. 26). This means that this study emphasises that reality does not stand outside the individual but is understood through how individuals make sense of their experiences. The current research contributes to understanding how female LLs in Saudi Arabia motivated and engaged in a university-level online English course, and the contextual factors that influenced and affected their engagement. The aims and research questions of this study can be said to be ontologically and epistemologically consistent with the interpretive paradigm, and therefore the rationale for designing the study through the lens of interpretivism lies in the central aims, questions, and nature of the study. The main goal of the research is to present meaningful discussion and explanation of NTLLs' motivation and engagement in an online learning environment, and to analyse the role of the contextual factors that affect their engagement experience. For best results, this research has been constructed to be socially and culturally specific. In addition to exploring the engagement of the students, who were all mothers and/or working women, I also wanted to identify the challenges they faced in achieving their goals and whether or not they found student social media communities useful and supportive.

This approach has meant building a base on the students' assumptions about themselves and the situations they find themselves in, as every individual's worldview is different, resulting in multiple realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, this research aims to examine and understand how the students interpret their world, in terms of how they experience and express their motivation and engagement, and how they respond to the challenges in the online learning environment during Covid crisis. The data for these personal interpretations must therefore begin with the students' own words. Working within a framework of subjectivist epistemology, I adopted the motivation (PIT) and engagement frameworks (Redmond et al., 2018) as lens through which to view incoming data and found that it supported understanding the complexity of the social phenomena while keeping an open mind to other viewpoints. The quality criteria for this paradigm are trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), which are discussed in detail in section 3.10.

The significance of the qualitative interpretive approach is that researchers are interested in people and how they interconnect. The qualitative approach enables hermeneutic interpretive and inductive reasoning. Bryman (2016) explains this feature as containing two levels of interpretation: participants' interpretation of reality and the researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretation of reality and their behaviour and assessing them with reference to the literature. This reflects the necessity of a prolonged interaction process between the researcher and participants in the context of the study to build inter-subjectivity knowledge. In order to gather data for these interpretations, this study adopts **multiple qualitative case study** methodology. This method was judged to appropriately serve the research questions as well as the complex nature of the enquiry, which aim to better understand the social phenomena under investigation via a naturalistic setting.

3.3.2 Research Approach

This study aims to investigate the complexities of adult NTLLs' motivation and engagement experience in online English learning in at a Saudi Arabian university. The research also aims to examine the role of contextual factors as they interact with individual behaviours to either promote or hinder engagement in learning. In consideration of the chosen philosophical position, one way to approach the social phenomenon is via the **explanatory, interpretive, multiple qualitative case study**. The study is **interpretive** because understanding how and why NTSS engage in learning English online alongside the other commitments they have in life, as well as how and why contextual factors impact their engagement experiences, requires a subjective and social construction of multiple realities and consideration of different perspectives, including the participants' views (Cohen et al., 2011). The research is **qualitative** because it studies the engagement experiences of adult female LLs (all mothers and/or employees) in the online learning environment, which involve interaction during English classes (in their social context), to understand the phenomenon (Duff, 2008). The approach is crucial in exploring complex situations via different data sources, enabling the reader to fully comprehend the complexities of the phenomenon being investigated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The research uses the **case study** in its sense of being 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident' (Yin, 2014, p. 16.). NTSS are unique in their heterogeneous needs (the case), and each individual's motivation and engagement are complex constructs and are influenced by contextual factors. Although the participants are learning within the same general context of a university online English course, they reflect different types of motivation and variable levels of the different engagement

components. These variations occur according to each student's individual interpretation of meaning and the unique contextual factors of their sociocultural environment. It would be impossible to understand both constructs of this body of learners if we separate them from their other roles in life. Case studies should not be examined in isolation but within their contexts to fully understand an inquiry (Duff, 2014; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). Also, the case study was chosen because it allows researchers to obtain a holistic and meaningful comprehension of real-world situations (Yin, 2014) and to understand factors that affect learners in different linguistic settings as individual cases reflect complexities in language teaching and learning (Duff, 2014).

According to the literature on case study classification, the current study is a **multiple case study** that is **instrumental** (Stake, 1995) and **explanatory** (Yin, 2014). The six female students at a Saudi university represent the multiple nature of the methodology. It is instrumental in that I use each case to gain insight into how this group of learners is motivated to learn English and how they engage in online learning. In addition, the study aims to identify the unique contextual factors that affect each participant's motivation and engagement.

The study is an **explanatory** case study because in understanding reasons for participants' motivation and engagement levels, the study can explain the complexity of these constructs for this specific group of online learners; thus, the study 'aims to be more descriptive and explanatory than simply exploratory' (Duff, 2008, p.29). To gain a better overview of the phenomenon (female NTLLs' engagement in online learning), I adopted a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design that consists of quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2013). Duff (2008, 2014) noted that many case studies use a mixed methods approach to provide balanced descriptions of cases. Creswell (2013) states that mixed methods research is based on a 'pragmatic worldview, collection of quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in the design' (p. 19) expressed earlier in the research paradigm. Creswell (2013) also highlights that, in an explanatory, sequential mixed methods study, if the researcher collects quantitative data first, the results can be used in the interpretation of qualitative data at a later point. The rationale for using mixed methods was to focus on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data and to obtain a complete comprehension of research questions with target participants (Creswell, 2013).

Furthermore, exploring real-life cases through comprehensive and multiple sources enabled me to fully understand engagement as a multidimensional construct (Creswell, 2013; Heigham & Croker, 2009). In this study design, using quantitative data at the beginning of the enquiry develops the design of the qualitative data, provides a general understanding of motivation and engagement fluctuation during the data collection period, and reinforces the qualitative findings in a later stage (Creswell, 2013). A detailed description of these mixed methods is presented in

section 3.73.7. The next section presents the sampling method used to choose the participants for the case studies.

3.4 The Research Context

This section gives details of the First Common Year (FCY) at SEU, Saudi Arabia, in order to better understand the context of the study. This information is based on content from the university website as well as the researcher's knowledge as a teacher at the university for many years. The female participants of this study are all adult learners studying at the foundation level in a blended-learning university in Saudi Arabia (1.5.3). Students in the FCY study intensive English courses; they meet for six hours of F2F classes once a week (four hours of English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while the other two are for modules such as maths, communication skills, and computer skills). Students must attend three virtual English classes (VCs) weekly and do online activities (blended form). A publisher designs a curriculum of English (in all modes). However, it is worth mentioning that English virtual classrooms are taught by different outside teachers hired by the publishers of the English books used at the university (not the same as F2F English teachers). Both English learning environments (F2F and VCs) were delivered online during the Covid pandemic. However, F2F and VC are displayed to students in the virtual learning environment (Blackboard, Bb). Thus, terms are kept the same in this study: F2F stands for an online English-learning environment that were delivered by university teachers and the English VCs were delivered by native English teachers. Table 2 shows LLS' assessments and grade divisions at FCY.

Table 2 Assessment methods and grade division

Assessment Method	Week	Grade
F2F Classes	All semester	5%
VC Classes	All semester	5%
Writing Assignment (Unit 1)	6	10%
Writing Assignment (Unit 3)	8	10%
Writing Assignment (Unit 5)	12	10%
Writing Assignment (Unit 7)	14	10%
iQ activities	All semester	20%
Quiz 1 (Units 1-4)	10	10%
Quiz 2 (Units 5-8)	14	10%
Presentation	7 & 14	10%
Total		100%

Before presenting the main research participants and the data collection methods, the methods of participant selection for both the pilot and the main studies are described below. The pilot study helped to develop and improve upon the methods of data collection and analysis.

3.5 Selecting the Participants

The quality of research does not rely on methodology alone, but also on the sampling strategy used (Cohen et al., 2007). Sampling means selecting the population who are then later asked to participate in the study. To better understand the Saudi female NTSs online English-learning engagement experience, a sampling strategy was used that fits within the non-probabilistic paradigm, also known as the purposeful sampling technique (Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007). Purposive sampling does not aim for the later generalisation of research findings. As the name suggests, 'purposive' refers to a specific purpose in mind as having a defined group act as a representation of reality (Fossey et al., 2002). According to Fossey et al. (2002), two essential considerations guide sampling methods: appropriateness and adequacy. Purposive sampling in a qualitative study aims to recruit appropriate and adequate participants to provide a rich, deep, and varied point of view on the phenomenon under investigation (Dörnyei, 2007).

The sampling method in this study falls into the non-probabilistic (purposive) paradigm, which the I felt would lead to a richer overview of the experiences of NTSs who have to engage in their learning environments at the same time as maintaining other roles they have in life, such a parent, carer, and employee, in a Saudi context. The purposive technique is tied nicely with the type of these learners to include a heterogeneous sample. It also provides a holistic understanding of Saudi female LLs' motivation and engagement in OL during the Covid pandemic. The population in this case study was purposefully selected based on a selection criterion to inform research questions. To be included in this case study, students at FCY fulfilled at least one of the following conditions from any university campus:

1. Students have had full-/part time jobs.
2. Students have family and caring responsibilities (husband, children, parents etc.).
3. Students have had gap year/s after high school.
4. The students' age is over 30 years.

In this study, I attempted to select participants that were diverse in their home and life circumstances and commitments, and of different ages; thus, I employed maximum variation sampling to find cases. This strategy allowed for more significant insights into the investigated phenomenon, specifically by considering all possible variations in the data. According to Merriam (2009), using maximum variation sampling can improve transferability because it may enable the application of the research findings to other contexts. In this strategy, I included cases with distinctly diverse forms of experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This information was collected before the start of the main data collection process through a short demographic section in the first survey. The original number of NTSs participating in the first phase was 54 at FCY in the

academic year 2020-2021. Following this, 17 students out of the original number then agreed to move to the second phase and completed the first interview. Although over half of the participants eventually withdrew from the study, the large number of participants at the beginning allowed for greater variation and diversity in the smaller sample used in the main research.

It was not easy to recruit the final sample for the study, and further details are presented in the explanation of the research procedure in section 3.7.23.7.2. Six female participants were chosen for the final sample, who had all enrolled at SEU in the First Common Year (FCY) in 2020-2021. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 45 years old. Because this study aims to explore participants' engagement experiences in OL, family and work-related information were also gathered as part of the study profiles. Three of the participants were full-time employees, while three were stay-at-home mothers. All but two had children, ranging from 1 to 18 years old. This was indeed a much smaller sample than was at first envisaged; however, it was not feasible to include more participants due to the nature of the research, its aim, and time constraints. Five students were from Dammam, a city in the east of the country, and one from Jazan, in the south. Table 3 below summarises the demographic information.

Table 3 Demographic overview of the participants

Pseudonym	Age	Family information	Employment	Tuition Fees Payment	Living Place
Maha	45	Married with six children (young, teenage, and adult), her husband needs special care because of his illness.	Full time (Teacher)	The student pays tuition fees.	Rural
Shoug	38	Single parent with three children (young, teenage, and adult).	Not working	Tuition fees are paid by social security.	Urban
Foos	32	Married with three young children.	Not working	The student pays tuition fees.	Urban
Roaa	23	Married with two young children.	Not working	The student pays tuition fees.	Urban
Mona	22	Single, responsible for a disabled brother and elder parents.	Full time (Call centre/company)	The student pays tuition fees.	Urban
Warda	19	Single	Full time Barista at a cafe	Tuition fees are paid by social security.	Urban

3.5.1 Participants' Profiles

3.5.1.1 Mature Students

Even though there is no exact age which can be defined as 'mature' (Rubin et al., 2018), some researchers have suggested 23 as the boundary of maturity (Arjomandi et al., 2018), while others propose 25 years (O'Shea, 2016). In the current study, the three participants over 30 years of age (Maha, Shoug and Fooz) are categorised as 'mature students'. Despite 23 being considered by some to be mature in student terms (Arjomandi et al., 2018), Roaa is in the 'delayed student' category as there is a larger age gap between this group of learners and the other, all of whom were over 30 years old.

3.5.1.2 Delayed Students

The three delayed students in the sample were much younger than the three mature students. Warda, Mona, and Roaa were 19, 22 and 23 years when they studied at SEU. They had each delayed enrolment by a year or more for many reasons. Warda and Mona were single, while Roaa married and had two children. Roaa relocated to the Eastern province due to her husband's work, unlike Warda and Mona, who lived with their families. Warda was like Shoug and depended on social security to pay her tuition fees for financial problems. Table 4 presents the mature and delayed students' final grades in English courses

Table 4 NTSs' Final grades on English course (*L indicates students' level)

NAME	Writing 1	Writing 2	Writing 3	Writing 4	Presentatio n	IQ	VC	F2F	Q1	Q2	Total
Shoug L2	8.5	9.5	7.5	9	8.5	20	4	5	9.2	9.6	90.8
FoozL2	9.5	10	10	9.5	10	20	5	5	9.2	6.4	94.6
Maha L1	10	9	8	10	9	20	5	5	9.6	10	95.6
MonaL3	10	10	10	10	10	20	4	5	8.3	7.2	94.5
Warda L3	10	10	10	9.5	10	20	4	5	7.6	7.6	93.70
Roaa L1	10	10	10	10	10	0	4	5	10	10	79

3.6 Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted in February 2020. Data were collected from 67 students (52 survey responses and 15 participated in focus groups) and three teachers in this initial phase. The first

data collection was an online survey from the Inventory of University Motivation (IUM), consisting of 70 items. Items focused on students' different goals (mastery-performance-social and extrinsic) and sense of self (self-concept-reliance and purpose) and some items from the First-Year Experience Questionnaire (FYEQ; Krause & Coates, 2008). The survey was translated into Arabic to avoid confusion and ease of understanding for participants with different English levels. Three Arabic language experts revised translated copies to ensure clear statements and no ambiguity. The first part of the survey consists of demographic questions about students' age, social status and working status (to help find NTs later). A number of the researcher's colleagues in the field completed the survey to check its clarity before it was distributed in the pilot and main studies. 52 students responded to the online survey (27 NTs and 25 Ts).

The second data collection was two focus group interviews with 15 participants (7 in the first group and 8 in the second). Participants in these interviews were both groups of learners (Ts & NTs). Each focus group lasted for 25 minutes, and it was ascertained that the participants preferred to use Arabic. The second type of interview was semi-structured with three English teachers; each interview lasted 20 minutes. They were conducted in Arabic or English, depending on the teachers' preference. After participants' approval, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Word's text processing software. It is worth noting that the researcher observed four online classes (2 classes for males and females) to contextualise virtual classes in the research context. Table 5 illustrates the outline of the pilot study.

Table 5 Pilot Phase

Research	Time and Goal	Research Methods	Participants	Remarks
Piloting	Time: the beginning of the second semester of the academic year (2019-2020) (February 2020 for ten days)	1. Survey (goals-self-facilitating conditions components of PI+ engagement components)	52 participants (online survey)	1. refining the research question, refining the survey questions, and excluding the engagement components from the PIT motivation survey.
	Goal: 1. to examine goals-self and to facilitate conditions for the questionnaire in the Saudi context)	2. Focus group Interviews (students) The interviews in this preliminary phase aim to give a view of students' engagement in learning English in a blended modality.	Two focus groups Group 1 (7 students) Group 2 (8 students)	2. non-traditional students preferred individual interviews; thus, in the main study, the researcher changed the type of interview.
	2. To understand the research context and changes while being away from the study	3. Interviews (teacher) Teacher interviews aim to enable the researchers to understand students' engagement from the lecturer's perspective in the Saudi context.	Three teachers	3. Some changes in the research context regarding the English syllabus and virtual class teachers.

4. Observation (virtual classes) Observing classes helps the researcher to understand the changes in the research context	Total four classes (male and female)
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The objective of the pilot study was to assess the research instruments, to gain insight into the English learning environments at SEU after coming to the UK for PhD study, and to check whether or not it was possible to observe online classes at SEU for data gathering purposes. It is worth noting that the initial aim was to compare the motivation and engagement of NTs to TSs. However, the results of the pilot study reflected no differences between TSs and NTs, which encouraged me to reconsider the research aim and methods. For example, NTs in the pilot study expressed different perceptions about having other teachers in F2F and VCs. This would need further investigation in order to understand whether different teachers in different contexts affects engagement. In addition, according to teachers' and students' interviews, teachers in F2F classes follow a communicative approach where students can work in groups, an option which is not so readily available in virtual classes.

Many lessons were learnt from this phase that helped design the main research. First, it gave me the insight to reduce survey questions to 35, as NTs are short on spare time, having many other commitments in life, and long surveys might be daunting. In addition, it led to the removal of several statements that the participants found unclear. In addition, the engagement items (from the FYEQ) were removed as the study adopted the experience sample method (self-report) to enable participants to reflect on their engagement experiences after classes. Finally, two focus groups with 15 students expressed the preference for individual interviews for privacy reasons. None of the data from this phase was used in the main study analysis.

One month into the pilot study, the Covid pandemic altered the situation dramatically. The shift to online learning and the uncertainty around when the pandemic would end encouraged me to explore the situation in the research context of my colleagues. I emailed 13 language teachers in FCY in April 2020, asking them questions about teaching in online learning and student engagement as they were teaching English on campus (F2F). I received only six responses to the following questions:

1. How does the F2F learning environment shift to online learning at SEU? (In other words, can you describe the learning environment? How does a language teacher teach four F2F hours entirely online?).
2. As a teacher, how did you find online teaching compared to normal F2F?
3. In online teaching, how do you communicate with students (camera, chat etc.? How does the online mode affect your teaching?

4. Has the experience changed you? How?

5. Are there any challenges you faced in this urgent change to the online environment?

The responses agreed that SEU was fully prepared, as Blackboard was already in use on the blended learning programme. The shift to online learning was seamless as the teachers and students had excellent knowledge of how to lead and take part in virtual classes. However, the analysis of the responses showed variation in teachers' perceptions of student engagement level in online learning compared to their F2F engagement before the pandemic. This encouraged me to consider comparing NTS engagement in different English-learning environments in the research context. Another lesson learnt in this phase is the importance of the researcher being flexible and adaptive to any circumstantial changes that may affect the study design or methodology. In piloting the initial methodology, I was excited to recruit as many participants as possible in order to compare them. However, the initial methodology became unworkable due to circumstances out of the researcher's control. Meeting the students on campus was no longer feasible due to the lockdowns, and although initially disappointed, I found that the data collection procedures went smoothly after discussing alternatives with my supervisors and academic colleagues. During the pilot study I explored the different approaches to virtual contact with participants and decided to set up online interviews as this was the only safe alternative. It was challenging to gain participants' trust solely through phone calls with no video link, which was necessary in order to respect their conservative culture and privacy.

3.7 Data Collection for the Main Study

The main study had aimed to start earlier and was to focus on two consecutive semesters of the academic year 2020-2021; however, ethical approval took a long time to obtain and delayed the start date. The study took place from December 2020 to April 2021 in three phases. Data was collected from two surveys (12 responses), two interviews (22 in total), experience sample methods (61 entries), observations (36 classes), informal chat (through WhatsApp with participants every week for many purposes), and log data (6 Blackboard analytics). The informal chats were to remind them to fill out self-reports, reflect on incidents in classes, or respond to inquiries. Table 6 presents an outline of the process of data collection (three phases). The following section describes the research instruments and the processes that were completed.

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Table 6 Main Study Overview

Research	Time /Goal	Methods	Participants	Remarks
Phase 1	<p>Time: End of the first semester (December 2020/January 2021)</p> <p>Goal: the aim is to find cases to track and to participate in interviews, observation, ESM and Blackboard analytics</p>	<p>IMU Survey (modified version after piloting, including only PIT components)</p>	<p>The survey was posted on the university website and received 732 responses (from both traditional and non-traditional learners)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was not easy to approach learners during the covid pandemic because of shifting to online learning. 2. The data from the survey was published in a quantitative study. 3. The responses of 16 participants were kept for the analysis
Phase 2	<p>Time: beginning of the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 January-February March-April</p>	<p>1. First Individual interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of students' engagement in EFL blended modality (questions will focus on F2F and online engagement)</p> <p>2. Engagement (ESM) for four weeks to measure students' engagement in F2F and online activities.</p> <p>3. Online Observation observing students in virtual classrooms for three weeks (total of six classes for each student)</p>	<p>Data from 17 participants were collected (10 participants withdrew from the study approved using interview data, and one was excluded from the study). Only six interviews were analysed.</p> <p>Data from 6 participants were collected and analysed.</p> <p>Data from 6 participants were collected and analysed.</p>	<p>Findings (Chapter 4)</p>
Phase 3	<p>Time: end of the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021</p>	<p>1-IUM Survey</p> <p>2-2nd Individual interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of students' engagement</p> <p>3-System Logs understand the students' involvement with blended learning)</p> <p>4- informal chats participants' comments on some incidents, their inquiries or their reflection used as a data source.</p>	<p>Data were collected from 6 participants and analysed.</p> <p>Data from 6 participants were collected and analysed.</p> <p>Data from 6 participants were collected and analysed.</p> <p>Data from 6 participants were collected and analysed.</p>	

3.7.1 Research Instruments

Researchers use a variety of sources from which to collect data in order to deeply understand the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2014, Merriam, 2009). The multi-method approach used by Cohen et al. (2007) involves the use of more than two methods to collect data, and several data sources to support data triangulation. I aimed to use different methods of data collection to obtain rich data which would illustrate the complexity of engagement as a multidimensional construct for a heterogeneous group in online learning, a learning mode that might be perceived differently by different Ls. The various methods are intended to minimise the risk of researcher bias. The instruments in this study comprised the questionnaire survey (phases 1 and 3), the semi-structured interview (phases 2 and 3), experience sampling via self-reporting (phase 2), classroom observation (phase 2), log data (phase 3) and informal digital text conversation via WhatsApp (phase 3). It is worth mentioning that all data collection instruments were developed in Arabic, the native and preferred language of the participants.

A detailed description of the data collection methods is presented below, and the following section explains how the data was collected in practice (3.7.23.7.2). It is worth mentioning that before data collection, I piloted the interview questions, the engagement self-reporting (ESM), and other instruments with five colleagues (PhD researchers) and two Arabic language teachers to check the clarity of questions, statements, and the quality of the online forms. The IUM survey was adjusted based on the results and feedback of the pilot study (3.6).

3.7.1.1 Survey

The study used a short-form Inventory of University Motivation (IUM) survey focussing on questions related to self and goals in learning English (received via email from Professor D. McInerney). The online survey (Appendix C) was created using Microsoft Forms. Participants took part in this survey twice. The survey was composed of three parts. The first asked for demographic information such as age, marital status, and employment status. The second part consisted of 35 items; 19 were about personal goals: 5 related to mastery goals (task or effort), 5 asked about performance goals (competition or social power), 5 concerned social goals (affiliation or social concern), and 4 covered extrinsic goals (praise or token). The remaining 16 items focused on a sense of self: 7 dealt with sense of purpose, 6 were about self-concept (positive and negative), and 3 explored understanding of reliance. The third part comprised open-ended questions about the participants' challenges and experience of online learning at SEU.

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The plan was to receive responses from participants about their motivation in three different periods (at the beginning, middle and end of the course); however, students responded twice: once before observing their engagement in classes (phase 1) and a second time at the end of the semester (phase 3).

My aim in using this motivational survey was to maximise the variation between the participants in order to obtain a more representative sample of students, and to compare participants' motivation at the beginning of the study and the end of the semester. In addition, the survey would also be used to connect differences in what motivated the participants to learn English with their actual engagement in the online English classes. The survey yielded vital information which was used as the starting point for the first interviews with the NTSs.

3.7.1.2 Interview

The individual interviews were the second primary data source. Kvale (2011, p. 1) defined an interview as 'an interview where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee'. An interview is the most common method used in qualitative research for different purposes (Dörnyei, 2018). Cohen et al. (2007, p. 349) noted that one of the strengths of the interview is that it is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard.

There are different kinds of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2018). Structured interviews consist of prepared questions in the same order and with exact wording to enable a comparison between all interviewees. In unstructured interviews, the researcher has a general idea of the topic with no detailed guidelines for questions to create informal conversation. Part of the purpose of this study is to understand how LLs engage in online language learning, and the semi-structured Interview is considered an appropriate method for exploring this area. Dörnyei (2018, p. 136) states that the semi-structured interview 'provides guidance and direction (hence the "-structured" part in the name), but it is also keen to follow up on interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues (hence the "semi-" part)'. As a researcher, I understood the research context and the phenomenon I was exploring. This allowed me to develop general questions in advance of the interview and also include additional questions according to participants' responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In the current study, each NTS completed two one-hour online semi-structured interviews (one in the second phase and the other in the third phase). The first interviews for all participants took place during the two weeks at the end of December 2020 and beginning of January 2021. The

questions (Appendix D) aimed to clearly understand participants' lives, goals, and engagement experiences in two English language learning environments. Due to travel restrictions, I could not meet the participants and interview them in SA, so all the interviews were done online on Google Duo, the participants' preferred app. The second interview was conducted at the end of the semester in April 2021 (Appendix E). As I started working on the analysis during the early part of data collection, the second interview questions were formed based on participants' responses to the first interviews, informal chats, and classroom observations. Questions in the second interview focused on participants' reflections on their learning and engagement experiences at SEU and the role of social media in their learning. These interviews proved rather more difficult to schedule due to the university making changes to the students' course schedule (Appendix F). All at once, the students were rushing to submit assignments, complete online activities, and prepare for exams. Thus, all of the second interviews were conducted after the end of the semester.

Both sets of interviews were audio-recorded to be transcribed later (Appendix G). Dörnyei (2007) encourages completing the transcription process as soon as the interview is over, especially since transcription is time-consuming. Duff (2008) points out, for example, that a one-hour interview might take between four to eight hours to transcribe. As Nvivo transcription supports Arabic, it was used in this study to transcribe eight of the interviews. However, two disadvantages of this software were inaccuracy in transcribing and transcription minutes being expensive, particularly with extended interviews. I listened to the recordings many times and amended the scripts to overcome these obstacles. Later, I also used other transcription software to transcribe some of the interviews and voice notes. All interview transcripts were sent to participants to check accuracy of meaning.

The data was kept in Arabic as it was essential to work from the source to retain the meanings that the participants intended. These Arabic transcripts were read many times over in order to generate the themes, and, being a native Arabic speaker and cultural insider, I was able to translate many of the relevant quotations into English. Two Arabic translation PhD students revised these quotations, and a Saudi researcher was asked to back-translate randomly selected parts of the translations to check the accuracy.

3.7.1.3 Experience Sampling Method (ESM)

Intensive longitudinal methods (ILM) involve repeated measurements to capture changes over time from individuals (Manwaring et al., 2017). The present study used a form of ILM, which is an experience sampling method (ESM). Larson & Csikszentmihalyi (2014) define the experience sampling method as a 'research procedure for studying what people do, feel, and think during

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their daily lives. It asks individuals to provide systematic self-reports randomly during a typical week's waking hours (p. 21).

Fredricks & McColskey (2012) highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses in comparing different methods of measuring student engagement. According to researchers, ESM helps collect engagement data in the moment rather than retrospectively compared with student self-reporting. ESM has been used to investigate students' engagement in learning mathematics (Lin et al., 2018), the role of autonomy and controlled educational goals in students' emotional states (Ketonen et al., 2018), and students' engagement and self-regulation (Xie et al., 2019). Xie et al. (2019) asserted that the method is a practical way to capture college students' learning experiences. The method can also be used to examine variations in engagement at different times and situations. However, the technique's effectiveness relies mainly on participants' willingness and ability to commit to consistently recording the data. It is difficult to capture a multifaceted construct such as engagement in a small number of items (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Henrie et al., 2015). Thus, I considered using an alternative practical way to ensure the technique's consistency, such as written or voice notes (informal chat) in Arabic through social platforms.

As the present study adopted the Redmond et al. (2018) engagement framework for OL, ESM items focused on engagement components from the framework such as cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and social engagement. Although there were no items in ESM that specifically focused on collaboration, this engagement component was evident in students' interviews and informal conversations and emerged from data. Cognitive and behavioural items in the ESM survey are adapted from Oga-Baldwin and Fryer (2020), while emotional and social items are adopted from Khajavy (2020). ESM in Arabic was created through an online link (Microsoft Forms) and shared with participants (Appendix H). The participants received a reminder at the beginning of the study weeks (excluding exams and presentation weeks) on a social media platform (WhatsApp) to remind them to complete the survey for at least five consecutive weeks to reflect on both modes of English learning environments.

I asked the participants to report ESM for a total of 12 weeks, and there were variations in the numbers of students' responses, ranging from 5 weeks' worth of responses to 12 weeks (Table 7). The reason for students choosing only certain weeks to reflect on rather than the whole semester is likely to be that they found completing weekly surveys for the whole 12 weeks too much of a commitment, given their many other course assignments as well as family or work responsibilities. In addition, it is possible that some of the students do not take surveys seriously, or they may have answered randomly to complete the task quickly. Despite my efforts to simplify the forms and reduce the burden on the students, some of them still forgot to fill out the form. To

avoid affecting the reflections, which were meant to be made as soon after the classes as possible, I asked participants who had forgotten just to abandon it for that week and reminded them to fill in the next week's as soon as classes were over. All ESM data was extracted in an Excel file for further analysis. Concerns that were brought up in these reflections were helpful in designing the second interview, as well as prompting follow-up questions to ask during informal chats with the participants.

Table 7 Self Report Responses

Participant	Number of self-reported classes	Teaching mode	Location
Maha	5	4 F2F & 1 virtual	Home
Shoug	11	6 F2F & 5 virtual	Home
Foouz	14	5 F2F & 9 virtual	Home
Roaa	11	5 F2F & 6 virtual	9 from home 2 from hospitals
Mona	13	6 F2F & 7 virtual	7 from home 6 from workplace
Warda	7	3 F2F & 4 virtual	4 from home 2 from workplace 1 in the car on the way home from work

3.7.1.4 Observation

Observation is a data collection tool that helps researchers observe and note behaviours, events, and activities in a research context (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2013). One of the main benefits of observation is that it enables researchers to gather vital information from a naturally social situation (Cohen et al., 2007). In this method, researchers can notice many aspects which cannot be reflected in other methods, especially if participants feel uncomfortable sharing them (Creswell, 2013). However, as with most research methods, this method has limitations. Creswell (2013) highlighted some limitations, such as the researcher's position being intrusive, containing some ethical issues that cannot be reported and lacking attending and observing skills.

Researchers have presented different types of observations. For example, Taylor-Powell and Steele (1996) classified observation into overt observation, in which participants know that they are being observed and observation might affect their actual behaviour, and covert observation, in which participants are unaware of being observed. Bryman (2016) divided observation into

participant and non-participant observation. The former means that the researcher participates in the participant's activities and writes down notes on it, while in the latter, the researcher observes participants' behaviour but does not participate.

In the early stages of the study, the intention was to observe English classes (F2F classes on campus and VCs on Blackboard) to compare students' engagement in two different learning modes. However, with restrictions, both environments were online. I employed covert non-participant observation for each participant in six online English classrooms. Teachers and all students (participants and non-participants) were aware of class observations of particular students as the announcement was posted on Blackboard by English teachers (Appendix I). However, one teacher out of the three did not agree to have her online classes observed. I contacted her, shared with her PIS, and informed her that teacher practices were not the focus of the study. The teacher later agreed that I could observe the recordings of the classes rather than join the class as it was taking place. I observed 36 classes (6 for each case -3 F2F and 3 VCs). In classroom observation, I took notes based on participants' obvious behaviours in the online class. Although observing learners' actual behaviours behind screens was challenging, the method helped to raise questions when participants did not respond to the teacher or engage in class activities. Observing different English online classes was a supportive tool as participants reflected on differences in students' engagement in the two environments and enhanced the formation of second interview questions. Examples of classroom observation notes (before and after entering data in Nvivo) can be found in Appendix J.

3.7.1.5 Data Log

Integration of technology worldwide enables academic institutions, specifically universities, to adapt learning management systems (LMS, also called course management systems; CMS). Even though there are different software types, such as Moodle, Learning Space, and the ANGEL Learning Management Suite (LMS), Blackboard is the most dominant e-learning software (Bradford et al., 2007). Blackboard is considered a platform which enables teachers and students to interact through the internet. It also has asynchronous and synchronous features that support learning and F2F teachings, such as announcements, emails, presentations, discussion forums, blogs, journals, and virtual classrooms. Learning management systems such as Blackboard require users to log in and track access to online material, time spent in different course areas, and the number of visits (Heathcote & Dawson, 2005).

For triangulation purposes, the present study extracts participants' data from the learning management system used in SEU (Blackboard), including views and time spent on activities. Although this data may reflect behavioural engagement, tracking participants' learning and

commitment to activities in an online language course are essential. This helped me understand cognitive, social, and emotional engagement in ESM, and understanding all these engagement indicators informed the development of interview questions.

3.7.2 Data collection procedure

Ethical approval for the study was obtained at end of November 2020, and so data collection began during the second semester of the 2020-21 academic year. Government lockdowns were by then affecting education institutions worldwide, and it was therefore much more challenging to recruit NTSs for the main study compared with the pilot study, when it was possible to be on campus. There was no opportunity to travel to the research location and recruit a study sample, so an alternative had to be found. The most effective option was to post a survey on the university website that investigated student interaction and satisfaction with online learning during the pandemic. The survey was open to the general student population, and 732 responses were received (318 female and 414 male) from different SEU campuses in SA from both TSs and NTSs. It is worth noting that the vast amounts of quantitative data that were gathered were presented at a conference. From this high number of respondents, 54 of the NTSs agreed to participate in the study. The initial plan was to look at male and female case studies at SEU, since offers to participate were from both genders. The first phase of the study was begun by sending the first IUM survey to all volunteers; however, only 17 students with different English proficiency levels agreed to participate and they were from other branches of the university. The IUM responses of the 17 participants were analysed and then compared to the second IUM survey on motivation at the end of the semester. I arranged a friendly chat with the participants individually on WhatsApp and built a rapport with them. I explained the aims of the study and all ethical considerations, as illustrated in the PIS (Appendix K). The students agreed to participate and signed an electronic consent form. Then, we arranged a time for the first interview and moved to the study's second phase.

The second phase comprised 17 individual interviews, with 12 female and 5 male students. There were no concerns about interviewing both male and female participants; however, it was challenging to interview male participants. Two of them preferred to respond to interview questions by email while the other three were interviewed on the phone. In an attempt to lessen the participants' anxiety and to have a natural conversation with them, Arabic was used in all interviews. With their consent, all were audio recorded. One female participant did not agree to be recorded, and so notes were taken instead. I began each interview by congratulating the student on returning to study and informing them that twenty years ago, I too had been a non-traditional student. I could understand the kinds of responsibilities they were undertaking in work

and home life, and I praised them for returning to study despite the difficulties. In this way I hoped to encourage the participants to feel comfortable and be open in talking about themselves. There were no concerns about teachers or grades, and I assured them that their identities would be secure, and that the data would be used for research purposes only. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants, reminded them of the engagement self-report they were to fill out, and asked them to review the transcript and confirm the accuracy of the content before continuing with the analysis. These steps helped to reduce anticipated problems and ensure research quality (3.10).

The second data source in this second phase was students' self-reporting on their engagement after the week's English classes. In the third week of the second semester, I sent the link to the self-report (ESM) to the 17 participants and reminded them to fill it out after English F2F and virtual classes. Unfortunately, ten participants did not respond to my messages and emails, leaving the study with seven participants (six female and one male). My second decision at this stage was to reconsider the research sample. Although one male was willing to participate through written communication, I decided to focus on female participants for comfort and more accessible communication for both researcher and participants, with the consideration that female participants have more responsibilities in certain societies (such as this research context) than males. Although the initial analysis of the interview showed commonly shared themes in the NTSS' experience, I decided to exclude withdrawn participants' data due to the large amount of data collected from the six participants. Although the amount of quantitative data (motivation survey) was small, it was combined with the participants' quotes for a rich analysis. Regarding the ESM, I communicated informally with the participants through WhatsApp and reminded them to fill out these forms every week (excluding assessment weeks). If a participant texted that she had forgotten to fill out the report for that week, I asked her to leave it and do the one for the following week. This strategy was to ensure that late reflections would not affect the data.

The third data source in this phase was classroom observation. I observed 36 classes (6 for each of the 6 participants, comprising 3 F2F and 3 VC). In classroom observations, I took notes based on obvious behaviours. Although observing learner behaviour via the computer screen was challenging, this method helped to raise the relevant questions when participants did not respond to the teacher or engage in class activities. Observing different English online classes was a supportive tool as participants reflected on the differences in their engagement in the two environments. Working on the analysis early during the data collection was effective as it enabled me to prepare for the next phase. All data sources in the second phase (first interview, ESM, classroom observation) supported me in designing the second interview questions (in the third

phase). Follow-up questions were suggested by informal chats with the participants if they gave sufficient information in the open-ended part of the ESM.

On moving to the third phase, the second interviews were more difficult to arrange due to changes in the course schedule. Because of this, the students suddenly became very busy submitting assignments, completing online activities, and preparing for exams. The IUM surveys were therefore sent to the participants before the end of the academic year, and the second interviews were postponed until the participants were available, so that exam stress and end of term submissions would not affect the data. I also extracted the participants' data from Blackboard, the learning management system used at SEU. These analytics included number of views and time spent on activities. Aside from this data potentially reflecting behavioural engagement, tracking learning and commitment to activities in online language learning helps to understand cognitive, social, and emotional engagement in ESM, as all components are interrelated. When students finished their assessments, I arranged a suitable time and conducted the second interviews in April and May. Table 8 summarises the collected data sources and the procedure in a time-ordered manner.

Table 8 Overview of Data Collection Timeline

<i>Research Method</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Data Collection Date</i>
Phase 1: 1st Survey (PIT)	Online surveys checked students' motivational goals and sense of self at the end of the first semester.	17-12-2020
Phase 2: 1st Interview	Interview students about their engagement experience in online learning.	<p>Shoug from Dammam 24-12-2020</p> <p>Male from Tabuk 24-12-2020</p> <p>Female from Jeddah 25-12-2020</p> <p>Male from Riyadh 26-12-2020</p> <p>Maha from Jazan 27-12-2020</p> <p>2 Females from Abha and Alahsa 28-12-2020</p> <p>Male from Madina 29-12-2020</p> <p>Female from Riyadh 30-12-2020</p> <p>Foos & Mona from Dammam 02-01-2021</p> <p>Raaa from Dammam 10-01-2021</p> <p>Warda from Dammam 12-01-2021</p> <p>Female from Riyadh 14-01-2021</p>

		Female from Jazan 14-01-2021 (not recorded)
		Email sent to two male participants
ESM	Online self-report on engagement after either F2F or VC. The researcher reminded the participants weekly.	<p>Shoug reported 11 weeks</p> <p>Maha reported 5 weeks</p> <p>Foaz reported 14 weeks</p> <p>Mona reported 13 weeks</p> <p>Raaa reported 11 weeks.</p> <p>Warda reported 7 weeks</p>
Online classes observations	Observe the participants in F2F and VC.	Observe F2F and VC <i>in weeks 4-6, and 10</i> for all participants.
Phase 3: 2nd Survey (PIT)	Online survey	03-04-2021
2nd Interview	Interview students about their engagement experience at the end of the academic year.	<p>Shoug 17-04-2021</p> <p>Maha 20-04-2021</p> <p>Foaz 22-04-2021</p> <p>Mona 24-04-2021</p> <p>Raaa 05-05-2021</p> <p>Warda 09-05-2021</p>
Log data	Blackboard analytics were collected after the end of the academic year.	20-04-2021
Informal chats	Student chats with the researcher were collected at the end of the year	09-05-2021

3.8 Data Analysis

The previous section presented the data collection tools used for the main study, and the following sections describe how the resulting data was analysed to enrich qualitative investigation. Flick (2014) defines data analysis as ‘the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it’ (p. 5). According to Dörnyei (2007), diversity in analytical approaches is central to qualitative research. Duff (2008) points out that ‘the approach to data analysis will crucially depend on the type and scope of study to be conducted and the conceptual framework guiding it’ (p. 169).

Scholars acknowledge that data analysis takes place almost simultaneously with data collection (Dörnyei, 2007; Duff, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although I worked on analysis from the moment the first data was recorded, more intensive analysis was done once all of the data had been gathered. The following sections deal with the quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures that were used.

3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

In this study, although quantitative methods (IUM and ESM) were used primarily to help triangulate data from classroom observations and interviews, these instruments served as a springboard for discussions during the interviews. At a later stage, the quantitative data was used to reinforce the qualitative data findings. With the small number of participants, Microsoft Excel was used to help analyse surveys and self-report data. With the current research approach and small sample size, there was no inferential statistical analysis. The research focus was not on determining correlations, factor analysis, or generalisations. Instead, the numerical data resulting from the quantitative instruments were listed according to students' responses in the survey or through calculating means in the data gathered from the self-reporting forms (students' motivational goals and sense of self in Excel sheet: Appendix L). Excel spreadsheets showing weekly data for cognitive engagement (CE), behavioural engagement (BE), positive emotional engagement (PEE), negative emotional engagement (NEE) and social engagement (SE) are presented in Appendix M. Presentation of these findings are supported by extracts from the interviews in chapter 4.

Answers to open-ended questions in the quantitative instruments were entered with other qualitative data from interviews, observation, and informal chats into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Nvivo, for thematic analysis.

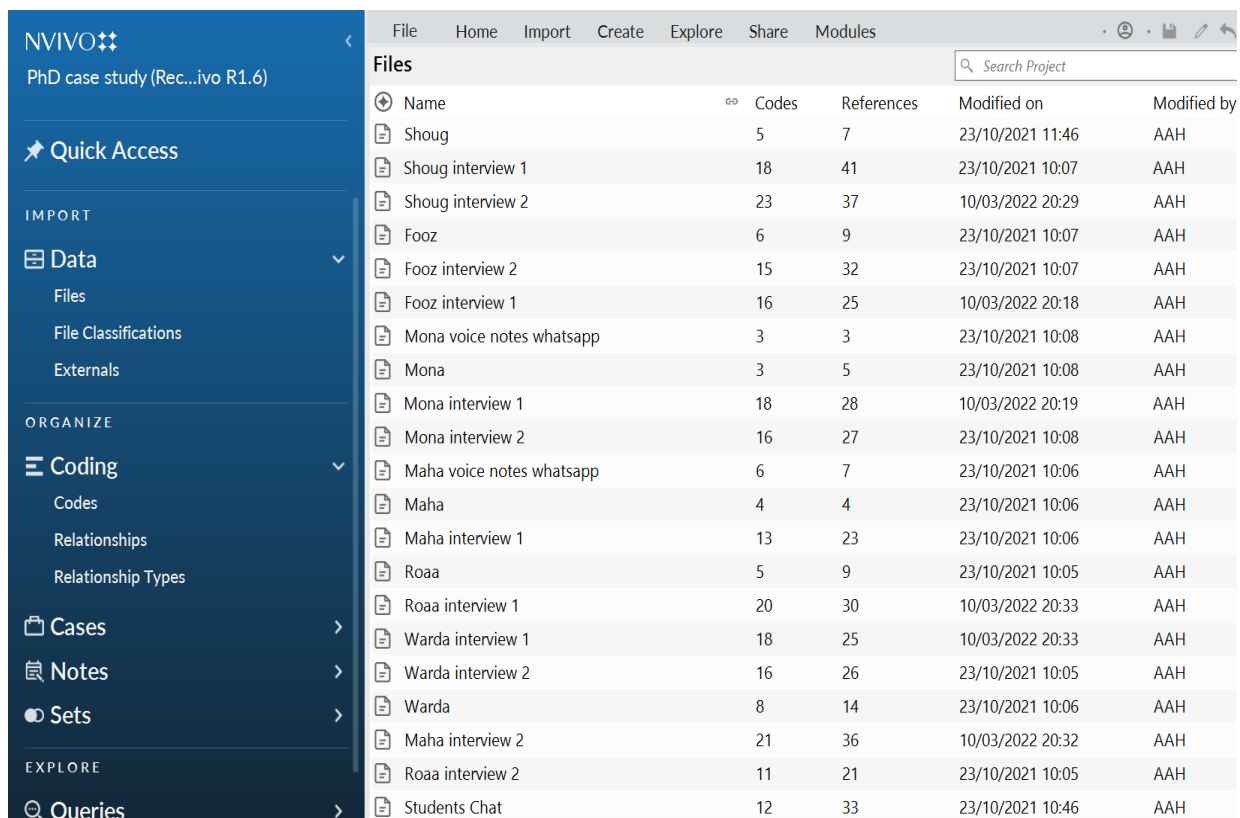
3.8.2 Organising Data

I considered a number of different packages of qualitative data analysis software before choosing the most appropriate in terms of the study's goals. Nvivo was selected for various reasons, not least because it is highly recommended by academics engaging in qualitative research (Cresswell, 2013; Duff, 2008). The software is able to organise vast amount of qualitative data and is regarded as one of the most reliable for qualitative data coding. Nvivo also supports Arabic, the language used in the data. In addition, as the university supports researchers with effective software, the software is not expensive and is also user-friendly. It enables the identification of

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patterns in qualitative data as well as organising data by creating nodes that can be later developed as themes.

Nvivo Version 12 was used to manage the data. All of the transcribed data files from the interviews, observation notes, open-ended survey questions, self-report forms, and informal WhatsApp chats were imported into the program. Pseudonyms were used for participant anonymity. Figure 7 below shows an example of file organising within Nvivo.



Name	Codes	References	Modified on	Modified by
Shoug	5	7	23/10/2021 11:46	AAH
Shoug interview 1	18	41	23/10/2021 10:07	AAH
Shoug interview 2	23	37	10/03/2022 20:29	AAH
Fooz	6	9	23/10/2021 10:07	AAH
Fooz interview 2	15	32	23/10/2021 10:07	AAH
Fooz interview 1	16	25	10/03/2022 20:18	AAH
Mona voice notes whatsapp	3	3	23/10/2021 10:08	AAH
Mona	3	5	23/10/2021 10:08	AAH
Mona interview 1	18	28	10/03/2022 20:19	AAH
Mona interview 2	16	27	23/10/2021 10:08	AAH
Maha voice notes whatsapp	6	7	23/10/2021 10:06	AAH
Maha	4	4	23/10/2021 10:06	AAH
Maha interview 1	13	23	23/10/2021 10:06	AAH
Roaa	5	9	23/10/2021 10:05	AAH
Roaa interview 1	20	30	10/03/2022 20:33	AAH
Warda interview 1	18	25	10/03/2022 20:33	AAH
Warda interview 2	16	26	23/10/2021 10:05	AAH
Warda	8	14	23/10/2021 10:06	AAH
Maha interview 2	21	36	10/03/2022 20:32	AAH
Roaa interview 2	11	21	23/10/2021 10:05	AAH
Students Chat	12	33	23/10/2021 10:46	AAH

Figure 7 Example of File organising within Nvivo

Nvivo was a helpful tool that assisted in both organising and analysing the data. It is crucial to note that Nvivo, as a software program, does not perform data analysis on behalf of the researcher. Instead, it aids in making the process quicker, more adaptable, and more reliable. To build the codes and allocate the data to them, I used Nvivo tools. The use of Nvivo improved the study's rigour, particularly by improving the data analysis's efficiency, systematicity, and accuracy. It only took a few clicks to search for, retrieve, delete, move, and combine codes using NVivo. Additionally, I could add notes to the data to record my reflections and observations.

3.8.3 Coding the Data

After organising the data, codes were developed using the Nvivo tools. According to Saldaña (2014, p. 7), 'Coding is a heuristic—a method of discovery—to the meanings of individual data sections'. Coding means examining coherent sections of collected data (word, sentence, or

phrase) and labelling it with a word or a short phrase to highlight its content (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

Thematic analysis (TA), which was used in this study, can be described as ‘a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set’ (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). The rationale for using this type of analysis is its flexibility, and it is considered an excellent analytic method for novice qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In addition, it is a powerful method for exploring and understanding experiences and behaviours across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify themes by utilising a pre-set framework derived from the literature (top-down) or deriving from the data (bottom-up). TA was employed in this qualitative study to highlight codes that later led to themes and sub-themes, and to find the connections between them in ways that fulfil the research aim and answer the research questions.

I carefully read the data many times over and then drew on the literature to determine how motivation and engagement could best be presented in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), coding can be theory-driven (deductive; derived from a concept) or data-driven (inductive; derived from data). In the coding process, I kept a copy close to hand of the research aim and goals, research questions, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks in order to be more focused and precise in analysis (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Nvivo was therefore used as the primary analytical tool for **inductive** and **deductive** thematic data analysis in the study. Each of the research questions was answered using a specific analytical framework, as described above in the literature review (2.3.2.1, 2.4.2).

First, deductive data analysis was used to analyse how NTSs motivate and engage in online classes. The deductive coding analysis for the first RQ was based on PIT framework of Maehr (1984) which categorised four types of motivational goals and three types of sense of self. Deductive coding analysis was also used to analyse the second RQ which focuses on NTSs engagement in OL based on the engagement framework of Redmond et al. (2018) in online learning, which categorised engagement into five components: cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and collaborative. These five components were created as codes (nodes) and named according to the framework. I then reread the data, highlighting the text, and coded it to the nodes according to the definition of each component in the framework.

Second, inductive data analysis was used to identify what the contextual factors are that affect NTSs engagement in online learning. Braun and Clarke’s (2012) steps for thematic analysis were followed (Appendix N). To begin with, I familiarised myself with the data, listening repeatedly to the audio-recordings to check scripts, writing observation notes, and reflecting on the data

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collection process. This was done in preparation for generating initial codes. During this bottom-up data analysis strategy, the codes were continually revised and reorganised until a final version was reached. Illustrative quotations from the participants were also coded in Nvivo, and the data re-evaluated to reduce the number of themes in line with the research focus. For example, the theme named 'challenges' was re-assigned to the theme of 'contextual factors that affected engagement'. Seven main themes emerged: engagement meaning, cognitive engagement, behavioural engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement, collaborative engagement, and factors affecting engagement in online learning. There were sub-themes under each main theme that had more nodes. Appendix O lists the themes and sub-themes with their definitions.

One of the challenges of working in Nvivo was that the data analysis files continually crashed, so I backed up the files using Microsoft Word documents to save the coded data and lists of translated quotations. Figure 8 and Table 9 show examples of coding behavioural engagement from both programs (Nvivo and Word). I highlighted students' words that demonstrated active participation or showed they had been engaging with class activities. In the Word document, the words 'participated' and 'participation' in Arabic from interviews 1 and 2 were noted, along with observation notes and informal chat, and the translation of each interview extract is written beside the original.

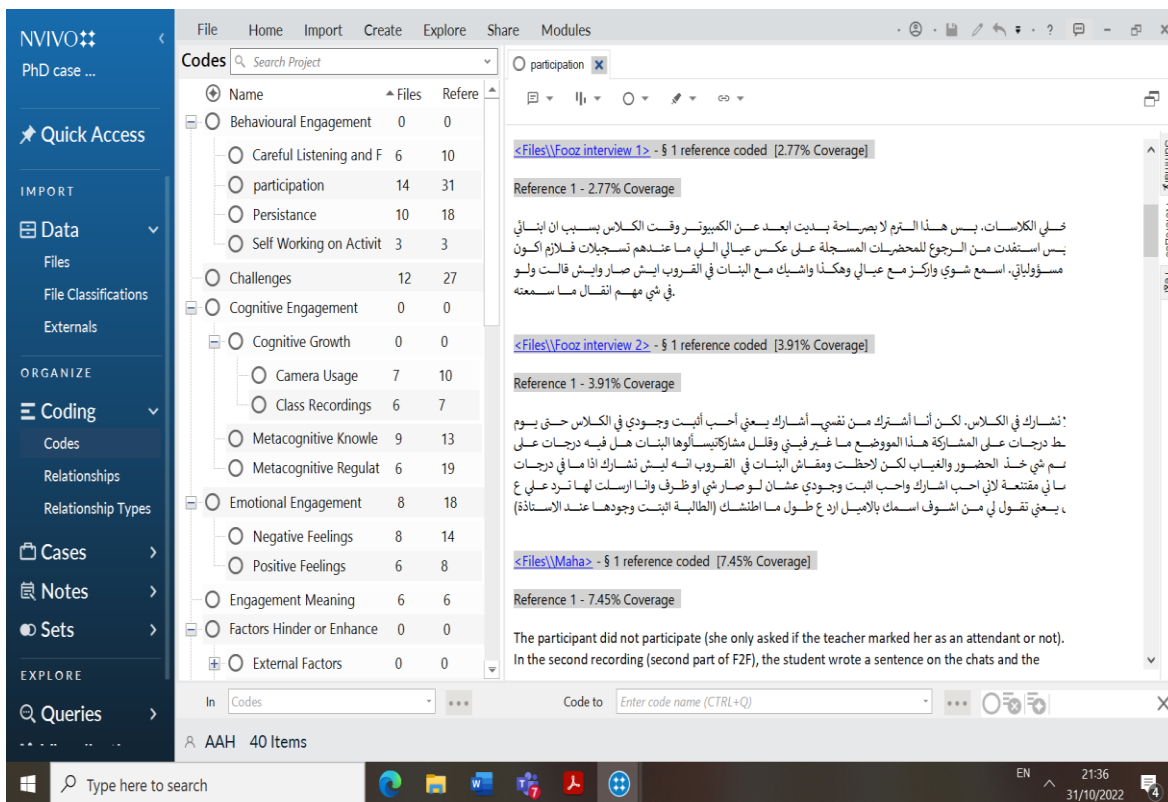


Figure 8 Example of Coding in Nvivo

Table 9 Example of Coding in Word

Theme	Category	Subcategory	Examples (Students' words)	Translation
Student engagement	Behavioural engagement	Participation	<p>لكن حقيقة مع وضي ما في مجال اني اكون نموذج الطالب المشارك اشغل المحاضرة عشان يسجل لي حضور واشوف الوقت واسمع كم كلمة واشوف الشات ومحادثة الطالبات واذا كان بمقدوري اقول كلمة كلمتين احاول (مها مقابلة 1)</p> <p>بصراحة قبل الكلاس لا والله ما اسوي شي. ووقت المحاضرة ما شاء الله البنات جرئيين انا من النوع اللي مو جرئ بالكلاس. اخاف. : ما ادري اخاف اتوتر اخاف اذا فتحت المايك يطلع ازعاج. لان وقت المنصة اكون مشحونة طول اليوم ناس صباح وناس عصر (شوق مقابلة 1)</p> <p>وشددين علينا اذا ما تشاركون يحسبوننا غياب فكان لازم نشارك يا عن طريق الشات او نفتح المايك ويقولون لمصلحتكم بس الحاليين ما احسهم مرة شاركنا او لا ما يقولون شي (فوز مقابلة 1)</p> <p>وانا ما اقول اني ما اشارك او اشارك بس انا اذا عندي مشاركة قيمة ومفيدة برخل فيها غير كذا احب اسكت (منى مقابلة 2)</p> <p>انا لو كنت فاضية اشارك معها يعني انا ارحم الاستاذ وقته وجهده احب اقدره وشارك معه بس بسبب انشغالي ما اقدر اشارك (مها مقابلة 2)</p>	<p>I cannot be a model for participating students, as I only sign in to avoid being absent. I barely have time to check the chat and student social group to grasp the whole picture of the class (Maha Int.1)</p> <p>I do nothing before the class, but during class time, the students are bold, but I am not. I am not like them; I am scared; I feel nervous and afraid that the mic will be turned on and there will be noise. Because all my daughters have online classes all day, I do not feel comfortable (Shouq Int.1)</p> <p>The first semester teachers were so strict that we did not participate. We have to participate through the mic or chat, and they said it's good for us, unlike this semester, they do not encourage us to participate (Fouz Int.1).</p> <p>I do not say I participate, but I will do otherwise if I have a valid point. I prefer being silent (Mona, Int 2).</p> <p>If I were free, I would participate. I sympathized with the teacher who worked hard to engage the students, but because of my commitments, I cannot participate (Maha, int. 2)</p>

I then reviewed data and the themes with quotes in codes to create a theme map. Figure 9 shows a hierarchy chart for themes and nodes coded from data. The most prominent were external factors that positively or negatively affected NTS engagement in OL.

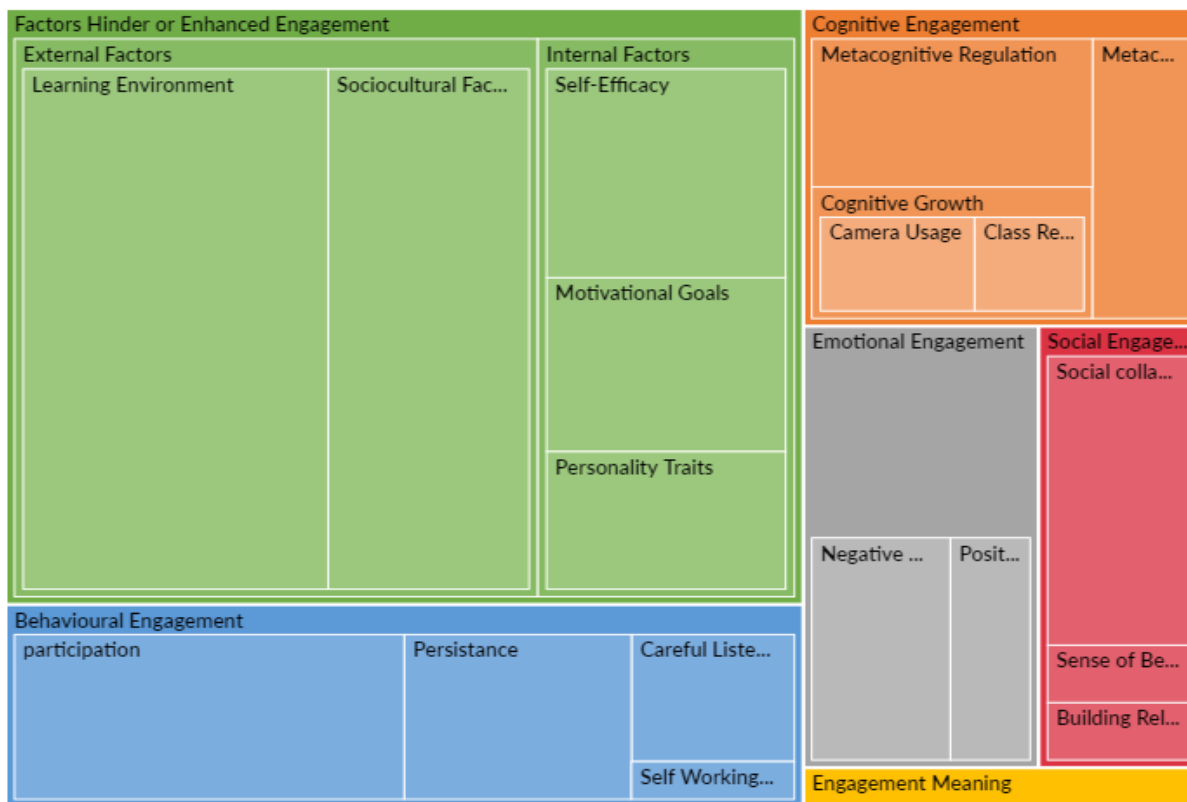


Figure 9: Hierarchy of themes

The final step was to integrate the synthesis of themes to explore NTS motivation and engagement in OL and to answer the RQs. The results of this step are presented in chapter 4. Two newly emerged themes were not discussed in the literature review and are shown below.

3.8.3.1 Metacognition

One of the themes that emerged from the data was metacognition. Metacognition is ‘thinking about thinking (Anderson, 2002), including awareness and regulatory skills. Schraw and Dennison (1994) stated that metacognition has two components: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. Akyol and Garrison (2011) distinguished between the static and dynamic aspects of metacognition in OL and divided the construct into three dimensions: knowledge of metacognition, monitoring of cognition and regulation of knowledge. According to the authors, the knowledge of cognition (metacognitive knowledge) refers to the individual's awareness of his/her cognition. Monitoring of cognition means a reflection on action (Akyol & Garrison, 2011), while the regulation of cognition means the steps that an active learner takes to control his/her learning (Baker & Brown, 1984; Akyol & Garrison, 2011). In a simple presentation, Negretti and Kuteeva (2011) classified metacognition as declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge.

The declarative deals with the factual information about the knowledge, procedural knowledge related to how the knowledge can be achieved and conditional knowledge are connected to the regulation or actions to accomplish the learning task. The theme emerged from the data due to the participants' reflections on the learning and engagement experience at SEU.

3.8.3.2 Personality Traits

Participants' traits played a vital role in their engagement in English online classes. Dörnyei (2005) and Komarraju et al. (2011) illustrated the five components of the Big Five framework of personality traits which described the personality of an individual: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion-introversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism-emotional stability. Even though it was not the aim to explore the participants' personality traits, these became apparent in their reflections. Student reflections showed three traits: conscientiousness, extraversion-introversion, and neuroticism. Conscientiousness refers to describing individuals who are organised and self-disciplined. Extraversion-introversion represents a friendly and active (extrovert) or quiet and passive (introvert) individual. Neuroticism is connected to emotional instability, leading to anxiety and negative feelings.

3.8.4 Organisation of Data Findings

This section presents further information on the construction of the analytical chapter 4 which helps to understand the findings by recounting the personal stories and learning journeys of the six female participants. The findings are presented in the following chapter, with each case study covered in four sections. The first introduces the backstory of the participant. In the second section, I examine the participants' motivational goals and sense of self (answering RQ1 a&b). The participants' motivation stories are revealed through triangulation of the different data sources (surveys, and interviews), as this enriches each case. The third section comprises the main part of each case study and illustrates each participant's engagement in online learning, cognitively, behaviourally, emotionally, socially, and collaboratively (answering RQ2a). Finally, the fourth section I note the contextual factors affecting each participant's engagement during the online English course (answering RQ3).

3.9 The Positionality of the Researcher

In social science research, the role of the researcher in any study significantly impacts the research itself and affects the research process in forming research questions, data collection and analysis (Ganga & Scott, 2006). According to Foote and Bartell (2011), the positionality that researcher obtains during their inquiry and personal experience shaped by this positionality may

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impact the researcher's decision of research process and findings interpretation. Thus, it is essential to pay close attention to the researcher's role in guaranteeing ethical research (Sultana, 2007). Although I have been reflective in writing this Methodology chapter, I need also to highlight my positionality in the research context. I should reiterate here that the original design and methodology had to be altered due to circumstantial change beyond my control, and that this affected my decisions in the different aspects of planning such as research approach, number of participants, participants' gender, type of interviews, and observation processes.

Two conceptualised positions in the literature are insider and outsider (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2003). Ganga and Scott (2006) pointed out two concepts that depict the extent to which researchers position themselves concerning factors in the research context, such as culture, language, and religion. In this study, I consider myself both an insider and an outsider. As stated earlier in the rationale, I myself had been an NTS, and therefore I am very much aware of the challenges and difficulties that face the participants in their goal to learn English. As I am now a lecturer within the research context of SEU and as I am a former EFL learner at Saudi schools and universities, this positions me as an insider within the research context. This is reflected in my understanding of the challenges of NTSs, as well as in the insider support, I received in accessing materials, Blackboard classes, the students, and the administrative help that the study required. My insider position has allowed me a unique perspective through previous experience teaching English in Saudi Arabia's HE sector. I was also an insider researcher since I shared with the students various characteristics such as culture, religion, and first language. This allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the research issues. I came to this research interested in understanding how female NTSs engage in learning English online and the contextual factors that affect this engagement. Although insider positionality was supposed to give me easy access to the participants, the situation was not easy (as I reflected in section 3.7.2) due to the Covid pandemic.

However, sharing the same culture with the participants enabled me to choose a suitable process to recruit samples for this study and approach students, particularly with the pandemic circumstances. Participants had a low level of English and using Arabic to communicate with them encouraged them to participate when I assured them anonymity and confidentiality. I could build compatibility with students to the extent they shared with me details of their personal lives and contacted me for consultation and support, creating a kind of ethical dilemma (3.11).

Nevertheless, a certain over-familiarity with the context also created a challenge for me in separating out my own knowledge from the participants' views and opinions. In other words, the insider position renders it rather more difficult to be objective about the phenomenon being investigated. The interpretive epistemological perspective in this study stressed the importance of researchers being aware of their perspectives and questioning their pre-existing ideas and values

concerning how they undertake social research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010). As a result, I constantly evaluated my perceptions of individuals and their circumstances. As explained in section 3.3.1, the double hermeneutic approach was particularly helpful in resolving this issue. In addition, it helped me as a researcher to question my own beliefs and understanding by assessing interpretations in this study by referring to the literature. I also kept the constructivist ontological perspective that underpins this research, which emphasises that people create their meaning and knowledge of reality. When participants expected me to guess hidden meanings, I constantly asked them for further information by asking probing questions that elicited more detailed responses. Another concern was being an employee in this institution, which might create a risk of power relationships. To reduce this, I reported my professional relationship with research context to the University of Southampton Ethics and Research Governance Online (ERGO). There was no financial gain or potential conflict of interest in the current investigation; on the contrary, my institution would benefit from the study. I informed participants that I am an employee in the research context. I assured participants that there is no power relationship and I have no access to their records at the university. In contrast, participants felt comfortable inquiring about university policies from me.

In terms of being an outsider, there are two issues. The first issue is that I have been away from the research context for five years as an international student in the UK. Studying in a new academic culture broadened my horizons to have a different learning experience from my participants' learning and teaching behaviours. The second issue is that despite the fact I share with participants the characteristic of being NTSs during undergraduate studies, there is a difference in the mode of learning English. I learnt English in a traditional learning environment compared to participants who experienced OL. Thus, I came to research with a fresh set of experiences.

3.10 Quality of the Research

In qualitative research, different criteria are used to establish research rigour. Qualitative studies are evaluated through trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). According to Fossey et al. (2002), trustworthiness is determined through the researcher's reflexivity, appropriate methodology and different methods of collecting data. In qualitative research, trustworthiness can be evaluated using four critical criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Richards, 2009). The following section describes the steps I took in applying these four criteria in my study.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility is one of the most crucial factors in achieving trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). It is reflected through questioning how findings are congruent with reality and whether research measures what it is meant to measure (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). There are many strategies for achieving credibility (Richards, 2009), such as prolonged engagement between researcher and participants, using triangulation (different methods and tools), respondent validation (obtaining confirmation of research findings by submitting them to participants), in-depth description of the phenomenon, peer scrutiny of the research project and member checks (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). In the current study, I deployed methodological triangulation using different tools to achieve data triangulation, such as self-reports, surveys, interviews, observations, and blackboard analytics. In addition, I used member validation (Richards, 2009), where participants checked interview transcriptions and confirmed the content to ensure both me as the researcher and the participants shared the same level of understanding (Duff, 2008). I also referred to the proposed theoretical and conceptual frameworks (PIT and Redmon et al., 2018) to help interpret findings and increase the credibility of the research.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability is the second criterion that can be used to evaluate trustworthiness in qualitative research. It concerns the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Because a qualitative study examines a phenomenon in its unique and specific context (Bryman, 2016), and each case is regarded as unique, generalisation is impossible (Shenton, 2004), and such transferability has been argued as impractical. However, other researchers, such as Flyvbjerg (2006) and Shenton (2004), have presented different views in discussing the possibility of such transferability as each case can be an example of a large group in similar or different contexts to the context of the study under scrutiny. To achieve this criterion, qualitative researchers are encouraged to provide a comprehensive description of data enabling researchers in various settings to relate findings to their contexts (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Richards, 2009). In the current study, although generalisation is not the aim, dense descriptions of NTSs, research context, and delivery mode are given to help readers gain a clear picture of the phenomenon and the context. With the recent sharp increases in student numbers in HE, such detailed descriptions can be of use in corroborating their applicability to other learning contexts.

Maximum variation sampling (Merriam, 2009) was used to guarantee transferability of the findings. Here, I tried to achieve diversity in the participants to apply in a broader context. Concerning this sampling technique, as mentioned in section 3.5, the participating in the study varied in age, work, and marital status. This variability is advantageous because it represents a greater range of NTSs in various circumstances.

3.10.3 Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to whether research findings are consistent and can be repeated. Richards (2009) defines dependability in qualitative research as 'an interrogation of the context and the method used to derive data' (p.159). Lincoln and Guba (1986) stressed a tight bind between credibility and dependability as, in practice, the demonstration of the former will involve the latter. Dependability can be achieved by using different qualitative methods, such as focus groups, interviews, and observations (Shenton, 2004). Bryman (2016) suggested that researchers adopt an 'auditing' approach by keeping a detailed report of the research process within the study. This will be viewed as a 'prototype model,' enabling other researchers to thoroughly understand the study's methods, effectiveness, and replication, if necessary (Shenton, 2004).

To improve dependability, besides triangulation and member validation (see section 3.10.1) an audit trail was used. This common strategy is considered to be useful for maximising dependability in qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), an audit trail 'describes in detail how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry' (p. 223). This Methodology chapter provides a detailed description of how the research was designed and how the data was collected during the extreme situation of Covid lockdowns. Strategies used to analyse the data are also well explained. Beginning with a pilot study to evaluate the methodology and keeping a research journal (Appendix F) have both been valuable in maintaining the rigour of this study (Richards, 2009).

3.10.4 Confirmability

The last criterion in evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research is confirmability. It answers whether research questions are verified and represent the ideas and experiences of participants, not the researcher's bias and interests (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Qualitative researchers influence fundamental research, and their objectivity is not acknowledged. Shenton (2004) highlighted two strategies to ensure that findings are based on participants' points of view and not those of interpreters in qualitative research: triangulation by using different sources of

data and reflexivity of the researcher by admitting their predisposition and the transparency of representation of data and methodology (Richards, 2009).

In qualitative research, it is assumed that each researcher contributes their subjectivity and individuality to the study. It is crucial to remember that the researcher must constantly be aware of their subjectivity and use the proper qualitative methodological techniques to deal with their biases. In this chapter, I have reflected on my methodological decisions during the data collection procedure and my position as a researcher (3.9) in the research context to provide a richer representation of my relationship with the participants.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

Ethics refers to principles that researchers must follow in their studies. In social science research, researchers investigate people in their natural settings, and some ethical concerns must be considered to protect participants from any harm or risk. As Duff (2008) states, 'it is of utmost importance to take measures to protect the cases we do research about or report on from harm or risk' (p. 151). The current study complied with the ethical rules of the two institutions. The first was SEU, where the fieldwork was conducted. Once this university had given approval for data collection (Appendix P), approval was then sought from the University of Southampton, where the study was carried out. I applied through the ERGO online system, and the application was approved under case number 61505.

According to Bryman (2016), ethics in social research shed light on concerns about the treatment of individuals on whom research is conducted and activities in which researchers engage in their interactions with them. The main ethical principles in social science focus on not harming participants, consent forms, accuracy, and deception (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). First, principal harm can be caused intentionally or unintentionally at any research stage, and it can entail physical harm, loss of self-esteem, stress, and harm to participants' development (Bryman, 2016). It is recommended that participants' privacy should be maintained to protect them from any damage. Privacy can be ensured by maintaining the confidentiality of participants' identities and records. Regarding privacy in the present study, the data was handled according to the Data Protection Act and the University of Southampton's Data Protection Policy (1998). All data collected for this study were kept in an encrypted file on a password-protected laptop, and only I knew the password. The printed copies of the information have been kept safe in a locked drawer in a study area that is only open to me. The information is therefore accessible to me only and no one else may access it without the participants' consent. Pseudonyms for the participants were used when discussing the cases with supervisors.

Before the participants signed the consent forms, I informed them orally and in Arabic, that the information collected would be utilised solely for this purpose of this research. In Saudi Arabia, the audio recording of women's speech is a delicate subject, as reported by the participants themselves (see section 3.7.2). Thus, it was essential to reassure them that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained.

Due to the prevailing circumstances of Covid lockdowns, I did not have the opportunity to meet with the participants. Because of this, I was not confident that I would be able to enrich the foundational data with the participants' background stories. However, since I was able to communicate with the participants virtually, I began with the basics of introducing myself as a researcher and faculty member at the college. I explained the purpose of my research and the motivation behind it. I gave the students details of all of the activities they would be involved in during the study, such as filling out ESM reports, being observed in classes, and taking part in interviews. I also talked to them about the benefits of participation and their right to withdraw at any time from the research. Although there had been no previous relationship with the participants, and I was not officially working at the university, the participants began to take me into their confidence and to message me on WhatsApp to ask for advice. My friendly approach and my own background as an NTS encouraged them to open up to me during that semester and to share their stories and concerns. However, challenges did arise when participants asked me how I had managed my own learning journey (in English or in general) alongside family commitments. Although this level of sharing began to establish robust relationships with the participants, it also created an ethical dilemma i.e., would these relationships compromise the objectivity of the study and was it ethically appropriate? Any advice from me could potentially change the behaviours I was observing in this study. Then, I realised that it was impossible to remain a neutral or impersonal researcher as it would create a situation where the participants would not trust me with their stories. So, I decided to communicate with them in a friendly manner and was careful to answer their enquiries without straying too far into giving personal opinions or advice. Exchanging ideas to help others develop their practices is part of an excellent ethical research tradition. I later discovered that the advice I gave them did turn out to be useful and appreciated, and that this group of learners needed a lot of understanding and support.

An important principle is related to elements of non-disclosure to the participants. Bryman claims that 'it is rarely feasible or desirable to provide participants with a complete account of your research' (2016, p. 134). In this study, I provided participants with sufficient information to understand the study's aim and what was being asked of them. As data collection took place over four months, it was acknowledged that might be daunting for students with commitments and responsibilities, and so they were given the Participant Information Sheet to ensure that they had

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all the necessary information regarding their participation. They also had the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before agreeing to participate and signing the consent form.

Consent forms are essential in research, which means giving participants all information they need to make their own decision about participation in the study. According to Social Research Association (2003), 'Inquiries involving human subjects should be based as far as practicable on the freely given informed consent of subjects. Even if participation is required by law, it should still be as informed as possible (p.27). This means participants do not need to feel they are required to participate, as they have the right to withdraw at any research stage. This was achieved by obtaining approval from SEU to use their campus as a site for this study.

Moreover, participants signed consent forms before any phase after explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any research stage. The second phase of the current study started with interviewing 17 participants; ten withdrew, one was excluded, and the investigation ended with 6 participants. In addition, students (participants and non-participants) and teachers were aware of observations, even in online observations.

The last ethical consideration is the accuracy of data analysis. Researchers need to avoid any personal bias and provide accurate information. According to Creswell (2013), falsifying data findings can occur by taking sides or discussing what suits the researcher's needs, disclosing only positive results or inventing findings. Data was analysed carefully to avoid any bias that could arise from my values as a researcher, and I discussed initial themes and findings with my supervisors. Accurate information can be validated by using different methods to understand outcomes. For example, participants revised interview transcripts and were asked to clarify their meaning before analysing data. In addition, various techniques enabled me to achieve credibility and trustworthiness 3.9). In conclusion, strict adherence to ethical considerations is essential since it is a legal requirement to protect the privacy of participants and ensure the accuracy of the data.

3.12 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has described and explained reasons for the research design and methodology. First, a summary of the study aims and its RQs were presented and then the chosen research paradigms that inform the study methodology were discussed. The philosophical assumptions underpinning the study were then outlined and the rationale for the case study approach explained. The next sections described the research context and explained the strategies used to recruit participants for the sample, hence introducing the six cases that became

the focus of the study. More detail was given on primary data sources, along with the methods and instruments of data collection, plus descriptions of data analysis procedures.

Later sections were devoted to exploring the challenges faced due to the qualitative nature of the research as well as the Covid lockdown conditions. Reflections on participant confidentiality and privacy were also part of this discussion, especially within the context of encouraging the participants to tell their background stories. The chapter ended by outlining strategies used to enhance the study's trustworthiness and follow the necessary ethical guidelines. The next chapter presents the research findings.

Chapter 4 NTSS' Motivation and Engagement in Online Learning

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the stories of each case in turn, with each story consisting of four sections. The first is a profile of the participant and their backstory. The second section deals with their motivation for learning online. I believe it is beneficial to explain the content of the second and third sections. In the second section, the participants' stories are presented in line with the PIT model, with the motivation survey focusing on the participants' **goals** and **sense of self**. Regarding the goals, the focus is on **mastery goals, performance goals, social goals, and extrinsic goals**. While knowledge of L2 goals can enhance our understanding of the motivation to learn English in online classes, the participants' concept of a **sense of self** also has a bearing on motivation in PIT, which will also be included in the second section of each story as well. The three dimensions of self in this study are a **sense of purpose, sense of self-reliance, and self-concept**.

The third section in each story focuses on the participant's engagement in the classes over a period of twelve weeks. And in this section the participants' stories are presented in line with the Redmond's et al. (2018) engagement model in online learning with the visual presentation of engagement self-report focusing on the participants' **cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and collaborative engagement** supported by participants quotes. The last section explores the contextual factors and challenges affecting their engagement in learning English online. In the analysis, I integrated all data sources (3.7.13.7.1) of all cases.

4.2 Maha: Is it Worth Going back to My Studies?

4.2.1 Maha's Profile?

Coming from a rural area in the south of the country, where births are not always recorded or registered correctly, Maha did not know the exact date of her birth or her age. In order to have a legal birthday, Maha's father had created a fictional date based on an assessment of her age from a third person, which at the time of the study made her 45 years old. Maha is married and lives with her husband, who is ill and needs full time care. They have six children, all of whom live at home. Her oldest daughter started her undergraduate studies the same year as Maha at a different university. Maha's five other children ranged in age from 7 to 16 years old at the time of this study.

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Although Maha's parents were uneducated, her father encouraged his children to learn and to attend school. Unlike her sisters, who did not complete their studies, Maha was the only daughter in her family who went on to enrol at teacher training college and qualify as a primary school teacher.

Maha loves her job as a teacher and by the time she came to SEU she had over twenty years' teaching experience. Her job commitments as a teacher and literacy coach often require her to work long hours. Delivering online classes to younger learners during the Covid pandemic was challenging for her, especially as she believed the online approach was not ideal, and she put a lot of effort into helping her students achieve their goals.

The idea of going back to study came after chatting with her 18-year-old daughter, who had enrolled at university. Her daughter told her about SEU and its flexible blended approach to learning. Maha realised that she would be able to go to university without having to give up her job. She was highly motivated after overhearing younger colleagues express their disdain for teachers without a bachelor's degree, and Maha wanted to prove to them that she was not inferior and that she was intelligent enough to do it. She applied to the university, and to her great surprise was accepted, despite being older than most of the other students and after having had such a long gap in her education since gaining her teaching diploma.

4.2.2 Motivation for Learning Online

'I didn't tell them at work that I'm a student at SEU, as I was afraid they might make things difficult for me or make fun of me. I didn't know whether the system allowed me to study. Besides, my work colleagues had always let me down whenever I talked to them about going back to education to get a bachelor's degree; none of them encouraged me or wished me good luck' (Maha, interview 1).

Maha held multiple motivational goals during her learning experience at SEU. Although Figure 10 shows Maha's **mastery goals** based on the two surveys, she also expressed the importance of other motivational goals in the interviews. She was not particularly interested in learning English, nor was she very interested in her chosen degree subject. Her motivation for the most part was based on her longing for a higher **social status**, as her perception was that her colleagues saw her as **inferior** for not having a degree and this functioned as a powerful source of motivation.

'I returned to studying to prove to my colleagues who thought my qualifications were inadequate that I am not inferior' (Maha, interview 1).

In addition, she sought **social power** through group leadership in her work, as she had the same high response to item 5, **performance goals**, in both surveys (Figure 11):

'If I can use English well, I feel superior to others' (Maha, interview 1).

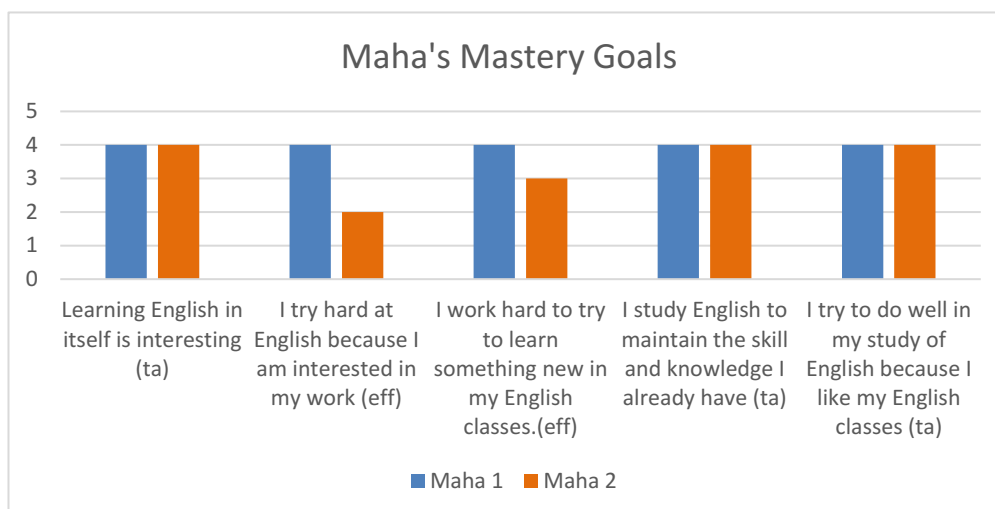


Figure 10 Maha's Mastery Goals

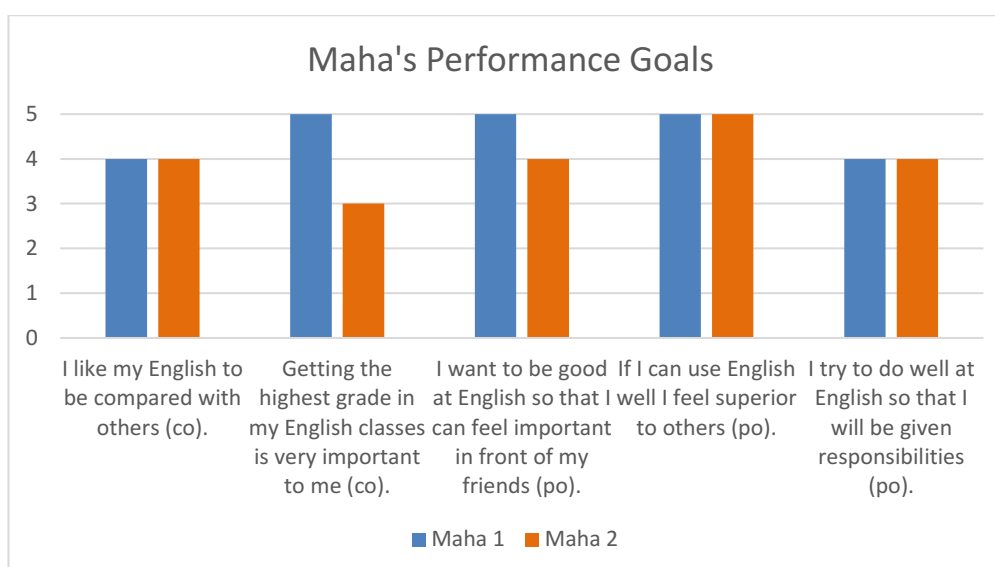


Figure 11 Maha's Performance Goals

Maha's main goal was social power in her workplace, not in learning English out of interest in the subject itself. She indicated that she enjoyed the challenge of studying for a degree, but only in order to rise in her colleagues' estimation. However, she was not particularly competitive during the online classes, due to the practical logistics of having to teach her own classes alongside taking English lessons. Despite the difficulties, Maha was satisfied with her two jobs: teaching at a primary school in the mornings and leading literacy classes in the evenings. By enrolling in English classes, she was taking on a lot more in terms of commitment, but she was fuelled by the goal of a higher professional standing.

Maha also expressed that she was driven by goals of **social affiliation**. Figure 12 shows Maha's responses to questions about **social goals** for learning English, which were high in both surveys.

She recalled the time when her mother was in hospital, and her cousin, a nurse, had translated what her mother wanted to say to the English-speaking medical staff.

‘I was wondering how she was able to speak English so fluently. We live in the same area, and I’m sure she’s developed her skills because she practises English in her work with foreigners. I wished I could speak like her’ (Maha, interview 1).

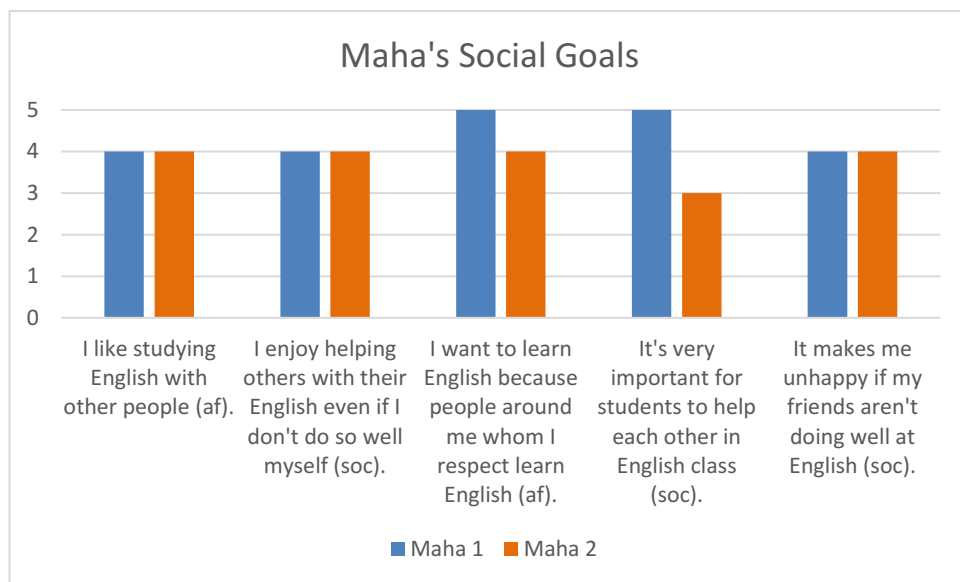


Figure 12 Maha's Social Goals

Maha's responses to the questions on **extrinsic goals** (Figure 13) were similar in both surveys, with only an increase in one item (item 4) in the second survey: *I try to do well in English mainly to earn credits so that I can graduate*. The increase might be related to another extrinsic motive, since, as she was the oldest student in the study, she was not only intent on showing her work colleagues that she could succeed academically, but was also challenging herself to gain a degree after a long period of not studying.

‘I have a good job and income, but until now, the time has never been right for me to set aside time to do a degree’ (Maha, interview 1).

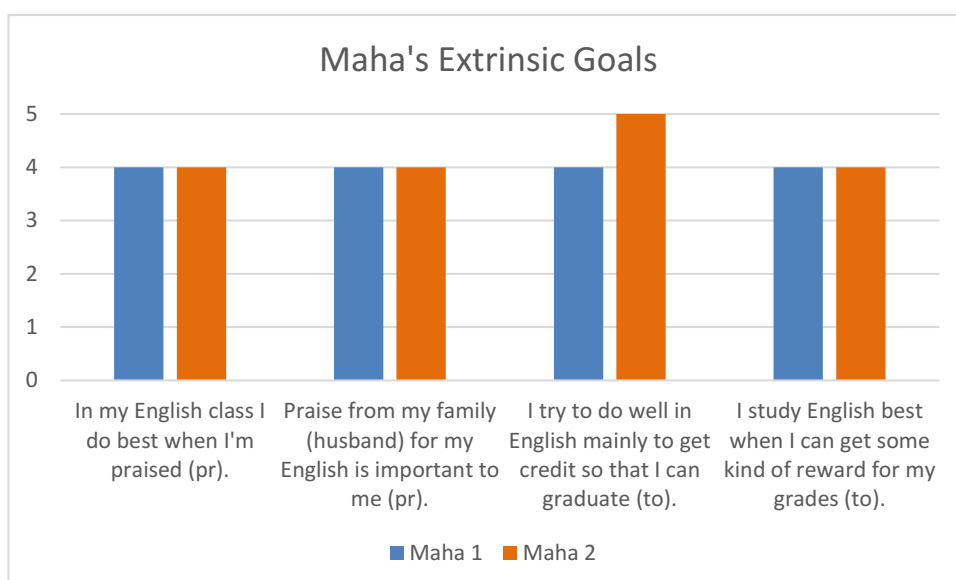


Figure 13 Maha's Extrinsic Goals

Although Maha did not clearly state any learning goals, she shared in the interviews that her career goal (performing) was to become an excellent teacher. Nevertheless, she was worried that spending time learning English in online classes might affect this goal. By the same token, however, having such a strong career goal may have affected her English-learning goal and subsequent engagement in classes.

'In my annual appraisals, I've always been told I am an excellent teacher, and I was caught between attending to my own education and teaching my classes and all my other responsibilities. My appraisal this year will not be as good as usual' (Maha, interview 2).

In terms of **sense of self**, Maha reflected that she **valued** the skill of being able to speak English in terms of the prestige it carries in Saudi society, and she greatly understood its social value for her future (see Figure 14), as Maha had previously expressed admiration for her cousin's fluency in English in her social goals. In addition, she expressed strong views on the meaning of illiteracy:

'Nowadays, an illiterate person is not just someone who can't read and write but someone who can't master English' (Maha, interview 1).

Despite valuing English language skills and having strong social motivation, she nevertheless struggled to learn English in the online classes. This was mainly due to low **self-reliance**, which affected her **self-concept**.

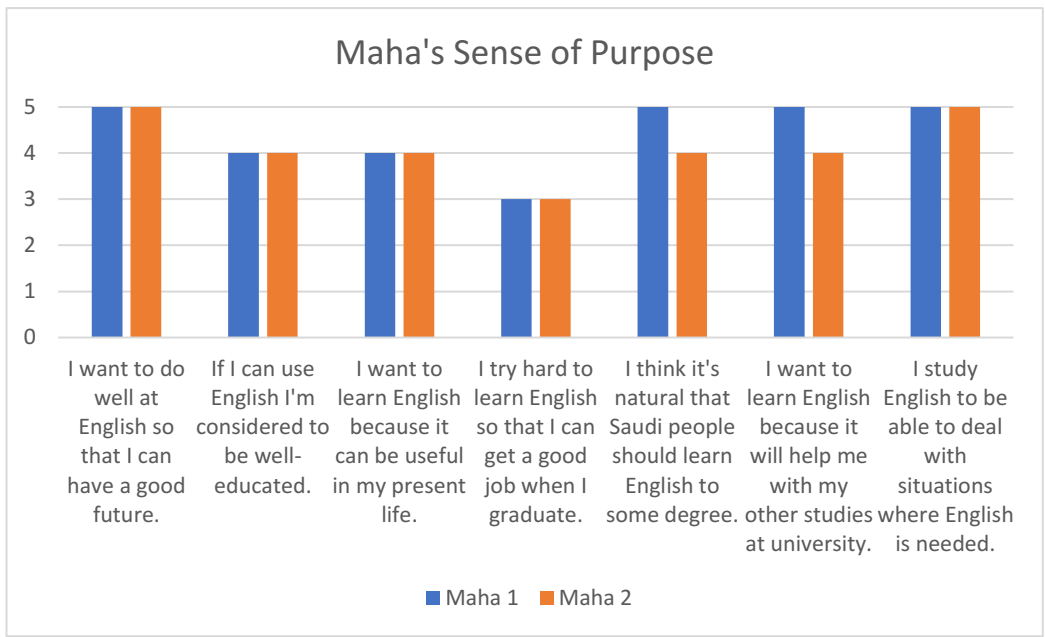


Figure 14 Maha's Sense of Purpose

Maha's sense of **self-reliance** had decreased by the time she completed the second survey at the end of the semester (Figure 15), when she disagreed with items 2 and 3. Maha hid her enrolment at university from her work colleagues, which suggests that she had low self-confidence. She did not want others to make fun of her if she failed, a fear connected to her low **self-efficacy**. In addition, Maha struggled to study other subjects that were delivered in English and believed that her low level of English would prevent her from passing her exams.

'I thought the IT course would be easy but, as it was delivered in English, it made it more complicated. I read the questions and answered them. I relied on my previous understanding of some of the concepts and vocabulary but discovered that it didn't help me score well in the tests. I couldn't pass the course because I am a beginner in English' (Maha, interview 2).

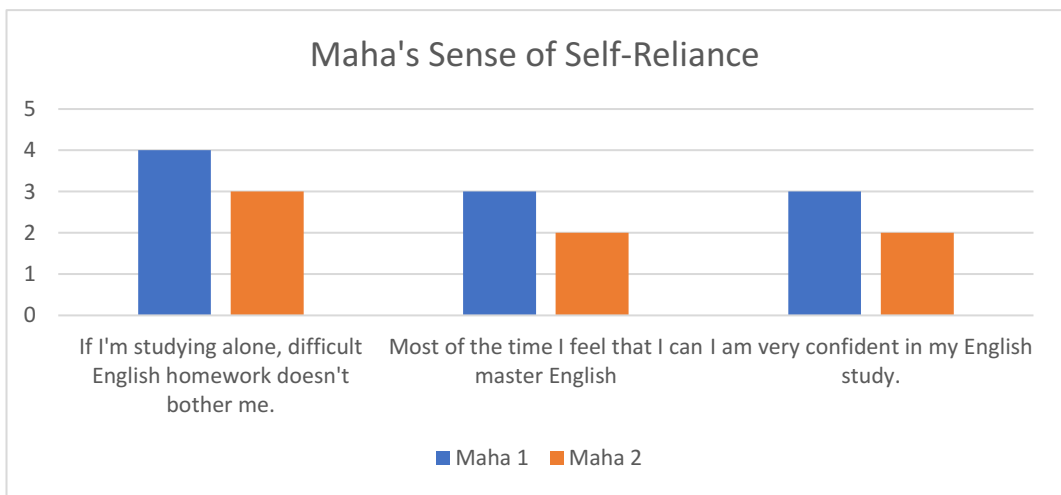


Figure 15 Maha's Sense of Self-Reliance

Maha did not feel very positive about her performance in her English classes and responded with 'not sure' for every item except two, where she disagreed with the statement: *English was one of my best subjects at high school* and agreed with: *I can't use English, I think I am inferior* (Figure 16). By the end of the academic year, Maha disagreed with item 4: *On the whole, I am pleased with myself in my English classes*. This is in line with what she reflected in the second interview.

'I feel sad because I've wasted time and money studying at this university. I also feel guilty as I became super busy and neglected my husband and young kids' (Maha, interview 2).

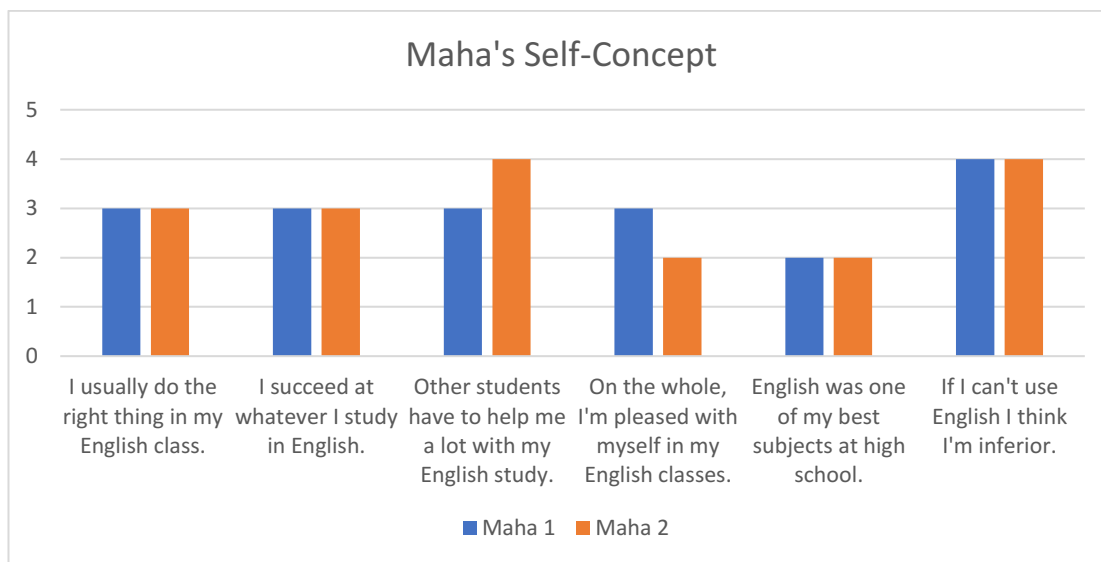


Figure 16 Maha's Self-Concept

Previous experience of learning English was an influential factor that shaped Maha's beliefs about her ability to learn English and her self-concept in online classes. According to the participant, the main reason she found it difficult to master English was due to her previous learning experience at middle school thirty years ago, when English was taught in a more authoritarian way. In addition, Maha's confidence in English was also affected by the teacher's negative attitude which upset her so much that she abandoned an online English course.

'You know how we learnt English before, it was a mixture of Arabic and English, and there were no resources to help us understand other than the books we had then. When I joined SEU, I was shocked by just how much English is used. I don't have an excellent knowledge of English and I found it challenging to do my homework' (Maha, interview 1).

Also,

'I've tried to develop my skills for many years and joined an online course. After the placement test, they put me in the beginners' class. Still, whenever I said anything in English, instead of supporting and helping me, the teacher laughed at me because of my

terrible pronunciation. I felt upset about it, and it made me lose confidence in my ability to learn English' (Maha, interview 1).

Understanding Maha's motivation for learning English online shed light on how she engaged in the classes while she was still working and teaching her own classes online during the pandemic.

4.2.3 Engagement in OL

'Pursuing a bachelor's degree was a dream that I decided not to give up on, whatever the consequences. I heard many rumours in my social group that no one had passed the course, and I remained silent and convinced myself I would fail because I had terrible marks in the midterm exam. It wasn't easy to understand the maths teacher's explanations in English, so I studied by myself, relying on YouTube video tutorials, and asking for my daughter's help. I had to commute long distances to campus for the midterm exam which took place right when I had to teach a class online. So, before the exam started, I told my students that I had poor internet connection and kept them busy with online activities. One of the reasons I didn't tell my work colleagues that I was studying was because I was worried they would make fun of me or criticise me' (Maha, interview 1).

At the beginning of our discussion about her engagement, I wanted to build a solid foundation based on an agreed **definition** of this construct. I was not surprised when Maha highlighted the behavioural components of engagement (attending classes, participating, paying attention) in her definition. Her inclusion of behavioural engagement indicators in her definition reflected what she had most focused on during her many years of teaching, and in light of this definition, she did not view herself as engaged in her English classes.

'Engagement means students must attend classes, pay attention, and engage with the teacher to reflect their presence in class. Unfortunately, I haven't been that kind of student during my online English course, as I'm too preoccupied with teaching my own classes. The teacher's role is fundamental in helping students engage in their classes' (Maha, interview 1).

Focusing on the **behavioural engagement** indicators that she highlighted, it is true that Maha did not engage in her English classes when I observed them. My observation notes showed that Maha did pay attention, listen carefully, and focus when her teacher checked the attendance register, yet she rarely participated by asking or answering questions, and did not share ideas with the group. In all the five engagement self-reports that Maha filled out during her learning experience at SEU, the mean of her behavioural engagement was between 2 and 3 across all five consecutive weeks (Figure 17).

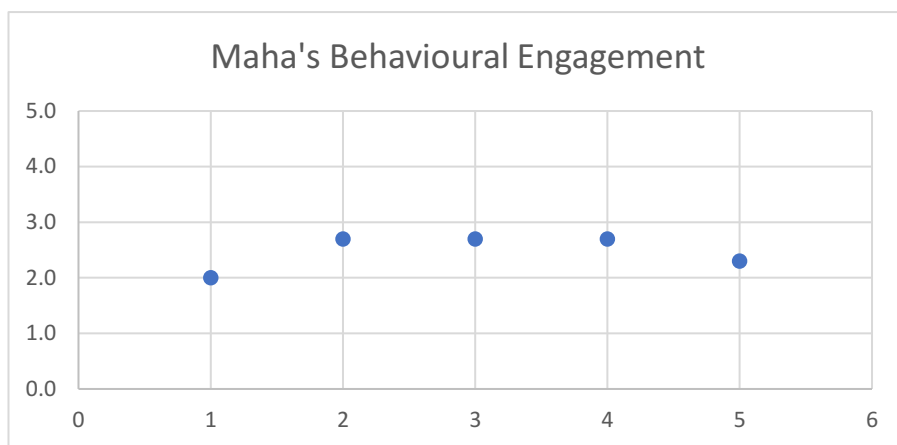


Figure 17 Maha's Behavioural Engagement

There was no data from the classroom observations from the first semester to compare Maha's participation across the two semesters, but in the second semester she appeared to lose interest in participating, possibly because she was not **extrinsically motivated**, as she was not graded on her participation, a factor which is known to motivate Saudi students. Initially, Maha was keen to be an active student who engaged in her English classes. However, on discovering that there were no marks allocated for participation, her engagement level began to drop, and she focused more on her work, which affected her **emotionally**.

'It's tough to attend an online class while simultaneously teaching another, so I designed loads of activities for the kids in my class to get on with, so I could try and participate more in the English classes and get better marks. I didn't want to be one of those students who doesn't value the teacher's efforts. I feel sorry for a teacher and am ashamed that I behaved like this in the classes; I was only attending because it was compulsory' (Maha, interview 1).

Maha's **cognitive engagement** was affected as she was not giving her full attention to her English classes. Figure 19 below shows that her highest average level of engagement was in weeks 2 and 3 (a F2F class and a VC). Although class observations did not reveal any differences in Maha's engagement in either the F2F and VC environments, Blackboard analytics showed that Maha engaged more with the content than her classmates (Figure 19).

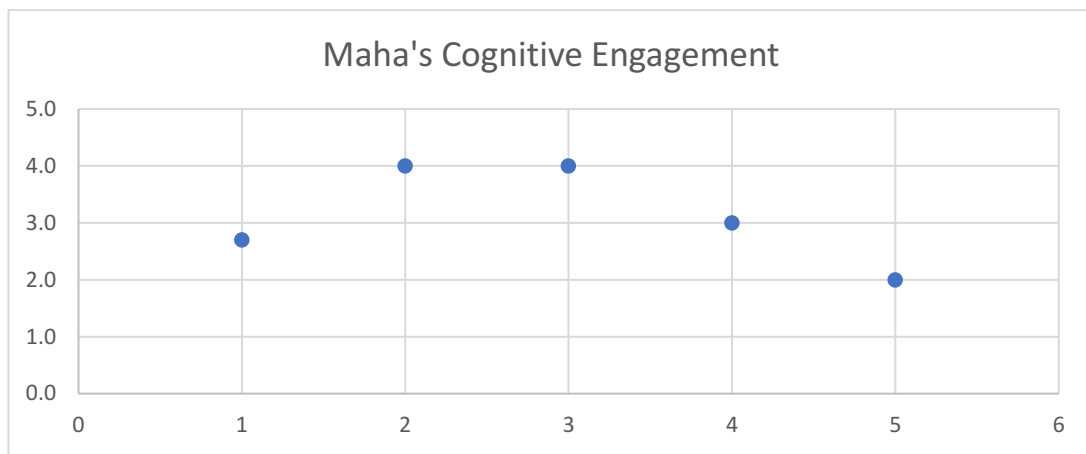


Figure 18 Maha's Cognitive Engagement

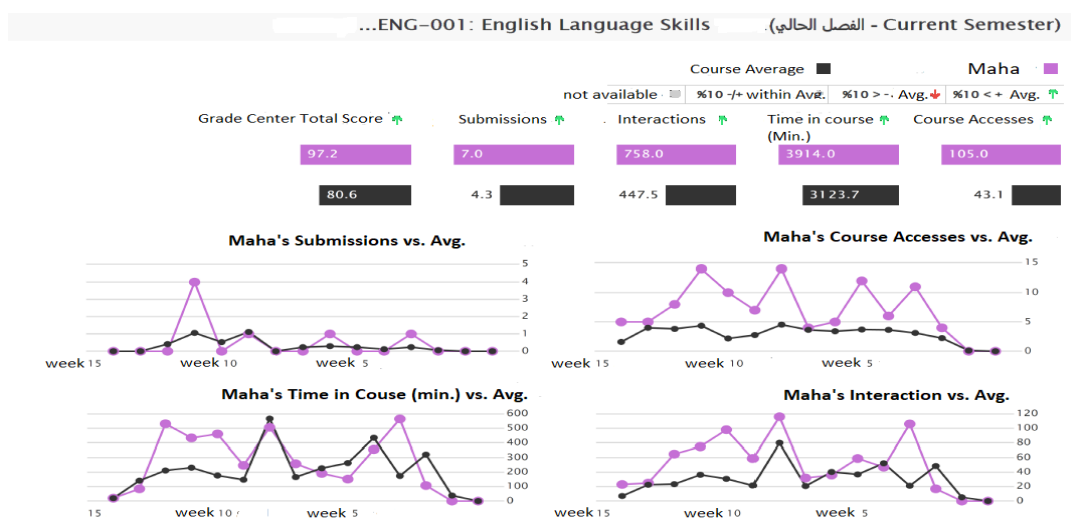


Figure 19 Maha's Blackboard Analytics

Maha preferred VCs 'because they are shorter and it's easier to understand the teachers' explanations of the grammar rules', while she found the **teacher** in the F2F classes 'talks in the same quiet tone from the beginning to the end of the class, which makes me sleepy' (Maha, interview 2). She particularly disliked it when her **English teachers** turned on their **cameras** during the online classes, despite this approach being recommended by the university:

'There are other ways to support students' understanding than turning the camera on, although I do think it's OK to use the camera as a visual learning aid' (Maha, interview 2).

As an observer, I could understand Maha's views. Her English teacher in the VCs was a native English speaker who presented in a very natural way on screen, while her F2F teacher, also a native English speaker, presented in a more formal Islamic style (focusing her camera on her covered face). The difference between the two teachers was that the English VC teacher dealt with the technology better than the F2F teacher and used the camera to make the online

experience more interesting and attractive to the students. Although this study does not focus on the teachers' behavioural strategies, Maha's opinions of the teachers affected her engagement. The fact that the English teacher was visible on her laptop screen worried her for religious reasons.

'I was worried that my sons might see the teacher's face, because I didn't want to sin if they saw her' (Maha, interview 2).

Despite her position on camera use in classes, Maha acknowledged the importance of **class recordings** for supporting students' learning, particularly for busy students. However, her lack of **time management skills** affected her learning. She found it difficult to access the class recordings to catch up on what she had missed while she was working.

'I'm overwhelmed with online teaching, doing assessments, planning lessons, designing activities and my commitments as a mother and a wife. I know these recordings are helpful for busy learners, but I don't have time to access them' (Maha, informal chat).

Maha could not prepare well for the university English entrance exam, despite her efforts to find ways and the means to develop herself through **social media channels**.

'I saw that my friends were recommending various Telegram channels that offered help with exam preparation, so I registered for a workshop on exam preparation to save time searching. Unfortunately, I couldn't follow up or attend it regularly. I used a lot of different resources, such as YouTube videos and PowerPoint slides, to try and help me understand what I had to know for the exam. I checked out various other online resources and asked for my daughter's help to understand the content; however, I still didn't do very well in the English tests. I looked at a lot of study materials and assumed I was ready, but after taking the exam, I found that I'd made a lot of mistakes' (Maha, interview 2).

In terms of cognitive engagement, Maha used lower order skills such as memorisation as a learning strategy. She reflected on the ineffectiveness of using this strategy when learning English during other courses.

'The IT course is delivered in English, and so I thought that as a course it would be easy but being taught in English made it a lot more difficult. To answer exam questions, I relied on memorising concepts and vocabulary, but I discovered that I didn't know enough to pass the test. I couldn't pass because I'm a beginner in English' (Maha, interview 2).

In addition, in the presentation, which was an assessed as part of the course, Maha did rather badly, and so her English teacher gave her a second chance. The next time Maha used notes to

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support her. As a teacher, Maha highlighted the importance of **praise** and feedback during a learner's journey, which would have been a motivating factor for Maha to engage in her classes.

'I gave the presentation twice. The first time I didn't follow the instructions, so the second time, I wrote down all the vocab and grammar [I wanted to use] and tried to use them in my presentation. I learned from my mistakes and followed the steps properly, and the teacher said, "Good, that was so much better than the first time"' (Maha, interview 1).

Although Maha noted that the teacher did not praise her or give her feedback during her English classes, the classroom observation data showed that, aside from the presentation, she did not participate enough to receive any feedback.

Her inability to engage in English classes cognitively and behaviourally created a consistently low level of **positive emotional engagement** (Figure 20). Although Maha ultimately failed the course, and her feelings of **frustration** did lessen over time (Figures 21), she still felt happy and satisfied with her online learning experience *'I do not regret my experience at SEU'* (Maha, interview 2).

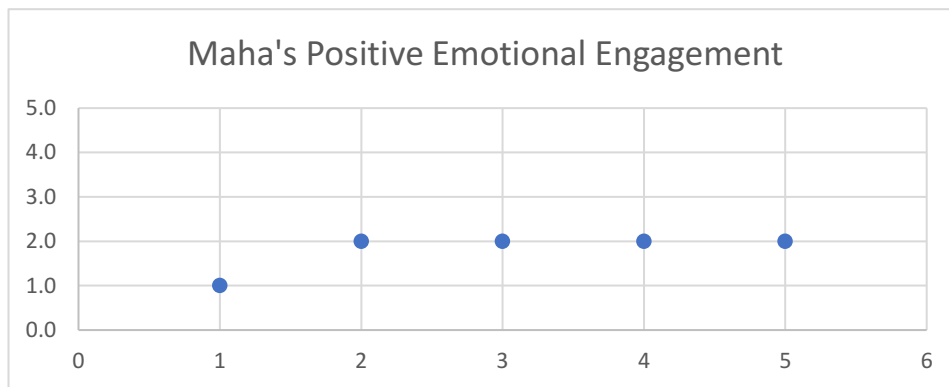


Figure 20 Maha's Positive Emotional Engagement

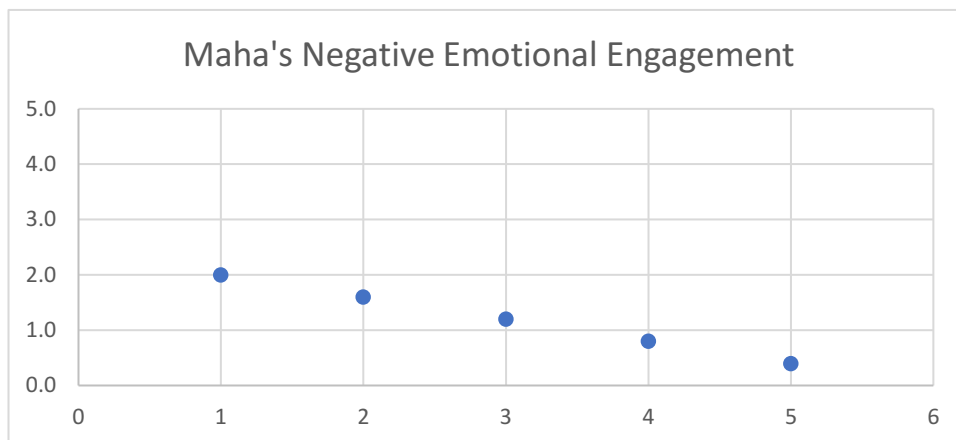


Figure 21 Maha's Negative Emotional Engagement

Despite her own contentment with her learning experience, Maha kept comparing her experience at SEU to her daughter's OL experience at a different university, especially concerning the teaching and assessments.

'Why should we uncover our faces and turn the camera on during the exams? SEU is the only university doing this, and I'd prefer to go to another that doesn't force us to uncover our faces, like my daughter's university' (Maha, interview 2).

Maha's feelings swung between having the **motivation** to learn and **frustration** at the whole experience, especially whenever one of the better students withdrew from their studies, which affected her negatively, as she was uncertain of her **ability** to continue her own learning journey.

'I found out that the class leader had withdrawn from the university, although she was an excellent student who spoke English well. I started to think about myself; if she was better than me and she left the university, would I be able to continue my studies here?' (Maha, informal chat).

Also,

'I feel frustrated and disappointed, but I blame myself for not working harder. I realise now that university is only suitable for those who can keep on top of their learning' (Maha, interview 2).

Maha could not engage in her university studies and catch up on what she had missed while she was working without the **social** (Figure 22) and **collaborative engagement** the students set up through social media. Although the figure below does not show a high level of social engagement, Maha stressed the effectiveness of the WhatsApp social group as an important and supportive tool for engaging with other students, particularly when she was **busy doing other activities**.

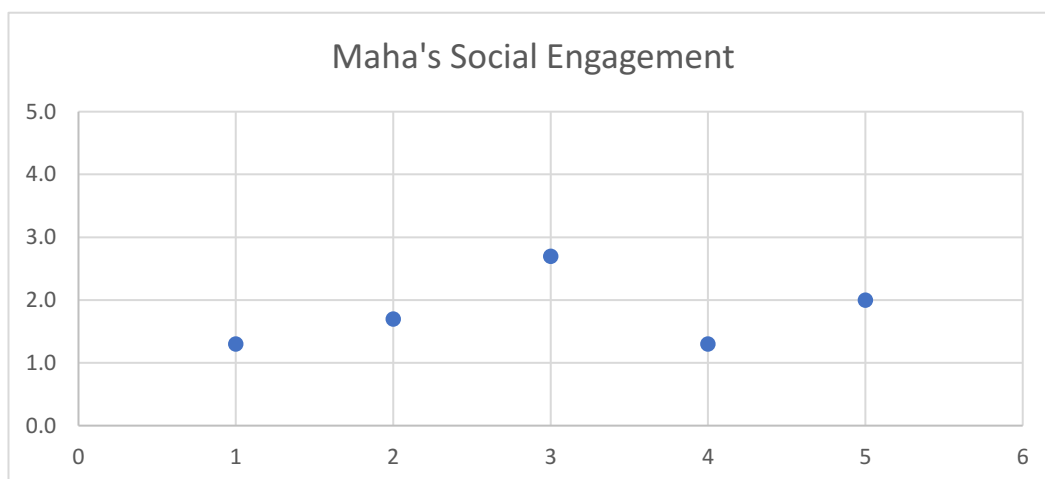


Figure 22 Maha's Social Engagement

'When I'm travelling from my place to my mother's house to check on her, or if I'm busy teaching a class, I ask my classmates to help me out by letting me know when the teacher takes the register, so that I won't be marked down as absent' (Maha, interview 1).

In this social group, Maha, as a mother and a teacher, found herself responsible for **giving advice** to motivate her colleagues.

'You can say I'm the type of person who helps others but cannot help myself. I always encourage students in social groups when they moan about their studies, because they are my daughter's age. I have my job, but they are still young and must fulfil their dreams and depend on themselves. They always refer to me as their second mother; I'm like a godmother to them. There's no competition between us, on the contrary, we encourage each other' (Maha, interview, 2).

To Maha, it was a blessing that the teacher was not part of this WhatsApp social group:

'Thank God the teacher isn't part of the group, so we can babble on as much as we like about loads of different things, whether they are related to our studies, classes, or life situations' (Maha, interview 2).

During the four months of data collection, Maha had to face many difficult **challenges** that affected her engagement and learning experience.

4.2.4 Challenges affecting Maha's Engagement

Maha's conflict started when she decided not to inform her relatives or work colleagues that she was returning to education to avoid their **negative judgement**. Consequently, she faced many difficulties managing her **workload** and engaging in her classes. Maha struggled to deliver online classes and assess her pupils. Unlike other working students, who could take leave for their final exams under Saudi labour rights, Maha could not do this as she had hidden the fact that she was studying from her employers. In addition, she had many **responsibilities** and the **Covid** lockdowns impacted her badly, as not only her teaching duties shifted online, but also her English course. Teaching online classes to young learners was difficult during the Covid pandemic, particularly for a teacher used to delivering traditional learning. Maha found it hard to fit her studies in alongside her existing work commitments and her other roles in life as a wife and mother, which affected her engagement experience during her studies. This, in turn, affected her well-being, as she was constantly stressed about managing her work, personal life, and studying for exams simultaneously.

'I am lost. I have to check on my mother, who lives alone in another town. My teaching workload has increased as we had to create VCs for the kids. My supervisor attends classes randomly to check on the quality of our teaching, and we have regular endless online meetings with teaching staff. I also have to look after my sick husband, clean the house and do all the cooking. During the English course, we have quizzes, written assignments to submit, and more classes to attend now that the exams have been brought forward. I'm completely overwhelmed with all these deadlines on top of my other responsibilities, and I'm so busy I don't even have time to be with my youngest daughter during her online classes' (Maha, interview 2).

The difficulty of her situation is illustrated by how she found week 9, which was the exam week at SEU. The students needed to be on campus for paper-based exams and this proved a considerable challenge for Maha. She could not ask for **support** from her work colleagues, because her fear of mockery or criticism had prevented her from disclosing that she was studying in the first place. Therefore, she had to carry on teaching her regular classes during the exam week while on her way to campus, which was a two-hour journey. She managed to occupy her pupils with worksheets and activities she had prepared in advance, but taking the English exam under these conditions was highly stressful for her. Other students rented accommodation near the campus during the exam week, but Maha was compelled to stay at home and carry on fulfilling all of her **work and family responsibilities**.

Maha gave an example of her conflict during an informal chat:

'To illustrate an example of the conflict I have between my study and work, I have an IT exam today from 5:00 to 6:00 PM. I contacted the coordinator (at work) to inform her that I would be late because they supervise us and report everything. She told me that I have to stick to my usual times. I have no idea what I'm going to do! Do I leave the kids without a teacher, or do I skip the exam? Would they accept my excuse? I don't know what to do!' (Maha, informal chat).

Later in the second interview, Maha explained how she resolved this conflict.

'So, I asked my daughter to go online for me and get the kids to do some activities I'd prepared earlier, so I could start my exam on time. I wasn't comfortable doing that, but it was the best solution for getting to my exam on time' (Maha, interview 2).

A complicating factor was Maha's negative views on learning English at a later **age** led to beliefs of **low self-efficacy**. As a student returning to education after a **gap of twenty years**, Maha often felt **lost** because she struggled to understand the course content, particularly the modules delivered

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in English. Maha would have preferred to have been spoon-fed, as she believed this was the best method for ensuring academic success. However, this is not a teaching approach taken at SEU. Despite her lack of academic and time management skills, Maha did the best she could under the circumstances.

'I have many resources, but I get distracted because there are so many, and I do not have time to look at them all. I went into the exam assuming I was well prepared, but I didn't do well' (Maha, interview 2).

'It's not been easy learning English after a long gap. I discovered I'm not good at English' (Maha, interview 2).

Beside the effect of the **teacher's** quiet tone (presented earlier in 4.1.3) in four hours classes on Maha's engagement, the English **curriculum** had an influence on Maha.

'Seriously, the syllabus does not support beginners, although it's fine for those who know some English or are at the intermediate level. The topics and written work were so tricky I relied entirely on Google Translate to write my essays' (Maha, interview 2).

Although she was overwhelmed by her commitments, Maha **persisted** and completed the academic year *'I thought of withdrawing but changed my mind, and I will keep trying'* (Maha, interview 2).

4.3 Shoug: Never Give up

4.3.1 Shoug's Profile

Shoug is a 38-year-old single parent who lives in the Eastern region. She is a stay-at-home mother to three children aged 17, 15 and 10. She had an education gap of over ten years, since she dropped out of school after marrying. Shoug has devoted her time to her children after her husband left her. She has financial difficulties and lives in a small apartment and sometimes cares for her elderly mother.

Neither Shoug's parents nor her husband were educated. She has only one sister, who completed her undergraduate studies in healthcare. At the age of 32, Shoug realised that she could not improve her life prospects and financial security without higher education. Thus, she began by going back to high school and passing her exams, which took two years. She described how happy she was to return to education after this long period, during which she discovered that she was rather a good student. She depended on social security for financial support to meet her family's needs during her studies, and when she discovered that most jobs interesting her required a

bachelor's degree, she applied to SEU. Although she had no specific field of interest, she initially expressed a desire to study law and enrolled in the foundation year. During the second semester, she transferred to business administration, and from there she changed to media studies.

Shoug heard about SEU by chance and knew she would probably be exempt from paying tuition fees as she was registered as receiving social security. Shoug was so excited when she was accepted onto a course at SEU as she had not been expecting it.

4.3.1 Motivation in OL

After her husband left, Shoug said she *'decided to invest in myself and continue learning to develop myself'* (Shoug, interview 1). At the beginning of the study, Shoug demonstrated high mastery goals (Figure 23), but this had decreased by the second survey at the end of the semester. Her initial high mastery goals could be related to the fact that she was happy with her progress in passing the first-semester modules and had **no concerns** about learning English.

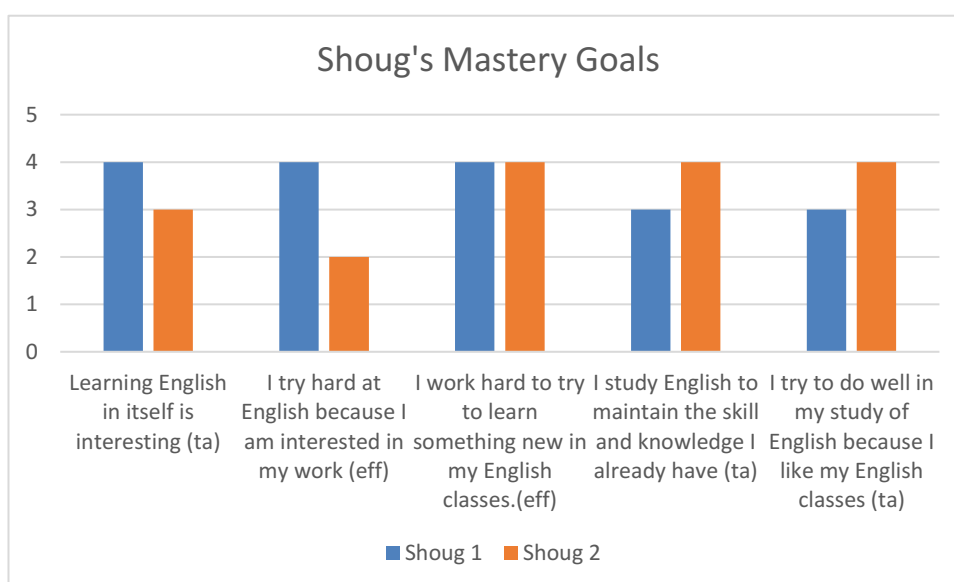


Figure 23 Shoug's Mastery Goals

Figure 24 and Figure 25 show a decline in Shoug's performance and social goals as her extrinsic goals increased (Figure 26). This might be connected to her circumstances, mainly her intention to improve her financial status to support her daughters, as her family depended on social security.

'I hope I can master English. I did my best to learn it before joining SEU, but I couldn't manage it. I know I can't get a good job without a bachelor's degree. I need to support my daughters now that my husband has gone, so I've returned to education and will work hard' (Shoug, interview 1).

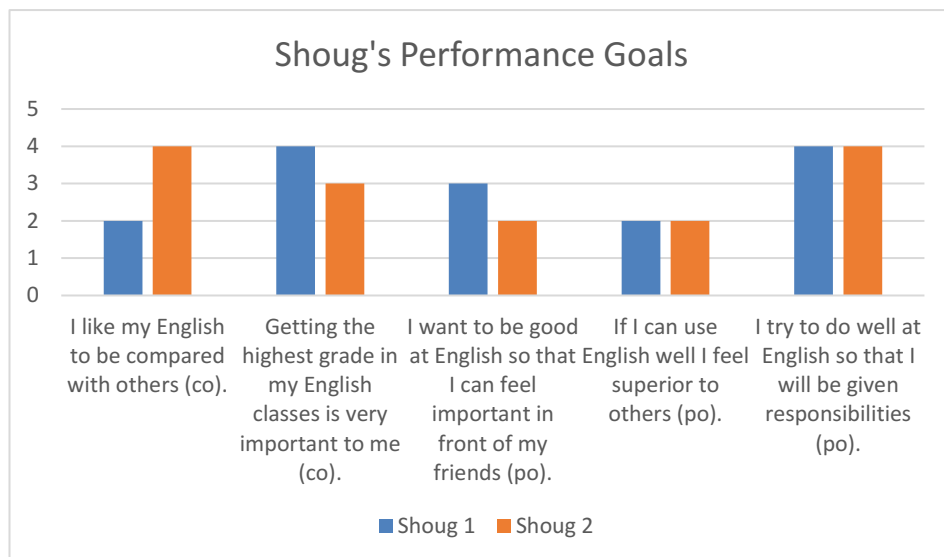


Figure 24 Shoug's Performance Goals

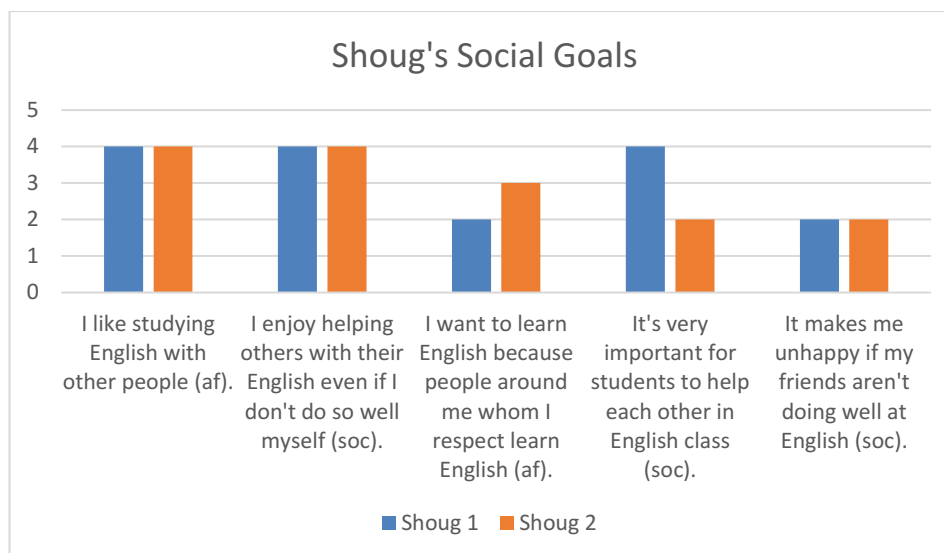


Figure 25 Shoug's Social Goals

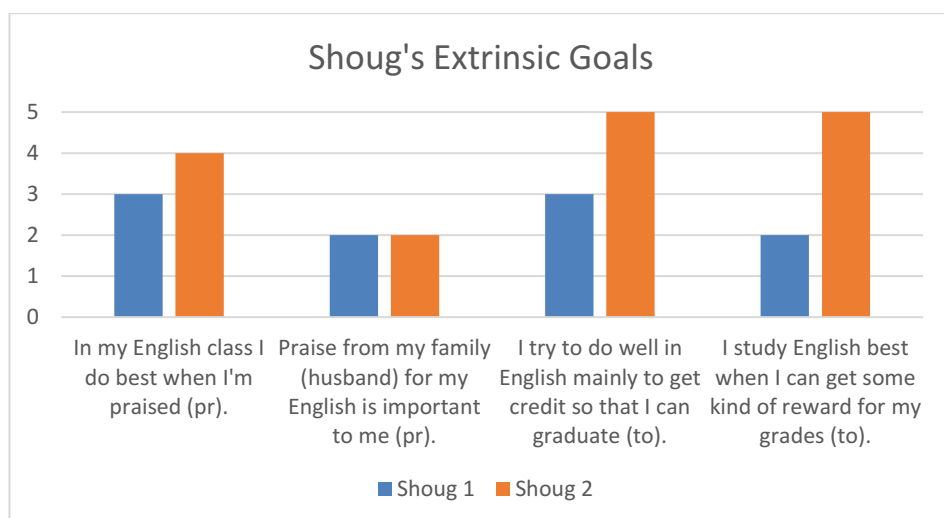


Figure 26 Shoug's Extrinsic Goals

During her learning experience at SEU, Shoug struggled with her English. Her main goal was to pass the university's **entrance exam** in English proficiency, but the online English course we are concerned with in this study was not specifically designed to prepare students for it. This discovery led her to find solutions, which in Shoug's case resulted in her devoting more time to working **independently**. When Shoug internalised her goal to challenge herself and pass the entrance exam, her **persistence** paid off and she eventually achieved her goal after several attempts.

Shoug said:

'I only have one aim now: to pass the entrance exam. I've enrolled in workshops, watched YouTube, and followed a few Telegram channels to find out the specific exam strategies we need, as the English course didn't prepare us for this exam' (Shoug, interview 2).

Shoug's responses in Figure 27 match her reflection in the first interview about the importance and value of English for her future and the for the broader Saudi community *'English is an international language, and it is essential in the Saudi community, as there are a lot of non-Arabic speakers in the country'* to the extent she advises her daughter to study English too *'I always tell my older daughter she should develop her English skills before applying for university, so that she won't have such a hard time with it, like me' (Shoug, interview 1).*

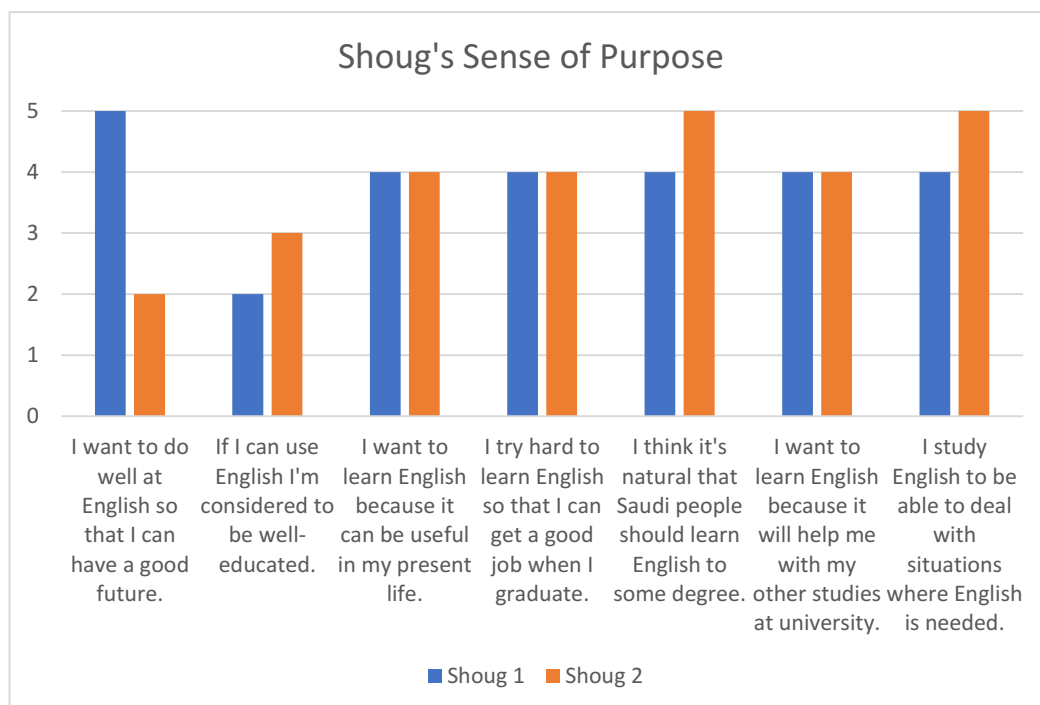


Figure 27 Shoug's Sense of Purpose

Shoug, neutral in her responses in Figure 28, highlighted the difficulties she encountered learning English and often expressed low **self-efficacy** during the interviews, informal chats, and surveys.

The extract below illustrates that she wanted to study her primary subject (law) in Arabic, believing she would be more likely to earn a degree if the tuition was in her native language. She had no confidence in her ability to study a full degree programme using English.

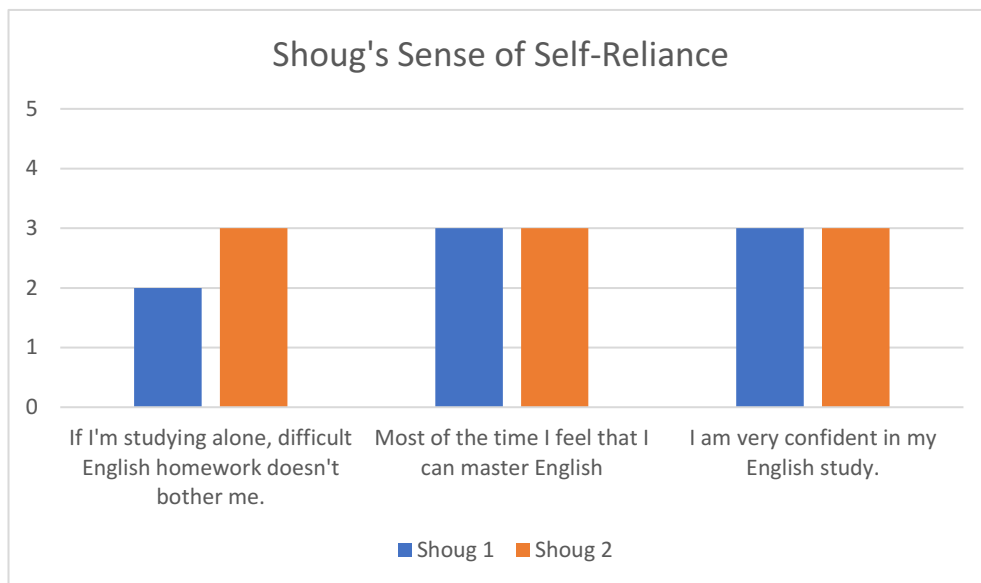


Figure 28 Shoug's Sense of Self-Reliance

Shoug: ‘I want to study law, but unfortunately, the course hasn't yet become available at our branch.’

The researcher: ‘Why do you want to study law? Is it delivered in Arabic or English?’

Shoug: ‘Well, to be honest, that is one of the reasons. It is the only department at SEU that delivers lectures in Arabic. Despite that, I still have to pass the English entrance exam, and I want to ensure that I can continue studying here. Studying in Arabic might help me to gain a bachelor's degree because law might be easier to understand in Arabic’ (Shoug, interview1).

Shoug, who categorised herself as an introvert in the first interview, reflected a **negative self-concept**, as seen in Figure 29, which might be related to her **previous learning experience**.

‘I am shy, and don't like having many friends, and I also don't really participate in student social groups. I studied English at school and thought I had basic English skills. Still, when I joined SEU, I found that I had zero knowledge of English and became nervous when I tried to use it in restaurants or hospitals, and I felt embarrassed and wished that I hadn't used it at all’ (Shoug, interview 1).

Despite believing she had basic English skills, Shoug discovered huge gaps in her knowledge and soon developed a negative self-concept and **anxiety** around learning English, becoming nervous

whenever she had to speak English in VCs or in public places. Shoug was the only participant to connect her learning experience with language learning anxiety. She had previously stated that she became nervous during English classes if she thought the teacher might ask her a question to which she did not know the answer.

'English was not my favourite subject at school. I don't know what used to happen to me when I had to speak in English. I used to get nervous and anxious' (Shoug interview 1).

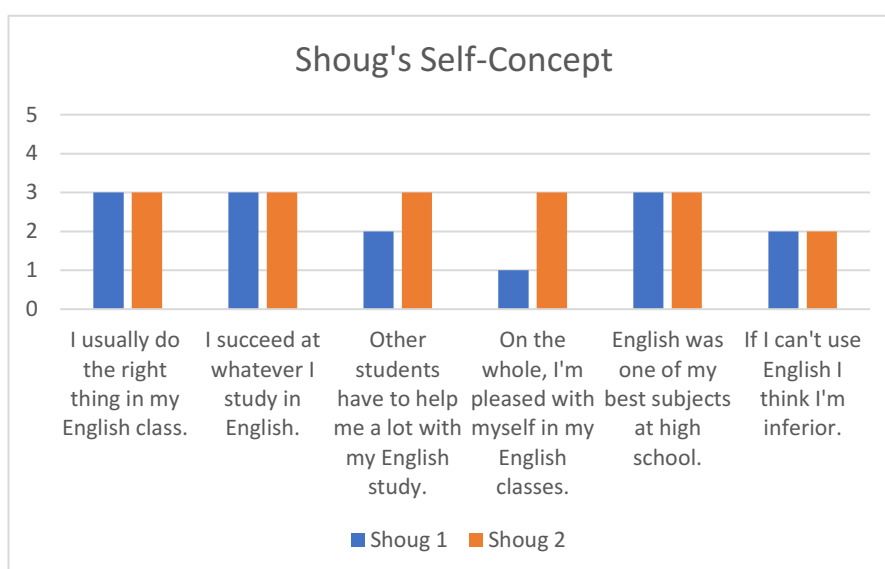


Figure 29 Shoug's Self-Concept

4.3.2 Engagement in OL

'I was so frustrated throughout the course because I had no confidence in my ability in English; I am glad now that I did not give up and kept trying, till I eventually passed the exam' (Shoug, informal chat).

When I first interviewed Shoug, she was reluctant to commit to a particular definition of engagement. She used phrases such as 'I am not sure' when asked what engagement means, and then agreed that engagement means interacting with teachers. She also admitted that she is generally not an engaged student because she described herself as shy (interview 1). When I observed Shoug in her virtual classes I noticed that she hardly interacted at all with the teacher, at which point I messaged her to check how she was managing in the English classes. For example, when I asked her whether the teacher had informed them of the exam resources that were posted up on Blackboard to help them to prepare for the entrance exam, she answered:

'I'm unsure if the teacher talked about the entrance exam resources on Blackboard because I can't focus properly on my English classes when they run them simultaneously with my daughters' classes' (Shoug, interview 2).

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Shoug submitted data for 11 weeks of the study (including the presentation and the exam weeks, weeks 7 and 9); 6 weeks were for F2F classes and 5 for VCs. Shoug's engagement highlighted how all of the engagement components interplayed and influenced one another. Her behavioural engagement was very much connected to her cognitive and emotional engagement. In weeks 5, 8 and 10, Shoug reported attending F2F classes (weeks 5 and 8) and VC (week 10). During these weeks, she showed higher behavioural and cognitive engagement levels, as shown in Figure 30 and Figure 31.

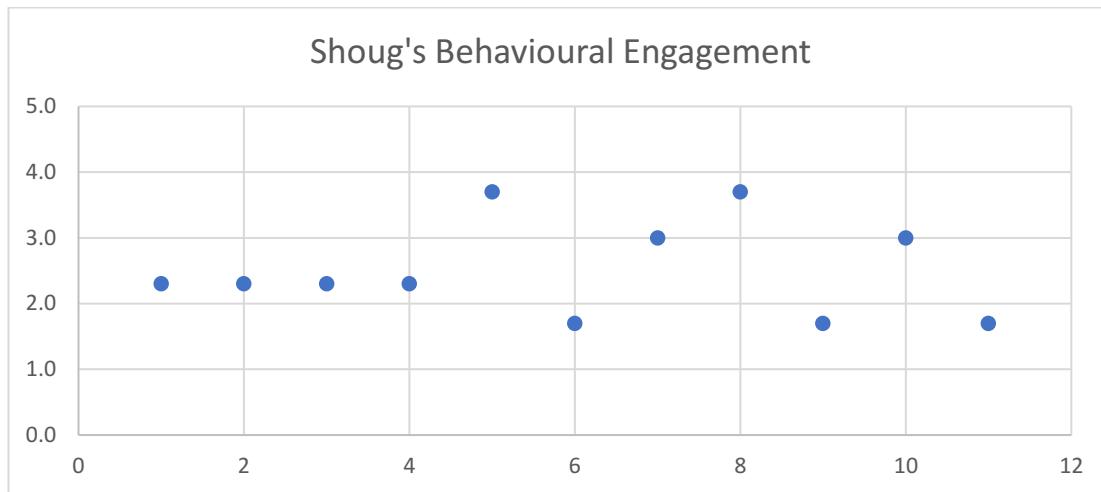


Figure 30 Shoug's Behavioural Engagement

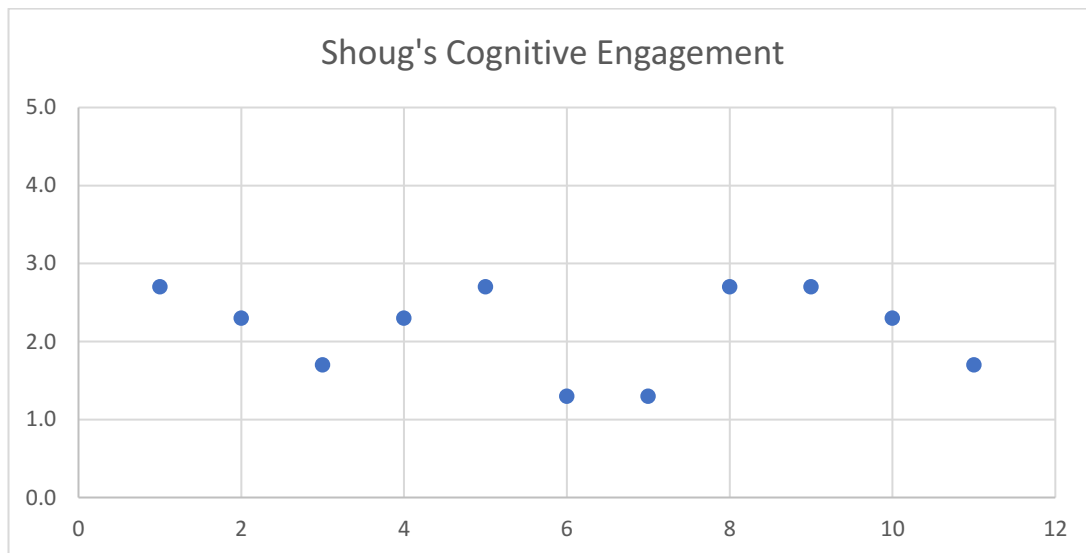


Figure 31 Shoug's Cognitive Engagement

Shoug's **behavioural engagement** was high in weeks 5 and 8 because her classes were in the morning, a quiet time of the day when she had the chance to pay attention and listen carefully, as her daughters' online classes were in the afternoon. However, her level of **cognitive engagement** was low, which related to her **low self-efficacy** in English. In her justification for not **participating** in classes, Shoug either focused on her **inability to understand** the teacher's speech '*It's difficult*

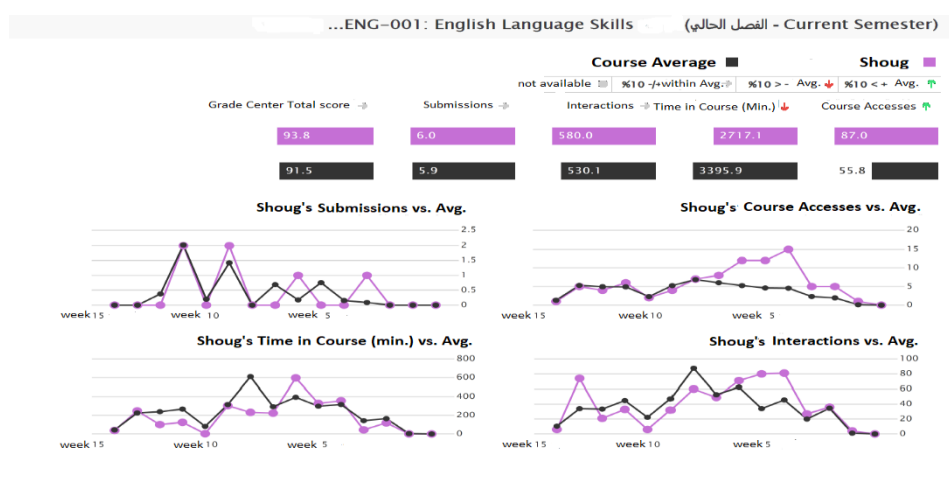
to understand the teachers' speech because they either speak fast or have a problematic accent', her **character traits** 'I don't have the courage', her **feelings** 'I feel scared to open my mouth or write in English', or her **caring commitments** 'I am really busy, and have lots of family commitments, I just can't focus on the classes' (Shoug, interview 1).

On comparing her colleagues' progress with her own slight improvement, Shoug began to question her **learning strategies**. When she realised that she was not very successful in applying what she had learned in the assessments, she made attempts to change how she was learning. Although Shoug said she did not have learning difficulties, there may have been factors obstructing her that she was unaware of, as she failed her first attempt at a maths exam, which was assessed in English.

'I don't have any difficulty learning and can understand everything I study; however, I find it difficult to apply what I have learned. I can't seem to put my theoretical understanding into practice; for example, when the teacher explains some grammar rules, I understand what she says, but I still can't use the grammar correctly. In exams, I can't answer all of the questions because all of the information in my head seems to have just evaporated' (Shoug, interview 2).

Shoug's participation was affected by her inability to engage with the **teacher**. Although Shoug attended her classes, she did not show much **behavioural engagement** indicators such as careful listening and focusing, which influenced the development of her English skills. There might also be another scenario here. A lack of clarity in the **teacher's** utterances was an obstacle to Shoug's understanding, discouraging her from paying attention or focusing on the classes.

Although a classroom observation showed that Shoug was a passive learner in her English classes, the Blackboard analytics in the Figure 32 below show that Shoug was higher than average in terms of her course access, interaction, and submission than her classmates.



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Figure 32 Shoug's Blackboard Analytics

Shoug's shyness of expressing herself in English made her **frustrated** about her learning experiences. Her negative feelings were high at the beginning of the semester but declined over time (Figure 33), although her positive feelings remained low (Figure 34). Shoug's anxiety and frustration during the course did shift, however, and she became more positive about her abilities as she passed the entrance exam in the summer and progressed to the second year.

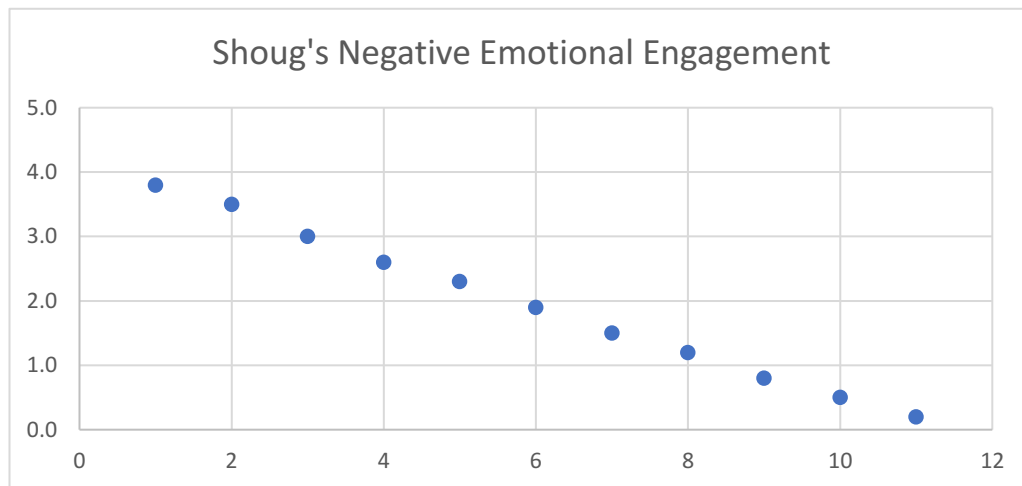


Figure 33 Shoug's Negative Emotional Engagement

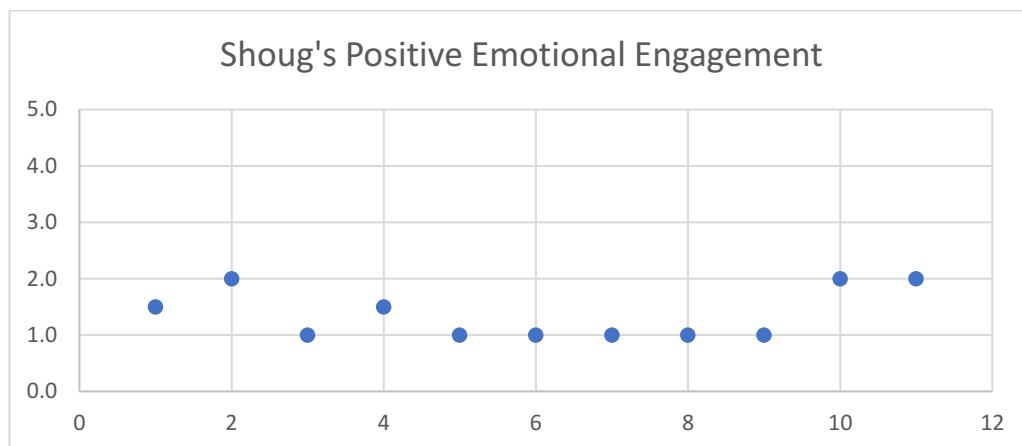


Figure 34 Shoug's Positive Emotional Engagement

Shoug's positive feelings endured when her teacher turned her **camera on** and she felt secure when the classes were **recorded**, although she was not able to access them because of her commitments. In addition, her cognitive engagement developed when the teachers turned their cameras on.

'However, when one of the teachers turned their camera on, you felt like you were in a typical class, and the teacher also participated in the chat. I can understand a lot more

when I can see the teacher. That's why I prefer F2F classes on campus' (Shoug, interview 1).

'I feel happy that the teacher is recording the classes. Still, as a single parent, I don't have time to access the recordings, even though I attend classes without paying attention. So, it would be helpful if I could manage to access the materials' (Shoug, informal chat).

Although Shoug, an introvert, did not chat with her classmates in the WhatsApp group and she had financial problems, she sought **support** from social networks and bought one of the **entrance exam** workshops because of her **low self-efficacy** in English.

'I posted on Telegram that I needed a workshop, and some other students recommended a trainer who had successfully helped them to pass the exam. His Telegram channel was free, but I had to pay for a workshop if I wanted one-to-one tuition and feedback. I think students who passed were either intermediate or advanced, unlike me, a beginner, which is why I failed my first two attempts' (Shoug Interview 2).

Shoug's **social engagement** was low except in weeks 8, 9 and 10 (Figure 35), as these were exam and submission weeks, however, the social group that Shoug shared with her classmates created for her a **sense of belonging** in the learning community.

'After the first semester, I missed what I usually did: wake up early and sign in for classes. I missed the good feeling of having classes to attend' (Shoug interview 2).

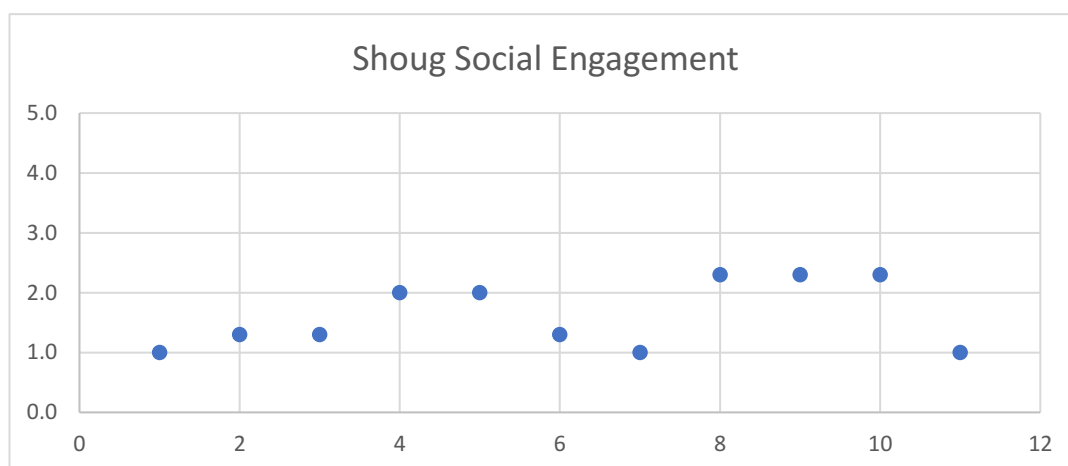


Figure 35 Shoug's Social Engagement

For her, the social group supported **collaborative engagement** through **collaboration** with her classmates by engaging with the course content, especially since the group chat was in Arabic:

'The social group was helpful, and the more accomplished students highlighted important things during the class. If we couldn't understand the teachers, the cleverer students

clarified things in Arabic. We also worked together to find the best answers to assignment questions. Although I never wrote messages in the WhatsApp group, I found that it was one of the most remarkable things about studying at university, your classmates would keep you updated about things you had completely missed! (Shoug, interview 2).

4.3.3 Challenges affecting Shoug's Engagement

The researcher: 'Now you've defined engagement, do you classify yourself as an engaged student in your English classes?'

Shoug: 'Honestly, no.'

The researcher: 'Why not?'

Shoug: 'Umm, I don't know how to explain this. My classes take place at the exact same times as my daughters', and we all sit in the living room, where we share limited internet connection and devices. We live in a small apartment and I always get stressed. I get scared and feel nervous, imagining the microphone will turn on by mistake. I have a parrot and it started repeating what I was saying during the presentation, and I got stressed out and embarrassed about it' (Shoug, interview 1).

When she joined SEU as a single mother wishing to develop her job prospects, Shoug faced many challenges starting with her **relatives**, who **criticised** her for going back to study because of her **age**. At one point, Shoug wondered if they were right, as she connected her difficulty learning English to her age.

'To be honest, I think the problem is that I am learning English at this age. Sometimes I think about the negative comments my relatives have made. They give me a hard time about studying at my age while I'm also caring for my mother and daughters' (Shoug, interview 1).

Another challenge is Shoug's lack of suitable **home learning environment**, as she is living in a small apartment with a limited internet connection and four people trying to use the internet to access online classrooms in one room.

'All of my daughters have online platforms for their schools, and I get so stressed when I have classes, because I'm scared that the microphone might turn on by mistake, and I'd be utterly mortified if that happened' (Shoug, interview 1).

To elaborate an example of her challenges, week 7 was presentation week, during which each student gave a presentation in English, either individually or in a team, for 3 to 5 minutes. Shoug's noisy home environment evoked her anxiety before presentation day, the only time that Shoug had to turn on her microphone. When the teacher called Shoug's team to present, everyone was ready except Shoug. One of the students told the teacher that Shoug had mentioned in the social group that she had a connection problem, and it was evident to the teacher that she was having issues (Figure 36). The difficulty that Shoug had understanding the teacher's English delayed the

presentation, and half an hour later, when Shoug had a better connection, the group gave their presentation. Unfortunately, Shoug then had the problem of a lot of background noise in her tiny living room. When she saw that her classmates were commenting on it in the WhatsApp group, she was embarrassed and felt obliged to explain. Students thought that it was Shoug's elderly mother who was making the noise, so she explained via the online chat box that she did not have a separate quiet room for her online classes and that the noise was caused by her parrot repeating the words after her.

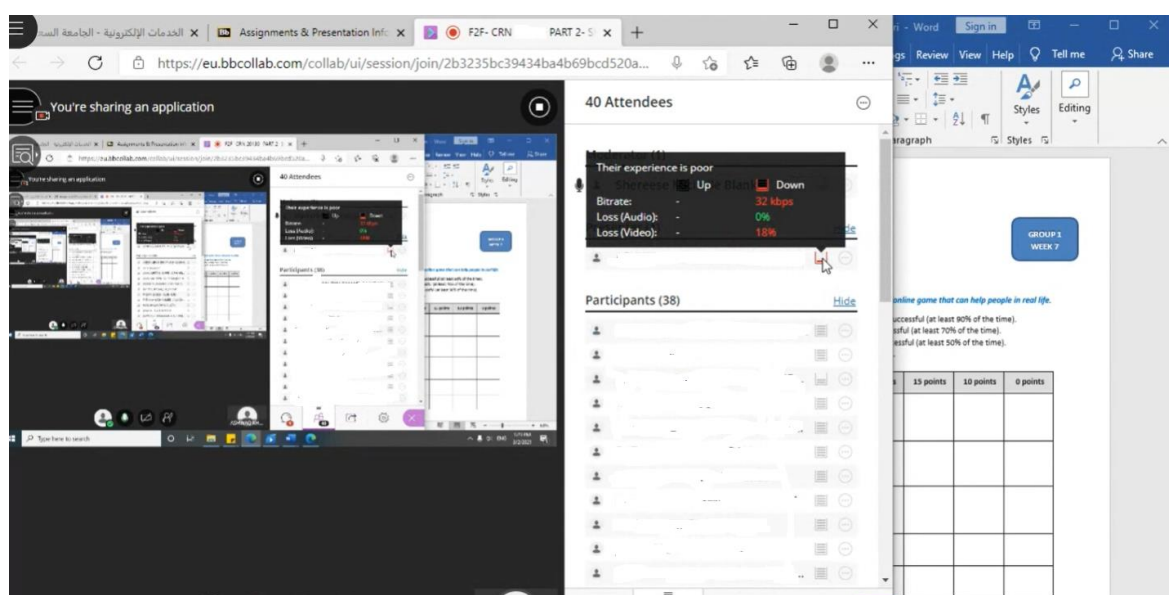


Figure 36 Shoug's Internet Connection Problem

The **teaching behaviours** of the F2F teacher presented another challenge that affected Shoug's engagement. Shoug was sensitive to the differences in the ways she was being taught:

'I am scared the teacher will ask me to write something or answer a question and I won't know how to do it. She's always saying she will test us at the end of the class and I get apprehensive. To make things worse, my daughters and I access our online platforms at the same time, which makes me worry that one of our microphones is going to get turned on by mistake' (Shoug, interview 1).

'VCs are better than F2F classes because the class is only one hour long, and the teacher does not test our patience' (Shoug, informal chat).

Instead of putting more effort into her online class engagement, as the **curriculum** did not support Shoug, she preferred to enroll in a paid online workshop that specifically taught strategies for the entrance exam. Despite her lack of engagement in the classes, Shoug did pass the English course.

'The course content of the English classes doesn't help you to pass the entrance exams. I decided to stop wasting my time with the English classes and focus on preparing for the entrance exam, because that would enable me to continue studying at SEU. I booked a workshop to master the strategies for passing' (Shoug, interview 2).

Shoug was overwhelmed with her **caring responsibilities**, *'Sometimes I felt upset because my responsibilities, care for my elderly mum and my three daughters all on my own prevented me from focusing on my studies' (Shoug, interview 2)*, and the extra burden of following her daughters' online learning due to **Covid**, resulted in her feeling very frustrated throughout the academic year. Her failure to pass the entrance exam several times and the increase in summer fees made her wonder whether she should withdraw from university altogether, but she held a strong desire to attempt the exam again in the summer.

'I can't believe that all my efforts this year will count for nothing because I didn't pass the entrance exam' (Shoug, interview 2).

Shoug doggedly continued to study without **support** from her family or even from the university, as she is a very private person and was not inclined to share her worries.

'I had no one to help or support me, so I always had to cheer myself up when I got depressed. I never shared my problems with the teachers or other students' (Shoug, interview 1).

Fortunately for Shoug, neither her commitments, relatives' negative comments, exam failures nor uncertainty about whether social security would pay the tuition fees could discourage her from retaking the exam in the summer. It was a huge surprise for me to receive this message from Shoug:

'Finally, you can congratulate me! I did it! I passed the ENTRANCE EXAM. I am flying with joy!'

4.4 Fooz: From Waxing Moon to Waning Moon

4.4.1 Fooz's Profile

Fooz is a 32-year-old who lives in the Eastern region. She is married and has three young children aged 15, 10 and 5 years old. Her three sisters and her husband have bachelor's degrees. At high school, Fooz described herself as a type A student who often achieved top marks and her high school grades enabled her to enrol at university without difficulty. She was excited about going to university after marrying, and she passed her first-year exams. However, things became more

complicated when she had her first child in her second year; thus, she decided to postpone her education, as there was no day care close to her area nor any relatives nearby to help her. Fooz thought the best time to go back to university would be after her first child had started school. Unfortunately, she was told she was no longer eligible to resume the course at that university after such a long gap. Fooz then lost all hope of getting a degree.

However, Fooz's husband, a teacher, heard that his friend's wife was having a very positive experience of SEU's flexible approach of blended learning, which meant she could study without abandoning her childcare responsibilities. He encouraged Fooz to apply to SEU and she was duly accepted. Overjoyed, Fooz said that she 'counted this opportunity as a true blessing' after such a long gap in her education.

4.4.2 Motivation in OL

When I first interviewed Fooz, she expressed happiness at passing her first semester modules, which aligned with her high motivation score in the first survey. Fooz was motivated throughout the semester and in both surveys. She also had a number of goals regarding learning English online and her motivational goals (all types) remained high. Although the interview highlighted Fooz's higher **extrinsic motivation** (to gain a certificate), she also stated that she was interested in learning English for its own sake, which is indicative of **intrinsic motivation** (Figure 37 & Figure 38)



Figure 37 Fooz's Mastery Goals

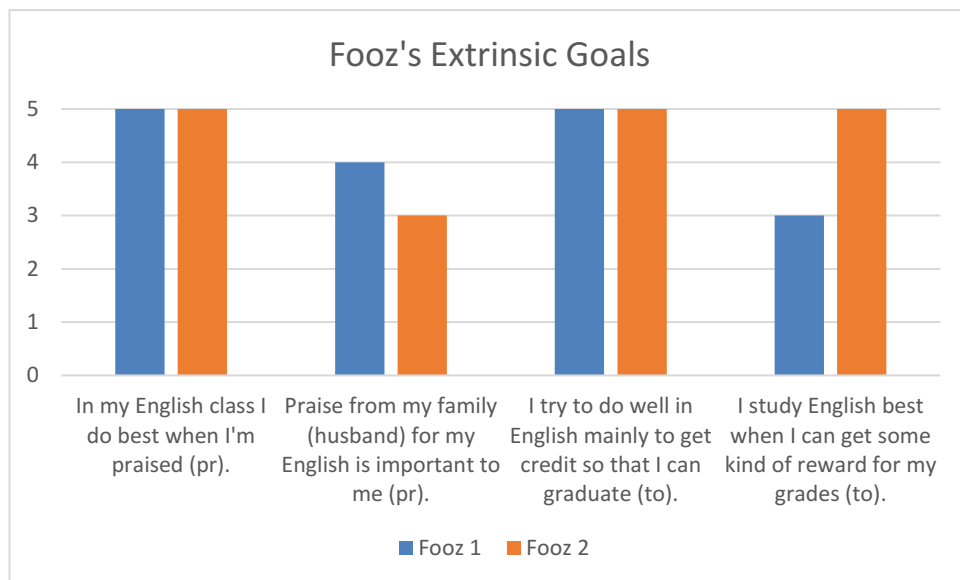


Figure 38 Fooz's Extrinsic Goals

Fooz's performance goals increased in the second survey, shown in Figure 39, as she was aiming to complete a degree and fought to achieve this goal.

'A person without qualifications is worth nothing. So, I wasn't thinking of any particular major or job for the future; I just wanted to get my bachelor's degree to fulfil my dream' (Fooz, interview 1).

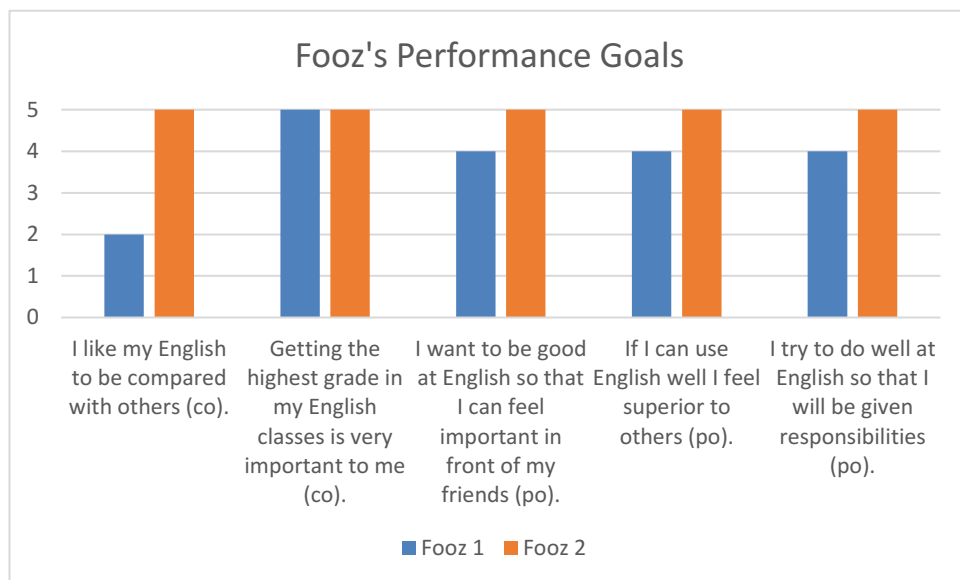


Figure 39 Fooz's Performance Goals

Fooz's also reflected high social goals (Figure 40) in the second survey, which might have been connected to her desire to be a role model to her children, who already had English skills. Fooz was not seeking to compete with her children but expressed that she was looking for social status in her family.

'I want to learn and be an excellent example to my kids. My husband and my kids speak English better than I do. When I want to practise my English, I try to talk to my kids to improve my skills' (Fooz, interview 1).



Figure 40 Fooz's Social Goals

Similarly, to the other mature students, Fooz was aware of the importance of having good English skills *'English is essential for use abroad, and I like taking English classes with native speakers here in this country, even though we have a strict teacher' (Fooz, interview 1)*. Fooz's **sense of purpose** (Figure 41) was connected with her goal of investing in her children's future because of language importance. Fooz, for example, self-assessed her English by comparing her linguistic competence with her children's fluency in English, and mentioning she was able to practise her English with them.

'To develop my kids' English skills, I enrol them in English courses every summer. My husband and my kids use English better than I do, so I practise speaking English with my kids. (Fooz, interview 1).

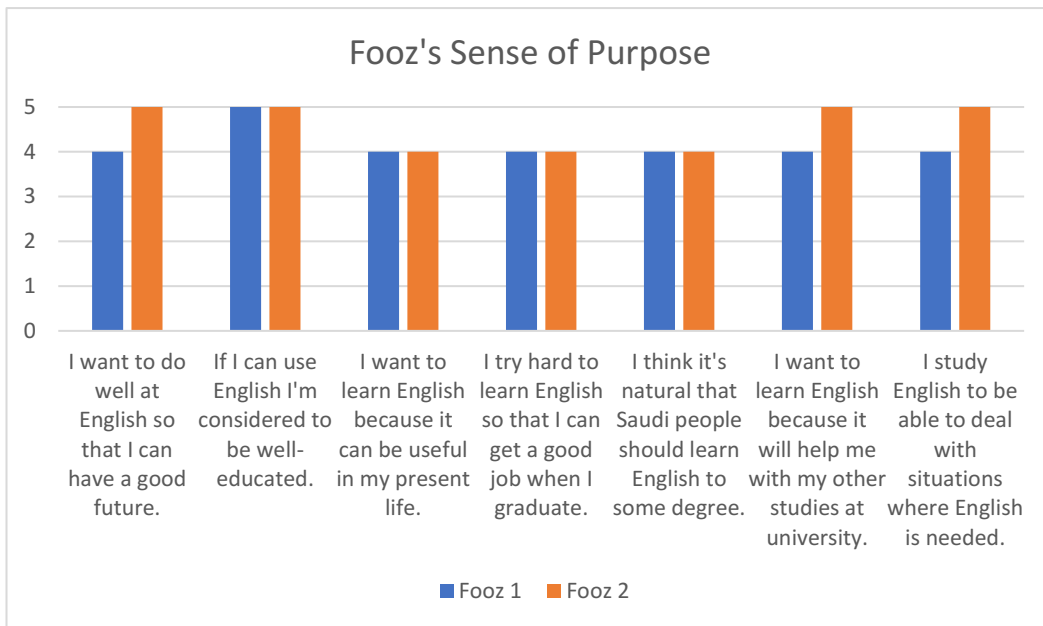


Figure 41 Fooz's Sense of Purpose

Unlike Maha and Shoug, Fooz maintained positive responses about her **self-reliance** in both surveys (Figure 42). Observation of her online classes showed that Fooz did well, although she did make mistakes in class discussions. However, making mistakes did not affect her confidence learning English. The fact she did not strongly agree with her self-reliance might be related to her fears of passing the entrance exam.

'I'm scared that all my expectations and dreams will vanish, because I failed the first attempt at the entrance exam. I'm working hard on the English course, and I'm sure I will pass it, but I'm not sure how to pass the entrance exam' (Fooz, interview 2).

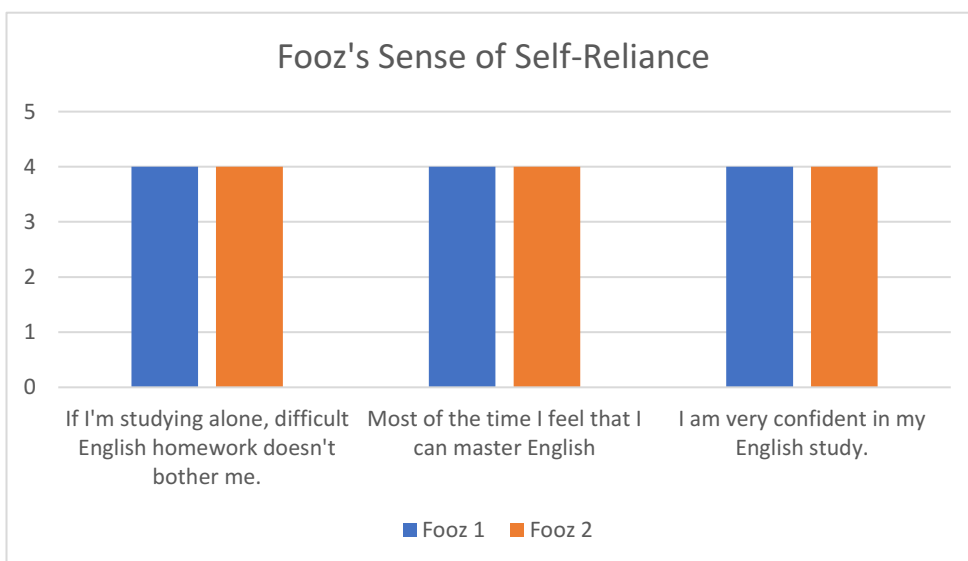


Figure 42 Fooz's Sense of Self-Reliance

Fooz's high sense of self-reliance enabled her to have a positive **self-concept** (Figure 43), although she experienced **challenges** in balancing her studies with her **parental responsibilities**.

Unfortunately, Fooz's motivation declined at the end of the year, and she decided to withdraw from her university studies. Despite passing all of the online English course modules, she failed the entrance exam and was discouraged from continuing on to university.

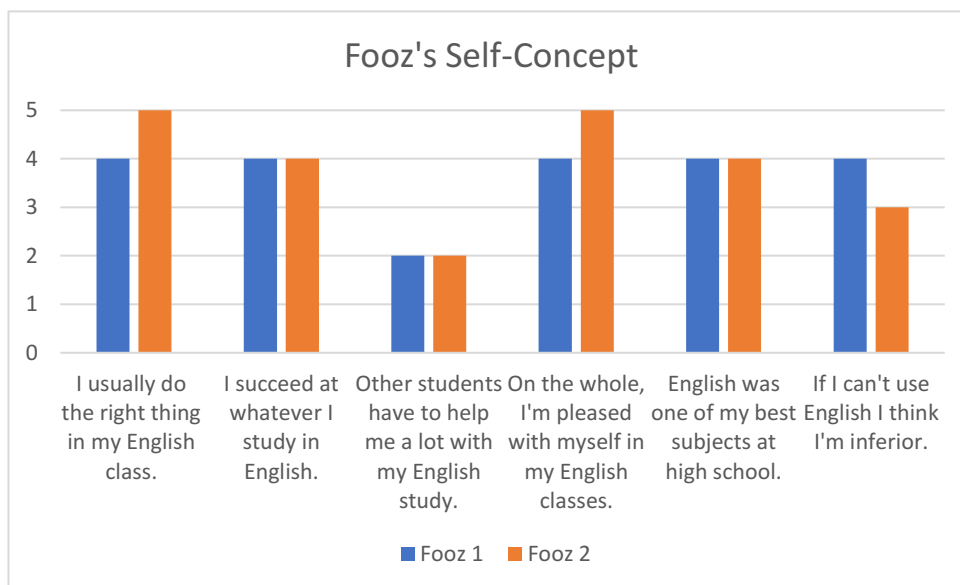


Figure 43 Fooz's Self-Concept

Although Fooz differentiated between learning a language at a Saudi state school and at university level, her **previous LL experience** had no negative impact on Fooz, as she found learning English at university much more enjoyable than at high school.

'We had to learn English at school, and everything was forced, so I didn't enjoy it.

However, the teaching at university is entirely different, making it much more enjoyable. It also meant I could study other courses, such as IT, in English' (Fooz, interview 1).

Fooz's integration of **motivation** with **engagement** can be seen in the extract below, which shows how the combination of goals, self-concept, and emotions shaped her attention. Fooz, who had **mastery** and **extrinsic goals**, worried about her **self-concept** in English classes even when she participated. She did not want the teacher to think negatively about her, and on one occasion when the teacher expressed disappointment with the lack of student **participation**, she emailed her directly after class to state her case. Fooz protested in the email that she had been trying to interact in class. She was concerned about protecting her **self-concept and purpose** in front of the teacher, whose opinion she valued. The teacher led students to believe that marks were assigned according to their participation in class discussions and activities. Still, they discovered from reading the assessment criteria that this was not the case. However, this did not affect Fooz, as

she was already **intrinsically motivated** enough to participate because of her interest in learning English in itself.

'I like to participate in classes. Even after discovering that there were no marks for participation, I kept on participating. The rest of the students had a good discussion about this in the social group because when they found that participation didn't carry any marks, they said they wouldn't bother if there were no rewards. But I'm not like them, and I don't feel the same way. I want the teacher to notice my presence in the class. Seriously, I like the teacher to praise me when I participate well and improve my English. I was pretty glad when the teacher was upset with the students for not participating in the class. I sent her an email to inform her that I was participating, and she reassured me that now that she'd noticed my name, she would reply to my email' (Fooz, interview 2).

4.4.3 Engagement in OL

'When I wake up early and remember that I have English classes, I moan about this burden in my life. Still, after a flash of my dream to have a bachelor's degree, I wake up with a smile and start to plan my day, so I can take care of all my responsibilities like preparing food, checking the kids, and preparing my learning space' (Fooz, interview 1).

Fooz was enthusiastic about studying again after a long break to have children. The youthful energy of her early twenties returned, and she felt like she'd turned the clock back. She immersed herself in her studies, actively **participated** in classes, and enjoyed the challenge of juggling her education with family time. Describing herself as a type A student, she felt at home again in an educational setting. Yet her husband, busy teaching online, never offered to help with the childcare. Fooz defined engagement at its superficial level as merely being the interaction between teachers and students.

Fooz submitted data for 14 classes — 9 VCs and 5 F2F classes. The graphs in Figure 44, Figure 45, Blackboard Analytics Figure 46 and examples of students' participation from class observations Figure 47 show that Fooz had higher cognitive and behavioural engagement levels than the other students in the current study. However, week 10 showed a drop in her cognitive and behavioural engagement. She explained that this was due to poor **internet connection, which** hindered her online engagement. Although she emphasised in the interviews that she was obliged to focus on her children's online learning, her cognitive and behavioural engagement was still high compared to the other NTSS.

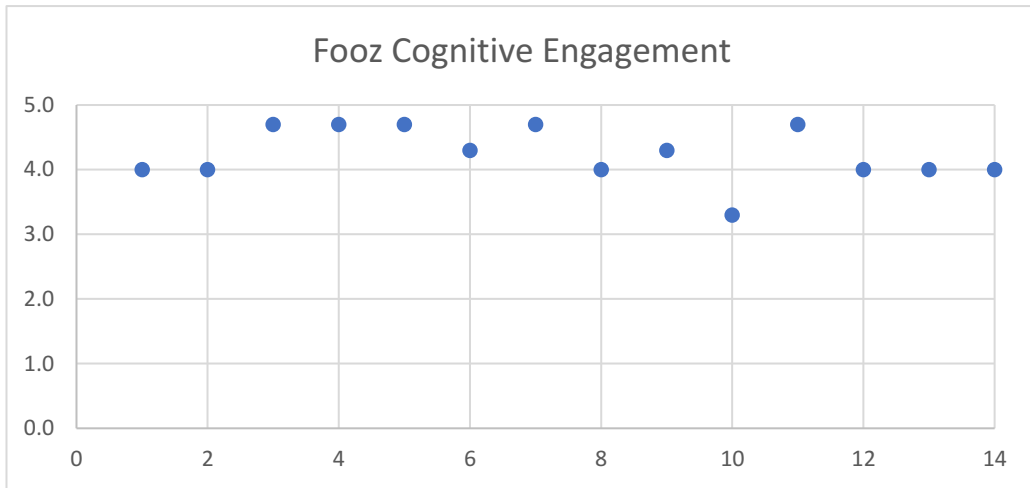


Figure 44 Fooz's Cognitive Engagement

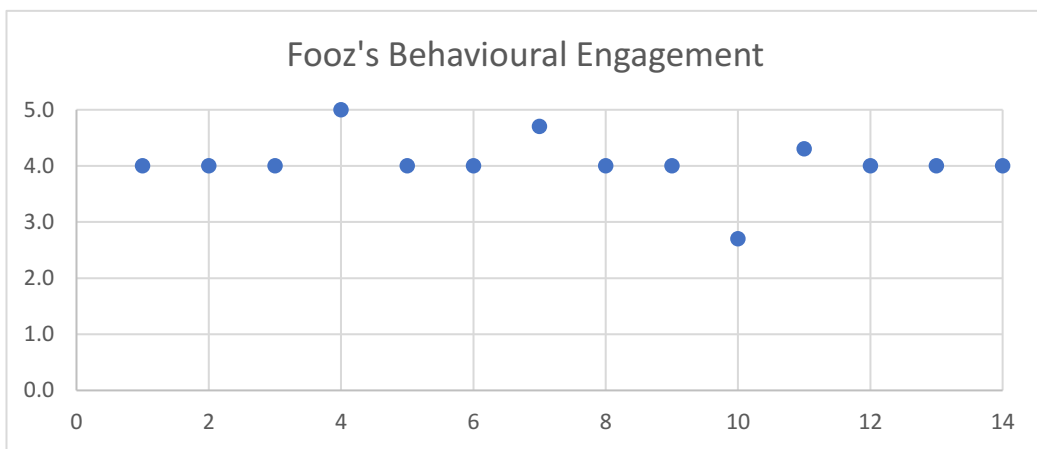


Figure 45 Fooz's Behavioural Engagement

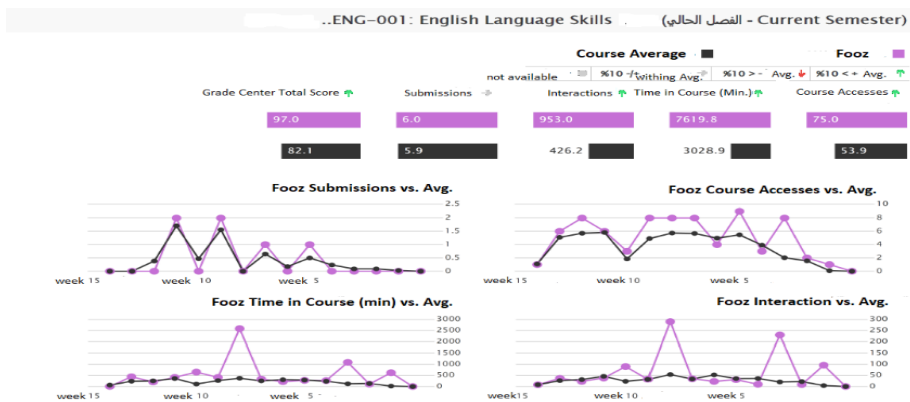


Figure 46 Fooz's Blackboard Analytics



Figure 47 Fooz's Participation from class observation

Unlike her classmates, Fooz participated because she was **interested** in learning English. She later clarified that unlike her classmates, she was motivated by more than grades. In Saudi schools, marks for participation count towards the final exam results, and thus participation is extrinsically motivated. Many undergraduates believe that the same holds true at university and participate for that reason alone. In class observations, Fooz **participated** more than any of the other students on her course, and she would often volunteer to read aloud when no one else wanted to.

'The students were upset when the teacher informed them that marks were not awarded for participation. They talked about their unwillingness to participate, but I didn't feel like that because I enjoy being an active learner in class' (Fooz, interview 2).

Although the **Covid** lockdowns affected Fooz's learning experience, as she had to homeschool her children, Fooz **persisted** with her studies.

'There were times when I was overwhelmed with the kids' exams and my studies, and then I felt guilty for enrolling at university and thought of leaving. Then I decided to devote one day a week to my learning, which worked' (Fooz, interview 2).

She recounted her contingency plans to benefit from the **class recordings**:

'I took advantage of being able to access class recordings at any time. I also started to devote more time to my kids' online classes' (Fooz, interview 1).

To overcome the challenges, Fooz applied many **self-regulation strategies**. She was the only parent who made a concerted effort to manage her time so that she could attend to her children's education as well as her own. She prepared family meals ahead of time and accessed study materials at the weekend to prepare for classes a week in advance. This showed that Fooz prioritised her family responsibilities and fitted her studies in around other commitments. Her excellent planning skills helped her to deal with any unexpected challenges in her learning, as she

kept up to date with the assignments and avoided postponing work. This planning supported Fooz in finding a **suitable learning environment** that enhanced her engagement in her English classes. Fooz was an active learner, and her consistently high levels of participation demonstrated her high interest in learning English.

'I plan every single task, from cleaning the house to preparing meals, sorting out the kids' education, and my study. I knew that some of my classmates' studies were suffering because of procrastination issues, so I worked hard to finish every unit by its due date. I always accessed the materials a week early to ensure I kept myself on track while keeping an eye on the kids' learning during the weekdays' (Fooz, interview 1).

Due to her earlier university studies in English and IT, Fooz was able to apply **cognitive transfer** to her new learning experience. She recounted that studying at SEU had refreshed her knowledge of both the English language and IT (delivered in English). She found the IT course easy and could complete the final exam much faster than the other students.

'I thought I had forgotten what I'd studied after a gap of ten years, but the IT course was not as challenging as I thought it would be, and I managed to remember quite a lot and pass the exam. Other students were amazed that I'd finished the final exam so quickly' (Fooz, interview 1).

Also,

'I liked most of the English classes once I'd remembered the grammar rules and vocabulary I'd learned before' (Fooz, interview 2).

Another strategy that Fooz applied was keeping a **regular record** of all the vocabulary and grammar she learned.

'I was keen to write down the new words from each unit and translate them into Arabic so that I could memorise them quickly; the vocabulary helped build my linguistic repertoire. I wrote down all new concepts and terminology I learned in English courses as well as English concepts in other classes' (Fooz, interview 1).

Although Fooz found herself distracted when the teacher turned the **camera on**, she engaged enthusiastically in her online English classes, as reflected by the in-class observations.

'Turning the camera on is optional for teachers, but I'd prefer it if they didn't do it. I got very distracted when the teacher turned the camera on because I was so busy looking at her' (Fooz, interview 1).

Chapter 4

Interestingly, Fooz worked **autonomously** with the online materials (Figure 48) because they ‘help me revise what I’ve studied in the unit’ (Fooz, interview 2) and she ‘found the English **curriculum** interesting, as it is connected to real life’; thus, she ‘developed English skills by practising material from online activities in conversations with English speakers’ (Fooz, interview 2).

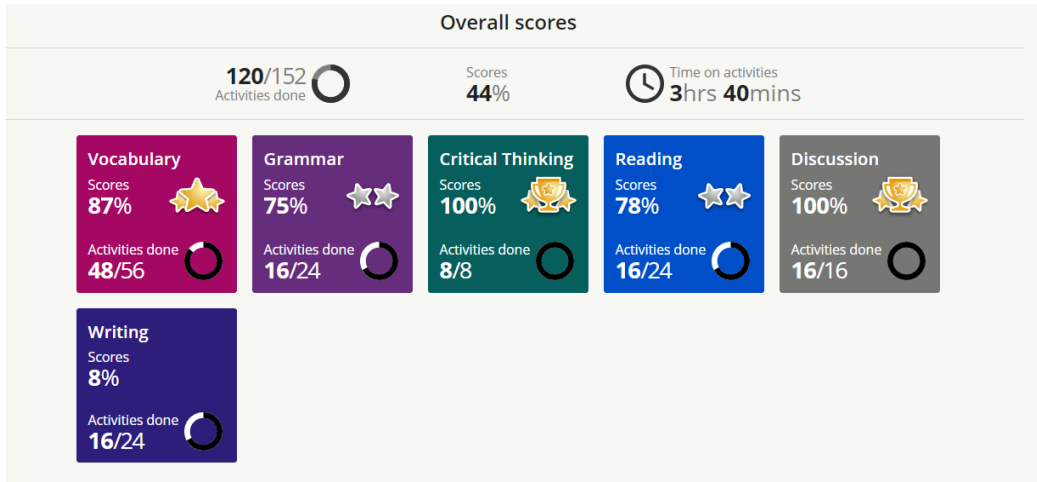


Figure 48 Fooz's Scores in Online Activities

During her experience learning English, Figures 49 and Figure 50 below show that Fooz had stable positive emotions during her learning experience at SEU, and low negative emotions.

‘I’m so happy as I’ve passed all the modules. The first online experience was exciting, and I felt ten years younger. I was delighted to pass my maths, English and IT courses. I started to gain confidence in my ability to learn at university, and I wish I could have this confidence in passing the entrance exam’ (Fooz, interview 2).

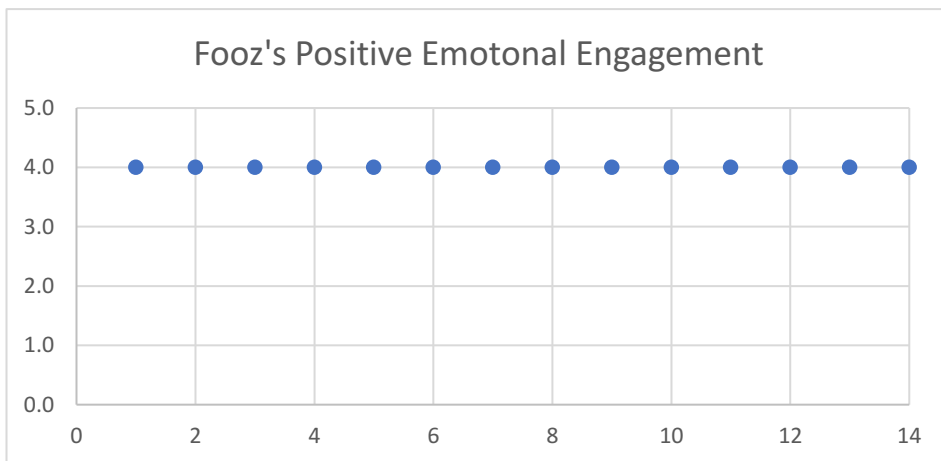


Figure 49 Fooz's Positive Emotional Engagement

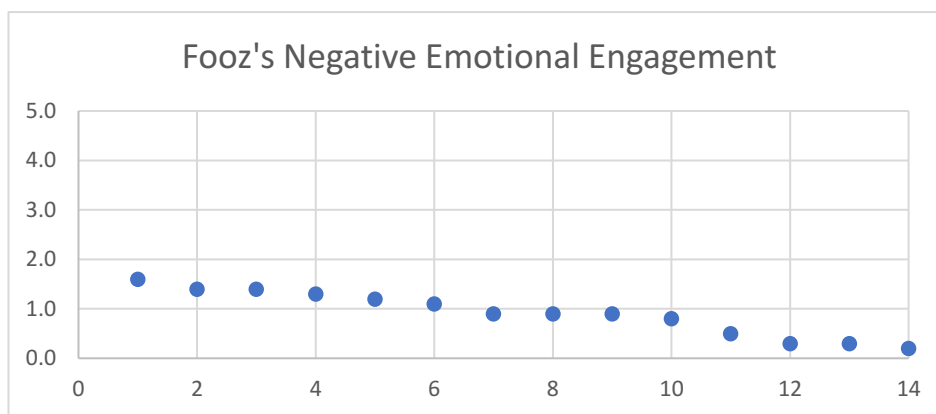


Figure 50 Fooz's Negative Emotional Engagement

However, Fooz also declared in the second interview that she had some negative feelings towards the English classes.

'I'm upset that our English teacher makes us hate English classes. She treats us as if we are experts and expects us to answer all her questions correctly, but we don't understand what she wants us to do. She wants to race through all the coursework as fast as possible and takes the attendance register every time. We need a teacher who understands our actual level of English, simplifies the language for us and lets us discuss things with her' (Fooz, interview 2).

The only moment Fooz highlighted any negative feelings about her journey was at the end of the academic year when she was unsure about her future *'I've worked hard and passed all courses, and now I'm both **excited** and **terrified** at the same time, excited because of my success and **scared** that I won't pass the entrance exam, because it determines whether or not I can proceed to the next level' (Fooz, interview 2).*

Fooz's teacher and her classmates chose her to be the leader that liaised between the teachers and students when *'the teacher suggested creating a WhatsApp group with a leader to communicate any updates or in case of technical issues encountered by students during online exams' (Fooz, interview 2).* When this **community had been built**, Fooz communicated effectively with her classmates to **support** them by passing on their enquiries to the teachers, even if she found it hard to catch up, as she was also monitoring her children's online education. Figure 51 below shows Fooz's level of social engagement.

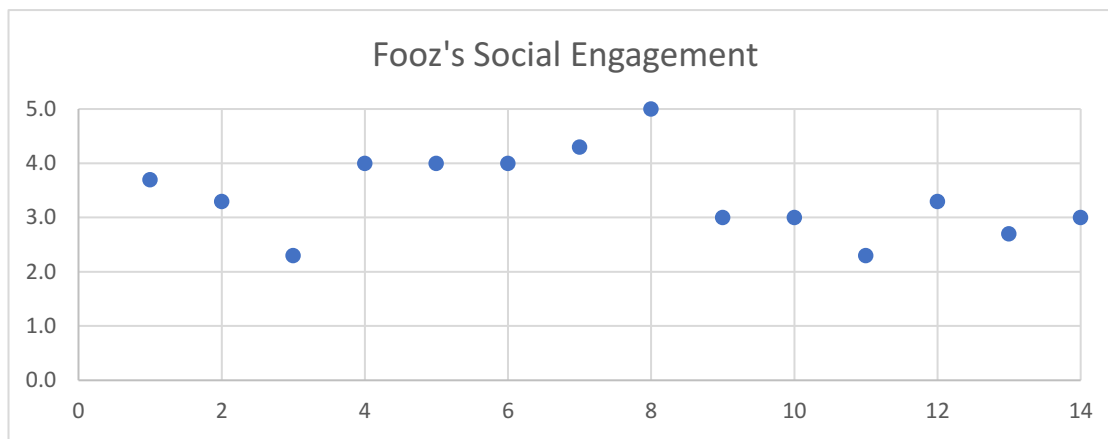


Figure 51 Fooz's Social Engagement

According to Fooz, some of the students who were active in the social group provided **social collaboration** and understanding of each other's circumstances.

'Some of the students were very supportive, so when someone who had work or job and needed extra support, she could ask for help and found us here. When anyone asked a question, you could see in the social group how all students cooperated by explaining to the others and providing sources. In the group, we encouraged each other to study and set a timetable for revision. I would never find such a fantastic group as this one again' (Fooz, interview 2).

However, nothing is without its downsides, and Fooz commented on her view of the **negative** side of this social group.

One of the things that I didn't like about the WhatsApp group is that some of the students just gossiped about trivial issues. They sometimes would jump to conclusions and didn't respect others' privacy. For example, I'm a busy mother and wasn't always able to respond to messages straight away (Fooz, interview 2).

Fooz devoted more time to engaging in online English classes and supporting her classmates than preparing for the test, so of course she felt terrible at the end of the academic year when she found she had passed all of the FCY modules but not the English entrance exam.

'I thought the entrance exam wasn't that difficult, and I thought I would easily pass because of my class engagement. When I took it for the first time, I told my classmates that the exam was not difficult; it just needed focus. I thought I'd done well, but then I found out that my score was too low for a pass mark. I cried all day. My classmates, whom I supported in the English classes and exams, got higher scores than me. What is this

exam? I passed all my modules, and now I won't be able to continue at the uni because I didn't pass this exam' (Fooz, interview 2).

4.4.4 Challenges affecting Fooz's Engagement

*'I feel so **frustrated**. I didn't pass the exam even on the second attempt, and all my dreams vanished in spite of all my hard work and excellent online experience' (Fooz, informal chat).*

During the academic year, Fooz was happy and grateful for the opportunity to return to study. She squeezed in every chance she had to develop her skills, not only on her courses but to pass the entrance exam that would determine her future. The most challenging times were when her children had classes and assessments; still, she devoted plenty of time to them and stayed up late to finish her coursework. Fooz's challenges started with the extra commitments she had during the Covid pandemic. She felt guilty that she could not support her youngest during his first year at school. Her dream of studying and meeting other students in person in a blended university on campus suddenly shifted to the reality of an OL experience with virtual classmates. Initially, Fooz was upset about the university's decision to switch to online classes during the pandemic. However, her **negative feelings** quickly changed as she planned how to achieve her goals. To enjoy her learning experience, Fooz overcame challenges such as managing the responsibilities of motherhood, home-schooling, and preparing for the entrance exam. However, one of the biggest challenges was that she felt stressed about the English **teacher's** strict approach.

Although Fooz kept engaging in the English classes by expressing her ideas and interacting with her teachers and the other students, she highlighted in the interview that her teacher's practices affected the students' engagement, especially when they found it hard to understand the instructions.

'The English teacher is strict and expects us to interact with her, although we are only at level one. If we don't participate, she threatens to mark us all as absent. The teachers don't appreciate that we have kids at school and that we are the ones who have to keep track of their schoolwork, and that we don't always have any support with this task' (Fooz, interview 1).

Fooz's teacher, who knew that attendance is mandatory at SEU, used the threat of marking students absent to force them into being more active learners. This behaviour annoyed the NTSS, as they considered themselves mature students who were able to take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, Fooz was attracted more to virtual classes, as those teachers did not follow the same tactics as the F2F teacher:

'I liked the virtual teachers more because they didn't threaten to mark us absent if we didn't actively participate in the classes' (Fooz, interview 1).

It seems that the English F2F teacher affected Fooz's learning experience, as she had plenty to say about this teacher and tried to justify her classmates' feelings.

'My group also started to hate our English classes because of the teacher. I don't blame my friends; the teacher's strict attitude did not encourage us to participate. Sometimes she gave us instructions, and we had no idea what she meant. We used to go straight onto the social group afterwards and ask each other whether anyone had understood' (Fooz, interview 2).

In addition, Fooz lacked **support** and understanding from her family. Her husband was a busy teacher who worked the same hours she did, but he and their children seemed oblivious that most of the parental responsibilities fell to her during the **Covid** lockdowns, leaving her with little time to study.

Fooz also found the **English assessments** 'demanding' and 'when the university decided to bring forward the final exams, we were so stressed because there were so many assessments to do for all our different courses' (Fooz, interview 2).

Any external factors could have affected her engagement in the class, but Fooz did not allow this to happen, and she managed to find the time and energy to participate, despite having so much to do at home. In spite of all effort she put in to engage in and further her studies at SEU, she could not pass the **entrance exam**, as studying just two hours a day was not sufficient to develop her English level.

'I didn't manage to pass the first time. During the month before the exam, I spent two hours a day preparing' (Fooz, interview 2).

Her feelings of pride were evident in the presentations she shared with me and her positive reflection of presenting and engaging in classes. Any observer would have predicted academic success for Fooz, but things do not always go as planned. Although she passed all her course modules and proved to be a good university student, she failed the entrance exam twice. As a result, her motivation waned, and she decided to postpone her university studies.

4.5 Roaa: A Flexible or Strict Teacher

4.5.1 Roaa's Profile

Roaa had just turned 23 when she joined SEU. Roaa is married and has two children, aged 1 and 3. Roaa was an excellent student who achieved outstanding grades at high school and in the Saudi university entrance exams (Qiyas). However, the offer she received was for distance learning only. She was disappointed as she thought she deserved better because of her high grades. She did not enrol, hoping to have the opportunity for F2F learning the following year. A year later, Roaa married, and in the following years, she received two offers for university places. However, they were living in a different city to the one she grew up in, and her husband had his own opinions about the importance of her education, which affected her decision to study. After many failed attempts to convince him to move back to where her family lived, she decided to abandon the idea of going to university.

Roaa's parents were educated to primary and secondary level. Her three brothers had graduated, while her younger sister was still at university. Roaa's mother encouraged her and promised to support her financially so that she could continue her studies. She was unhappy that Roaa had given up thoughts of continuing onto higher education, and Roaa herself was frustrated that she was not allowed to progress with her education, including her English skills. She knew she could join any number of workshops and short online courses, but she wanted a more substantial course that would result in her attaining qualifications. Although Roaa had been reluctant to take up distance learning in the past, she realised that the blended learning approach offered by SEU was the option most suited to her life situation. She applied and was accepted onto a course at SEU that was taught using F2F and VC components.

Roaa described herself as a hard-working student who devoted time and effort to achieving her goals. Even though her husband supported her financially, he did not give her psychological and emotional support. Roaa recognised that the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood had left her unable to give her full attention to her studies, and she was upset with herself that she had not fulfilled her academic potential.

4.5.2 Motivation in OL

After the release of the first semester results, Roaa was happy with her progress, and expressed her interest in learning in general *'before I married, I enjoyed learning and wanted to finish my studies, especially as I'd applied quite a few times and got several offers'* (Roaa, interview 1). By the second semester, Roaa had a lower level of **mastery goals** (Figure 52) and **performance goals** (Figure 53) than she had had in the first survey. Her mastery goals declined over the semester,

particularly for item 2: *I try hard at English because I am interested in my work.* There are several possible reasons for these differences in ratings of her mastery goals, according to her interviews.

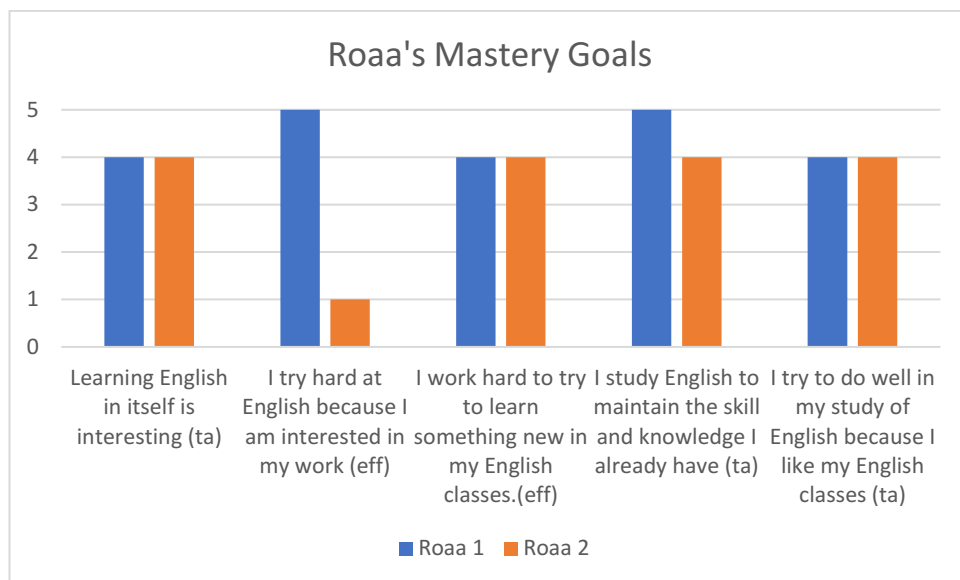


Figure 52 Roa’s Mastery Goals

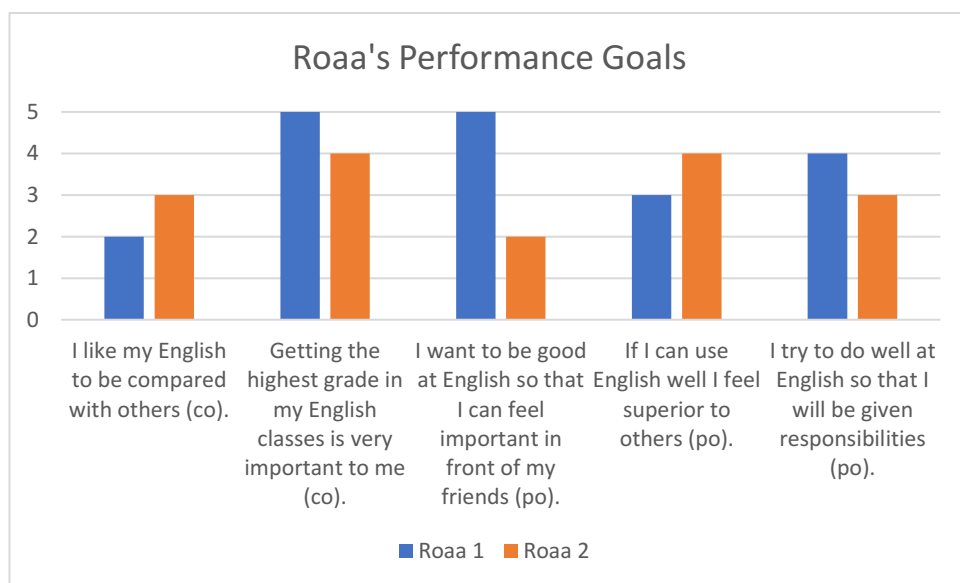


Figure 53 Roa’s Performance Goals

Roa’s **interest** in learning English in the first semester may partly have been due to her liking her **teacher**, as in the second semester she had a different teacher with whom she had not such a good rapport, which affected her motivation and engagement.

‘I enjoyed learning English, particularly in the first semester, when the English teacher helped us break free of our shyness and not feel embarrassed if we made mistakes’ (Roa, interview 1).

The decline could also be associated with her difficulties in **understanding English**, which affected her performance and her interest in completing her assignments. In addition, in the second semester, Roaa discovered that she needed to pass the university's **entrance exam** in English in order to progress *'the most important thing is knowing how to pass the entrance exam because it's the path to higher education'* (Roaa, interview 2).

However, the corresponding shift in her motivational goals resulted in higher ratings of her **social** and **extrinsic** goals (Figures 54 & 55).

'In addition, I need to have a degree to get a job and support my husband, as we have financial problems. I hope we can improve our standard of living when I get a job after my graduation' (Roaa, interview 1).

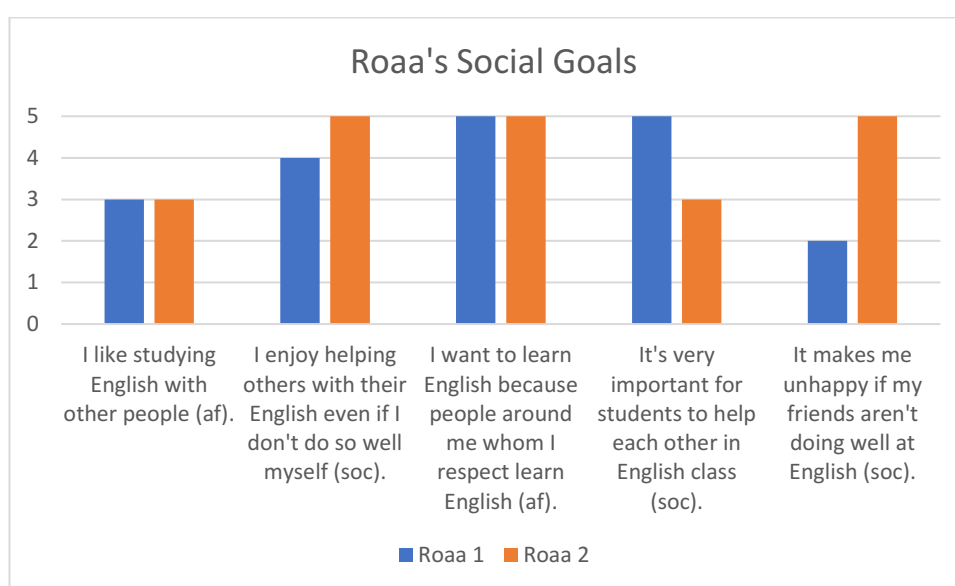


Figure 54 Roaa's Social Goals

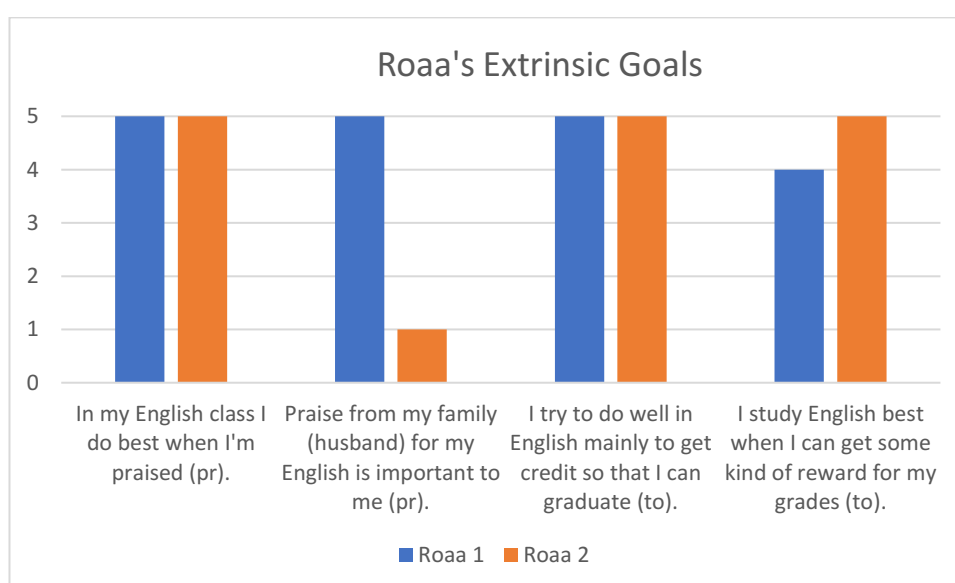


Figure 55 Roaa's Extrinsic Goals

Roaa expressed the importance of learning English: *‘English is an international language that can be used everywhere worldwide. Learning a language helps you stop feeling embarrassed when you’re in a foreign country’* (Roaa, interview 1). However, her responses to the **sense of purpose** items in the motivational survey (Figure 56) showed a decline in the second survey for items 1 and 5: *‘I want to do well in English so that I can have a promising future’,* and *‘I think it is natural for Saudis to learn English to some degree’.*

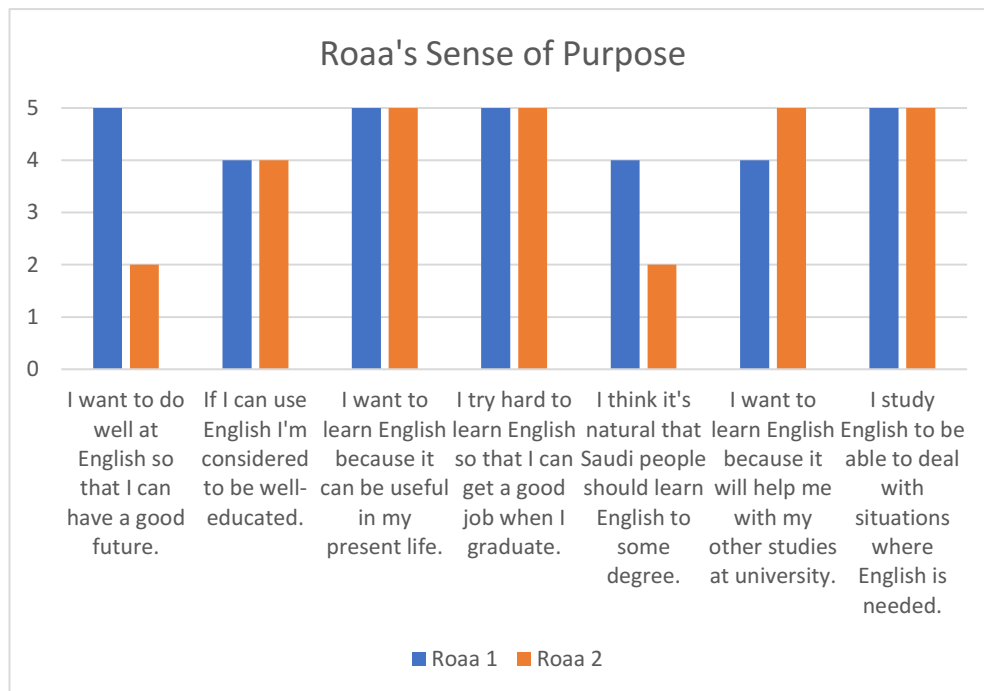


Figure 56 Roaa’s Sense of Purpose

Roaa felt she could not progress because of her **family commitments**, despite describing herself as a type A student before getting married. The decline in her sense of purpose may also have been connected to the university **teaching methods**, which were unfamiliar to Roaa. She reflected on what English learners need from a teacher:

‘The teachers in high school helped us understand English, because they used Arabic when teaching. In other words, they simplified their English for us, but here, you need to focus and either guess the meanings or translate them somehow. Some of the teachers here either explain too fast or are not interested in teaching, which affects our understanding, as we need time to understand what they are trying to say, but now it is the student’s responsibility to understand and focus, particularly with online learning’ (Roaa, interview 1).

Roaa’s **sense of self-reliance** when learning English was not consistent, as shown in Figure 57. Despite strongly agreeing with the second item, *‘most of the time, I feel that I could master*

English' in survey 2 at the end of the semester, her interviews showed that she was not completely confident in her ability to learn English. The extract below gives an example of this.

'The fear I have regarding learning English is that I don't feel good at it, although I'm not that bad. Having to do an entrance exam to evaluate our competence in English makes me nervous though, and I worry that I won't be able to pass' (Roaa, interview 2).

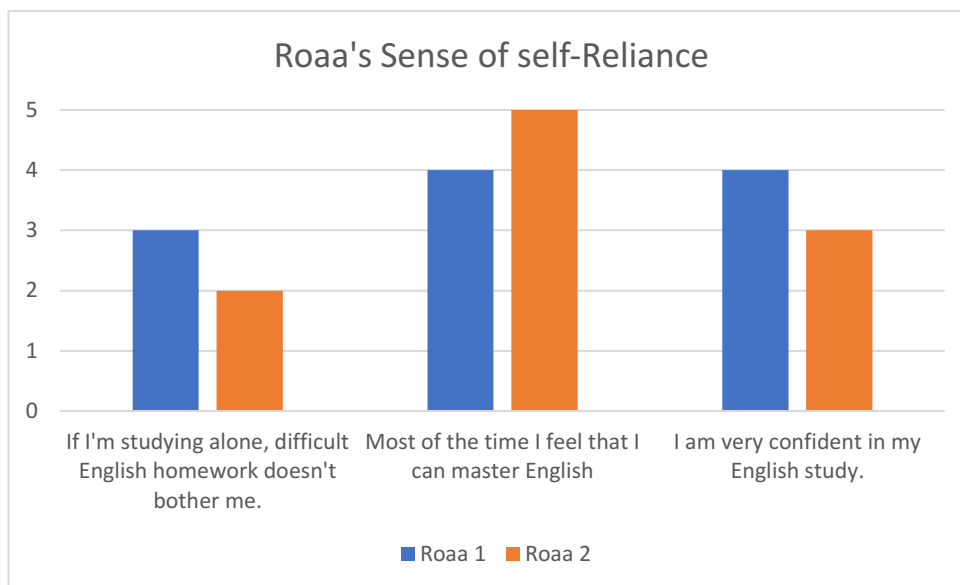


Figure 57 Roaa's Sense of Self-Reliance

Initially Roaa reflected a **positive self-concept** (Figure 58) in online language classes, while later she was not sure if she was successful studying English, and she had a **negative self-concept** when she practised her English in her classes. In an informal chat, she said:

'My English is not that good. I understand English, but the continuous discussion makes me uncomfortable about making mistakes when speaking. I know mistakes are not wrong or bad, but we tend to feel shy if we make mistakes' (Roaa, informal chat).

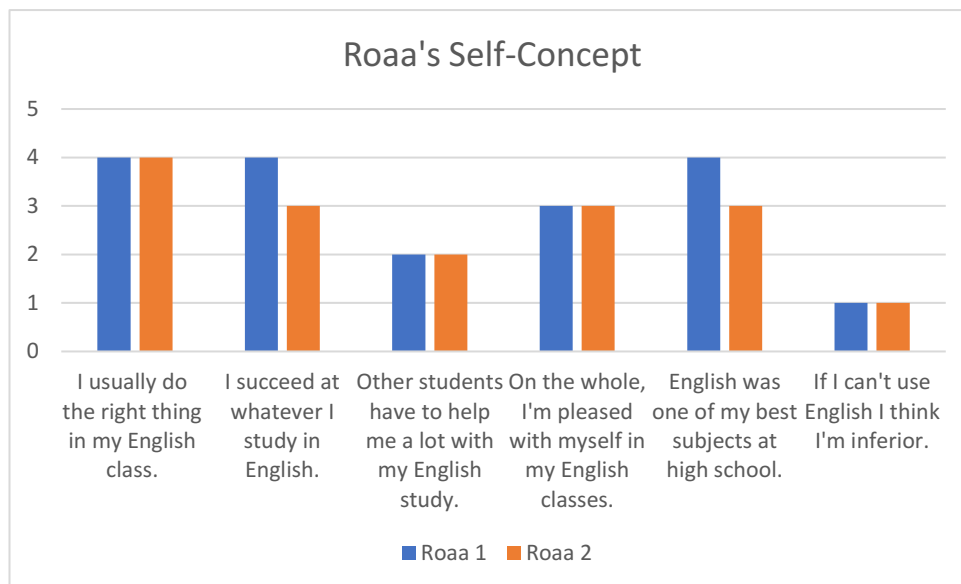


Figure 58 Roaa's Self-Concept

Roaa compared her experience of learning English at high school to that at SEU and judged the former to have been more valuable. She justified this by saying that the English teachers at her high school had used Arabic to help students to understand, while in VCs at SEU, she had to work harder to figure things out for herself. For Roaa, developing learner **autonomy** was essential to help her progress in English at university. Still, she was not particularly interested in doing this, since it took more time and effort. This was obvious in her failure to complete the tasks in her online English classes, and consequently, she failed the course.

4.5.3 Engagement in OL

'I find the VCs more valuable than the long F2F classes, and I can understand more during these classes. The timing of these classes suits me, unlike the morning one, although I might be more interested if the long classes were on campus' (Roaa, interview 1).

Learning online during the pandemic was against Roaa's learning style preferences, and she resisted the idea of BL (blended learning). However, after the first semester, she reported being much more satisfied and happier with the experience than she had expected. In the first semester, she worked hard in her English classes and on her online assessments, as she liked the English teacher and her flexible approach to teaching. However, this contentment did not last long, as a new English teacher was assigned to teach her class in the second semester. Roaa was unsure how to define her engagement:

'I guess it's the interaction between teachers and students' (interview 1).

Roaa gave self-reported data for 11 classes comprising 6 VCs and 5 F2F. Two of these classes (weeks 5 and 8) were accessed outside Roaa's home. Roaa tried to be an active student in her English classes, although Figure 59 and Figure 60 show fluctuations in her **cognitive and**

behavioural engagement, due to many factors. In week 5, for example, when Roaa reported taking a one-hour VC, she was also attending a hospital appointment. She could not pay attention or listen properly, which affected her cognitive engagement.

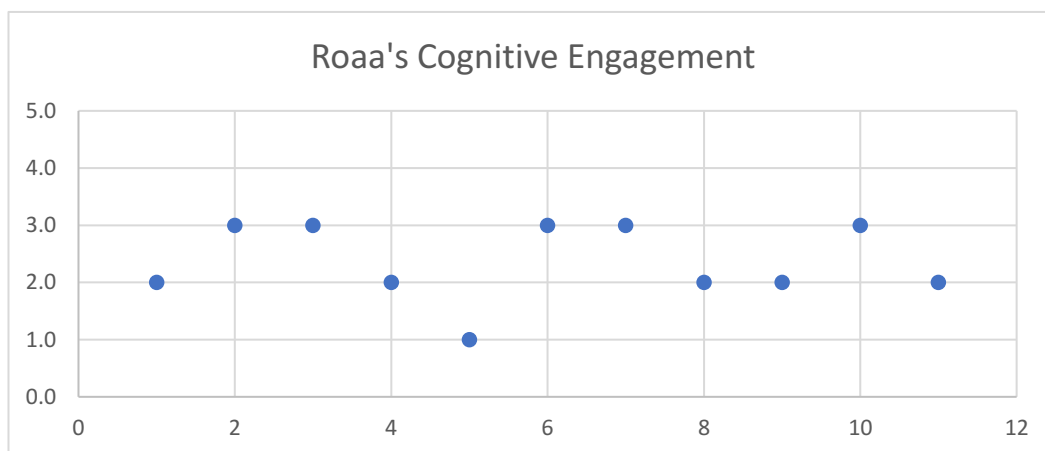


Figure 59 Roaa's Cognitive Engagement

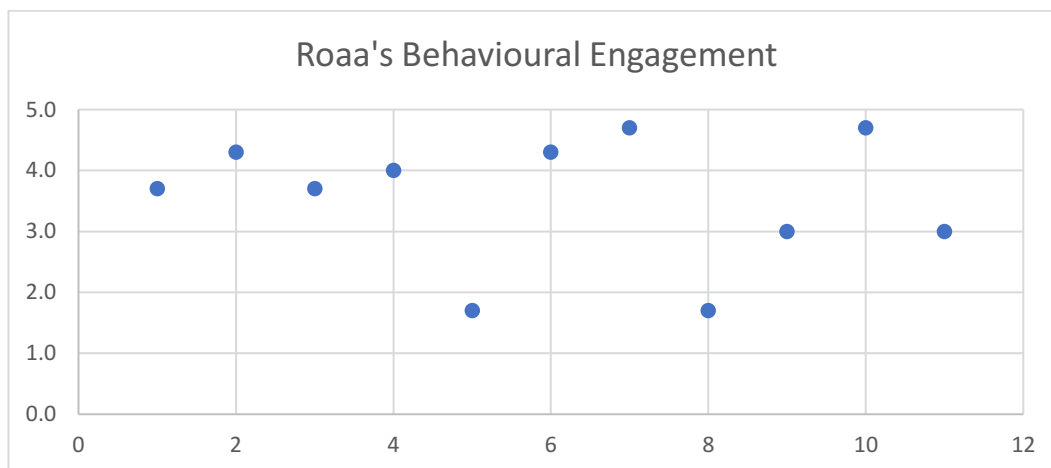


Figure 60 Roaa's Behavioural Engagement

Roaa had previously resisted BL and OL many times, but she had no other option during the **Covid** pandemic. The online approach at the beginning of the semester may have affected her cognitive engagement.

'The reason for disliking online learning is that students do not take their studies seriously, they don't bother to turn on their laptops and join the classes, and they often say they're busy for some reason. In addition, I like to see and interact with the teacher, and being in a proper classroom helps me remember the information' (Roaa, interview 1).

Still, when the teacher **turned on her camera**, Roaa's cognitive engagement increased. She also reflected in the interview that as a beginner, she found it difficult to understand the native English teachers, and she had to ask her classmates in the **social group** to explain the instructions.

'We could not understand the teachers and yet they wanted us to engage. However, our focus increased significantly when a teacher turned on her camera. Although I didn't use the microphone, I was active in the chat and excited to see the teacher. Sometimes, if I couldn't understand the question, I could still guess the meaning from her facial expression' (Roaa, interview 1).

The class observations and self-reporting show that Roaa reflected many aspects of behavioural engagement. For example, she actively participated in some of her English classes and used the chat box to answer questions and engage with the teacher or other students. However, on one occasion, Roaa did not respond to her teachers' requests to answer aloud, as she was reluctant to use the microphone and be heard by the rest of the class. When I asked her about this incident, she replied:

'I was shy about responding to the teacher's request to read [aloud] and didn't want to use the microphone because I didn't want everyone to hear me. The teacher in the first semester helped us to break out of our shyness and gently encouraged us to join in. However, the second-semester teacher is much stricter, and so we avoid participating' (Roaa, interview 1).

Although Roaa recognised the importance of learner autonomy, 'it's the student's responsibility to focus and pay close attention' (interview, 1), she considered that the **curriculum** was accessible 'simply because I am at the introductory level' (interview, 2). However, because she did not engage with the activities or do the tasks which were set, she was the only participant who was obviously at risk of failing. She found it challenging to both study and fulfil her duties as a mother simultaneously and, therefore, did not complete the online activities (Figure 61), despite the teacher reminding her many times.

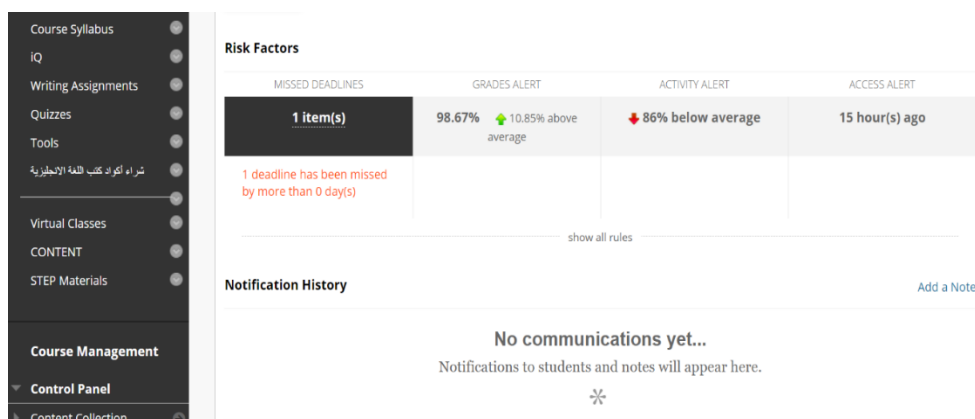


Figure 61 Notification of Roaa's Risk of Failing

In contrast, she complained about the demands on her to complete her assessments *'we have two books full of exercises for writing essays. We have to do so many different things before we*

finish' (Roa, interview 2). Moreover, she had a different view from the other participants about the **class recordings**.

'I've never accessed the recordings. Instead of wasting time accessing the recordings of the classes where I was active and engaged, I decided it was better to prepare for the entrance exam. I think the recordings would be helpful if they taught us strategies to pass the entrance exam' (interview 1).

Roa very much wanted to engage with her English classes. However, she was not able to identify any **strategies** that she found particularly helpful during her learning experience. The main strategy she used to learn actively was to simply write *'down all the new words and translate them before class to engage more effectively'* (Roa, interview 1), however, this strategy did not seem to support the development of her language skills.

Roa was unsure about her ability to manage her commitments alongside her learning, and her low sense of **self-efficacy** in English made her reluctant to *'spend money on workshops, as there's no guarantee I'll pass the exam'* (Roa, interview 2). Her lack of self-efficacy affected Roa's **emotional engagement** (Figure 62 & 63) and it started to fluctuate when she learned more about the **English assessment** and the importance of exams in determining her progress at SEU. Her emotional engagement suffered a decline from week 4, when she realised that the online **English classes** were not helping her much to prepare for the exam, and thus, she lost **interest** in engaging:

'I don't regret joining SEU, but they should help us prepare for this entrance exam so we can continue on to university, as it would save us considerable money and effort. But discovering, at this stage, that the English course doesn't help prepare us for the exam is disappointing' (Roa, interview 2).

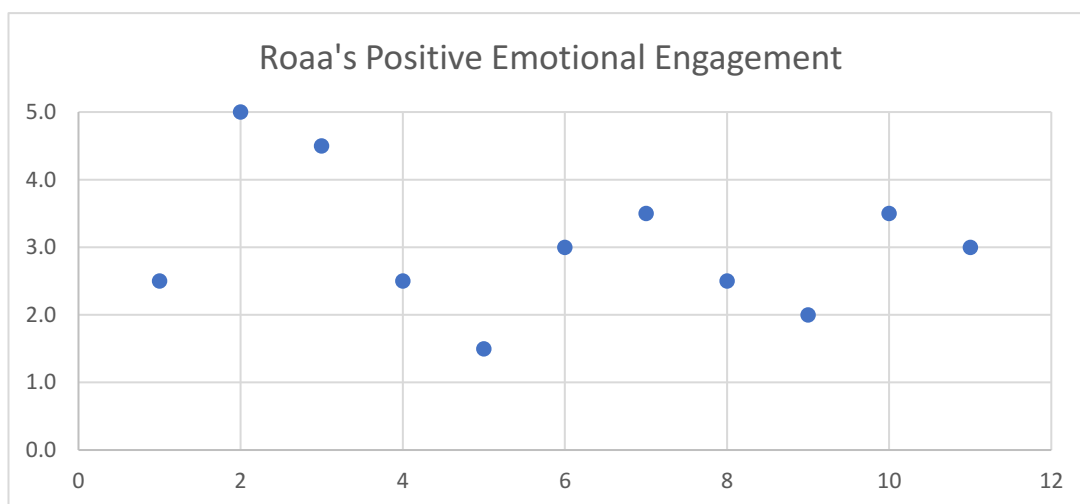


Figure 62 Roa's Positive Emotional Engagement

'The experience was good; however, I couldn't eliminate my fear and worry about my ability to continue studying at SEU. I know for a fact that my English level was not good enough. I should have been more prepared for the exam by finding out the right learning strategies to use' (Roaa, interview 2).

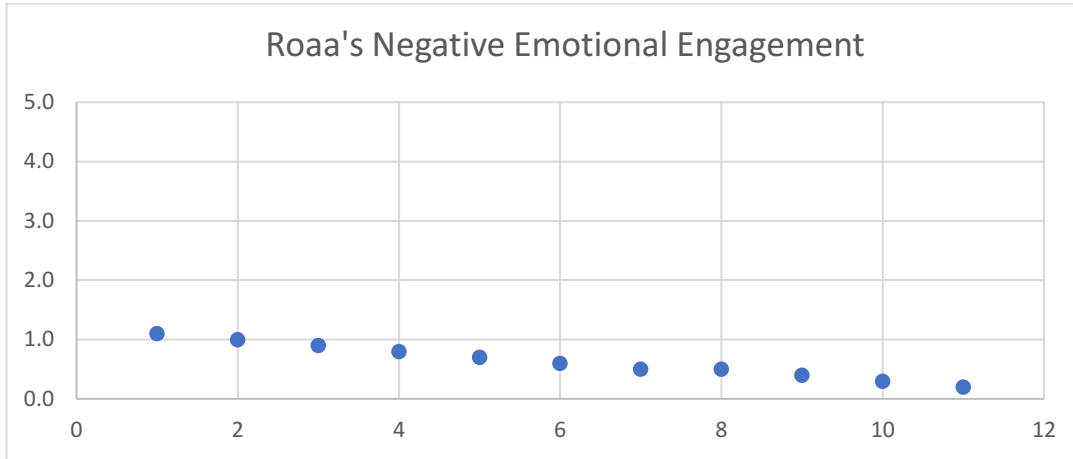


Figure 63 Roaa's Negative Emotional Engagement

Roaa found that **collaboration** with the other students on the WhatsApp group was very supportive. She was active in the social group, particularly for weeks 2, 6 and 10 (Figure 64), when she responded to enquiries and received **support** from other students.

'As busy mothers, we sometimes had situations that made it impossible for us to focus on our classes. So, we weren't always in front of our laptops. Our fellow students used to update us via the social group, so that instead of going back to the recordings, we could find out the main points of the class. We also reminded each other of assessment due dates' (Roaa, interview 2).

Also,

'It's beneficial to have this group. We share many things connected to our studies or life' (informal chat).

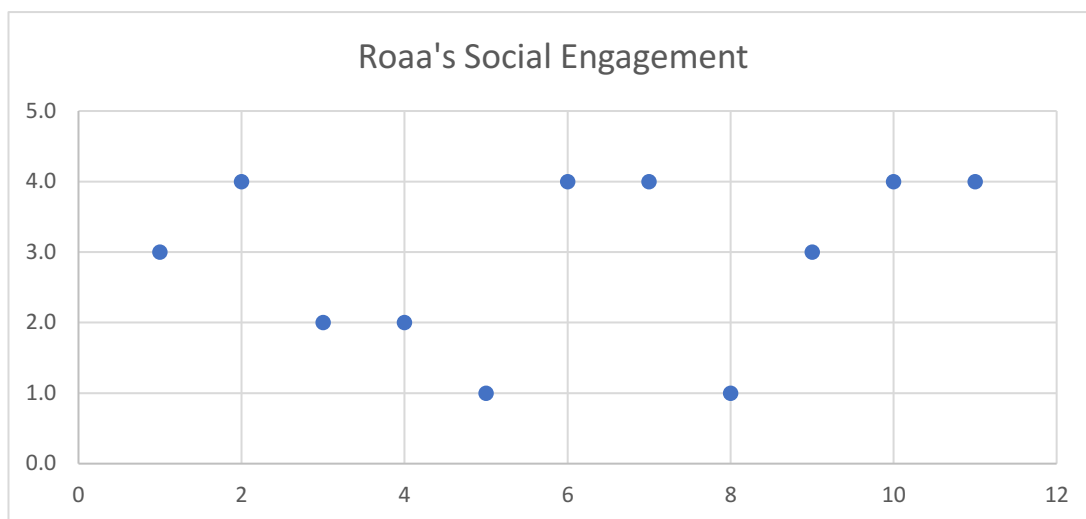


Figure 64 Roaa's Social Engagement

Roaa also revealed she had experienced a sense **of belonging** and she expressed how much she liked being on campus during the midterm exams in the first semester, as well as how happy she felt about meeting her colleagues. This coincided with her desire to study in a traditional learning environment.

'I can't describe how happy I was when I went to the university campus in the first semester for the midterm exams. I met my classmates in person there, and I felt good about the university and all the other students in my classes' (Roaa, interview 1).

Although Roaa passed the courses delivered in English, she failed the online English course, because she did not complete the online components. In addition, she also failed the entrance exam. Figure 65 shows Roaa's low level of interaction in accessing the course materials. Since Roaa was unable to progress to the next level, she was offered an extra semester to pass the English course and entrance exam. However, she did not take up this offer.

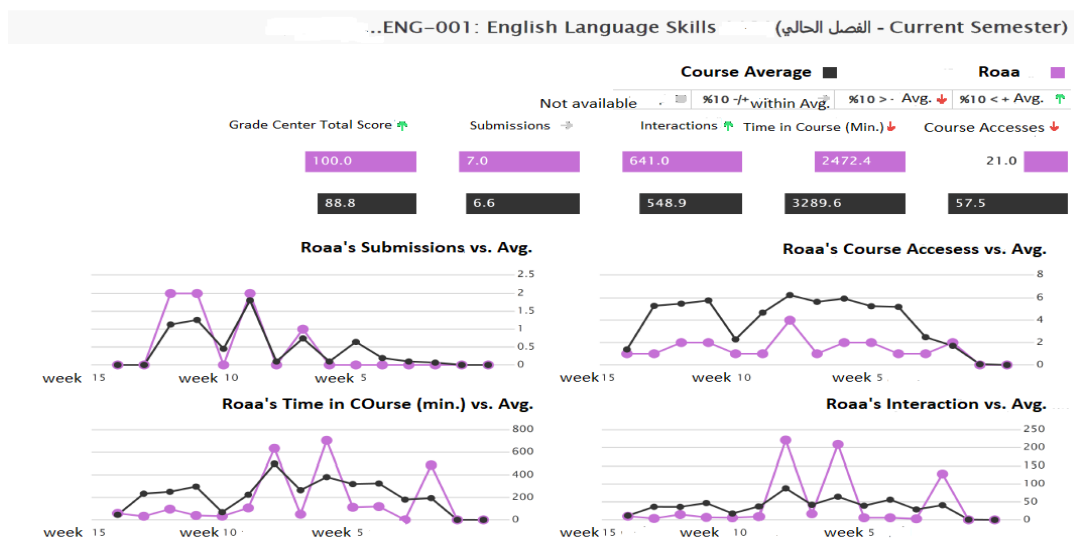


Figure 65 Roaa's Blackboard Analytics

4.5.4 Challenges affecting Roaa's Engagement

'In the first semester, the English teacher helped us overcome our shyness and not feel embarrassed if we made mistakes. Even though the class was online, she insisted that all of the students should participate and encouraged us to join in and not worry about making mistakes. She also used enthusiastic Arabic expressions to keep us motivated, despite the fact she is not an Arabic speaker. In the current semester, we had a different teacher with a completely different approach, and you can see the same students participating each class. She divided us into groups in the VC and asked us to answer the questions. Because some of us couldn't understand the instructions, we used the social group to find out whether someone else had understood' (Roaa, interview 1).

Roaa's challenges started with her inability to choose a major, as her husband insisted on interfering with her choice *'My husband wants me to choose a major that enables me to work in only all-female environments' (Roaa, interview 1)*. In addition, she lacked a **suitable learning environment** for her online classes, that is, somewhere she would not be disturbed by her children. Roaa tended to **access** her classes using her mobile phone, so that she could walk around the house and see to her children at the same time. Roaa never managed to focus exclusively on her English classes, as she was constantly being interrupted. In response to a question about her online engagement, she said:

'Online classes are about the student, and the teacher doesn't benefit. Classes are for the student's sake — the teacher is doing her job, and students shouldn't just turn their computer on and walk off. Although I'm a student, my heart is always with the teacher. Still, I have to log onto classes with my mobile, so I can move around the house and take care of my other responsibilities, such as preparing breakfast for the youngest, who needs more attention than his elder brother' (Interview 1).

Roaa's lack of sense of **self-efficacy** in English was a powerful factor that affected her engagement and led to her experiencing **negative feelings** about the entrance exam.

'I failed the maths course because it's in English, but I worried more about the entrance exam than the maths exam' (interview 2).

'I do understand the English sometimes, but I can't express my ideas. I don't feel confident about speaking, as I'm afraid of making mistakes. I know it's not bad to make mistakes, but we've been scared of making mistakes in English since our schooldays' (informal chat).

In her reflections, Roaa compared the two **teachers** who had taught her English during the academic year and concluded that she was dissatisfied with the teaching in the second semester. While the teacher in the first semester **encouraged** the students to participate in the classes, even if they made mistakes, the second teacher **threatened** that non-participation would result in being marked absent. As a result, Roaa lost interest in her English classes, even more so when she discovered they were not designed to prepare her for the entrance exam.

'I wish we had the same English teacher who taught us in the first semester. I was engaging in classes because I liked them, unlike now. The teacher had a flexible attitude and encouraged us to participate regularly, she helped us to read, and we weren't afraid of making mistakes. She reviewed our assignments and gave us some helpful feedback. This semester, we have a different teacher with a different approach. I much prefer the VCs' (Roaa, interview 1).

Moreover, Roaa disliked being threatened by the English teacher, as she is a mature learner with many other responsibilities and is aware of the commitment needed for online courses.

'I need the teacher to be in front of me if I'm to have a chance of understanding her English. Still, I found that learning in an online environment is definitely possible if you have a teacher who understands your position as a mother with young kids' (interview 2).

One day, in week 5, Roaa, full of enthusiasm, logged on to one of the F2F English classes and waited for the teacher. Rather daringly, she shared in the students' chat box in Arabic that she was a bit afraid of the teacher (Figure 66). Later, in the break, she wrote in the chat box in Arabic again, asking her classmates about something that was not relevant to the lesson. The teacher then informed the students that she had checked everything they had written in Google Translate and asked them to write in English (Figure 67). Roaa was upset by the teacher checking up on their conversations during the break, and she and the other students began to chat via WhatsApp

Chapter 4

about how aggressive their new teacher was. Roaa much preferred the VCs to the F2F classes, due to the teacher's approach:

'I find the VCs more valuable than the long F2F classes, as I can understand more in these classes. Also, the timing of these classes suits me, unlike the morning ones, although I might be more interested if these long classes were on campus' (interview 1).

Chat	
The participant يمه جات	00:13
The participant Wow, it's beautiful and relax 😊	01:10
A student good morning	01:14
A student good morning	01:23
A student Good morning	01:25
The participant Good morning ❤️	01:26
The teacher Good morning, can you hear me?	01:27

Figure 66 Roaa's engagement in Class Chat Box

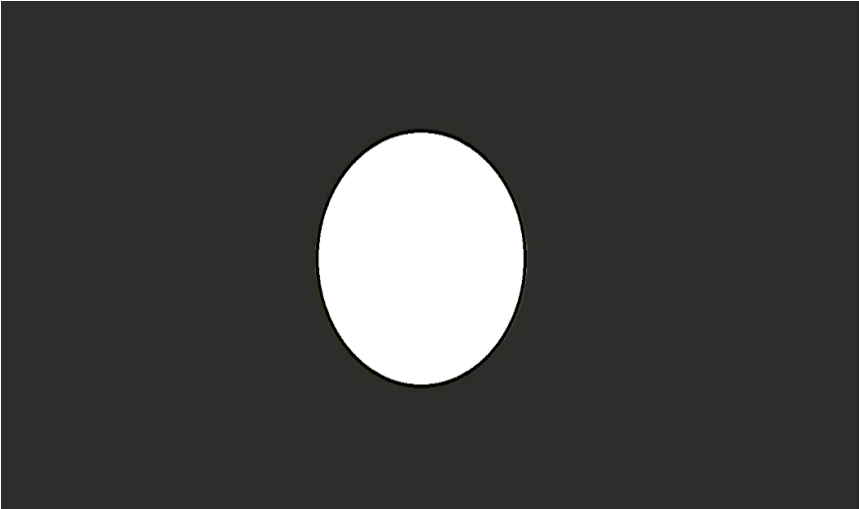
	The teacher 10.10am	01:00:06
	Student 1 Ok thank you	01:00:53
	Student 2 هلك لفضل زيود لشي ولا جا ؟	01:04:09
	The participant جا	01:04:23
	Student 3 لا جا خليفه	01:04:24
	Sudent 3 لشي باقي	01:04:29
	The participant شخباري زيود	01:04:35
	The participant 😂😂	01:04:41
	The teacher English please	01:04:45

Figure 67 Teacher's Response to Roaa and her colleagues in break time

Roaa often compared the two teachers:

'The teacher in the first semester had a better approach to teaching, and we were excited in her English classes. She gave us her number and joined us in the social group. She also encouraged us to turn on the microphone and participate with her. She inspired us to write and give feedback before submission. We missed all this kind of engagement in the second

semester. The classes weren't as exciting or fun as in the first semester' (Roaa, informal chat).

When the F2F teacher eventually became friendlier towards the end of the second semester, her change in attitude encouraged Roaa to focus and engage more.

'The F2F teacher has started to smile and joke with us, which has made me focus more on her classes and pay more attention' (Roaa, Informal chat).

The matter became more complicated for her when the university policy of video **recording exams** came into effect. She knew her husband would not like this, as he held **conservative views** on what was allowable for women. In the end, she was forced to lie to him to take the exams.

'I was worried about telling my husband that the final exams would be recorded during the semester, that the camera would be turned on, and I would have to uncover my face. I was afraid he might ask me to withdraw from university, and I had to convince him that only women were able to access the recordings' (interview 1).

Unfortunately, the **balancing act** was difficult for her, as she lived far from the rest of her family and had financial problems, which affected her learning as well as her **emotional well-being**. Her youngest child needed a lot of attention, and this too may have affected her engagement.

'My youngest son is very attached to me; he follows me everywhere I go and sits beside me during my classes. My husband works different shifts and so he can't take care of the kids when I have classes. I have no one to help me. I wish I lived closer to my family, who would at least help look after the kids when I have classes or exams' (Roaa, interview 2).

For Roaa, the **Covid** lockdowns brought advantages and disadvantages *'If the classes had been on campus, I would have had to find childcare places for the kids. Shifting to OL during the pandemic saved me a fortune' (Roaa, interview 1).* However, she also said *'the negative thing is that we are in front of the screen for long hours, which affects our health' (Roaa interview 1).*

4.6 Mona: Will my Work be Supportive Next Year?

4.6.1 Mona's Profile

Mona was a 22-year-old single student and a full-time employee when she joined SEU. She had had two gap years after high school, during which time she gained a diploma in computer science. For that diploma, Mona had completed an English course that was similar to the one at SEU but without the online component. She realised that experience was not enough, and that she

needed a bachelor's degree at least. Thus, Mona decided to pursue a degree in business administration to secure a better economic future for herself. Mona chose SEU because of the flexible blended learning system, and she had faith that the university would support her in starting her own business.

Mona's parents had primary and secondary education, and all of her siblings were well-educated with bachelor's degrees or postgraduate degrees. Mona had been accepted into medical school; however, she realised that she *'could not bear to look after injured people'*. Mona also valued living with her family and preferred not to study away from home.

Mona described herself as an excellent student, often setting high academic expectations for herself. Unlike other students who were studying IT, maths, and study skills, Mona was only required to take the online English course, as her diploma counted towards the university entrance requirements. She counted herself lucky to only have to do the English course and no final exams, as it meant she did not need to request leave from work.

4.6.2 Motivation in OL

When I talked to Mona and interviewed her, I discovered that she **liked** English and was **interested** in joining SEU to develop her language skills. Mona was the only participant in this study who was simply studying the online English course, and she could drop it once she had passed the entrance exam. Looking at her motivational goals responses, Mona' goals in the first survey were different to the second (Figures 68, 69, 70 & 71), as her **mastery goals** increased due to her ability to prove her competence in English.

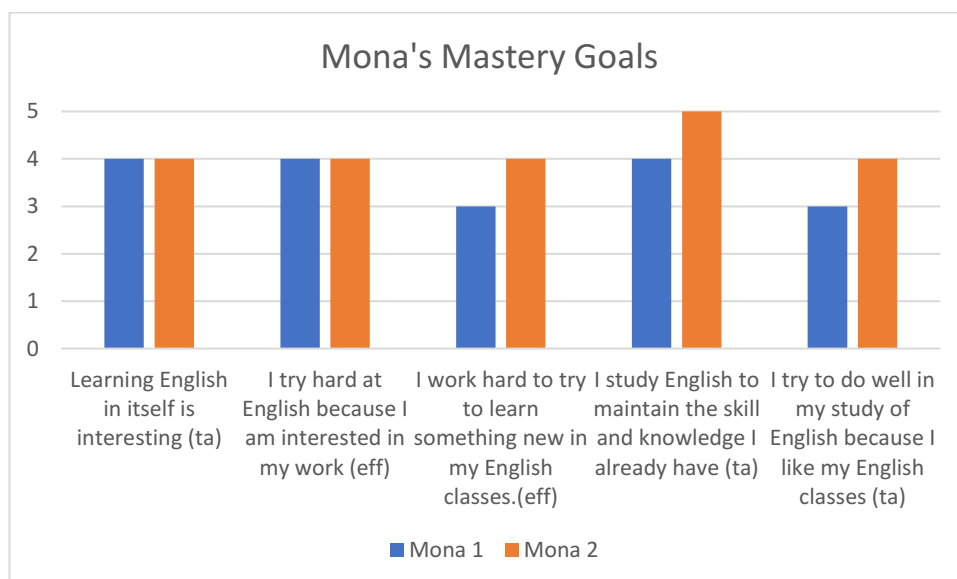


Figure 68 Mona's Mastery Goals

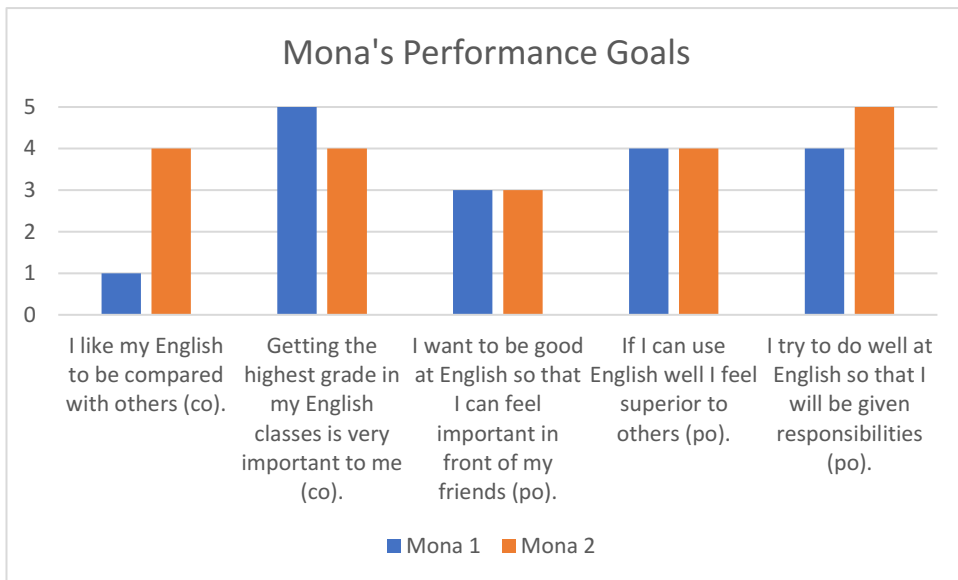


Figure 69 Mona's Performance Goals

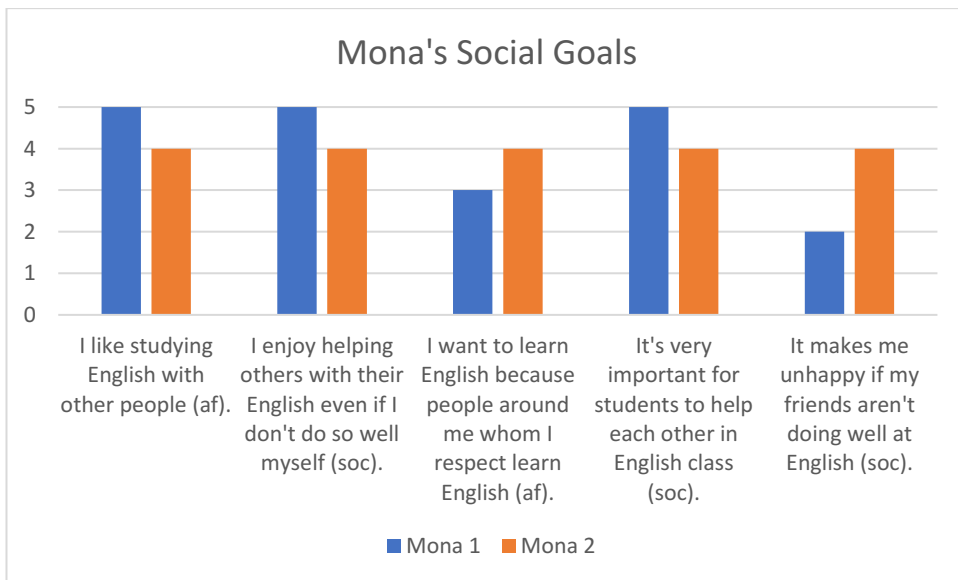


Figure 70 Mona's Social Goals

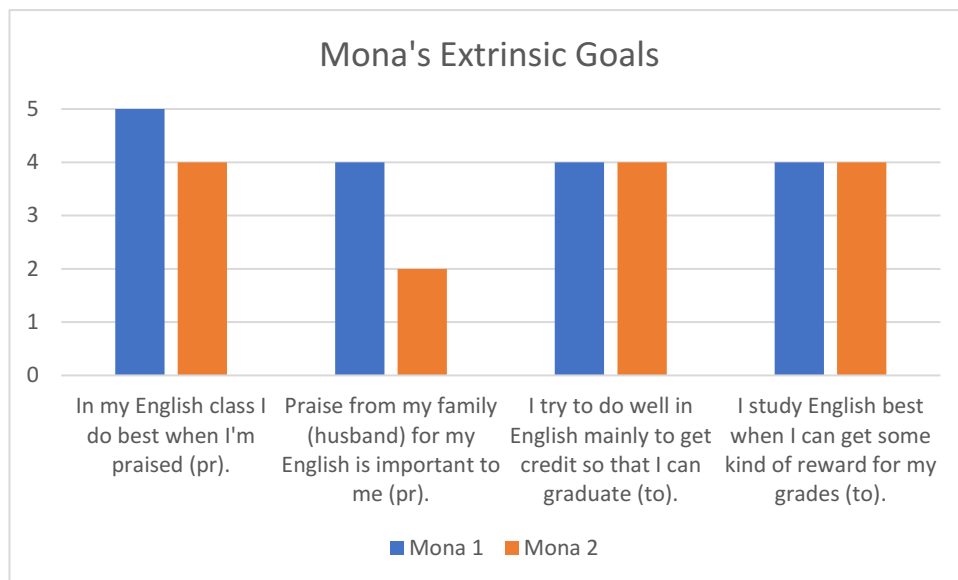


Figure 71 Mona's Extrinsic Goals

Regarding her competence, Mona was the only participant who talked about the joy she felt in devoting her efforts to English language-learning activities.

'I like working on assessments, as I find them focused and not complicated. Our English F2F teacher was cooperative and supportive, and she guided and revised our written work and gave us feedback before the due dates' (Mona, interview 1).

In the first interview, Mona pointed out that the English content was similar to what she had previously learned during her diploma and that she was not highly motivated to learn English in the first semester. However, she became more interested in learning English in the second semester, when there was new content to explore and the scope to develop new language skills. Even once she had passed the entrance exam, Mona's interest in learning English motivated her to continue attending online classes, doing assessments and receiving constructive feedback from her tutors.

'I like learning English and want to practise it in a learning community, as I don't have anywhere else to do it. The curriculum is similar to what I studied in my diploma. However, in the second semester, I found the content more challenging, and I decided to continue learning English at SEU, even when I had the chance to drop it after passing the entrance exam' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona had a clear vision of her goals and future. Unlike the other participants, she knew what she wanted to major in and had set her goals accordingly.

'I was accepted on different courses in medicine at another university and health informatics at SEU. However, I never felt like that was what I was interested in, so I chose business administration because it's more in line with my interests' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona compared the learning content of her English classes at high school with those at university in SA, contrasting the lower-level language courses at school with the more intense English course at SEU.

'I think I started learning English properly at university because what we did at high school was not really learning the language' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona reflected on her **sense of purpose** regarding the importance of English for her future, as Figure 72 shows. Her responses to the items in both surveys remained the same, with her mostly strongly agreeing with item 5, which asks whether it is natural for Saudi people to learn English to some degree. This might be related to the fact that she had passed the entrance exam and there were no further burdens on her to study at SEU.

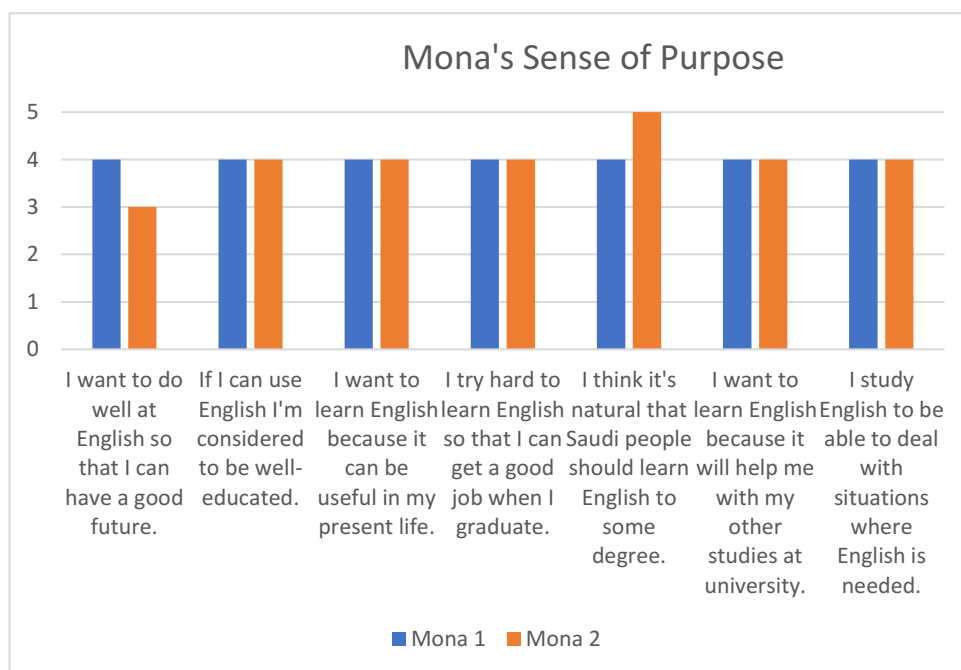


Figure 72 Mona's Sense of Purpose

Mona was upbeat and confident about her ability (**sense of self-reliance**) to study English (Figure 73). As English is considered a prestigious language for Saudis to speak, Mona was careful about using it in public in case people thought she was showing off.

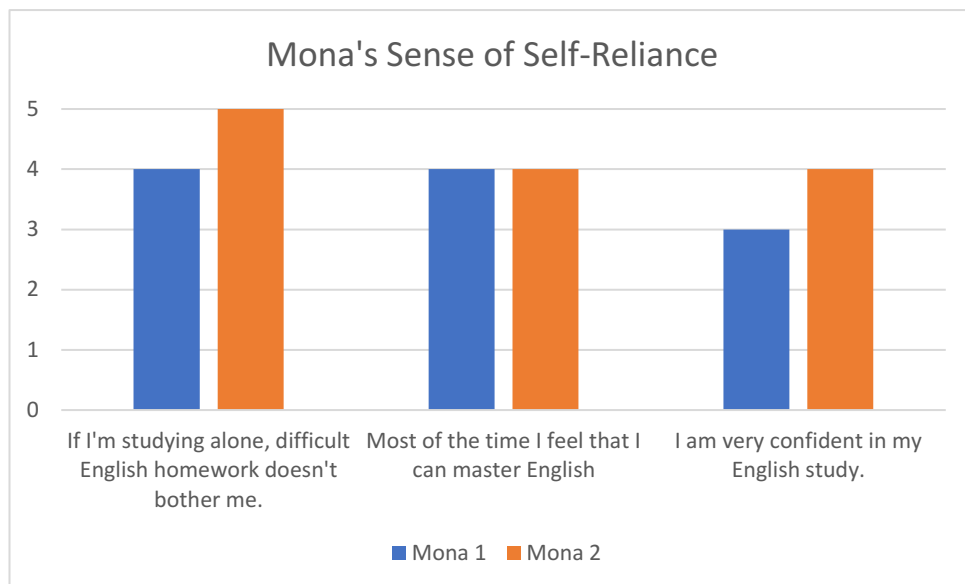


Figure 73 Mona’s Sense of Self-Reliance

Mona expressed uncertainty in her responses to the **self-concept** items, despite being self-reliant when learning English and responding positively about her performance in her English classes (Figure 74). Her uncertainty could have been related to her fear of the future, as although she was not studying any other modules that year, she was worried about the next academic year, as there would be a lot more on her timetable.

‘I’m worried that this is the calm before the storm. I was lucky this year, as I have no finals and only have my English course that I have taken as an option to practise my English skills and refresh my memory. I’m scared about the coming year because, at work, they’ve started to take a hard line with those of us who need time off because of our studies and to take our finals’ (Mona, interview 2).

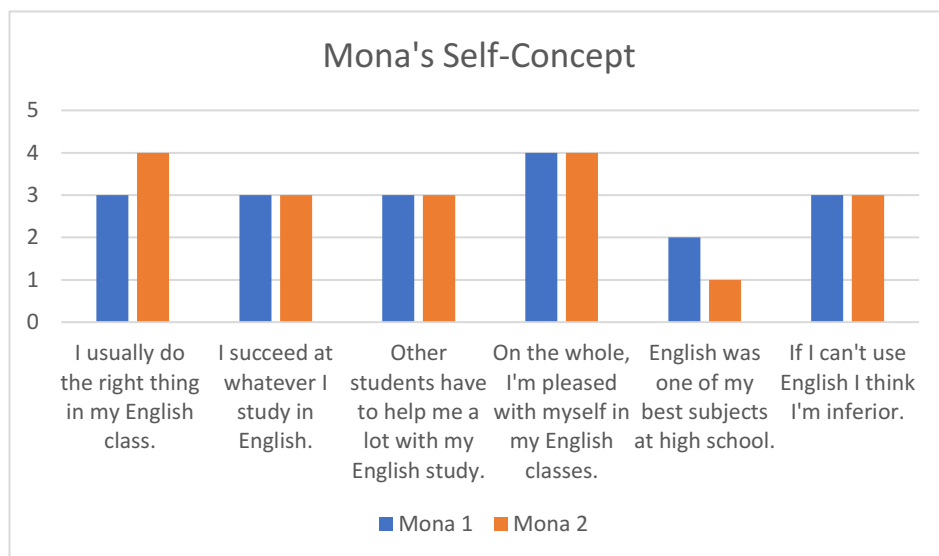


Figure 74 Mona’s Self-Concept

Mona's **self-concept** when learning English had shifted from negative to positive. However, she did not want others to judge her negatively for using English in an Arabic-speaking country.

'I've had a bad relationship with learning English because we had no language teaching at high school. I felt terrible when I realised I couldn't understand English speakers. On the diploma course, I noticed that I was starting to learn English and I felt delighted to be able to understand people using the language around me. However, I'm very cautious about practising my English in public, as I'm scared that some people might think I'm doing it as a status symbol or to show off: 'Look at me, I'm speaking English'' (Mona, interview 1).

4.6.3 Engagement in OL

'This has been an exciting and pleasurable experience where I've proved to myself and others that I can manage my commitments and study simultaneously. I'm proud of myself for passing this online course, and I look forward to experiencing blended learning soon' (Mona, interview 2).

Mona was the only student who explained what engagement meant to her, and she stressed the emotional aspects that influenced her engagement and her attitudes toward classes.

'Engagement includes many aspects, such as focusing on classes with no distractions. Even being silent in class can be categorised as engagement because facial expressions can reflect engagement. I also think emotions come under engagement; for example, I'm not interested in classes where the teacher expresses her boredom or a negative attitude. A teacher's facial expressions send a message to encourage me to be engaged in the class or not. A teacher who shouts and reflects an aggressive attitude discourages her students from being involved in the class, as they feel uncomfortable' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona was an **autonomous** learner who took responsibility for her learning and worked hard to manage her time and skills effectively *'OL enabled me to work and study without the trouble of being late; it was flexible, and I enjoyed learning'* (interview 2). Mona self-reported for 13 classes, 7 VCs and 6 F2F classes; 7 were accessed from home, while 6 were accessed from her workplace. Mona's **cognitive and behavioural engagement** fluctuated during the semester, as shown in the Figure 75 and Figure 76 below. However, when she **accessed** classes from her workplace, she had a higher level of cognitive and behavioural engagement (weeks 2, 5, 8 and 13). In contrast, her engagement in the VCs in weeks 1, 4, 7, 9 and 11 were not as high as in her F2F classes in weeks 2, 5, 8 and 13.

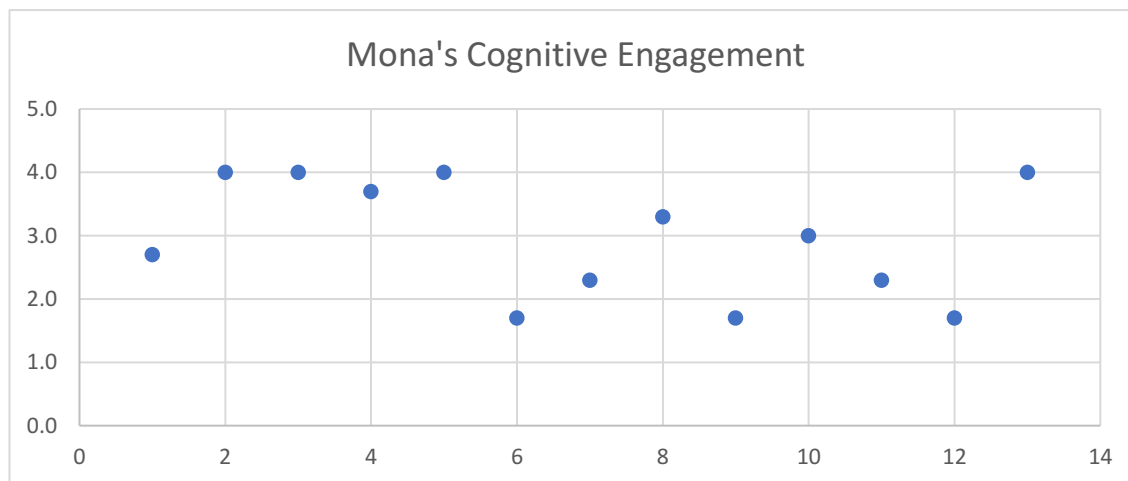


Figure 75 Mona’s Cognitive Engagement

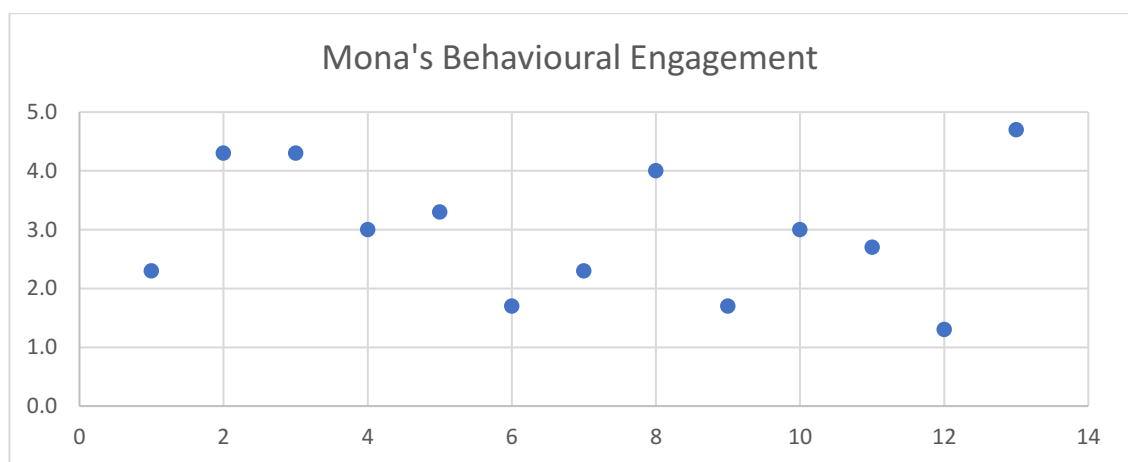


Figure 76 Mona’s Behavioural Engagement

The fluctuations could be related to Mona’s preference for F2F classes over VCs. In the interviews, she compared the teaching practices of both styles and highlighted her preference for her F2F teacher.

‘I’m pretty sure that, from the observations, you’ve noticed that no one in the VCs teaches us in the same way as the F2F teacher. Unlike the other teachers, Mrs. (teacher’s name) shows us her interest in the class. We don’t care if we make mistakes because we want to show her that we are also interested in her class’ (Mona, interview 2).

Fluctuations could also be related to Mona’s commitment and ability to **manage her work and study**. Although Mona accessed some of her classes from her workplace, she seized every opportunity to **participate**, despite her being unable to change her work schedule.

‘I work in customer services and respond to enquiries via the chat box or on the phone, so I have to take off my headset connected to my English classes and reply to customers. Once

I finish, I go directly to the class and do my best to participate and make up for lost time. I also participate on my way home in the presence of the driver' (Mona, interview 1).

Given her **responsibilities and work commitments**, Mona felt optimistic about OL and accessing **class recordings** to improve her comprehension. She preferred to learn by herself rather than ask the social group for clarification.

'I didn't believe in OL, and I never bothered opening whatever ads I received for online courses. I had the belief that online classes were useless. However, this OL experience has changed my mind, and I realised how useful it is and how suited to my current situation at work it was. Moreover, I was interested in returning to the recorded classes' (Mona, interview 2).

'I'm interested in accessing and listening to the recordings. This helps me check my understanding and supports my learning in some cases, for example, when I'm busy at work and not paying attention to the ongoing classes, when the teacher speaks fast, or even when we have terrible internet connection in our area' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona's cognitive and behavioural engagement was affected by **turning the camera on**. Mona liked to see the teacher; however, she pointed out that the teacher's attitude was reflected in her facial expressions and described how this influenced her engagement.

'When teachers turn their cameras on, it's a kind of improvement. However, sometimes you want to tell them to turn their camera off because they look so bored and uninterested in the class. I am a social person. When the teachers turned their cameras on, I was happy to see them, but some kept looking at the time and didn't allow the students to participate. So, [in general], I prefer them to turn the camera off, as those classes aren't interesting to me if I can see that teacher isn't interested (interview 1).

During her English course, Mona **transferred** her prior knowledge to a new learning context and was actively engaged in the classes with the teacher she liked. Unlike during her previous course, she was motivated, brushing up on existing skills, improving her written English, and actively participating participated in the online activities. Indeed, Mona valued the teacher's feedback in developing her writing skills.

'We had a similar syllabus at a different university where they used a different delivery mode. What I liked about SEU was that I developed my English essay writing using SafeAssign. My first online experience was exciting. Although I thought I wasn't learning anything new at the second level, I discovered I was. I liked all of the English exercises.

However, I most wanted to practise writing English essays. I tried to finish the essays before the due dates, to enable me to receive feedback from the teacher that helped me improve my writing’ (Mona, interview 2).

As she engaged with the classes, activities, and assessments, Mona highlighted the effectiveness of the **English curriculum** at SEU in developing her language skills, including the feedback the teacher gave her.

‘The syllabus is good. I have friends at other universities who are studying the same kind of course content but they don’t do the extra activities that we do at SEU. I like the fact SEU requires us to do online activities that support our learning’ (Mona, interview 2).

Despite Mona’s active involvement in her English classes, she experienced **negative emotions** which was declined over time, (Figure 77), after she found support.

‘I was also afraid and worried about F2F classes on Mondays, which overlapped with my working hours. These feelings disappeared when my employers cooperated by being flexible about my hours on that day. Also, I was initially afraid of the teacher because I didn’t understand her approach, but this vanished once I found her to be friendly’ (Mona, interview 1).

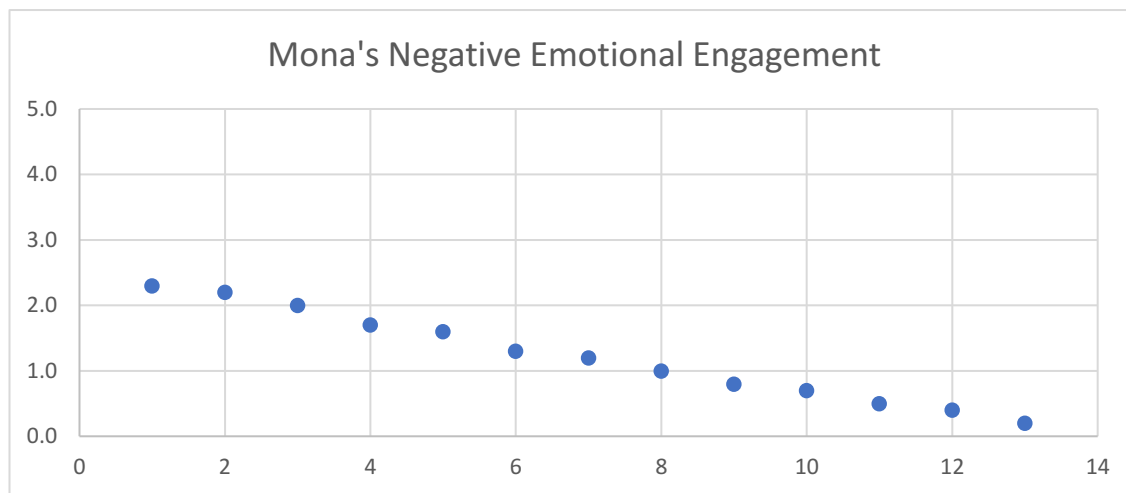


Figure 77 Mona’s Negative Emotional Engagement

Her positive emotional engagement fluctuated, despite her overall satisfaction with her learning experience (Figure 78), possibly because some of her classes took place during work hours.

‘I’m happy and proud that I can manage my studies and work by organising my time. I always set my calendar to mark all my due dates. To avoid problems, I avoid leaving assignments to the last minute. I give myself two weeks before the submission date for

revision. I try to be a responsible student at university and not wait for the teacher to remind me to submit assignments' (Mona, interview 1).

Her positive emotions might also have been connected to the fact that Mona was **confident** about her ability in English. She passed the entrance exam on her first attempt, perhaps partly because the English course was the only one she was taking that year and there was no additional **workload** from other courses.

'By completing the course, I'm now able to use English confidently and express my ideas to other English speakers. I was lucky to get an excellent score on the entrance exam the first time because I wasn't planning to repeat this stressful experience' (Mona, interview 2).

'I found a channel on YouTube that posted a plan for exam preparation, starting with the basic rules, but these were no help for the exams' (Mona, interview 2).

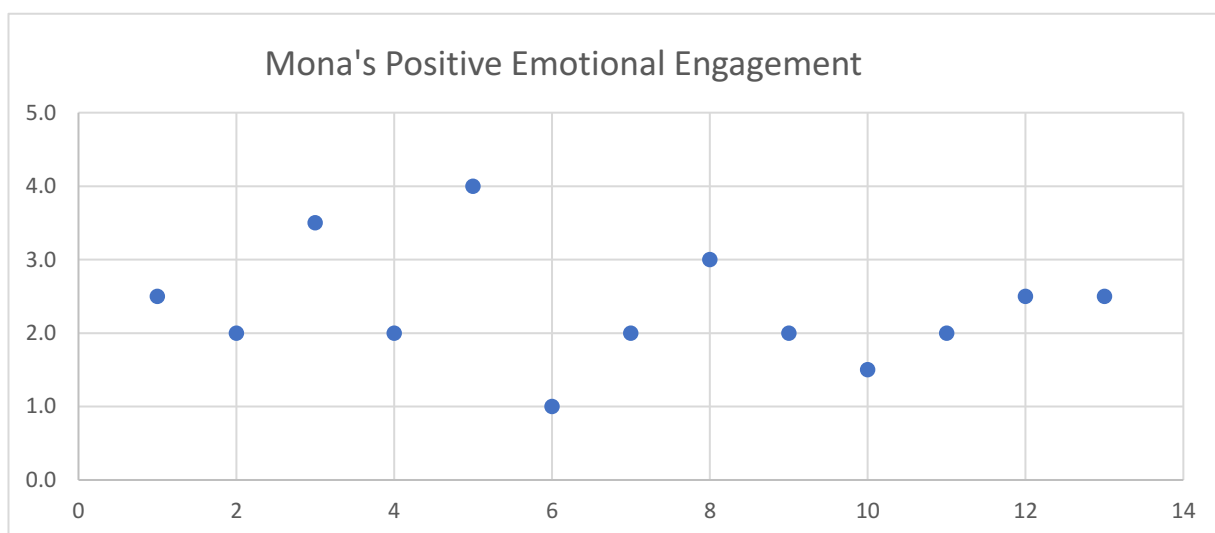


Figure 78 Mona's Positive Emotional Engagement

Mona respected her F2F English **teacher** and felt that her rather intimidating approach was an attempt to engage students and help them improve:

'I have never seen a teacher so keen on students' learning and improvement as the F2F teacher. She works hard to teach us and I appreciate her [efforts]' (Mona, interview 1).

Mona built **good relationships** with the other students, and as two of them also had jobs, and as no-one could meet up during the lockdowns, they all communicated by text and WhatsApp. She **collaborated** with her classmates and used the social group to check what she had missed if she was busy at home or work. She also **supported** other students when they asked for clarification of group assignments and instructions. In week 5, she showed the highest average in terms of her

social engagement (Figure 79), which was probably because this was when she worked collaboratively with her group on their week 7 presentation.

‘It’s nice to find cooperative students who understand your commitments and agree to meet online, as some of us have jobs. We managed to plan, rehearse and present according to the time slots convenient for those who work’ (Mona, interview 2).

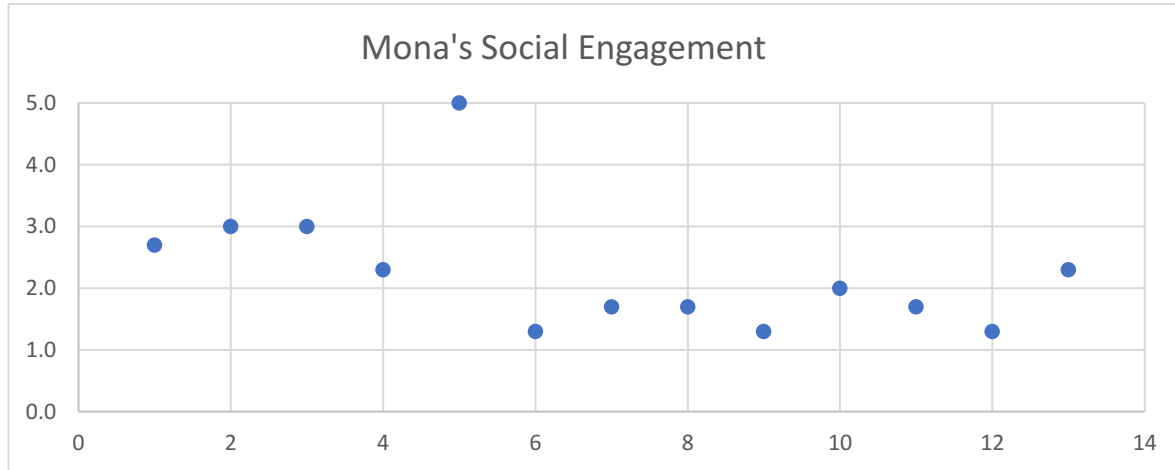


Figure 79 Mona’s Social Engagement

For Mona, the **social group** was an essential part of the OL experience:

‘We have a WhatsApp group to connect us students, but our teacher isn’t a member. Without this group, we’d all be lost’ (Mona, interview 2).

She elaborated:

‘All of the group members are cooperative. If I have difficulty understanding something, I ask them, and they help. At the beginning of the semester, not all of the students were familiar with the system. We supported each other in finding solutions and explaining things to each other, especially when we had internet problems’ (Mona, interview 2).

As well as the clear advantages of the social group for helping students to engage with the course content, Mona also acknowledged its downsides:

‘The bad things about the social group were that there was a lot of random, trivial stuff posted that had nothing to do with the course, and there could be negative vibes sometimes. In the end, I turned off the notifications and stopped checking it regularly for new posts’ (Mona, interview 2).

The Blackboard analytics (Figure 80) showed that Mona outperformed her classmates in terms of course access, time spent on the course and grades, although not in submissions and interactions, a fact that was obvious from the in-class observations.

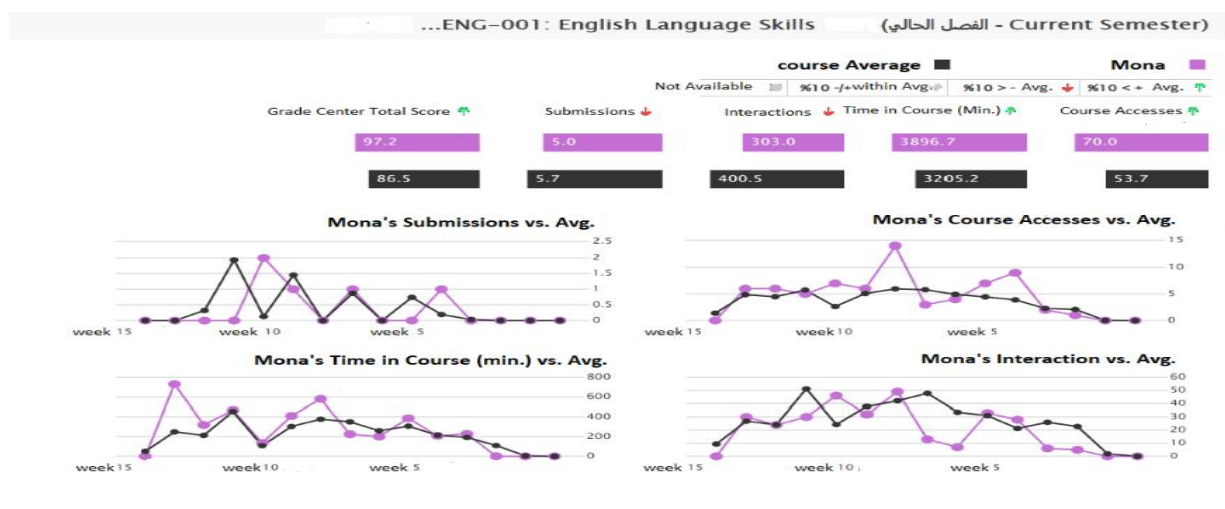


Figure 80 Mona's Blackboard Analytics

4.6.4 Challenges affecting Mona's Engagement

'I'm excited about next year, but anxious too. My workplace was so supportive this year, and I didn't need to ask for days off to study for the finals, as there's no final exam on the English course. However, I saw how they acted with a colleague who was also studying, and they were very strict in dealing with this person regarding how much time off she needed. This makes me worried about the future, as I have a lot of modules next year, and right now, they've stopped hiring people who are also studying.' (Mona, interview 2)

Mona's job supported her elderly parents and disabled brother. As well as going to work, Mona cleaned the house, cooked meals, and checked on her parents and her brother every night before starting her English coursework. Mona's challenges started with her father, who was sceptical and annoyed that his daughter wanted to go to university. He could not understand why, since, in his opinion, she already had a diploma and a good job, and he constantly **nagged and criticised** her for taking this step-in life. Naturally, Mona was troubled by her father's negativity, especially as she was fitting in her studies around caring for her parents and her brother.

'The only thing that made me consider whether or not to continue at university was my dad being so critical and negative, because it upset me. Whenever he saw me studying, he went on and on at me for returning to university and told me it was ridiculous because I was working and didn't need to study. Sometimes I was affected by his words and asked myself, am I right to come back to studying? But then I thought about my brother and my mum and I insisted on continuing my studies' (Mona, interview 1).

Chapter 4

Although Mona did not let her father's views affect her motivation, her level of engagement wavered whenever she thought about it and/or was under work stress, which affected her emotionally. Overall, she believed in the importance of pursuing an undergraduate degree to compete in the job market. The gap in thinking between the two generations annoyed Mona, who was looking for support from her family. Although her father was not supportive, Mona's mother and elder brother were a source of strength that enabled her to ignore her father's negative comments.

Engaging in online classes during work hours sometimes proved challenging to the participants with jobs, especially if they were highly interested in English, as Mona was. Mona was lucky to only be on an English course, as she already had the equivalent foundation-level qualifications. This gave her the flexibility to access her online classes from her workplace.

Although she passed the entrance exam, joining the English course was a suitable pathway for her to practise her English in a formal environment and with native-English teachers. At the beginning of the year, Mona was frightened of her English teacher, because she was unfamiliar with her teaching approach. When she understood how strongly the teacher felt about helping students to improve, she began to respect her more and preferred the F2F online courses to the one-hour VCs. This view was the opposite to Roaa's, as the latter did not find her F2F teacher understanding and supportive.

'The teachers in the VCs don't want you to make mistakes, but how do you get learners to participate with that kind of pressure? I like the F2F teacher, because she encourages us to participate whatever our level' (Mona, interview 2).

'I wouldn't say I liked the VCs; you could see that teacher wasn't interested in the class, which affected me as a learner, because I only feel like joining in if the teacher shows they're interested in teaching' (Mona, informal chat).

Another conflict Mona experienced which caused frustration *'is when the teacher calls on me to participate, and I can't because either my boss is hanging around or I'm in the middle of something and can't leave it' (Mona, interview 2)*. Although the university aimed to support employed students by having flexible timetables, Mona could not *'change my schedule to have classes in the evenings instead, as the uni wouldn't let me. Being at work sometimes didn't allow me to engage in my classes, as I had to finish what I was doing while simultaneously listening to online classes' (Mona, informal chat)*. On the other hand, Mona's teacher and her boss supported her to continue with her studies.

Although she had her bosses' approval to access her classes from her workplace, Mona had a conflict. She liked being an active student, but when accessing her classes from the workplace, she could not always participate as much as she wanted to, as she also had to focus on her work. One day, Mona could not respond to the teacher's call because her boss was in the office. It was no surprise she came to like the English teacher, as she completely understood Mona's difficulties in participating during work hours.

4.7 Warda: Building Social Friendships through her Studies

4.7.1 Warda's Profile

Warda is a 19-year-old single student living with her mother. She was the youngest member of her family and the last to study at university, with her elder siblings having already earned bachelor's degrees. She had a one-year gap after high school, as she did not get any university offers. Warda and her family were registered with social security, and she worked full-time in a café with only one day off a week to help her mother after her father had passed away. Her work meant a great deal to her, so Warda did not risk quitting her job in order to study during that year. She had considered many solutions, and SEU seemed like her best alternative.

Warda had been very excited to find out about SEU and the blended learning programmes, and she explained how business administration was very much in line with her character. Warda chose this major because, as she explained, she *'had a passion for it'*. As a student, Warda described herself as someone who knew what she wanted. She actively sought an in-depth understanding of all the courses she took and achieved high grades in all of her modules at FCY.

4.7.2 Motivation in OL

Warda, the youngest participant, had different motivational goals than the others, and was focused on mastery. Figure 81, Figure 82 and Figure 83 show that her motivational goals (performance, extrinsic and social goals) were high, albeit with slight variations in both surveys while her mastery goals were high in both surveys (Figure 84). This may have been because Warda had **chosen a major** that she liked, was highly motivated to progress from the FCY to a full degree course and was aware of her **passion** for learning.

'I'm interested in learning this subject (business administration) because I like it, and I took many courses before joining SEU to expand my knowledge in the field' (Warda, interview 1).

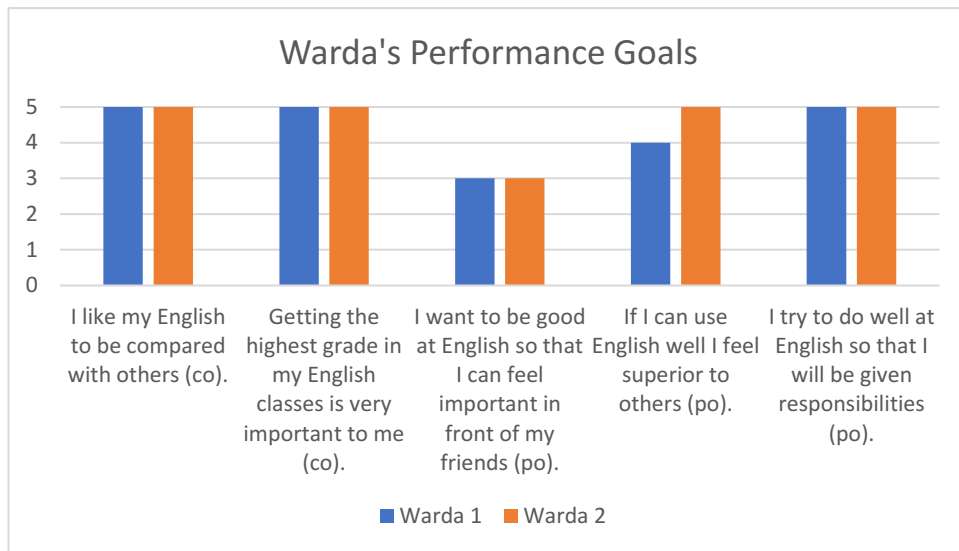


Figure 81 Warda's Performance Goals

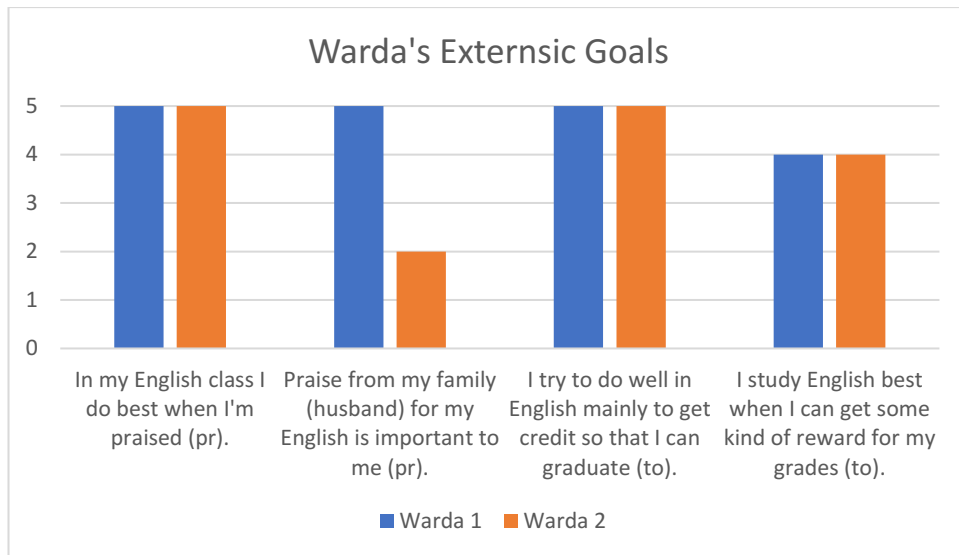


Figure 82 Warda's Extrinsic Goals

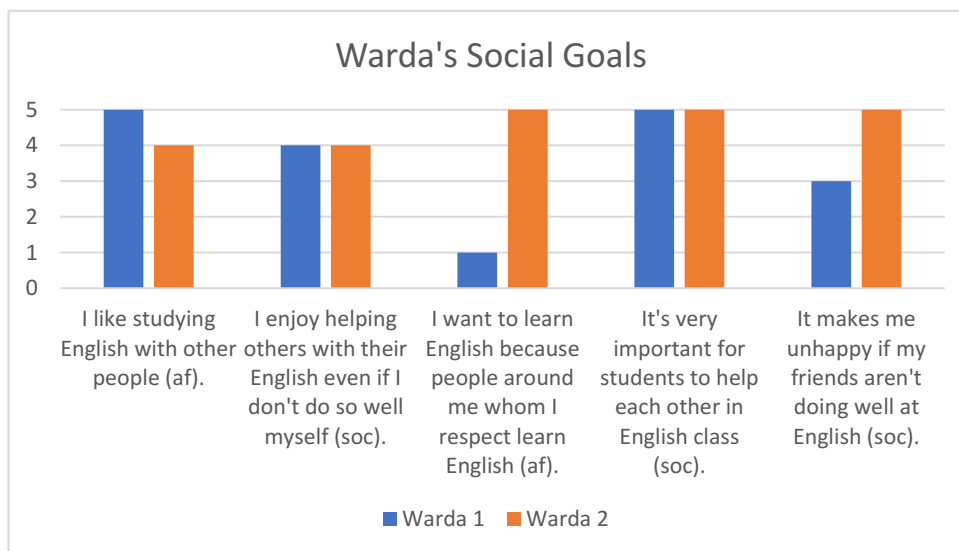


Figure 83 Warda's Social Goals



Figure 84 Warda's Mastery Goals

Warda rated her **social goals** more highly in survey 2. This can be seen in her desire to build a social connection with her English teacher, who was a native speaker. In one of the class observations, Warda seemed pleased to have a conversation with her English teacher, which reflected her interest in learning languages. She had been inspired by her father, who spoke many languages. She reflected that her negative attitude towards English had shifted to a positive one due to her **admiration** of her father, who inspired her to learn English and may justify the increase in her positive response to item 4 in survey 2.

'I didn't like English when I was in middle school. But I remember once, when I came home from school, I heard my father speaking English on a business call (he speaks seven languages, by the way). I stared at him because I couldn't understand a word he was saying. This was a pivotal moment in my life, as I wanted to be like him, to learn as many languages as possible, and have friends worldwide (Warda, interview 1).

Warda acknowledged the importance of English (Figure 85) for her future career and academia. Being a barista in a café, she was the only participant who had the chance to use English in her work.

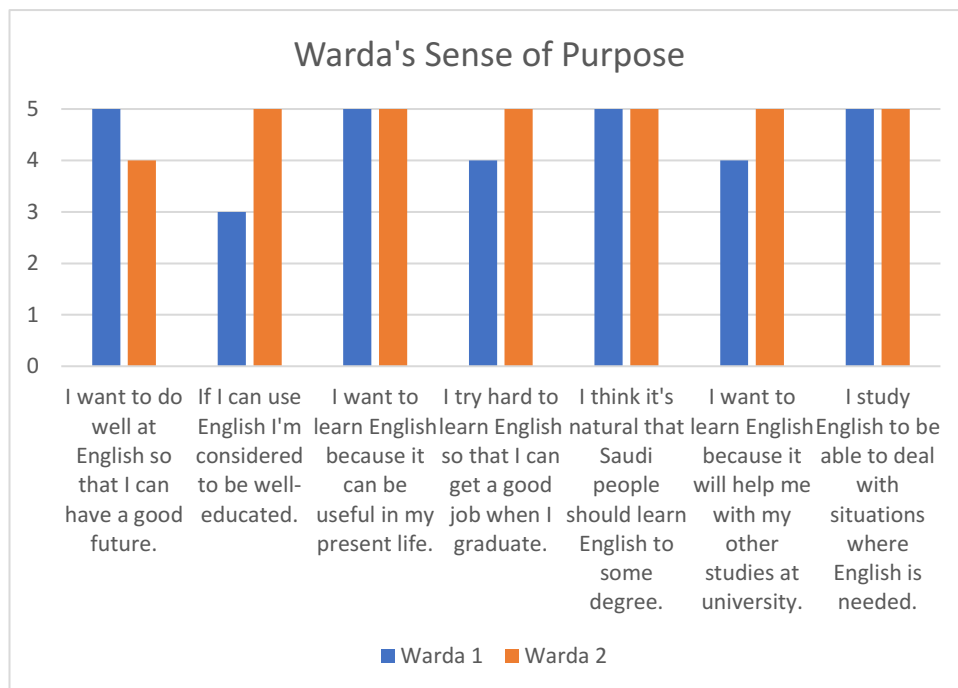


Figure 85 Warda’s Sense of Purpose

Warda was **confident** and optimistic about her ability to learn English, as Figure 86 shows. Although Warda, as the other participants, had begun learning English at school, where Arabic was the language of instruction, she did not experience L2 anxiety or feel shy about making mistakes. In contrast, her conversation with her English teacher reflected her confidence practising English with native speakers.

Warda was strong-minded and undeterred by her family:

‘I know what I want and how to achieve my goals, and I’m sure I can balance my studies and work commitments. So, I refused to listen to my relatives’ advice to quit my job and focus on studying’ (Warda, interview 1).

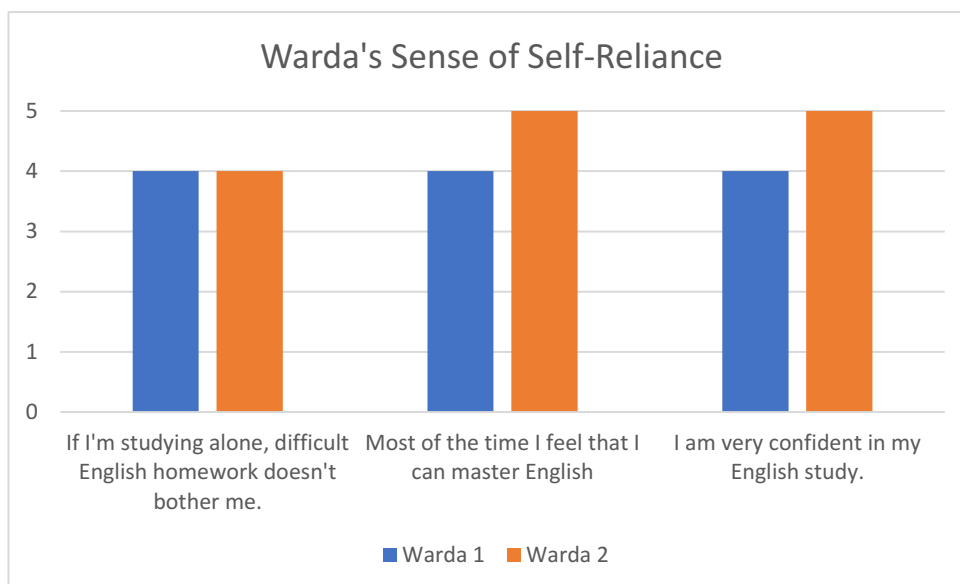


Figure 86 Warda's Sense of Self-Reliance

Warda had a positive **self-concept** about her abilities to study English at SEU, as shown in Figure 87. In our interviews, Warda did not express any negative self-concept about her ability to pass the entrance exam, and she believed that the key to passing was **good preparation**. Her self-concept increased in the second survey after she had passed the entrance exam and secured her place at university.

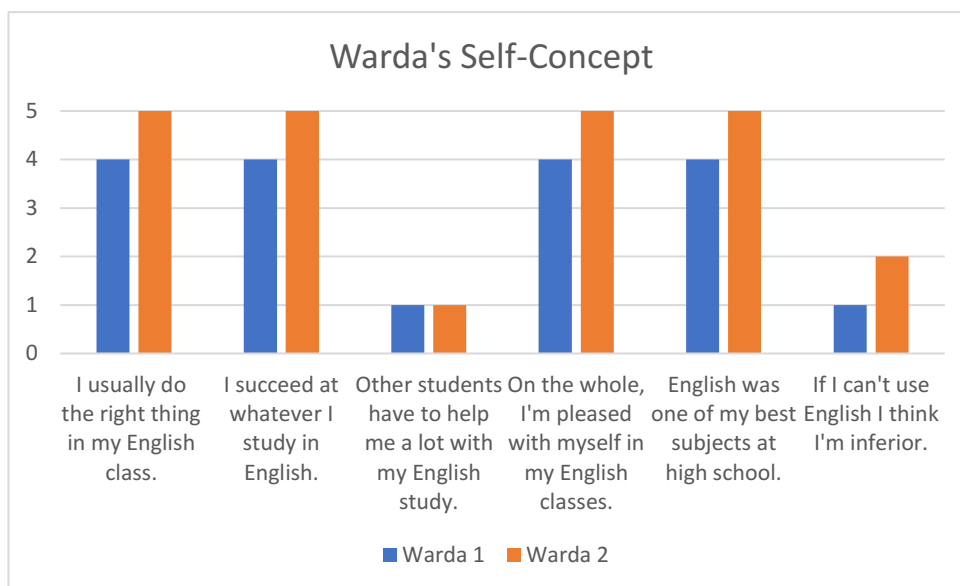


Figure 87 Warda's Self-Concept

4.7.3 Engagement in OL

'If this OL was engaging, how about BL, which will give me the sense of being on campus? I'm pleased with this experience; it's enabled me to practise my English with native speakers' (Warda, interview 2).

Warda had hated her English classes at middle and high school and used to cry a lot when she had to study or do her English homework. However, her attitude to learning English completely changed the day she returned home from school when she was at middle school, and she heard her father speak English fluently during a business call. Although she was learning English at school, she could not understand anything he said. Warda later learned that her father spoke seven languages, which amazed her and made her very proud of him. From that day on, her father started teaching her English. Like the majority of the participants, Warda defined engagement rather superficially, as mere interaction, emphasising the behavioural component.

Warda did her self-reporting assignment for seven weeks (4 VCs and 3 F2F). Four classes were accessed from home, two from her workplace and one on her way to work. Warda was one of the most engaged participants in English online classes; however, accessing online courses from the workplace prevented her from engaging fully. Although Warda reported a moderate level of **cognitive engagement** (Figure 88), observations showed that she was an active learner in responding to the teacher, expressing her ideas, and reflecting on other students' ideas both in the chat or using the audio feature on Blackboard.

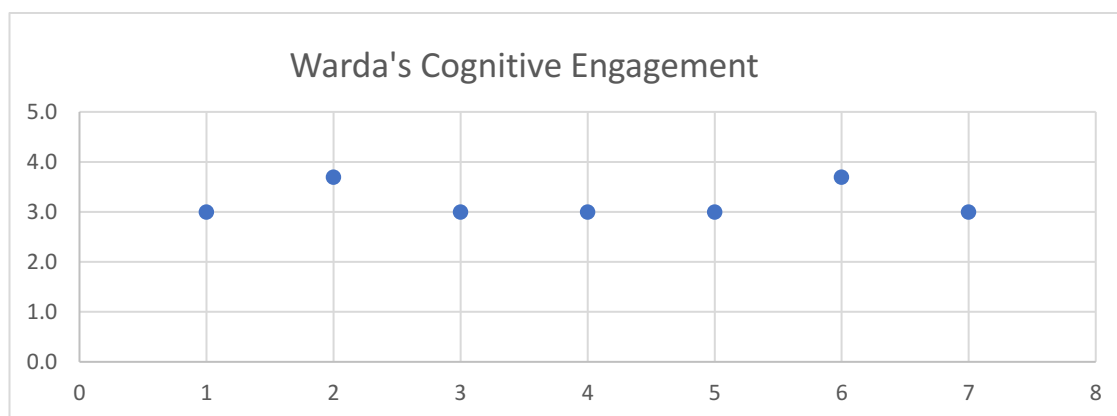


Figure 88 Warda's Cognitive Engagement

Warda was very happy for the teacher to turn her **camera on**, and it affected her engagement positively, since it enabled her to develop **cognitive growth** in terms of understanding and during discussions during her classes.

'The teacher gave us sentences using new vocabulary, but I couldn't determine what the new words meant. When she turned her camera on and I could see her facial expressions, it was much easier for me to grasp the meaning' (Warda, interview 1).

She also commented on the availability of the **recordings** for busy students.

'It's good to have recordings for classes, just in case we need to access them and double-check something related to what we have studied.' (Warda, interview 1).

In week 5, Warda accessed classes as she was being driven to work and showed a higher level of **behavioural engagement** than in other weeks, when she was at work (Figure 89). In week 6, for example, Warda let the teacher know that she could not pay as much attention as usual, as she had to concentrate on her job.

'If I'm at work and have to get on, I inform the teacher that I am listening, but I may not be able to participate, as I cannot risk my job. I let her know I will engage and participate whenever possible' (Interview 1).

Unlike Maha, Warda was keen to inform her teacher that she **accessed** classes from the workplace, and she did not want to risk her job by neglecting her duties. The teacher was **supportive** and understanding about Warda's commitments during her lessons.

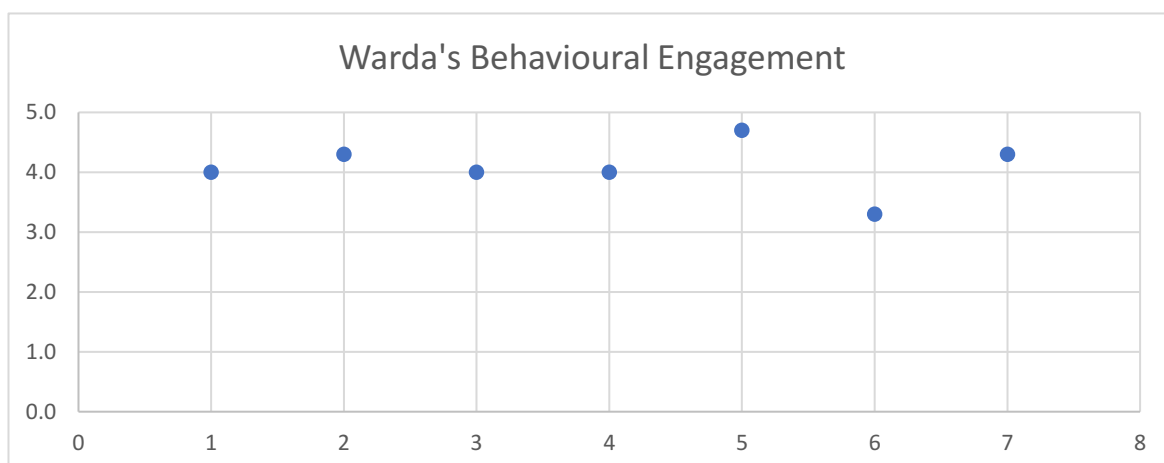


Figure 89 Warda's Behavioural Engagement

As Warda engaged with her classes and the content, she was able to **transfer** her real-life experience to her chosen presentation topics:

'What I liked most about learning English at SEU is that the topics we are studying are connected to my experience. I found it interesting to do a presentation about coffee, as I work in a café, and I did another one on how to make a good impression in interviews, because I had had three discussions with professionals on this topic when I was applying for jobs' (Warda, interview 2).

Moreover, Warda enjoyed her positive online experience and contrasted it with the views of others. Initially she thought her English level was not improving, but she then realised she was making progress.

'Before joining SEU, I heard many people say OL is useless and difficult to understand. However, I found it exciting and it suited my need to balance my work and studies. It was an enriching experience. Although learning was entirely online, I improved my writing skills and focused on spelling' (Warda, interview 2).

'I thought I wasn't going to develop my language skills at the second level, because it seemed too simple and easy. But at the third level, in the second semester, there were a lot more new and exciting things to learn' (Warda, interview 1).

As she engaged with the course content, Warda used **planning** as one of her strategies to balance her work and studies. In addition, being aware of her **personality traits** enabled her to cope with the challenges she faced.

'I wouldn't say I like having free time; I'm happiest when I have plenty to do, and I know that when I'm under pressure, I'm more productive. So, being a student at SEU and having a job at the same time keeps me busy. I like it when I come home late from work, prepare for my studies, and I only sleep for a couple of hours before starting a new day at university or work' (Warda, interview 2).

Warda also looked to YouTube for help as *'I found YouTube helpful, and I followed someone who talked about how he'd passed the entrance exam. He provided links to valuable files and gave advice' (Warda, interview 2).*

In Figure 90 and Figure 91, Warda showed mostly positive emotions. She rarely felt frustrated or negative, as she found OL at SEU exciting and effective in developing her language skills.

'This was my first online learning experience, and it was exciting. Even though I was busy with work as well as my studies, I didn't mind the pressure and was successful' (Warda, interview 2).

The only negativity she expressed was after arguing with her mother before her English class. This was evident in an observed class when the teacher asked why she was not participating in the class.

'Every time I argue with my mum, I end up feeling incredibly annoyed, as there are just the two of us at home. I head off to my classes as soon as I can or find another excuse to get away and think over the argument. If we've had a row, I can listen in class, but I don't feel calm enough to participate in the discussion' (Warda, interview 2).

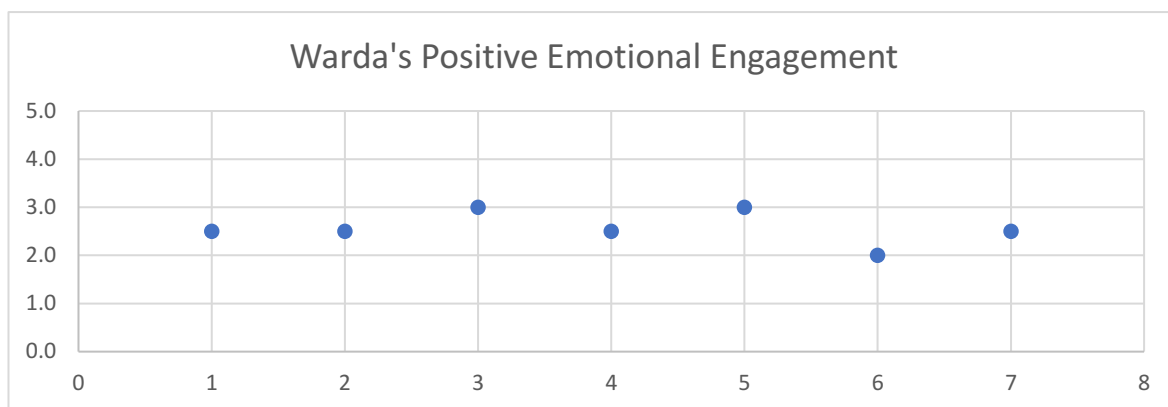


Figure 90 Warda's Positive Emotional Engagement

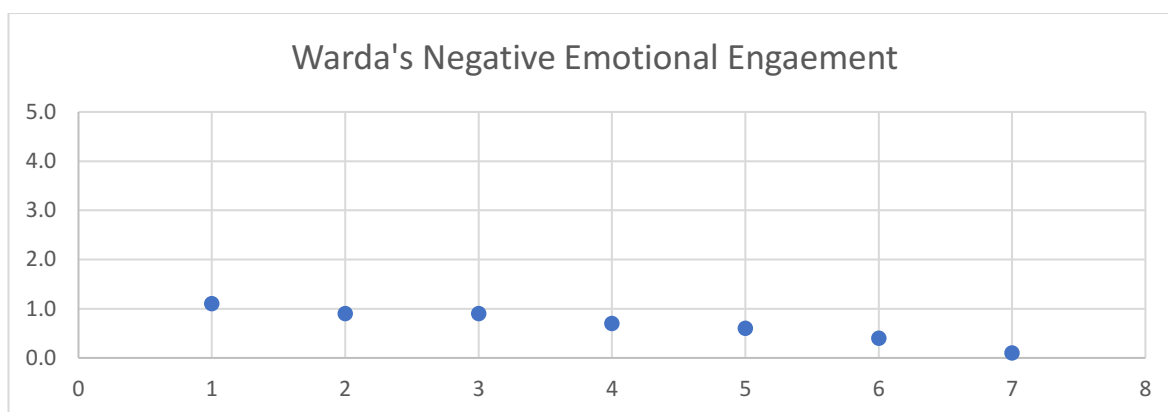


Figure 91 Warda's Negative Emotional Engagement

Warda was a sociable student and active in the WhatsApp group, where she was happy to help her colleagues and knew that she could ask for support when she was busy with work commitments. In week 4, Warda showed the highest level of **social engagement** (Figure 92) when she communicated intensively with her classmates to answer activities in the book and chatted with her teacher after class. To Warda having friendly **relationships** with her teachers and other students supported her **well-being** at university.

'Thank God, our group is so lovely and cooperative. I've built good relationships with the teacher and my classmates, which will help me in my social life on campus and in the future' (Warda, interview 1).

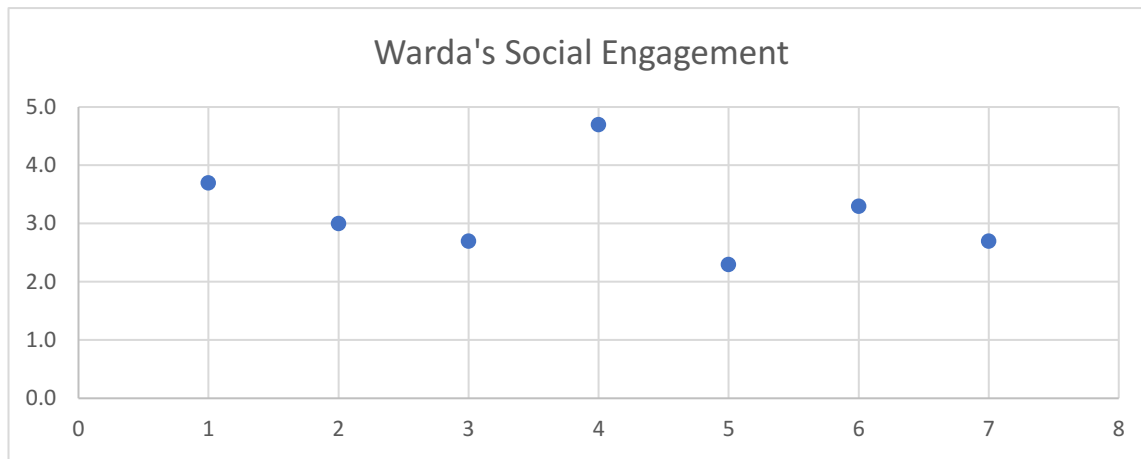


Figure 92 Warda's Social Engagement

Warda was the only participant whose teacher was also a social group member. Within each class, the teachers or students would assign a leader who would be responsible for creating the WhatsApp group and adding members.

Warda revealed that:

'Our English teacher is unique; she gave us her number to add her to the social group for accessible communication. We were happy because she helped us and reminded us of the due dates. She divided us into groups and put the questions in social groups. She was also engaged in the social group at all hours of the day. If I had a question, I could send it to her in the group or privately, and she would respond. She showed us photos of her kids' and shared her Instagram account in case we wanted to follow her' (Warda, interview 2).

Warda expanded her **sense of belonging** to include her classmates and university.

'There are a lot of things that I liked about this experience. My classmates, for example, were connected, checked in on each other, and cared about each other to the extent that we felt sad when we had finished the year, as everyone would go on to study their majors and we would not be in the same year group' (Warda, interview 2).

'In the social group, we asked how everyone would prepare for exams and where we could go on to study. On exam day, we did a kind of group revision and made it into a game. If someone gave the wrong answer, everybody helped to correct her. This helped us remember the information' (Warda, interview 2).

Communication in the social group was in Arabic, which enabled the students to explain things and help each other more easily:

'We used Arabic in the group to help those who did not understand what was going on' (Warda, interview 1).

Warda shared that:

'Some of the students had problems opening the books online, so we shared the grammar and vocabulary from each unit in the social group, so that everyone could be ready for the assessments' (Warda, interview 2).

Warda also shared how she gave her classmates advice on how to prepare for the entrance exam:

'I always tried to be supportive of my classmates. I gave them tips and advice and shared the materials I used to prepare for the assessments' (Warda, informal chat).

However, Warda also found a negative side to the helpfulness and convenience of the social group:

'One thing I did not like about the social group was that some students relied entirely on others. Although all of the information was clear, they couldn't be bothered to read it' (Warda, Interview 2).

Finally, the Blackboard analytics (Figure 93) confirmed Warda's high level of engagement. She exceeded the class average in terms of course access, interaction, submission, and overall grades, although not in time spent on the course.

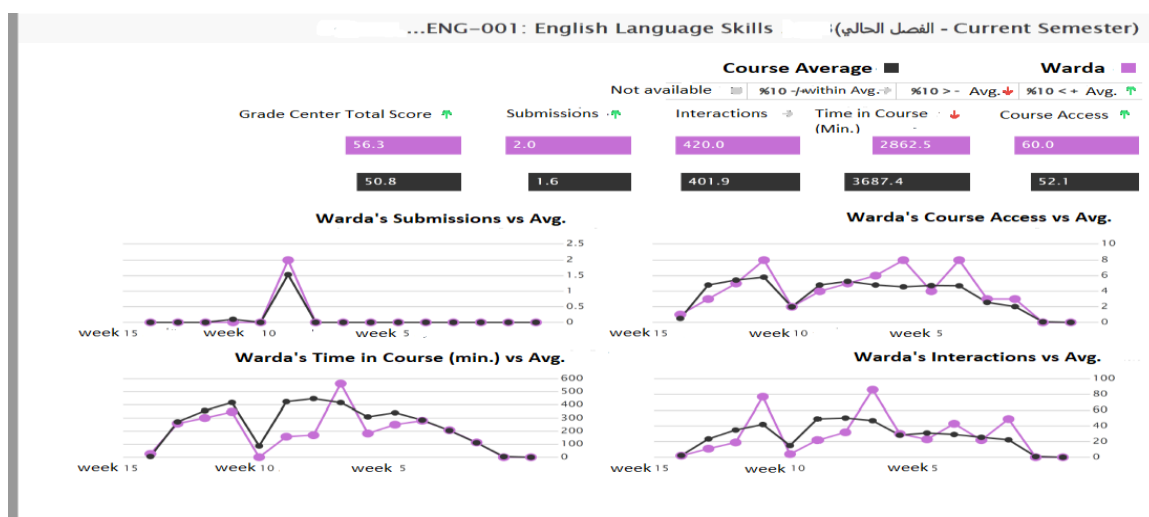


Figure 93 Warda's Blackboard Analytics

4.7.4 Challenges affecting Warda's Engagement

As the youngest participant in the study, Warda was the participant who encountered the least number of challenges, and the challenges she did have were not unusual compared to the those

of the other participants. Her **positive nature** helped her to easily cope with these challenges, as she was confident and determined about her choices and knew what she needed.

'I like everything about my experience learning English. There weren't any challenges, and I completed the unit activities every week. I can see that this English course has improved my language skills' (Warda, Interview 2).

The biggest challenge that Warda had was that she would regularly have **arguments** with her mother right before her English classes, which affected her engagement for a period at the beginning of the lesson. Once, for example, not long after the Covid restrictions had been eased, she decided to pamper herself with a new haircut. When she returned home, she smiled and swished her hair joyfully to attract her mother's attention. Her mother was sitting by herself on the sofa in the living room. She looked at Warda without saying a word. Upset, Warda asked her mum what was wrong with her new haircut. After a long argument, Warda left the living room and went to her room to prepare for her English classes. Warda lay on her bed, turned on her PC, and shed some tears. Throughout the class, Warda's mind was distracted as she reminisced about the joy she had felt earlier about her haircut, and then she began to remember her happiest moments with her father before he had passed away. The attachment she had to her father and the fact he had been a role model and inspired her to learn languages made her feel lonely sometimes, particularly when she felt misunderstood by her mother and sisters. However, when she received a text message from her English teacher, who had missed her vivacious spirit in their English classes, this cheered her up immensely. She reflected on how good it was to know that her teacher cared about her, and so Warda invited her teacher for a drink at the café she worked at to express her appreciation of her.

The **teacher's friendly approach** to her students encouraged Warda and the others (she was the same teacher who taught Roaa in the first semester) to be active in class and interact without hesitation or fear, as well as developed their interest in learning.

'I feel as if my teacher is my friend. We contact each other on WhatsApp and Instagram. I usually communicate with people who rank higher than me, such as teachers or bosses, with caution, to ensure I don't overstep the mark. However, it was different with this teacher; her messages made me happy' (Warda, interview 2).

Unlike some of the other participants, who preferred either F2F or VC English classes, Warda was interested in both learning environments, although she preferred the F2F:

'My F2F English teacher was active; she made the classes very inviting, and even the quieter students joined in. She used social groups to send links to materials for those who

had problems accessing books, and she also divided us into groups, with a leader in each who would pass on the group's answers later. She also shared everything on the social group on/and Blackboard, to ensure all students were aware of it. The VC teacher encouraged us, but learning with the F2F teacher was more fun, and she never implied that if you didn't participate, you would be marked absent' (Warda, interview 2).

One of the challenges was managing her course workload in addition to her job. However, her self-regulation skills enabled her to overcome the obstacles and adapt to the new situation.

'My life is solely about my work and studies. I didn't meet up with any relatives or friends for two months because of the heavy workload of my assessments and being busy at work. This affected me initially, as I felt a lot of pressure, but later on, I found I could cope' (Warda, interview 2).

Even though Warda passed the entrance exam, she did note that it could be highly stressful for many students, and that it affected their engagement, as they were juggling course assignments with exam preparation.

'It's good to know your actual level in English, but it is not clear why the entrance exam carries more weight than the English course and its assessments. So, I felt I wasted time studying English on this course, because then to carry on at the uni, I had to pass an entrance exam in English that didn't bear any relation to what I'd been learning on the course' (Warda, interview 2).

Another factor that also supported Warda was her employer's full cooperation at work. They understood her commitments as a student and helped her manage her work schedule.

'My work was supportive when I informed them that I was a student and needed to be away for final exams. So, I rearranged my schedule by changing my day off, which helped me manage my job and my exams. I was lucky' (Warda, interview 2).

Warda knew, however, that if she concentrated on her job, she could not engage fully in her classes, thus creating a conflict:

My participation depends on my circumstances. My VCs are during work hours, and I find participating challenging, even though I'm trying to focus on class. I keep my work colleagues updated when I'm busy but find it hard to engage in discussions. At home, I'm interested in lessons and participate a lot' (Warda, interview 1).

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presents the stories of motivation and engagement of six female NTSs in English online course at university level and their challenges in learning experience during Covid pandemic. In each case, I integrate the findings of all data sources to portrait the complex picture of NTSs situations when learn online and the extra burden they had in the crisis besides their daily life commitments. Next chapter, I discuss in more details the findings of the current study.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Thus far, through a contextualised qualitative multiple case-study analysis, this research has elicited stories from mature and delayed non-traditional female students who described their motivation and engagement in learning English online during the covid pandemic in Saudi Arabia. Although the participants were similar in that they were all Saudi NTSs engaging in the same online English course, their experiences were not identical. Indeed, the participants differed in their previous learning experiences, reasons and motivations for learning English, their personal attributes and circumstances and their attitudes towards online learning. Weaving together the data derived from motivation surveys, engagement self-reporting (ESM), individual interviews, classroom observations, Blackboard analytics and informal chats has produced a complex picture of the factors affecting participants' motivation and engagement in learning English online during the extreme and unique situation of a societal lockdown.

This chapter reviews the study findings and uses cross-case analysis to discuss the common and unique themes in the six case studies. This is achieved by first contrasting and comparing the results of this data analysis with others in the related research literature. This discussion is organised according to the following research questions:

1. What are NTSs' motivations for learning English online?
 - a) In what ways do NTSs' goals shape their motivation to learn English online?
 - b) In what ways do NTSs' sense of self influence their motivation to learn?
2. What does NTS engagement look like in learning English online?
 - a) How do NTSs demonstrate cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative and social engagement in learning English online?
3. What contextual factors might hinder or promote NTSs' engagement in learning English in an online course?

5.2 Discussion of the Study Findings

The covid pandemic caused the most significant disruption to the education systems in recent memory (Hussein et al., 2020). Before answering the research questions, it is critical to reflect on the nature of OL, since it plays a role in shaping motivation and engagement. Students of all ages from all over the world experienced a sudden change to exclusive OL during the covid pandemic,

and data collection for the current study began at the very beginning of the crisis, when no one knew how long the lockdowns would last. Extensive research from this period has focused either on the effectiveness of the learning technologies available or on learners' perceptions of OL (Budur, 2020; Chaturvedi et al., 2021; Idris et al., 2021; Laili & Nashir, 2021; Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Wieczorek et al., 2021). Consequently, this qualitative research project seeks to add to the body of knowledge by understanding a small group of NTSs who engaged in OL alongside their many family responsibilities and work commitments during the pandemic, which was an uncertain time. OL suited and motivated the NTSs due to the multiple benefits of its flexibility (Kuo & Belland, 2016; Robinson & Cook, 2018), particularly during the lockdowns, as it enabled them to enjoy learning regardless of their ages and life circumstances (Kara et al., 2019). However, the lockdown situation tended to exacerbate numerous existing inequalities apparent in OL (Asmelash, 2019; Doyle, 2020; Outhwaite, 2020; Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Steele 2019), which affected learners' learning experiences.

The variables of learning space, gender, age and internet access affected the current hegemonies in OL and created inequalities in the learning experience. Many of the NTSs found themselves trapped in environments that restricted their learning engagement, either in the home environment with their children or in the workplace. Older students and mothers of young children found OL a potential burden, as they had to balance their work routine with their children's OL and their own. For example, at home, some of the NTSs found themselves trying to attend synchronous online classes at the same times as their children, causing logistical problems of time, attention and device accessibility, which drove them to neglect their own education to monitor and encourage that of their children. In line with Lau and Lee (2021), the parents of young children found that their children were struggling with online schooling due to restricted space and device access, inability to learn independently and a general lack of interest, all of which affected the children's engagement in online classes.

In addition, while education worldwide went online during the pandemic, many workplaces required employees to still work in offices, which was the case for employee-students Mona and Warda in the current study. OL enabled young employee-students to manage work and study simultaneously, and other positive aspects of OL during the pandemic were time and cost effectiveness (Fidalgo et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2020; OECD, 2020). However, they found it difficult to engage when they accessed their English classes from their workplaces during working hours. The following sections discuss and answer the research questions about NTSs' motivation and engagement, as well as the contextual factors influencing NTLLs' engagement in OL.

5.2.1 What is NTSs' motivation for learning English online?

In this study, I stand with Akbari et al. (2016), Christenson et al. (2012), Eccles and Wang (2012), Fredricks and McColskey (2012), Finn and Zimmer (2012), Ng et al. (2018) and Skinner and Pitzer (2012) in studying motivation and engagement together to answer the research questions. There are two components essential to understanding motivation in language learning: goals and a sense of self (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). It is widely believed that these two factors strongly influence learners' engagement in educational activities (Pintrich, 2000). In addition, although goals and sense of self are unobservable internal attributes (Finn & Zimmer, 2012), they provide a general understanding of observable behaviour such as engagement. Focusing on NTSs' agency in being active and engaged in OL expands the existing knowledge of factors that might affect their engagement in different learning environments. This can justify linking motivation with engagement in the current research and literature, as one may affect the other (Rothes et al., 2017). The use of PIT as a generative model supports an understanding of the goals and sense of self of NTSs in the study context. It provides an overview of each participant's motivation in terms of their goals, sense of self and other aspects, such as the influence of previous learning experiences in their sociocultural context. The case studies presented in Chapter 4 describe the nature of each participants' motivation for taking an online English course, as well as how they engaged with it.

5.2.1.1 The role of goals in shaping motivation to study

Motivational goals in learning English have been described as dynamic, diverse and complex (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). As King et al. (2019) suggested, the PIT model of motivation has not often been used in research on L2 motivation, whether in online or F2F modalities. The current qualitative multiple case study is the first study to apply PIT to online language learning, as it is a suitable framework for identifying the components of motivation in complex situations. The data analysis indicated that the participants' motivation and engagement were subject to fluctuations and were affected by numerous different internal (personal) and external (circumstantial) factors during the learning experience.

The findings of this research build on existing research that has used the PIT model to analyse adolescent education in non-Western cultures (King et al., 2012a, 2013). This study brings a novel focus to the situation of NTLs in online learning. According to PIT, motivational goals can be divided into four types: social, extrinsic, performance and mastery. This study's findings show that the NTS participants had multiple goals in wanting to learn English online. Social power, family affiliations and concerns for future employment were salient motivating factors in determining the participants' goals, highlighting that these are issues that could apply to adult learners of all

ages. As in studies of adolescents in collectivist cultures such as China (King et al., 2012b) and the Philippines (Ganotice & Yenug, 2016), this study found that female NTSs were motivated by social and extrinsic goals that were shaped by their individual attitudes towards learning and university education (King & Ganotice, 2013). Due to the scarcity of research that uses the PIT model in L2 studies and tertiary education, it was helpful in this study to categorise the four types of goals under the standard concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in L2 learning (2.3.2.2).

Dörnyei (1994) stressed that EFL learners are mostly driven by extrinsic and instrumental motivations due to the lack of opportunities for interaction with native speakers of the target language. Such interactions tend to expose learners to social and cultural influences and may generate more intrinsic motivation. Although the NTSs in the current study were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to study English, there was more emphasis on extrinsic motivation, despite the fact that they were taught by native English speakers. This emphasis on extrinsic motivation might be explained in terms of the female participants strongly connecting with the social empowerment engendered by these valuable educational opportunities, particularly during times of enormous social change in their context (1.5). This finding supports previous research that has found that mature students are driven by a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with variations according to context (Alshebou, 2019; Boiché & Stephan, 2014; Novotný et al., 2019; Rothes et al., 2014; Vanslambrouck et al., 2016). For example, in the Czech context, Novotný et al. (2019) reported that NTSs had higher intrinsic motivation. In contrast, Arab learners in Kuwait (Alshebou, 2019) and Sudanese learners in Australia (Gately et al., 2017) showed more extrinsic motivation.

The fluctuation in students' motivation during their learning experience was clearly connected to internal (personal) and external (institutional) factors (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lin, 2016; Markle, 2015; Ushioda, 2009). The different types of goals impacted students' motivation in online English classes. Shoug, for example, reflected more extrinsic goals at the end of the year, as she was determined to pass the entrance exam so that she could continue to study with the long-term goal of finding better job opportunities. This exam represented a significant hurdle for the NTSs, who wanted to continue their education, and Shoug's extrinsic motivation was strong enough for her to eventually pass. In contrast, Maha and Fooz showed a mixture of motivational goals, with Maha's goal of social power setting an excellent example for her children, while Fooz also counted her children's future as a reason for studying English. These social goals motivated them to persist in learning despite the challenges; however, their motivation eventually declined by the end of the semester, when they were unable to pass the exam. On the other hand, Mona and Warda, who had deferred university enrolment, had a mixture of social, extrinsic and

performance goals at the beginning of the semester that shifted more towards mastery goals by the end of the semester when they passed the entrance exam.

5.2.1.2 The role of a sense of self in shaping the motivation to study

All of the aspects of sense of self (sense of purpose, sense of reliance and self-concept) were found to influence the participants' motivation to study. The broader picture of how this functioned is contained in each of the case studies. As English increasingly becomes an international language and the medium of instruction in many HE institutions (Parajuli, 2022), studies stress the importance of identifying the purposes of learning English (Allahdadi et al., 2016; Alrabai, 2014). The participants in the current study stated that the common reasons for learning English were that it increases educational and job opportunities, is useful when travelling abroad and adds social power, which was similar to the findings of Nduwimana (2019). Interestingly, although the female NTSs in this study valued the importance of English as a language (sense of purpose), their development in English competency was connected more to their sense of self-reliance and self-concept.

Self-reliance and self-efficacy are significant factors in student motivation and engagement. Self-efficacy enables active learning in all classroom modes, while the lack of it at the university level constitutes a major internal barrier in adult learners (Alshebou, 2019; Jameson & Fusco, 2014; Kara et al., 2019; Lin, 2018). NTSs' self-efficacy correlates with levels of achievement and the nature of their beliefs about language learning (Asakereh & Dehghannezhad, 2015; Genç et al., 2016; Kassem, 2015; Rahimi & Abedini, 2009; Raofi et al., 2012), and anxiety tends to rise with age while self-efficacy decreases. In the current study, the lack of self-efficacy as a hindering factor was obvious in the case of two mature students, Shoug and Maha, who had long gap years and found it challenging to become autonomous learners or develop self-efficacy, which was not the case for younger students, Mona and Warda, who showed a strong sense of self-reliance. In addition, a lack of self-efficacy in learning English via online lessons affects learners emotionally, as Jameson and Fusco (2014) found when assessing HE students' anxiety, self-perception and self-efficacy in learning maths, discovering that adult learners had negative self-perceptions that may have functioned as an additional obstacle to their learning.

Previous research into FL has pointed out the dynamic nature of self-concept (Mercer, 2011; Rubio, 2014), and interestingly, it may change from negative to positive if learners have positive learning experiences (Elliot & Brna, 2009). This study found that self-concept was subject to change in both directions. Shoug, for example, became more positive and confident in her ability to learn and started to enjoy studying once she passed the English exam. This led her to change the major she had initially chosen at the beginning of the academic year. Shoug's experience

contrasted with that of Fooz, who was highly motivated, had a positive self-concept about herself at the beginning of the year and worked hard to manage her different roles and responsibilities. However, although Fooz enjoyed studying at SEU, her self-concept declined towards the end of the year because she repeatedly failed the exam. The motivation of the NTSs in terms of their goals and sense of self was affected by many factors during the term (5.2.3). However, they were persistent in their attendance despite the difficulties of the lockdown situation.

5.2.2 What does NTSs' engagement look like in learning English online?

a) How do NTSs demonstrate cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative and social engagement in learning English online?

The literature review revealed that student engagement is crucial for learning and academic development (Reeve, 2012) and is critical in all learning modalities. NTSs favour F2F over OL (Adams & Corbett, 2010; Vanslambrouck et al., 2016), despite the positive impact of technology on student engagement (Chen et al., 2010; Junco et al., 2011; Kahn et al., 2017), because it is difficult for them to engage in OL when they lack appropriate support in understanding their circumstances (Blackmon & Major, 2012; Brown et al., 2015; Halim, 2021). Although engagement is acknowledged in a variety of foreign educational contexts as a facilitator of students' learning and success, this aspect of learning has not, to date, been given importance in NTLLs' experiences during the covid pandemic. The current study is also the first to adopt the Redmond et al. (2018) engagement framework (2.4.22.4.2) to describe and understand NTSs' engagement in an English online course. This framework supported all engagement components of cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative and social engagement and helped to determine the extent to which the online nature of the course influenced all five components of engagement. Consequently, the study initiates discussions about this multi-dimensional construct and how to enhance it in ways that benefit all students, educators and researchers.

5.2.2.1 Cognitive Engagement

In the current study, OL influenced two aspects of cognitive engagement: cognitive growth and metacognition (knowledge and regulation). Teachers' camera usage and video recordings were additional elements that supported NTSs' cognitive growth because they provided NTSs with active learning opportunities similar to those in other studies conducted by Hasan and Hoon (2013), Indahsari (2020), Palenque (2016) and Scagnoli et al. (2019). They also affect NTSs' cognitive engagement, as the instructor's presence is experienced differently (King et al., 2019; Meyer, 2014) and enhances their social presence. This can be connected to the importance of COI principles (2.4.2) that enable teachers to maintain a collaborative learning environment in OL

(Daspit & D'Souza, 2012; Garrison, 2016). Although camera usage is not the focus of this study, the theme emerges in the findings and aligns with Hartsell and Yuen (2006) and Lonie and Andrews (2009) in finding that live video streaming with students in virtual classrooms allowed students and teachers to communicate with immediacy. However, unlike previous research, the current study found that the participants preferred to keep their cameras off for cultural and religious reasons; therefore, the camera use they were commenting on was the teacher's rather than their own. The findings showed variation based on the learners' learning preferences, with some students seeing it as a supportive tool that enhanced language comprehension and effective communication with the teacher, while others found it distracting and experienced anxiety related to cultural and religious norms, which affected their learning (Ellingson & Notbohm, 2012; Tonsmann, 2014).

Access to recorded material was one of the reasons NTSs felt happy about starting online English classes, even if they later admitted that they did not access them regularly. Although undergraduate NTSs have been found not to access video recordings as often as graduate students (Scagnoli et al., 2019), the participants in the current study felt reassured that the recordings were available in case they missed classes due to family and work commitments. Recorded lessons represent a set of valuable podcasts for some NTSs and effectively support live EFL classes (Hasan & Hoon, 2013); students can use them to improve their listening skills and self-confidence (Indahsari, 2020), and they create a sense of belonging to the learning community (Palenque, 2016). Interestingly, Mona and Warda, successful students who used the recordings, engaged more in the course on the whole than Shoug, another successful student who did not access recordings or engage in her classes.

The development of NTSs' metacognitive knowledge was another aspect of the cognitive engagement employed in this study. The covid crisis radically altered NTSs' views of OL as a method of language learning (metacognition knowledge). Before the lockdowns, studies showed that NTSs tended to doubt their abilities to learn English online and preferred F2F classes (Adams & Corbett, 2010; Vanslambrouck et al., 2016). However, research during and after the lockdowns has shown a marked increase in adult students perceiving OL as a positive experience and effective learning modality (Hazaymeh, 2021; Kuo & Belland, 2016; Rifiyanti, 2020; Robinson & Cook, 2018). In addition, the participants' reflections in the current study show that they were able to bring cognitive transfer skills to OL, which aligns with Barak et al. (2016), who found that online learners had a higher incidence of cognitive transfer. For example, Mona and Foz felt that their prior knowledge of English supported their current learning, enabling them to develop writing skills and save time and effort.

Another important aspect of cognitive engagement employed in this study was self-regulation strategies (metacognition regulation) in OL. Many scholars assert that cognitive engagement is rooted in self-regulation (Appleton et al., 2006; Christenson et al., 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2018; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Previous researchers, such as Li et al. (2018), Stephen et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2013), have shown that self-regulation skills are vital in OL; however, the current study takes this further. The data indicated that the NTSs all realised that they were fully responsible for the success of their learning. They actively adopted self-regulation strategies, such as planning and recordkeeping, and sought information and support from other learning resources. They were very active in messaging their classmates via the WhatsApp group whenever they needed clarification and were extremely aware that inadequate self-regulation would hinder their development of competence in English.

Despite self-regulation being a critical factor in the success of NT online learners (Stephen et al., 2020), in line with the findings of Pedrotti and Nostor (2019), the NTSs in this study were not always able to self-regulate adequately. For example, they all knew that they needed to plan their study timetable for success, but not all of them did so effectively. This was sometimes due to an overload of family and work responsibilities, which was the case for both Maha and Roaa. Effective use of self-directed learning strategies has been found to boost motivation in OL and to lead to higher levels of course satisfaction and improved performance (Wang et al., 2013). Therefore, a lack of self-regulation skills may affect students' motivation to learn. Although the online English course in this study was not specifically intended to prepare students for the entrance exam, the most effective self-regulatory skills that helped them pass were time management and planning. The findings also indicated that the mature NTSs were initially highly motivated by having the opportunity to learn, regardless of the delivery mode. Still, specific self-regulation skills were needed for them to have a successful learning experience in OL. Therefore, it is recommended that institutions and teachers raise students' awareness of self-regulation strategies to help them get the most out of OL.

5.2.2.2 Behavioural Engagement

The qualitative data analysis of this research identified four components of behavioural engagement in OL: participation, persistence, careful listening and self-working on activities. The first component is participation or interaction in class. An effective learning process occurs when teachers and their students connect and participate in learning activities (Abdullah et al., 2012). However, participation in an OL environment is more challenging to track because a student may log in and out without engaging with resources (Robinson & Cook, 2018). Through observation, I found that some participants are active learners during classes and regularly participate in English

classes, while others do not because of other factors. Yang (2011) researched student participation in online language learning environments and found that student participation in OL activities is critical to successful language acquisition via computer-mediated communication. Nevertheless, the findings of the current study show that even high levels of interaction and participation in online classes do not always guarantee success in end-of-course assessments or exams, a point that is in line with Davies and Graff (2005). In the current study, almost all the students, even those who showed little engagement, passed the English module. The only student who failed the module was Rooa, who participated and engaged in classes more than any of the other students. However, she failed because she procrastinated so much that she did not complete the mandatory written work on time. That her high level of participation and engagement did not result in a more successful outcome stands in contrast to the findings of Handelsman et al. (2005), Koç (2017) and Tayebinik and Puteh (2013).

Persistence is the second theme in behavioural engagement, and it is a common characteristic of female NTSSs (Markle, 2015) and learners who complete online courses (Fang et al., 2017; Hart, 2012). In the present study, all the students attended the course until the end, despite some being occasionally tempted to drop out. Their persistence was partially due to the sense of community that they built through their social network group, in which they found support and encouragement during challenging times. This finding coincides with Hart (2012) and Yang et al. (2017) in identifying several factors that contribute to student persistence in OL, such as personal feelings and attributes, the quality of the programme, a sense of accomplishment, personal goals, a sense of community and belonging, family support and better time-management skills.

The third theme of concentration, focus and listening carefully during online classes, also affected behavioural engagement. Whether accessing the English courses from home or the workplace, many NTSSs found it difficult to pay attention during online classes, mainly because of distractions in their immediate environment. Students who were parents and employees had many other commitments to take care of in addition to their English learning. These responsibilities affected their engagement in online classes, particularly four-hour ones. These findings are in line with research by Blackmon and Major (2012), Brown et al. (2015), Halim (2021), Holley and Oliver (2010), Risko et al. (2012) and Smith and Schreder (2021), who investigated the barriers to learning in online environments. The findings showed that factors such as inability to attend or to concentrate during longer classes, difficulties in managing class attendance due to work and family commitments and technology issues could all affect OL. Course designers, administrators and teachers might do well to take these factors into account when scheduling class times and durations or when delivering content.

The study data revealed a fourth component of engagement, which is self-working on activities, otherwise known as autonomous learning, which refers to the learner's willingness and ability to 'act independently and in cooperation with others as a socially responsible person' to make decisions about their learning (Dam, 2003, p. 137). Autonomous learning also refers to the flexibility that students are given and their ability to convert contextual restrictions into affordances to build autonomy (Benson, 2013; Lai, 2019). The online environment gives NTSs the advantage of learning in a more convenient self-learning environment in a way that considers their learning styles and with added scheduling flexibility and access to limitless internet resources. Although NTSs were more familiar with learning English in teacher-centred environments, during online courses, they could develop autonomy in their language learning by finding different tools and techniques to help them learn independently. To develop language skills outside of a formal learning context, participants, as autonomous learners, looked for more materials, new ways of learning, reference materials and different kinds of self-study tools. This finding mirrors the findings of Albogami (2022), Mısır et al. (2018), Muliyah et al. (2020) and Mutlu and Eröz-Tuğ̃a (2013) regarding the effectiveness of technology in enhancing learner autonomy and developing English language skills.

Three of the participants—Maha, Shoug and Rooa—showed low self-efficacy about completing their studies at SEU and found it extremely difficult to become autonomous learners. This echoes Tilfarlioglu and Ciftci (2011), who found a high correlation between learner autonomy and self-efficacy. In other words, when an individual's self-efficacy improves, so does their ability to be an autonomous learner. It is worth noting that the opinions of 'low self-efficacy' participants about online teaching styles correlate with their ability to be self-directed learners. Belief in the effectiveness of a teacher-centred approach may lead to difficulty in developing autonomous learning skills. This finding aligns with Lai (2019), who highlighted that online learners find it challenging to transition from 'object-regulation' to 'self-regulation' (p. 54). These challenges include instructors' inadequate system positioning and pedagogical organisation, as well as learners' lack of computer literacy and familiarity with system functions (Suvorov, 2017). Even though none of the participants expressed any difficulty in using technology in learning, they nevertheless called attention to numerous contextual challenges. The findings suggest that teachers' actions in formal settings significantly affect students' autonomous learning practices with technology in informal settings (Lai, 2019; Lamb, 2011), such as in the case of Maha's language exam preparations, after losing interest in English classes because of the teacher's quiet tone.

Learner motivation, agency and learning environment intertwine with autonomy and may affect learning (Lai, 2019; Lamb, 2011). Participants were motivated to learn; however, the more

engaged students in the classes (Mona, Warda and Fooz) showed a high level of autonomy in their learning, while others struggled to continue the course. Both mature students (Shoug and Maha) sought peer support in completing English course activities, while a delayed student, Roaa, tended to procrastinate. In addition, the less autonomous participants preferred the F2F environment for learning English, which coincides with the findings of Muliya et al. (2020) and Rahman (2020). In this study, motivation levels may affect students' autonomy and interest in learning, thereby affecting their engagement. Although Shoug did not show any autonomous behaviours in English classes, she demonstrated that she was an independent learner in her preparation for the entrance exam. Shoug, as a separate LL, was unaware of the university's supporting materials for entrance exam preparation on Blackboard. As such, she decided to become an autonomous learner and chose resources to develop her English skills. This finding is in line with Baru et al. (2020), who showed that learners' choices enable them to become more independent and self-directed in their learning decisions.

5.2.2.3 Emotional Engagement

There is little doubt that the emotional states of all NTS participants were affected by the covid pandemic. In terms of their learning, they were also anxious about whether they would learn enough English to pass the entrance exam, which was a condition of undergraduate study. In terms of learning engagement, it was clear from the data that emotional engagement played a part in the OL experience and its success. As previous research has found (e.g. Angelaki & Mavroidis, 2013; Wang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2008), participants in this study expressed both positive and negative emotions in their engagement with OL. The only positive emotional theme from the data was contentment/satisfaction with the OL experience. Satisfaction with the OL experience can be directly linked to the extent of students' persistence and interaction with peers, teachers and course content (Fathali & Okada, 2016; Frenzel et al., 2018; Lai, 2019; Molinillo et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020). If students developed favourable attitudes towards online learning and perceived the learning environment to be pleasant, they generally experienced more positive emotions.

However, the NTSs in the current study reported experiencing many negative emotions about learning English online. The fear, anxiety, frustration and annoyance they felt were generally related either to internal beliefs and attitudes about themselves, such as their perceived self-efficacy, or to external social factors, such as the need to earn money and their struggles to find time to study alongside family responsibilities. For example, the fear and worry experienced by Shoug, Roaa and Mona was associated with a lack of self-efficacy that El-Sayad et al. (2021), Martin and Rimm-Kaufman (2015) and Wang et al. (2022) assert plays a critical role in emotional

engagement, along with beliefs and attitudes about academia and OL. Annoyance with the teaching style was also found to influence engagement. Mona expressed her annoyance at one of the English teachers, who showed much less interest in teaching than another one, who was more positive and enthusiastic. This finding is in line with Ge et al. (2019), who found that the different verbal behaviours of teachers can elicit an emotional response in e-learners, which may then influence the learning process.

The inability of the NTSs to achieve a balance between multiple life roles and study commitments created a conflict that generated anxiety and tension. In comparing male and female emotional reflections on OL experiences, Zembylas (2008) observed that women often found it more challenging to balance their multiple roles and responsibilities with learning. In addition, in terms of negative emotions experienced by female NTSs in OL, this study supports the findings of Moss (2004), von Prümmer (2005) and Zembylas (2008), who found that when women pursue a course of study, they are unlikely to be relieved of other tasks, such as childcare and housework. This finding emphasises the problems women with family responsibilities face when returning to or entering HE and the emotions evoked by stepping into a new role as students. Similarly, in this study, participants expressed frustration and guilt either because they were not focusing solely on their children's learning (Fouz and Maha) or could not concentrate on their education because of their responsibilities (Shoug and Roaa). Other feelings of frustration and anxiety were not related specifically to the online mode but were more connected to the demands and requirements of the English course itself.

Interestingly, in contrast to the view that positive emotions increase learning while negative emotions inhibit it (Ge et al., 2019), this study demonstrates that negative emotions during engagement in OL can stimulate a powerful desire to acquire competence in the subject. In Shoug's case, for example, frustration and fear spurred her on and made her more motivated to pass the entrance exam. This finding supports the conclusions of Liew and Tan (2016), Pretz et al. (2010) and Wang et al. (2022), who suggested that while negative emotions may decrease intrinsic drive and lower learning engagement, they may simultaneously ignite the extrinsic motivation to engage more in order to prevent failure, as Shoug engaged more in preparing for an entrance exam but not in her online classes.

5.2.2.4 Social and Collaborative Engagement

In addition to cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement, the students also reflected on their social and collaborative engagement with respect to OL. This form of engagement was clearly present in the WhatsApp group that they created for themselves. The academic and non-academic purposes of the group fostered both social engagement (Pittaway & Moss, 2014) and

engagement in collaborative learning. Although Angelaki and Mavroidis (2013) and Barak et al. (2016) focused on the significant role of social interaction and engagement in OL, the findings of the current study support Meyer's (2014) assertion that it is not just any interaction but specifically the kind of interaction that promotes and supports students' deep engagement and critical reflection on issues to do with the course. This was evident in Roaa's case, as her high level of interaction and engagement based on class observation and her reflection about her social engagement in the social group did not support her progress in learning English.

In demonstrating the importance of community in increasing engagement, the WhatsApp community described in this study was found to improve social and collaborative engagement by increasing learner autonomy, promoting self-regulation skills, encouraging collaborative learning, improving content-sharing skills, developing lasting friendships and supporting academic help-seeking (Baru et al., 2020; Cheng & Lam, 2013; Hill, 2013; Muliya et al., 2020; Imran et al., 2016). Even introverted learners, such as Shoug, who did not participate in her social group, acknowledged its effectiveness after she observed how her classmates benefited from using it. Similarly, Dolan et al. (2017) examined engagement in OL communities from an interdisciplinary perspective and pointed out that learning communities can construct knowledge and increase engagement if collaboration is prioritised. Most importantly, the participants used the WhatsApp group to give each other emotional support and encouragement during their individual learning journeys. Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the WhatsApp group in nurturing social and collaborative engagement, matching the findings of Angelaki and Mavroidis (2013) and Dolan et al. (2017). However, this finding goes beyond these previous studies, as participants in the current study also highlighted negative aspects of the social group, as some learners did not take responsibility for their learning and used the WhatsApp group as a shortcut to get information about course content and materials without exploring the learning platforms themselves.

This study aligns with Tunks (2012) in considering the teacher as the most critical factor in OL engagement, particularly in a context that adopts a student-centred approach that is unfamiliar to learners who are used to passively absorbing knowledge dispensed by teachers. This study is also in line with Dolan et al. (2017) and Kebritchi et al. (2017), who found that fostering engagement in online classes was facilitated by teachers and their abilities to communicate well, build a community and effectively deliver lessons, making a significant difference to student learning outcomes and engagement. These activities can be valuable for NTSs who have different roles in life and look for support, or at least for someone to listen to them. In the current study, while some participants could interact and socially engage with English teachers in classes and outside learning environments, others could not engage for various reasons, including experiencing

anxiety in English classes, being uninterested in class, not getting along with the teacher or being overwhelmed by their commitments. This lack of social interaction and engagement affected students' behaviour in class; for example, four participants did not feel connected to their teachers. Such disconnectedness affected their engagement and learning in general.

5.2.3 **What contextual factors hinder or promote NTSS' engagement in learning English online?**

This section discusses the most critical factors that significantly enhanced or inhibited NTSS' engagement. The data shows three types of factors: internal, sociocultural and institutional.

5.2.3.1 **Internal factors**

Self-efficacy in English language learning is a significant theme that affects student motivation and engagement (section 5.2.1.2). NTSS with low engagement in online English classes had low levels of self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with Rahimi and Abedini (2009) and Rothes et al. (2014), who highlighted that adult learners' levels of self-efficacy and beliefs about language ability can affect their engagement in classes. Similar to Payne (2019), who suggested that self-efficacy, in the sense of confidence, can be a significant 'driving force' for engagement, the current study shows that a lack of self-efficacy can be a 'resistance force' in OL engagement. NTSS with low self-efficacy found it challenging to develop their English skills in online mode due to a lack of interaction with the teacher. Even though the NTSS were not confident about their abilities in language learning, they used different self-regulatory strategies and traditional study methods in the same way as participants in the Baxter (2012), C,akirog'lu (2014), Farrell and Brunton (2020) and O'Shea (2016) studies, enabling them to pass English courses and other English modules. It seems that the NTSS were not fully ready for online English classes due to limited self-directed learning skills (Hung et al., 2010; Kuama & Intharaksa, 2016) and the extra family responsibilities they had during the covid pandemic.

Not surprisingly, personality traits also emerged as an internal factor that affected NTSS' engagement in OL. In line with Maican and Cocoradă (2021), Qureshi et al. (2016) and Serrano et al. (2019), the personality traits of the NTSS in this study reflected their level of engagement. Previous studies have examined personality traits as predictors of student engagement or factors that influence communication and collaboration (Maican et al., 2021) and the effects of personality on OL outcomes during the covid pandemic (Yu, 2021). Such studies have used the 'Big 5' or five-factor model of personality as the dominant model to measure individual differences in personality (Qureshi et al., 2016). Although this study does not use any quantitative

measures for the five traits (3.8.3.23.8.3.2), three of them were evident in the participants' responses: conscientiousness, neuroticism and extraversion.

In this study, conscientiousness is a strong predictor of student engagement, and learners with higher conscientiousness are likelier to rate OL positively than those with lower levels (Bhagat et al., 2019; Keller & Karau, 2013; Qureshi et al., 2016; Serrano et al., 2022; Yu, 2021). However, neuroticism, as might be expected, is a negative predictor of academic performance, and undergraduate students with high neuroticism dislike online classes because of a lack of interaction (Laidra et al., 2007; Yu, 2021). The most engaged students (Mona, Warda and Fooz) showed a high level of planning and were goal-oriented (conscientiousness). They engaged cognitively, behaviourally, emotionally, collaboratively and socially in online classes. In addition, they held positive attitudes towards OL, unlike the other students, who lacked self-managing skills. In addition, the NTSs with high neuroticism did not manage to learn enough English to pass the entrance exam; these students preferred F2F classes that would enable them to interact more with instructors (Roaa and Maha).

All learners in this study showed interactions with peers in classes or social groups that indicated extroversion, except Shoug, the only introvert. Interestingly, not all extroverted students become engaged in online classes, despite their engagement in the social group. Although Ariani (2015) concluded that extrovert characteristics enable interaction with peers and teachers and therefore increase engagement, the extroverted learners in the current study, Maha and Roaa, did not follow this pattern and showed low engagement in classes and online activities. In addition, Shoug (as an introverted student) did not participate in the synchronous OL opportunities but preferred to engage differently through an asynchronous strategy of learning at her own pace and preparing for the entrance exam in her own way.

5.2.3.2 Significant Sociocultural Factors

Caring responsibilities before and during the pandemic were a critical socio-cultural factor in motivation and engagement. Busher et al. (2015) similarly discovered that in the UK, work and family obligations frequently interfere with mature students' HE studies and lowered motivation. The female NTSs in this study were facing new domestic challenges that were a direct consequence of the covid lockdowns, such as increased childcare responsibilities, new home-schooling obligations and intensified family care duties, all of which affected their motivation and ability to engage in education. The study participants who were mothers endured high levels of conflict due to their internalisation of the demanding mothering and ideal student roles. Fooz and Maha felt guilty about spending less time with their children than they used to. The role conflicts experienced by the

mothers sometimes led them to consider withdrawing from university. This finding echoes research that shows women are more likely to struggle in balancing the demands of their numerous daily tasks, while at the same time feeling stigmatised as mothers who are unable to perform as well as other students (Kara et al., 2019; Markle, 2015). Female adult students face various barriers and challenges due to their increasing obligations (Kara et al., 2019), which affects the quality of their academic engagement. Taking on the task of supporting their children's OL during the pandemic, the participants reflected that they lacked support from the rest of their families. This coincides with the findings of Brooks (2013), who observed that the home environments of student-parents do not always support engagement with education, particularly if they lack family support (Stoessel et al., 2015).

NTSS' engagement in OL might be affected by their inability to decide which subject they want to pursue at university. As discussed in the research context earlier (1.5), it is no secret that SA is a deeply religious (and, for some, conservative) country, and family life is held in high regard in social and business circles (Yamin, 2013). Although the government has recently made many efforts to address gender issues (Alwedinani, 2016), some practices still appear to reflect attitudes of male superiority in some families. For example, in her interview, Roaa pointed out that she had tried to choose a major that satisfied her husband, who did not want her to interact with male colleagues in a future job. Consequently, she may not be particularly interested in her choice of major, which could also affect her willingness to engage in learning English at SEU. This finding is in line with Alwedinani (2016), who highlighted that male dominance influences female undergraduates' choice of majors and, thereby, their future jobs, particularly concerning the presence of male colleagues.

The matter becomes more complicated when this group of learners doubts their ability to learn in an online environment after a long gap. Furthermore, families may not always support adult learners, and friends and relatives may try to make fun of those who want to return to education (Alajlan, 2013). The current study found that age is another factor that challenges adults, partially due to a stereotypical belief that the ability to learn declines slowly after the age of 25, leading older participants to doubt their ability to learn. The two oldest learners in this study, Shoug and Maha, found it difficult to engage in English classes because they had not studied since leaving school, and this initiated negative emotions (Coker, 2003; Shousha, 2021). In fact, they focused more on avoiding failure than on the best way to learn, particularly when they considered traditional judgemental views of women's education (Alajlan, 2013). Such negative views from family and friends may disturb the equilibrium of adult learners and alter their perspectives (Alajlan, 2013). Maha and Shoug expressed their fears surrounding their decision to return to

school, citing the conflicting opinions of relatives and colleagues regarding the prospect of their returning to education as mature learners. On a personal note, I also encountered this kind of negative viewpoint from others when I came to the UK with five of my children to study for a PhD, leaving my husband and elder son in Saudi Arabia. As a result, my motivation and engagement fluctuated at the beginning of my journey, and the only hope I had at that time was that I would not regret my decision. As Shoug managed to do, I ignored the negative voices and became my own source of support and encouragement, a task that was made easier once I started to make progress.

Internet access was also an issue that affected the NTS participants' language-learning experience. Financial circumstances, limited internet bandwidth and rural locations created digital inequalities between the students (Doyle, 2020; Outhwaite, 2020; Steele, 2019). The NTSs often did not have enough devices for themselves and their children to access online classes at the same time. At other times, they had access difficulties due to limited internet connections. Thus, the mothers would sign in to classes from their mobiles, either because it gave a better internet connection or because it meant that their children could use the family laptop/desktop/tablet for their school work. Working students needed the support and permission of their employers to access online classes from the workplace, which influenced the nature of their learning engagement during work hours. Warda, for example, was supported by her employers, while Mona found cooperation and understanding at the beginning but later witnessed aggressive behaviour towards employees who were studying at the same time. This caused her to worry about her future and affected her emotionally while engaging in OL. This finding echoes Deggs (2011) and Mahlangu (2018), who suggested that a lack of support in the workplace challenges adult learners in HE. When Maha enrolled at university, her fear of failure prevented her from sharing this with her colleagues and managers, which meant she cut herself off from any possibility of support from them, as well as from any benefits enshrined in Saudi labour law, which encourages workers to study and offers paid leave during final exams (Labor Law, 2022).

Previous learning experience has been acknowledged in the literature as a factor influencing the nature of motivation and engagement in the classroom (Bandura, 1997; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Data analysis from the current study showed that participants' previous positive or negative language learning experiences influenced their engagement in OL. Due to the participants' age range, the interviews produced accounts of English LL in SA from the 1990s until the 2010s. Despite differences in language teaching practices over that period, most of the women had negative memories of learning English either at school or in paid courses. Students' negative attitudes towards learning English seem to arise from their early schooling and uncompleted online courses later on. Participants noticed differences between teaching practices

in schools and universities using Arabic in classrooms. On a personal note, I have also experienced a range of classroom teaching and learning practices in EFL, such as using the mother tongue as the language of instruction and the teacher-centred approach, in which students 'acquire' knowledge via memorisation to pass tests rather than via methods that produce deeper and more meaningful learning (Alrabai, 2018; Alharbi, 2015; Al-Alhareth & Al-Dighrir, 2014). However, recent shifts in English teaching methodologies enabled Warda, Mona and Fooz to engage more in online classes, unlike the other three students, Roaa, Shoug and Maha, whose attitudes were negatively influenced by previous LL experiences.

5.2.3.3 Institutional Factors

One of the dominant themes in the institutional factors that emerged from this study is the impact of teacher–student interactions on student engagement (Allen et al., 2013; Dörnyei, 2001; Fredericks et al., 2004; Harbour et al., 2015; Kebritchi et al., 2017). Even though this study did not focus on teachers' behaviours in the classroom, the students' responses reflected their views about their teachers' attitudes and behaviours in English classes. The current study found that teacher–student interaction affected students' cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative and social engagement. This finding coincides with studies that showed the significance of teacher–student interaction as a contextual factor in predicting engagement and contributing to academic outcomes (Lam et al., 2012) or functioning as a lens through which to perceive learning (Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012).

In this study, the NTSs sometimes did not like the English teachers' teaching practices or attitudes. While some of the teachers created engaging learning atmospheres, some treated learners in an authoritarian and formal manner, leading them to be passive learners in online classes. With these teachers, learners could be hesitant to engage with them or nervous about two-way conversations. For example, the mother-students were upset with the teachers' threats to mark them as absent, as they were aware of the importance of attendance. The teachers did this in an attempt to motivate the students to participate and engage. However, the busy mature students whose children were also learning online criticised this behaviour, as they considered themselves adults responsible for their learning. Furthermore, they later found that no marks were allocated for participation or engaging in classes and insisted on not participating. These findings align with Markle (2015), in that female NTSs felt patronised or ignored by the teaching faculty, and this affected their motivation, as they wished to be treated as adults. In Bohl et al. (2017), faculty members were noted as being biased against NTSs, despite being considered a support source. When faculty members spoke negatively about NTSs, it affected students' perceptions of the faculty member and the institution as a whole (Bohl et al., 2017; Markle, 2015; Rabourn et al.,

2015). Even though no adverse comments were made to the NTSs in the current study, the participants reflected the need to be understood as EFL beginners, not as experts in the foreign language, and to be respected.

The teachers' interest in teaching English was another point raised by NTSs that affected their engagement in English classes, as engagement increased when the instructor reflected passion and interest in teaching the course (Hew, 2016). NTSs were motivated to learn English, and the behavioural action of their motivation (engagement) was affected by the teachers' level of interest in teaching English. This study stressed the importance of motivation and engagement in learning English, and LLs did not engage in classes if their motivation was affected. Pintrich and Schunk (2002) pointed out that learner motivation increases when teachers serve as role models and are excited about the subjects they teach. In their study of 200 Hungarian English language students at different levels, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) highlighted the importance of instructors' commitment and enthusiasm for teaching English as one of the most significant components of effective learning enhancement. Mona lost interest in engaging in virtual classes because she did not find the teacher as interested in teaching as her F2F teacher, while Maha was not interested in engaging with her F2F teacher because of her patronising tone, in which she talked to the students as if she were telling them a bedtime story.

Other institutional factors that affected student engagement in English classes were entrance exams, curriculum and workload, which aligned with the findings of Au et al. (2018) and Kara et al. (2019). The university website has information about university policy, study system and entry requirements; however, the NTSs in this study joined SEU without realising what the policies were, specifically the use of EMI and the fact that passing an exam in English competence was a mandatory entrance requirement for enrolment in a degree programme. The students felt that the pressure of EMI added tremendous stress and prevented more relaxed engagement with learning English because the stakes were so high (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Parajuli, 2022). In this study, this finding showed that such a policy hindered the most motivated and engaged NTSs from furthering their studies (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016; Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Parajuli, 2022). I sympathised with Fooz, who worked hard to pass all the assessments but was not allowed to enrol in any of the undergraduate programmes because she failed the English entrance exam. She lost hope and decided to postpone the idea of furthering her studies.

One must remember that the NTSs had initially assumed that the online English course would help them prepare for the English entrance exam but later found out that this was not the case. Kebritchi and Santiago (2017), Li and Irby (2008), Luyt (2013) and Mahlangu (2018) have

highlighted that student expectations in OL could be an issue that affects their learning experience, particularly in distance learning in HE. In line with Au et al. (2019), the less engaged students lost interest in the online course because they perceived it as either uninteresting or did not match what they wanted. Those NTSs who focused on whether the online English course would help them pass the entrance exam tended to let these worries negatively influence their progress and engagement. However, the most engaged students could easily relate the course content of the English classes to their personal and professional needs (Yang et al., 2017) and valued the effectiveness of the course in terms of promoting interaction and social presence. They also saw the point of developing their academic writing, could link learning activities to their goals and used simulations of real-world situations to boost their engagement (Farrell & Brunton, 2020).

At one point during the course, the large workload became a significant challenge for the NTSs when the university decided to move the holiday forward. Participants found it daunting to engage in online classes when they also had to complete and submit many assignments simultaneously. The heavy workload was the leading cause of student demotivation and difficulty in understanding study materials, and the NTSs may have lacked institutional support and felt that the university tutors were unaware of their needs as students. Despite this, the study showed that the available social support did positively influence their engagement in OL. Although not all of the teachers joined the students' social networking group, they fully supported their students in creating these groups to help each other (Ansong et al., 2017) and support student engagement in OL. Baxter (2012), Brown et al. (2015) and Farrell and Brunton (2020) have all shown that the engagement of distance learners is powerfully influenced by their ability to develop study-related relationships in a digital environment. NTSs find peer communities a vital source of support, comfort, encouragement and human connection. In the current study, the WhatsApp group functioned as a social space that tied the students together as a community.

5.3 Conclusion

In HE contexts, marginalisation and the exclusion of marginalised groups are structural problems that need to be identified and addressed (Oropeza et al., 2010; Turner et al., 2008). The studies in the HE of this group of learners highlighted concerns of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In an attempt to explore a diverse group of NTSs at a Spanish university, Padilla-Carmona et al. (2020) found that traditional pedagogy was not suited to this group of learners and that it created additional difficulties for them. These problems could be remedied by personalising learners' education to reflect their needs. Although EDI statements frequently use similar terminology, EDI concepts continue to be defined and applied differently by different institutions (Garcia et al.,

2021). This research context, for example, aims to provide equity of learning opportunities to a diverse group through a flexible learning approach. Even though the university employs a flexible (blended/online) approach that might suit NTSs' circumstances, the results showed that NTSs felt 'othered' in this context. First, they did not like to be called NTSs, as they viewed themselves as traditional students with more responsibilities. The NTSs in this context also felt disrespected and perceived as irresponsible adult learners via the threatening behaviour of certain teachers who lacked an understanding of their many other commitments in life. In this study, the mature learners did not share their life burdens with the teaching staff for fear of being judged, for having the discussions be perceived as attempts to postpone submitting assignments or for being compared to other hard-working TSs. This finding is in line with Tavares (2021), who examined five international students' experiences with EDI at a Canadian university. The results showed that international students felt excluded despite the university's efforts to apply these aspects of EDI. The current study's findings contribute to these principles by suggesting that more attention should be given to heterogeneous learners in all of their diverse and unequal situations, particularly in contexts that add burdens to their current lives, such as the recent covid pandemic. Doing so will enable these students to feel that they belong in learning communities because their needs and circumstances are being considered in HE institutions.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by summarising the aims of the study and how it was conducted, its main findings, and its main contributions. I then include a section discussing its limitations, and another suggesting directions for future research. The final section is dedicated to the implications of this research for theory, practice, and institutions.

6.2 Aim of the Study and Summary of Findings

The covid-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to investigate how a heterogenous group in higher education were motivated to learn English and engaged in OL alongside their multiple roles in life. My personal experience of teaching NTSs and having been one myself encouraged me to focus on this group of learners. I was very aware of the importance of motivation and engagement in the blended learning context, since I had worked in that environment. However, it was not clear what effect online learning would have on students' motivation and engagement during the stressful situation of the covid lockdowns. I had heard from friends, as well as knowing from my own experience of studying for the doctorate during lockdown with my children, that students experienced difficulties with their motivation and engagement in online learning. I had thought that it would be challenging for students to continue with their studies when all of the teaching went online, and my interactions with the participants suggested that their motivation would fluctuate and that irregular access to technology would affect their learning outcomes. However, what I actually found was a richer, more complex picture of how NTSs' motivation and engagement were affected by many contextual factors during the pandemic.

The aims of this study partially arose as a result of combing the literature for research on motivation and engagement and considering how they are interrelated (Akbari et al., 2016; Christenson et al., 2012, Eccles & Wang, 2012, Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Ng et al., 2018; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). The study aim was to combine a motivational theory from educational psychology with an engagement framework to understand the factors affecting female NT language learners' motivation and engagement in OL at a university in Saudi Arabia during the covid lockdowns. The significance of this study comes from portraying the complex nature of motivation and engagement in six NTSs participating in an entirely online English course, and in revealing which factors affecting motivation and engagement relate specifically to the unique pandemic conditions of the time and need further attention. The role of qualitative

enquiry in analysing the data was especially valuable for jointly creating a deeper understanding of the participants' stories and triangulating the data gathered from many different sources. Although OL motivated the participants because of its many advantages (Kuo & Belland, 2016; Robinson & Cook, 2018), the pandemic brought to the fore and exacerbated certain pre-existing inequalities in OL that added to the burdens of adult students who were working or who were parents. These inequalities affected the motivation and engagement of the participants, and in some cases reduced their chances of passing the module and progressing further with their education. The problem of inequalities and perceived lack of institutional understanding and support also led some of the participants to abandon the idea of university studies.

This research began by looking at participants' motivation to learn English online through the lens of PIT. In answering the first research question and its sub-questions, a clearer picture has emerged of NTSs' motivational goals and sense of self in their desire to learn English at SEU. PIT offers a suitable and supportive framework for understanding the motivation of non-traditional language learners in OL as it is a comprehensive model of factors affecting motivation. Although the sample was small, the participants revealed a variety of different motives and self-perceptions which established characteristic NTS heterogeneity in their engagement with the online English course. Thus, this research found that for non-traditional online learners, motivation and engagement are shaped by goals and sense of self, and these goals were found to change and fluctuate in intensity as the course progressed (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Participants' prior experiences of studying English and opinions about their abilities to learn English in an academic setting also shaped self-perception and modified levels of engagement. Competence in English was a standard requirement for further undergraduate study, and the barriers to study presented by the NTSs' other life commitments rendered it critical for them to stay motivated and to engage with their language classes through OL. The findings of this research constitute a valuable contribution to the EFL field as the framework facilitates effective investigation of LLS' motivation in different contexts, whether traditional, blended or online.

In response to the second research question, this study contributes to understanding student engagement in online English courses by using the five-dimensional engagement model devised by Redmond et al. (2018), which demonstrates that OL has a significant effect on NTSs' cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative, and social engagement. Unlike other research that looks at the dimensions of engagement separately, this study demonstrates the integration of the five components in OL environments and shows that their integration is essential in understanding LLS' experiences. Analysis of five engagement dimensions in non-traditional learners stresses the interplay of these dimensions in learning English online. For example, a student's inability to focus on classes (behavioural engagement) may affect their comprehension (cognitive engagement) and

simultaneously connect to negative feelings (emotional engagement) at not being able to proceed in university studies. This act may drive them to communicate with their peers, either seeking support (collaborative engagement) or at least finding relief through talking about their feelings (social engagement).

At the cognitive engagement level, this study found that the online approach supported students' comprehension in language classes if combined with visual and audio aids, although students' preferences may vary. In addition, the online approach was found to enhance students' cognitive transfer and self-regulation skills and proved to be a practical approach to learning English online. However, learners with low self-efficacy found it difficult to develop language skills online.

This study also indicates that learning a language exclusively online affects NTSS' behavioural engagement. In their home or work environments, students often lacked a suitable learning space that enabled them to participate effectively or at least to be able to listen carefully and focus on classes. This issue mainly arose if they accessed courses from home, where they were prone to be easily distracted by their caring responsibilities. However, due to the flexibility of online learning and the availability of class recordings and other internet resources, those who were motivated managed to engage with learning despite the challenges. However, it is essential to note that self-working on activities and active participation, as indicators of behavioural engagement online, did not always translate into success or lead to their passing the online course/entry exam.

In line with other studies in different educational settings by scholars such as Zembylas (2008), Wang et al. (2022), Yu et al. (2020), and Angelaki and Mavroidis (2013), this study found that learners reported both positive and negative emotions surrounding their engagement in OL. Negative emotions of fear, worry, frustration, and annoyance were associated with a lack of self-efficacy and other contextual factors. The positive feeling of contentment was related to the whole online experience; an experience which learners had not expected to be as effective or exciting, despite the challenges. Research shows that negative feelings are likely to appear when there is a change in a learning culture, for example, from a traditional learning environment to a more progressive student-centred approach (Hamdan, 2014) and even more so in extreme and uncertain situations such as the covid crisis (Wang et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2020).

In terms of social and collaborative engagement, feelings of contentment reported by the NTSS during their online experience would not have been possible without the social community that learners built. In online courses, social interactions with teachers and peers are considered fundamental components of an effective learning environment (Pittaway & Moss, 2014) that also alleviate feelings of isolation (Angelaki & Mavroidis, 2013; Dolan et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2018). OL enabled NTSS to communicate effectively in their social network group to support their

learning and discuss daily life and burdens while studying. NTSs created a sense of belonging to university and their classes and cultivated a sense of connection to their peers and, in some cases, teachers. The lack of student-teacher interaction in online classes affected the students emotionally and decreased their interest in engaging in online English classes. This view echoes the views of Fredricks et al. (2004) that teachers can inhibit social, cognitive, or emotional engagement if they fail to support academic and social outcomes that can increase students' connectedness and sense of belonging.

Last but not least, researchers stress the importance of context in motivation and engagement studies (Dorney, 2001; Reeve, 2012). The participants in the current study shared the experience of OL with many TSs and NTSs in educational institutions the world over. Many contextual factors that are highlighted in the third research question's findings, indicate that various factors can affect the engagement of NTSs in different contexts. This was particularly so in the context of the current study, because the female participants bore the burden of family responsibilities such as home schooling and caring for children, as well as caring for other family members or working. Beside the contextual factors, self-efficacy was the central theme in internal factors that affected student motivation and engagement and the teacher's behaviours and attitudes were the most important among institutional factors.

It is clear from the findings that the sudden and widespread use of OL during the covid-19 pandemic was the start of a new chapter in the history of teaching and learning in higher education. The specifics of this new chapter, however, are still unclear and require further research. It would be interesting to investigate the effects of OL in different country contexts, consider ways to close the digital divide, and boost student motivation and engagement using developing technology while keeping educational quality. Not only did the sudden online shift have an impact on TSs and NTSs, but it also changed the working practices of teachers and other staff in educational institutions. This shift brought with it both advantages and disadvantages for students. On the one hand, the NTS participants felt safe in working from home and avoiding the virus, enjoying the flexibility of synchronous and recorded classes, and saving time and money on travel and child care costs. On the other, they found themselves studying in conditions of social and economic uncertainty, struggling with the lack of emotional and practical support as well as limited technological resources. While some students struggled with the switch to OL, giving in to the pressure and difficulties, other students enjoyed the experience, and the majority of them now believe that future learning will be hybrid in nature. This is does not come as a shock, of course, because internet learning existed long before the pandemic and was extensively researched in the literature. The pandemic has simply accelerated the implementation of online learning on a global scale.

6.3 Contribution to Knowledge

Given that OL in higher education has become more mainstream since the covid pandemic, the doors are now open to non-traditional learners with variable commitments to study at university level (Macdonald & Stratta, 2001). I would still agree that OL is very suitable for learners presenting with different life circumstances and backgrounds because of its affordances (Kara et al., 2019; Markova et al., 2017), but the present study brings to the fore many of the hidden challenges and inequalities that NTSs have to deal with. Despite the fact that there is a growing body of research looking at online learning during the covid pandemic, the emphasis has so far primarily been on students' experiences and opinions of e-learning (Budur 2020, Laili and Nashir 2021, Muthuprasad, Aiswarya et al. 2021), while other studies have looked into the physical and emotional well-being of online learners (Chaturvedi, Vishwakarma et al. 2021, Idris, Zulkipli et al. 2021, Wiczorek, Koodziejczyk et al. 2021).

The first main contribution of this study is that it sheds light on NTSs' motivation and engagement in their online learning experiences during a time of great turbulence and uncertainty. Online learning environments were presented as the main alternative to face-to-face teaching during the covid crisis, and the sudden shift to OL brought with it a whole range of challenges that potentially affect the learning experience. The present study was originally conceived out of an interest in exploring what motivates NTSs to learn English and how motivation and engagement interact in the learning process. The dimension of online learning later became the specific research context out of necessity, and this study demonstrates that the qualitative investigation of contextual factors affecting motivation and engagement in OL has, at the very least, as much to offer as quantitative methods of research. The six stories narrated in this thesis ended with three of the participants continuing their university studies while the other three withdrew. Although not all of them achieved the results they wanted, they were all satisfied with their first OL experience, despite the great obstacles they faced.

A second contribution of the present study is that it draws out certain inequalities that exist within the current pedagogical framework of OL. Prior to the pandemic, research suggested that academic inequalities between students may be caused by the digital divide arising from socioeconomic factors (Asmelash 2019; Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Steele 2019). The findings of this study broaden our understanding of these factors, such as the differences in online access for students living in rural and urban areas, as well as the differences in learning environment, gender, age, financial, and family circumstances that made academic inequality worse during the pandemic (Asmelash 2019; Doyle, 2020; Preez & Le Grange, 2020; Steele 2019; Outhwaite, 2020). For example, female NTSs frequently took on more family responsibilities than their male

partners, such as home-schooling their children. Gender-related expectations therefore continue to play their part in generating inequalities in learning opportunities. This is further complicated if female adult learners question their ability to succeed academically on returning to education after long gaps (Alajlan, 2013; Kara et al., 2019).

A third contribution of the current study is that it helps to reconsider the concept of the non-traditional student. Initially, a definition of 'non-traditional' was arrived at after consulting the relevant literature, and inclusion criteria were chosen on this basis. However, this study has shown that we need to go beyond definitions to gain a deeper understanding of NTSs' stories and greater comprehension of the issues they face in higher education. This has been demonstrated to be especially important during the crisis in education caused by the global pandemic. It has also been shown to be important when reflecting on a change in learning modality, such as a move to online teaching. Other studies have focused on NTSs in these environments and reported the suitability of OL for different learners' circumstances (Kara et al., 2019; Markova et al., 2017), while others have found that F2F is a mode preferred by NTSs (Vanslambrouck et al., 2016). This study has gone further and deeper in analysing the value of online learning for NTSs by examining how they invest time and effort to engage in OL and identifying the factors that affect this engagement. Thus, the study generates practical implications for supporting this group of learners.

The fourth contribution is the use of PIT as a framework for exploring motivation. PIT was created within the field of educational psychology and was judged to be the most suitable interpretational framework for understanding participants' engagement in the online English course. The model is an integrative framework that sheds light on all the facets that shape students' academic motivation: self, goals, and contextual social environment factors. It supports comprehension of learners' motivation and enlightens exploration of engagement because both constructs are related. This model can enhance understanding of learners' motivation in blended and online learning in research or other similar contexts. The fact that few studies of motivation have used this model makes the current study stand out as a more comprehensive piece of research.

Finally, another contribution relates to the methodological exploration of student engagement. Unlike previous studies that explore engagement quantitatively, this study uses a qualitative case-study approach that combines the five dimensions of student engagement (cognitive, behavioural, emotional, collaborative, and social). This approach facilitated a deeper engagement with the study participants and enabled a wider view of their learning experience during the pandemic that took into account their other life roles as wives, mothers, carers, and workers. Although this study combines two effective frameworks in examining participants' data (COI and

the engagement model of Redmond et al., 2018), I found that COI was limited to three overlapping presences of the educational experience while the Redmond model allowed a more wide-ranging understanding of NTSs in OL since the analysis of the five dimensions can be related to in and outside-class activities.

6.4 Limitations

Before suggesting areas for future study, it is fundamental to address the limitations of this research. First, the study has methodological limitations. It was based on an interpretive paradigm, which addresses the nature of knowledge and reality. This paradigm is based on subjectivity through the researcher's interpretation. This view of knowledge (different realities) provided rich data (from other sources) about the phenomenon under investigation. Various sources, along with the researcher's interpretation, helped in presenting an understanding of engagement in an online language course in the Saudi context. In addition, the case study was used as a research design to examine this complex phenomenon in its natural context. The focus was on a small number of participants. It did not represent the whole population of students at the foundation level, so no definitive conclusions can be drawn from this study. However, researchers such as Flyvbjerg (2006) and Shenton (2004) have highlighted the importance of subjectivity in understanding the complexity of a phenomenon in each context and argue that case studies are unique and context-specific and can be examples of expanded consensus. Thus, although the findings of this study cannot be generalised due to differences in educational contexts, researchers and educators will be able to transfer results to their contexts (Bryman, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

The second limitation is using a cross-sectional study instead of a longitudinal one. A cross-sectional study is a 'snapshot-like analysis of the target phenomenon at one particular point of time, focusing on a single time interval' (Dörnyei, 2018, p. 78). This study focused on student engagement in OL during one academic semester. There was no data collected in the first semester to compare with the second semester, particularly for those participants who experienced a change of English teacher. A cross-sectional study may not, therefore, precisely reflect the engagement process.

The third limitation concerns data collection tools. Although self-reporting is used widely in engagement studies (Chapman, 2003; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012), this method has some drawbacks. For example, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009, pp. 8–9) highlighted social desirability, self-deception, acquiescence bias, and the halo effect. The first two issues are connected, reflecting that respondents may not provide accurate responses consciously (achieving desired-expected

answers) or unconsciously (deceiving themselves). Acquiescence bias refers to respondents' tendency to concur with all assertions while having conflicting or ambiguous attitudes. The halo effect, the fourth issue, is the tendency of participants to overgeneralise their positive and negative opinions of a subject, leading them to answer all questions about that subject with the same attitude. In this study, students' responses may have been influenced by social desirability, self-deception, and the halo effect. Since the data collected was focused on the student's motivation and engagement (questionnaire and self-report) in learning English online, they may have provided incorrect responses about their motivation and engagement (behavioural level). There was an attempt to overcome this issue by administering the motivation questionnaire twice and engagement self-reporting in many online classes.

The quality of data in engagement self-reporting may also have been affected by acquiescence bias. Students' replies are based on retrospection (when the researcher reminded them to fill out online forms). Some of them may not have remembered their precise actual level of engagement at the cognitive level (Chapman, 2003) and, as a result, may have responded neutrally to statements. In addition, the challenges those NTSs faced during their studies may have led them to react negatively when self-assessing their emotional engagement. The study employed other data triangulation tools to overcome such concerns.

Another limitation is related to the participants in the study. The research examined only NT female students with essential responsibilities besides educational commitments, such as families or full-/part-time jobs. Due to social segregation and cultural norms, there was no male participation. Therefore, this study was limited to female participants at the foundation level at SEU.

6.5 Future Research

Little research has been done to investigate NTSs' engagement in OL environments. Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that OL emerged as an emergency solution during the covid pandemic and remains a current and future teaching mode worthy of further exploration. As the research context is a university that offers the BL approach, more research is required to investigate NTS engagement with BL and to contrast this with the OL-only context. It could also be interesting to explore the differences in student engagement between F2F and virtual English classes and what factors affect engagement in these different environments.

At the methodological level, this research used the case study method and involved a small number of participants in understanding how NTSs engage in OL. Further research in other contexts, and with a larger sample, may yield a more diverse picture of the variety of factors

affecting engagement in this group of learners. In addition, because of the long process of gaining ethical approval, this study was able to focus on engagement in one semester only. Such a short period may not be sufficient to understand student engagement in OL fully. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to compare student engagement at different points in their journey and to determine if engagement increases or decreases with BL and OL approaches. Lastly, it might be helpful to conduct studies that use different methodological approaches, such as life histories, where NTSs can document their engagement experiences in OL by expressing their stories in their own words.

6.6 Implications

In the following subsections, theoretical implications are identified for OL, motivation, engagement and NTSs, and practical and institutional implications are drawn based on the study findings.

6.6.1 Implications for Theory

The study findings lend support to the PIT engagement framework of Maehr (1984) and Redmond et al. (2018) with regard to OL, and align with the concepts of community of inquiry (COI) in the context of NTSs. First, through the lens of PIT, the study presents a comprehensive overview of NTSs' motivation in OL. In addition to mastery and performance goals in L2 motivation theories, the NTSs highlighted other social and extrinsic goals for learning English in online environments. PIT could also provide an effective framework for a more holistic understanding of LLs' motivation in other educational settings, such as traditional and blended/online learning. This holistic understanding would help researchers and educators to offer recommendations for conceptualising learners' needs for motivation in OL and for considering learners' different motivational goals, their sense of self in learning and other factors in specific contexts that might affect their motivation.

OL was not the preferred teaching approach in the research context. The online approach became perforce the main teaching strategy in many HE institutions worldwide during the covid pandemic lockdowns, and instructors everywhere sought to motivate learners and engage them in this modality. Although this study presents participants' comments on the shift from negative to positive attitudes to OL, some of them were not particularly active and engaged during OL. With its flexibility in accommodating NTSs with family and work commitments, OL could be an effective learning strategy for younger NTSs. At the same time, other NTSs may find it challenging, especially older students with low self-efficacy. The challenges are connected to the NTSs having

grown up in a different educational culture which was a traditional, passive, and teacher-centred learning environment. Transitioning from conventional classes to an online environment requires students to become skilled in self-directed learning. There is potential for dissatisfaction with this mode if they find such skills challenging to acquire. OL could be a suitable learning environment for NTSs. However, the blended approach that combines the advantages of F2F and OL (Kaur, 2013) may support these learners more effectively in the current context and others, such as the transition from school to university studies. NTSs in the recent study were not ready for OL; thus, their engagement was affected.

COI is a supportive framework that presents three significant components of OL and shows where there is overlap between them in the educational experience. While the COI framework can support understanding overlap in cognitive, teaching, and social presences in OL in the educational experience, the engagement framework of Redmond et al. (2018) gives us a more detailed view of what this kind of overlap looks like outside of the educational experience. The engagement framework enhances our understanding of how NTSs engage in OL in five dimensions. Findings on engagement in this study reflect many similarities parallel to concepts theorised by Redmond et al. (2018). OL affected the participants cognitively, behaviourally, emotionally, socially, and collaboratively. Findings stressed that NTSs are not a homogenous group; in contrast, they are a heterogenous group who vary in their motivation and engagement in OL. Differences were observed in their motivation, engagement stories, and challenges during their studies and interaction with others, with some looking for support while others preferred to be self-directed.

6.6.2 Implications for Practice

Certain factors need particular consideration when applying the online instructional approach to NTS language learning, especially in contexts where mastering a foreign language is mandatory for entry to higher education, such as the research context. First, the study revealed a lower level of engagement among NTSs who had low levels of self-efficacy in learning English. This has implications for implementing OL with beginner-level students who lack self-directed learning skills. For students who juggle multiple roles in life, learning a foreign language while coping with the challenges of OL can be a highly demotivating experience, resulting in a loss of interest in engaging. Foreign language educators using OL need to understand the needs of beginners and use simple target language that can support learners' cognitive engagement and positively affect other components of engagement. It would be beneficial if there were a variety of visual and audio aids.

Second, according to COI and Redmond et al. (2018), for the online environments to be effective, LLs need to construct knowledge through interaction. Interaction with peers and teachers is essential for achievement and progress in learning. However, if contextual factors affect the cognitive, teaching, or social presence, students' motivation and engagement might be adversely affected. The findings show the importance of understanding context to evaluate internal and external factors that affect LLs' motivation their engagement in OL. Building a rapport relationship with NTSs in online communities would help educators understand learners' needs and the challenges they may face. Consequently, it would enable the teachers to find venues to motivate the students to be engaged in classes. Teacher one-to-one discussions with NTSs and individual support would be beneficial to provide some practical solutions to develop language skills in OL.

Another implication can be speeding up the transition process for NTSs by providing support or one-to-one discussion to reduce learners' anxiety in university and classes. In addition, language teachers need to identify practical ways to facilitate students' initial anxiety and frustration. Emotional engagement is considered a prerequisite for learning (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), and negative feelings could affect student engagement. It would be possible to reduce students' anxiety by allowing them a minimum of one week of adjustment in which they would receive practical training and guidance on using the various technological tools adopted in the flipped class (Crouch & Mazur, 2001; Garver & Roberts, 2013). Considering these implications for online learners could solve NTSs' low level of engagement, not only in solo OL but in the online component of blended format.

6.6.3 Implications for Institutions

Findings suggest that OL can be problematic regarding students' motivation and engagement in the current context, as NTSs represent a large population. Those learners come to university with other roles in life. Therefore, there are implications for educational institutions that wish to increase NTSs' motivation and engagement.

Considering the variation in learners' commitments, institutions could provide more support to enhance their experiences in B/OL. First, learners need to be reassured of the potential for flexibility in changing assigned timetables as long as they support their request with a letter explaining their circumstances. Although SEU grants students an opportunity to choose their schedules, a whole group would not be able to change their timetable due to the increase in student numbers in the current academic year. Another kind of support could be providing services at an institution, such as counselling, workshops, and training. Even though SEU has a consultation service and usually runs academic and non-academic activities that support learners

on campus, the situation was different during the covid pandemic. NTSs were unaware of consultation services, leading them to seek support from their peers in a social group or the researcher. In addition, induction was not enough to prepare students for OL. Therefore, further workshops and training are needed to support LLs in developing self-directed study and life skills to enhance their engagement and sense of well-being in B/OL.

Second, findings show that NTSs were not interested in the English curriculum and the workload of assessments. Although assessments (explicitly writing) support future academic study, students found it demanding to complete online activities, write essays, and prepare for other assessments. In addition, the English curriculum and its assessments did not help them to develop language-learning strategies for the entrance exam. There was a mismatch between the curriculum and entrance exam content. While the curriculum aims to develop language skills and content that is considered easy to master, the entrance exam requires several strategies that are new to students and are difficult to achieve, in particular at the beginner level. Although the university posted many resources for exam preparation on Blackboard, the NTSs seemed to be unaware of them. As English teachers in this context, we need to raise students' awareness of Blackboard content, especially the examples of entrance exam questions. The NTSs showed initiative in finding various free and paid online resources to help with their exam preparation. Implications for institutions can increase the need to provide training and workshops to explain exam strategies or at least devote an hour of VCs teaching them. Integrating entrance exam skills into the curriculum could develop LLs' motivation and engagement in B/OL at SEU.

Finally, although OL grew as an alternative mode of teaching to BL and F2F during the pandemic, the findings have shown that some NTSs would be willing to learn online in the future because of the suitability of the approach to their circumstances. For example, mature learners who also work may feel much more encouraged to enrol in higher education if the institution can offer a flexible online mode. This means that policymakers can consider providing online alternatives to their usual teaching modalities to support NTSs who find it difficult to attend blended or F2F courses.

6.7 Concluding Notes

To conclude, I have endeavoured in this study to explore NTSs' motivation and engagement during Covid pandemic. Yet, I must acknowledge that in conducting this study I have been able to expand my knowledge not only of the blended mode of teaching, which was the initial focus of study before the pandemic, but of online mode, due to the worldwide shift. Having some experience of teaching English in blended environments, I assumed I was aware of engagement as

a concept and how to engage students in BL. The journey was an excellent opportunity to question my beliefs and understanding of engagement in online communities, a new mode that I was not expecting to explore due to the BL nature of my context. More specifically, I assumed that engagement meant class participation, but I discovered that there are many components of this construct, and that participation was an indicator of behavioural engagement. Another example from the first time I observed participants, I assumed that due to their engagement in classes, engaged students would pass, unlike unengaged ones. Surprisingly, two of the most active students withdrew from university, while one of the unengaged students is now studying for a degree. I realised that it is wise for researchers not to draw conclusions before understanding the whole scene, and I was led to explore the factors behind my assumptions. I hope to have the opportunity to make contact with this unengaged student before graduation and continue exploring her engagement experience as an undergraduate.

In this research, I was able to interact with all six of the study participants: Maha, Shoug, Fooz, Roaa, Mona, and Warda, to develop a deeper understanding of their motivation to study and their engagement in OL, and how these were shaped and influenced by the other roles they took on in daily life. I hope that I have presented a clear view and understanding of the phenomena of motivation and engagement as they changed and developed during the online English course. The findings of this study will serve as the foundation for undertaking further projects in this field, such as raising awareness of the need for NTSs to be given more support and understanding in HE.

Appendix A A Summary of L2 Motivational Frameworks

The Period	The Model	Importance
Sociopsychology (the 1960s-1990s)	<p>Socio-educational model</p> <p>Clement's theory of linguistics self-confidence</p>	<p>*Students' attitudes to L2 culture and people will influence their success in L2 learning</p> <p>*language achievement is influenced by integrative motivation, language aptitude and other factors.</p> <p>Integrative motivations are integrativeness (integrative orientation, attitudes towards L2 community and interest in L2), attitude (towards L2 teacher and course), and motivation (attitude and effort towards learning).</p> <p>*AMTB is a questionnaire comprising 130 items about all Gardner's models in addition to L2 anxiety, parental encouragement, and instrumental orientation.</p> <p>*beliefs about one's ability to perform a task or achieve goals through interaction between language learners and the L2 community.</p>
<p>The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s) focuses on how the learner's mental process influences motivation.</p>	Goal Theories	<p>Learners learn L2 for many reasons and goals. Achievement goal theory (mastery and performance), goal setting (self-efficacy and intrinsic</p>

		motivation) and goal content and diversity (non-academic goals as social and extrinsic.
Process-oriented period (2000) focuses on the dynamic nature of motivation (motivation fluctuates within a class period, year, and lifetime)	Williams and Burden's Social cognitive model (1997) Dornyei and Otte of L2 Motivation	Three stages: reasons for doing something, deciding to do something, and sustaining the effort. Three stages: pre-actional stage (motivation retrospection), actional stage (executive motivation, and post-actional stage (choice motivation)
Socio-dynamic period(current) focus on the situated complexity of motivation in L2 learning as it interacts with social and contextual factors (relational system)	Ushioda person in the context Dornyei MSS	Understanding language learners' motivation by integrating the different selves and identities that are shaped in learners' culture and context. Ideal L2 self (one's ideal self in L2 learning) Ought to L2 self (attributes one believes possess to avoid negative outcomes. L2 learning experience (specific motives related to the learning experience and environment)

Appendix B Da Silva (2006) Model

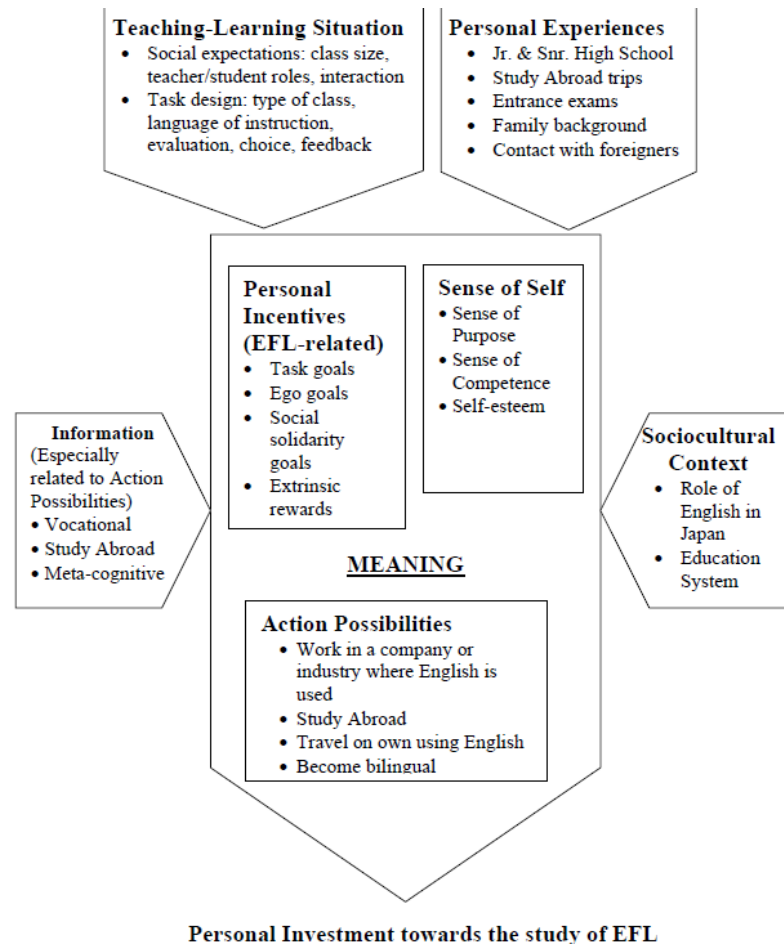


Figure 2.4. Maehr's personal investment model and EFL motivation of female

Maehr's PIT and EFL motivation of female Japanese university students (Da Silva 2006, p.37)

Appendix C PIT Online Survey

Dear Student,

Thanks for participating in this study by answering the following questionnaire. This study focuses on non-traditional students' experiences (those with other commitments and responsibilities while learning as workers or having people to care for husbands and children). This study will investigate non-traditional students' motivation to learn in Foundation Year at SEU (Saudi Electronic University). It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey. The survey is composed of three parts: part one is about personal information, **part two is about motivation to learn English which is adapted from *The Inventory of University Motivation, IUM English by Da Silva and McInerney (2005)***, and part three is about open-ended questions about the broad learning experience in SEU. **ALL DATA IS CONFIDENTIAL.**

Part One: Demographic Questions

Please choose from the options below

1. **Your Age:** a)18-23 b) 24-29 c) 30 and up
2. **Marital Status:** a) married with kids b) married without kids c) single d) divorced e)widowed
3. **Working Status** a) full-time job b) part-time job c) only student
- 4- **Do you consider yourself a non-traditional student (a traditional student in university directly from high school without a gap year)? Why?**
6. **Intended Major:**
7. **Campus branch in**

Part Two: Motivation to learn at SEU

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 each represent a level of disagreement or agreement. (5) means you strongly agree with the statement, (4) agree, (3) not sure, (2) disagree and (1) strongly disagree.

Example –

	How do students like to work at university?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
	<i>Circle your response for each one.</i>	Disagree				
Ex. 1	I enjoy making history at the university	1	2	3	4	5

If you Strongly agree with this, then you would circle 5.

If you Strongly disagree with this, then you would circle 1.

<i>Circle your response for each one.</i>		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	Learning English in itself is interesting	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I like my English to be compared with others.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I try hard at English because I am interested in my work.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Getting the highest grade in my English classes is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I work hard to try to learn something new in my English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I study English to maintain the skill and knowledge I already have.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I try to do well in my study of English because I like my English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I want to be good at English to feel important in front of my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	If I can use English well, I feel superior to others.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I try to do well in English so that I will be given responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I like studying English with other people.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I enjoy helping others with their English even if I don't do well.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	In my English class, I do best when teachers or peers praise me.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I want to learn English because I respect people around me learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Praise from my family (husband) for my English competence is important.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Students need to help each other in English class.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	It makes me unhappy if my friends aren't doing well in English.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I want to do well in English to have a good future.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I try to do well in English mainly to get credit so I can graduate.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	If I can use English, I'm considered to be well-educated.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I want to learn English because it can be useful in my present life.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

22.	I study English best when I can get some reward for my grades.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I try hard to learn English so that I can get a good job when I graduate.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I think it's natural that Saudi people should learn English to some degree.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I want to learn English because it will help me with my other studies at university.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I study English to deal with situations where English is needed.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I usually do the right thing in my English class.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I succeed at whatever I study in English.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Other students have helped me a lot with my English study.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	On the whole, I'm pleased with myself in my English classes.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	English was one of my best subjects in high school.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	If I can't use English, I think I'm inferior.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	If I'm studying alone, difficult English homework doesn't bother me.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Most of the time, I feel that I can master English	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I am very confident in my English study.	1	2	3	4	5

Part Three

1-What are the challenges you face in learning English at SEU?

2-How did you find the learning experience at the foundation level in the first online weeks at SEU?

Suppose you are a non-traditional student working or have a family to take care of other family members. Can You participate in follow-up interviews to discuss the challenges you face while learning (your identity is completely confidential)?

- a) Yes b) No

If Yes, can you please provide your email

Email.....

The End.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix D First Interview Questions

Purpose

- To explore online learning experiences in the first seven weeks due to the COVID-19 outbreak (as students have two different online learning environments). *[depending on open-ended survey questions, these questions might be reframed].*

Target Selection

- non-traditional students selected from questionnaire responses.

Introduction

- Welcome the student.
- State the purpose of the 1st student's interviews.
- Explain the use of data (for research purposes, and names will not be disclosed).
- Gain consent on the tape recording.
- Explain no right or wrong answers.
- Encourage the student to freely express her views.

Questions

- Can you tell me about your family?

هل من الممكن أن تتحدث لي عن عائلتك؟

- Do you have other responsibilities? What are they?

هل لديك التزامات؟ ماهي؟

- Why did you choose to learn at SEU?

لماذا اخترت الدراسة بالجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية؟

- Are you motivated to learn at SEU? Why?

هل أنت متحمس للدراسة بالجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية؟ لماذا؟

- Do you think learning English in this mode (blended/online learning) is useful and effective for you?

هل تعتقد بأن دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعة (حضورى وافتراضى) مفيد لك؟

- With all these responsibilities, you decided to come back to study. Can you tell me the reasons behind this?

بعد الانقطاع عن الدراسة ومع كل المسؤوليات والالتزامات على عاتقك إلا أنك قررت العودة ومواصلة مسيرتك العلمية فهل بإمكانك ذكر الأسباب الداعية لمثل هذا القرار؟

- Is this your first online learning experience? How did you find it?

هل هذه تجربتك الأولى في الدراسة عن بعد؟ كيف وجدتتها؟

- How did the online learning experience at the foundation level be found because of COVID-19?

كيف وجدت تجربة التعليم عن بعد في السنة التحضيرية في ظل التغيرات الجديدة التي أحدثتها جائحة كورونا؟

- As you have commitments and responsibilities (family responsibilities, work commitments and kids are learning from home), how was this experience to you while you are a student as well?

بالرغم من التزامك بعدة مسؤوليات (العائلة العمل وتعليم الأطفال من المنزل في الوقت الراهن بسبب الجائحة) كيف كانت تجربتك وكيف استطعت الموازنة؟

- You have two different learning environments: one of them supposed to be online and the other one F2F but because of the current situation of COVID-19, there is only one option (online), how did you perceive this decision?

الجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية توفر بيئتين تعليميتين الأولى عن بعد لتقديم الفصول الافتراضية والثانية حضورية في الحرم الجامعي وبسبب جائحة كورونا تم الغاء الخيار الثاني وأصبحت هناك خيار واحد فقط بتحويل جميع الفصول الى فصول افتراضية للمحاضرات الحضورية والافتراضية وأصبحت الدراسة عن بعد بنسبة 100% ما تأثير هذا القرار عليك كونك طالبة مستجدة في الجامعة؟

- How did your teachers encourage you to learn in both environments?

كيف تشجعك المعلمات في البيئتين المختلفتين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

- Which one of these environments(F2F/virtual) are you interested in to learn English? Why

أي بيئة دراسية تفضلين الحضورية أم الافتراضية لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ولماذا؟

- What is your plan for the coming semester if it is continued to be online learning? or if it is blended?

ما هو تخطيطك للفصل الدراسي القادم لو استمر وضع التعليم عن بعد؟

- What was your expectation for your experience in learning at SEU before joining the university?

كيف كان تصورك عن الدراسة بالجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية قبل الانضمام إليها؟

- And what is it now after experiencing online learning in both different learning environments?

ما هو تصورك عن الجامعة الآن بعد تجربة التعليم عن بعد في بيئتين مختلفتين(الحضورية والافتراضية)؟

- As a non-traditional student (a mother- worker), why did you decide to go back to study?

كطالبة غير عادية لديها الالتزامات والمسؤوليات لماذا قررتي العودة للدراسة؟

- As a non-traditional student (a mother- worker), do you face issues while managing your commitment and learning at the same time? What are they?

كطالبة غير عادية لديها الالتزامات والمسؤوليات هل واجهتي أمور أو مواقف وأنت تعملين على الموازنة بين مسؤولياتك ودراستك في الوقت ذاته؟

- As a non-traditional student (a mother-worker), how did Covid-19 affect your study?

كطالبة غير عادية لديها الالتزامات والمسؤوليات كيف أثرت جائحة كورونا على تعلمك اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة؟

- Are there any comments you would like to add about your current experience in language learning at SEU?

هل يوجد لديك أي تعليق ترغبين في اضافته فيما يخص تجربتك الحالية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في الجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية؟

Appendix E Second Interview Questions

Overall Experience:

- 1- Overall, how do you evaluate your experience at SEU?
- 2- What are the things you enjoy about being a student at SEU?
- 3- What are some things that are perhaps difficult or frustrating at SEU?
- 4- What was the most exciting part of the English course? Why?
- 5- What was the most difficult part of the English course? Why?
- 6- What challenges have you faced in the foundation year at SEU?
- 7- Has anything in you changed due to being an online learner this year? (skills- beliefs)
- 8- At the end of this course, how would you describe your feelings as a student in the foundation year at SEU?
- 9- Did you experience any negative feelings in English classes?
 - a- When did you have such a feeling?
 - b- Why did you have such a feeling?
 - c- Do you wish to return to blended learning in the coming year? Why?
- 10- Were the teachers in both environments engaging you to learn English?
- 11- Were your colleagues in the class engaging you to learn?
- 12- Was the learning environment at SEU engaging you in learning English?

Assessment:

- 13- Have you taken STEP? How was your experience?
- 14- How do you find English assessments at SEU? (*What do you like/do not like about it*).
- 15- How did you prepare for STEP?
- 16- Do you think the English curriculum at SEU helped you to achieve the targeted score of 83?
- 17- Were the teachers help you or give you some advice about the STEP?
- 18- From your perspective, how can students get a high score in STEP?

Social Media in academic life

- 19- Do you use social media for learning purposes? What are they?
- 20- Do you think it is important? Does it play a role in your learning?
- 21- How did you use it when you joined SEU?
- 22- Was it helpful for you? How?
- 23- From your perspective, what are the pros and cons of using social media in learning?
- 24- How about your teacher? Were you engaging with her through social networks?
- 25- What features do social media Apps such as (WhatsApp) offer? How? Example?
- 26- How do social media programs assist your learning with friends? Example?
- 27- How do social media program as (Telegram and WhatsApp) assist your understanding of an educational topic? Example?
- 28- Can you tell me what you think is essential to keep you engaged in your study? Why?
- 29- Can you tell me how engaging in social media facilitated or impacted your learning?
- 30- Do you note any problems or difficulties with using social media in learning and engagement?

Plan

- 31- What is your plan for the future?
- 32- Are there any challenges you faced this year, and do you hope to overcome them in the future?
- 33- Would you wish academic life to return to blended learning at SEU?
- 34- What would you advise a friend (non-traditional) who will join the foundation year at SEU and ask you about the English course?

Appendix E

Closure

Do you have anything to add?

Thank you for participating in this research. You have the right to contact me at any time if you wish to receive a copy of the findings.

Appendix F Change in Course Calendar

The screenshot shows a Blackboard announcement page. On the left is a dark sidebar with navigation options: Writing Assignments, Quizzes, Tools, شارة اكماد لكتاب اللغة الانجليزية, Virtual Classes, Course Management, Control Panel, Content Collection, Course Tools, Evaluation, Grade Center, Users and Groups, Customization, Packages and Utilities, and Help. The main content area features an announcement titled "URGENT: Course Calendar Changes" posted on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 5:34:11 PM AST. The announcement is addressed to "Students" and states that final exams will be in week 13, making the following week the last week of class instruction. It lists four key changes:

- Presentation Group #2 will present week 12. **Those students who chose to present on unit 8 are allowed to change to a unit 5-7 just email me with your new unit and the class CRN.**
- Writing assignment unit 7 is due on **Saturday, April 10, 2021.**
- Quiz 2 will be available for students on **Friday, April 9 - Saturday, April 10 - Sunday, April 11.**
- Last day to complete the IQ is on **Saturday, April 17.**

The announcement is posted by "عبدالله العتيبي" (Abdullah Al-Atabi) for the course "English Language Skills - Damman-Females". At the bottom, the logo of the "الجامعة السعودية الالكترونية" (Saudi Electronic University) is visible.

لباحث: طيب بركك أحدي دعمك م الهل.

للمشارك: حقيق فلحد الآن لحد الآن لتظلمت مع أحد لموضوع سي ال ادرة العم والشبي لان اخا الشراف عوقدون بماللو قلت ان الباغى كمل درلتي يقولي ليت عويين ضي زيهاشي لاخفت تبصر اراحة ما ادري طيش النظام خفت مويخ لي يرفقلت لخليه سر يفاضل وتعويين الاحري عوقدون الموضوع اجينا. وانا ايضا ابلغى اعني السنه هذي ان زيهات لي اللهيب عدم الفين هم معي خريجات منفس الم عهد لثا سرتت حرك من زمانك هم اخوتنا قاول هم والله لبي علي هم وعلي يقول هم طيش ريكلم اذا يتفكر صقنك م دراستنا ونوقى فينسين ابسري ردون علي طيشرتت فين فين لا بغاء احمدي بيكي عويينك سرون مجا في نظام المقيت احقول لي ال اللبيبك لمل يبس يقولن لي احمدي بيكي لطعي في المعهد احمد بيكي في مغممة ما ادري لبي في عويينك وكون سلوب ولولوب اصط الكسير.

لباحث: الهل عمو،؟

المشارك: اي لهي يدرون.

لباحث الهل فاكلن تدرة فاعل زوجك لال خبرتي ملتي بتكلمين درلسه؟.

المشارك: والللك هم يدون حقيقه ولاح ملل

لباحث: طيب اي ش هي الاسباب للهلي تخك تكلمين درلتيك؟

المشارك: لثم فكت في التحرين المادي لانوض عي كويس والله الحمد البسرو اللبي حاول بيكر فينسيني نا من وقتها حاولت بكون لي مورقاصنني شبي وحطيت لك رقواسي. وسمع اللوق ادا تل ملبضت عي ال جام علة عريه الهفتوحه ضي وقت ال حجر طلعت نا وبيتي خيس مشريط الن زوجي مريضو لسننا فالك عشنا المبتنقويين وولفت مع بيتي وللمت واحد دلتور ال طالبين شيريه وقال عاي لوش هلكه مرت عايها سرين مكن يقفي ال جام عك الهفتوحه او اللقنر رويه والاح ملل نا دخلت س جلت لثي شيه حمد ملل وجلي يقول. لان يبعد لمعه موظفت على طول لثا سب عطالها والني في ميينه نظيه جلتي توظي فعلى طول.

لباحث: طيب عادي اسأل عن عمرك؟

المشارك: عمري تقريبا لثي عويين نا اذكر بلوي ولكن حلما ويتفكر معاه هولم لنا واخو ليح السرين على قع عيش آتته نا اذكر مكن قال اي نا وبتكلم على ش ان يقدر ونه العجم فق الوالوي يقوي را في مواليد 1400 امي كل بتقول واحد في المل وكفوي اشارة الى الهلك خالد رحمة الله عليه ومن هذا التقدير حطو اخو لي اللبي في واحد الفبر في الثلثي زلت لزوجت ولاف في ريل عيططي. دخلت لمدرسة في عمر 9 سنوات

لباحث: م او ه مس براك في اللغة الانجليزية.

المشارك: مستوي اول على ما اظن بتري نا ما عرف النظام حقه مرة.

لباحث: لطيب لبي فش فبتكلمني مع بعد؟

المشارك: بصراحة موالح سرق اللبي في سب حان اللبي مكن من حظي. المكن ان عتبر ع ال جام ع في هطقة جاز ان ثلاث ساعات والللك مكن بعبد واجات ما في ال يطق لثا فل. مخلص لهن مكن ان في هذا الوقت الناس كل هارزلت ومبتا في ش ققي عوي ما اقدر امشي من فال فالك عشان اجبر وادوم واحضر حاضرتك لتحل وعشله عن بعد قدر ارجع اسمع لاجاضرتك اللبي نشوتني.

خاص قتي النجلش اضاج احديرج ليقتنييفس ي صولما اجي لطقك لتتنضحك علي لنا من اولقت لكم لنا السلة غير
ممارسة ل غفلي شينضحكون علي اذا ما نطق تلك كلام كويس ومراحة هذي حطم من ف الشراغ بلكلهم. صي يني لم
تسم عني بكم ونطقي شي غلط حكي سبتضحك قول مبدال ملضكين علي لنا لك ساعينني لطق ص ح لاس نفع لحي يني.

للباحثوكيف تواصلكم مع زميائكم في شعبة؟

المشارك مصلح لئنا قروب اذا في بي شي ورتق ال نخر ليعضرا لو احفله شي او موفاهم شي نذكربعضنا لبعض الواجهات
وموعد التاليمات

للباحثي عن هل هذه لمجموع قفي دة لك؟

المشارك: اي قروب كويس والله في ج امعات شريه اعضاء هبة التدرس مع الطلبة لن في الانترنتوي هي اللهنا ذ الي ييل من
الهابور د عش ان توصل م ال سيدة و م لودوا ما في اي بلص الميننا وي ال ست اذ انتي في ل حاجضرات اذ تلقلنا
ل حاجضرات من لجة و ملعظنا من وقت الان ص عبلهم في شي غير لمادة.

للباحث: وقت ل حاجضرات هذ القروب يظن فعال؟

المشارك: تنقل اذا ما حنا مين شروحات وعاون فيف مبعض ال طلوب ابهي الم حضرات لاقول دتلكون مسؤولة عن
الشي فتعرف لو احد حده مثكل في دخول كيز او مثكل قفوية ممكن تساعد ملحلبس حقيق فرصي اليوم قرصة امس وحدة
من زهلاشي شاطرة وتشارك ونا ما اعرف حقيقه ميتوا مهي اللي ظهرو لي اعرف لهم اش طر فيف اجاءت انض الشعة
ما خيت ف هول مياينات لنا عيف حقيقه لصد دمتي وملك لباركول يوس لفتوا ل س تبعين اسمع مبيشكون ملكن ظا في
لظاهي الن هبة لصد دمتم لم عنت الغلب ما عدى.

Appendix H ESM survey instrument

Name.....Datetime.....

- 1- Are you reporting on a face-to-face (Virtual) or Oxford online learning activity?
- 2- Where are you?
- 3- What is the main learning activity you were doing (or just did in class)?
- 4- What else were you doing?

Behavioural

Did you participate in today's class activities?

Did you pay attention to the teacher today?

Did you listen very carefully in class?

Emotional

Did you feel good when you were at English class today?

Did you enjoy learning new things in English in class today?

Did you feel frustrated in English class today?

Social

Did you try to help others in English class?

Did you try to understand other people's ideas in English?

Did other students help you in English class?

Cognitive

Did you **express your ideas** using English in today's class?

Did you think about what others were saying in English?

Did you try to **comprehend the teacher's English**?

Anything happened in class today (you liked it or did not like it)?

Did you participate in the class WhatsApp group during class time?

(social-emotional) Khajavy, G. H. (2020). 13 Modeling the Relations Between Foreign Language Engagement, Emotions, Grit and Reading Achievement. *Student Engagement in the Language Classroom*, 12.

(cognitive and behavioural) Oga-Baldwin, W. Q., & Fryer, L. K. (2020). Engagement growth in language learning classrooms: a latent growth analysis of engagement in Japanese elementary schools. *Student Engagement in the Language Classroom. Multilingual Matters*.

Arabic Translation

..... الاسم

يهدف هذا الاستبيان لقياس مدى مشاركة الطلاب في الأنشطة التعليمية التي يقومون بها في الصفوف الدراسية، وذلك من خلال الإجابة على أسئلة تتعلق بـ (الوقت الذي تقضيه في الصف، المكان الذي تتواجد فيه، الأنشطة التي تقومون بها، وما هو النشاط الأساسي لهذا الفصل؟) (قراءة كتاب، استماع، تحدث).

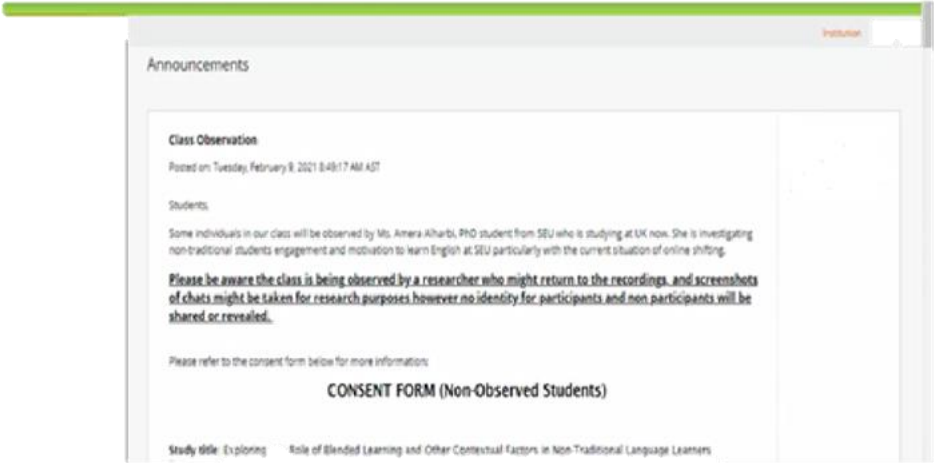
اليوم:	التاريخ:
1	هل هذه المحاضرة اللغة الانجليزية الافتراضية من الجامعة أم الافتراضية لأكسفورد؟
2	ما هو النشاط الأساسي لهذا الفصل؟ (قراءة كتاب، استماع، تحدث)

3	Non-Traditional Language Learners: Exploring The Factors Affecting Engagement In Online Learning At A University Level In Saudi Arabia
4	هل شاركت في أنشطة اللغة الانجليزية اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
5	هل كنت متابع للمعلم/ة طوال المحاضرة؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
6	هل استمعت جيداً لما قاله المعلم/ة اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
7	هل شعرت بشعور جيد عندما كنت في صف اللغة الإنجليزية اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
8	هل استمعت بتعلم شيء جديد باللغة الإنجليزية في الصف اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
9	هل شعرت بالإحباط في صف اللغة الإنجليزية اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
10	هل حاولت مساعدة الآخرين في صف اللغة الإنجليزية؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
11	هل حاولت فهم أفكار الآخرين باللغة الإنجليزية؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
12	هل قام طلاب آخرون بمساعدتكم في صف اللغة الإنجليزية؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
13	هل عبّرت عن أفكارك باستخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في صف اليوم؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
14	هل فكرت فيما يقوله الآخرون بالإنجليزية؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق
15	هل حاولت فهم حديث المعلم/ة باللغة الانجليزية؟ (أ) كثيراً (ب) الى حد كبير (ج) نوعاً ما (د) قليلاً (هـ) لا على الإطلاق

هل حصل شيء أزعجك أو يزعجك نفسي لم تحضر رطلايوم؟

هل تواصلت مع لطلبته في لمدى موعدة لخصق بك نفسي ممدوع رطلوتس ابقت لم تحضرة؟

Appendix I Observation Announcement



The image shows a screenshot of a Moodle announcement. At the top right, the name 'Institution' is visible. The announcement is titled 'Class Observation' and was posted on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 11:17 AM AST. It is addressed to 'Students'. The text states that some individuals in the class will be observed by Ms. Amara Alharbi, a PhD student from SEU who is studying at UK now. She is investigating non-traditional students' engagement and motivation to learn English at SEU, particularly with the current situation of online shifting. A bolded warning states: 'Please be aware the class is being observed by a researcher who might return to the recordings, and screenshots of chats might be taken for research purposes however no identity for participants and non participants will be shared or revealed.' Below this, it says 'Please refer to the consent form below for more information:' followed by the title 'CONSENT FORM (Non-Observed Students)'. At the bottom, the 'Study title' is 'Exploring Role of Blended Learning and Other Contextual Factors in Non-Traditional Language Learners'.

Announcements

Class Observation

Posted on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 11:17 AM AST

Students

Some individuals in our class will be observed by Ms. Amara Alharbi, PhD student from SEU who is studying at UK now. She is investigating non-traditional students' engagement and motivation to learn English at SEU particularly with the current situation of online shifting.

Please be aware the class is being observed by a researcher who might return to the recordings, and screenshots of chats might be taken for research purposes however no identity for participants and non participants will be shared or revealed.

Please refer to the consent form below for more information:

CONSENT FORM (Non-Observed Students)

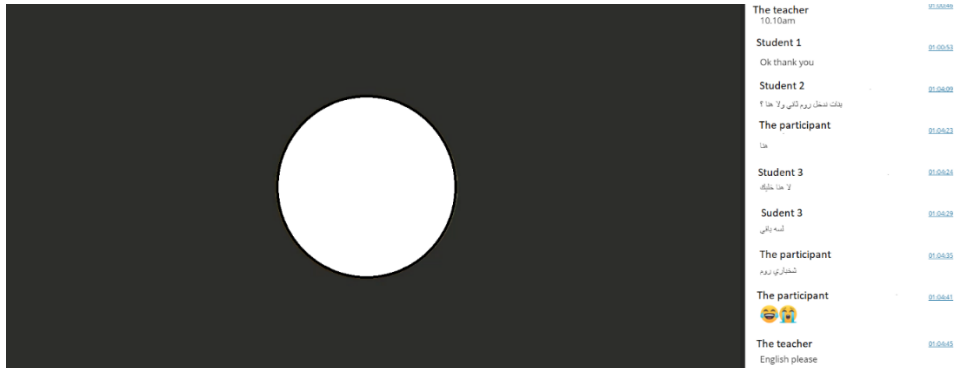
Study title: Exploring Role of Blended Learning and Other Contextual Factors in Non-Traditional Language Learners

Appendix J Observation Example

Observation 1 Example- Roaa

Class	Taught Skill	Duration	Day	Time	Campus
F2F (delivered online)	Reading & Writing	2 hours were observed out of the actual 4 hours	09-02-2021	9:00 am	Eastern
1- General Comments about class					
This class was supposed to be on campus but delivered online because of covid restrictions. The teacher greeted the students and did warm-up activities at the beginning of the course.					
2- Students' engagement in the class					
<p>1- In the first hour, the participant was active in class. She responded many times in the chats (more than five times in the first 15 minutes). The participant did some vocabulary exercises and engaged with the teacher. However, the participants did not respond after that, and I had to ask her why. The teacher asked the student to read, but she did it. WHY?</p> <p>2- <u>The student's engagement and interaction declined as she barely participated with the teacher in the second hour.</u></p>					
3- Other Points of Observation					

- 1- The participant talked with another student in the chat in Arabic, and the teacher asked her to speak and write in English, although it was a break of 10 minutes.
- 2- The teacher asked the students to continue working (self-study), and she was online if there were any questions.



Link
Link
Relationships
Stripes
In Vivo
Unicode
Annotation
Cloud
Explore

Quick Access

IMPORT

Data

- Files
- File Classifications
- Externals

ORGANIZE

Coding

- Codes
- Relationships
- Relationship Types

Cases

Notes

Sets

Search Project

Files

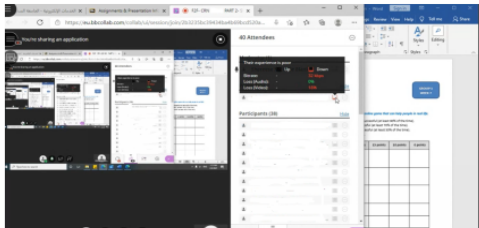
Name	Code	Refere
Shoug intervie	23	37
Maha intervie	21	36
Roaa intervie	20	30
Shoug intervie	18	41
Mona intervie	18	28
Warda intervi	18	25
Fooz interview	16	25
Mona intervie	16	27
Warda intervi	16	26
Fooz interview	15	32
Maha intervie	13	23
Students Chat	12	33
Roaa intervie	11	21
Warda	8	14
Fooz	6	9

Shoug


Edit Code Panel

02-03-2021 Presentation day

It is presentation day. The participant waited long time and then as it showed in the screenshot that she informed the teacher that she is ready as the teacher reminded the students that they have to present today, or they will lose the chance of participation as students scheduled their presentation. Despite that the teacher explained to the students how to share the content or the presentation through the blackboard, the participant explained the difficulty in sharing her file with the class through the blackboard. Then the participant mentioned that there is a problem with her internet and the teacher checked on the blackboard and told her yes let's wait till it is stronger.



Later the teacher asked the participant either to email it to her or share it on the screen. The student read the prepared slides (she informed before that she asked the support of a friend to help in the presentation). Later, the teacher commented on student's presentation and how she heavily rely on the reading the slides as there was no natural sound of the presentation. The participant justified her performance of being nervous as she has a parrot in her house repeated some words.



Appendix K Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Non-Traditional Language Learners: Exploring The Factors Affecting Engagement in Online Learning at a University Level in Saudi Arabia

Researcher: Amera Ali Alharbi

ERGO number: 61505

You are invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information before deciding to participate in this research. You may like to discuss it with others, but it is up to you to decide whether to participate. If you are happy to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

The researcher (Amara Alharbi) is a PhD candidate seeking to investigate the social and contextual factors that promote or hinder language learner engagement in blended learning contexts. The research aims to ask students (non-traditional students) about language learner motivation, engagement and experience in the blended learning environment and if this environment enables them to improve language skills as the COVID-19 pandemic affected blended learning at SEU, the first [phase of this study seeks to explore the teachers' and students' experiences in shifting to online learning in the first weeks of the current academic semester.

The researcher is a funded student by Saudi Government.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are a student in a foundation year at SEU who is learning the English language through a blended course. As this study aims to understand the language learning experience by investigating students' motivation and engagement, your participation in this study will help understand language learners' experience in learning English in a blended mode.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Once you consent to participate in the study, you will answer an online questionnaire and online interviews for everyone's safety and reflect on your learning experience in self-report. The online questionnaire has some questions regarding motivation and engagement in the blended learning environment. In the interview, you will have a chance

to reflect upon your learning experience individually. In the self-report, you must reflect on some questions for three weeks.

Are there any benefits to my taking part?

There is no direct benefit for individual participation. However, this will help shape the study in understanding language learner engagement in blended contexts and understanding Saudi students' motivation in learning English in a blended modality.

Are there any risks involved?

There is no risk in participation, and the students have the right to withdraw at any stage. No real identity will be revealed in the study, and if there are real names, the identity will not be exposed in the written analysis or anywhere. If you are to be mentioned, you will be assigned a nickname.

What will data be collected?

The data will be collected by the researcher through

- 1- some questions in the online survey*
- 2- interviewing some volunteers throughout the semester.*
- 3- Filling out experience report on some weeks*

Will my participation be confidential?

YES. All participants' information will be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants' names will not be revealed under any circumstances. The researcher will inform the participants to have the option to say their real names or just initial letter; however, pseudonyms will be used in the analysis. The recording of the focused group will be transcribed and destroyed after the transcription. There is no need to keep the tapes for future use. The data and the information will be accessible to the researcher only and will be secured on a Southampton university computer. There is no third party involved in this study.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to participate. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent directly.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time before the focus group interview without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected. You can clear your withdrawal by emailing (a.a.alharbi@soton.ac.uk) or informing the researcher directly. Please remember that withdrawal after recording the interview will be difficult as it is the primary source of data information. However, suppose you

withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained to achieve the study's objectives. We can exclude your participation from the study as you requested.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your details will remain strictly confidential. Research and research made available in any r. The researcher will share the findings and results with the participants if they want to know about the study's findings.

Where can I get more information?

The researcher

a.a.alharbi@soton.ac.uk (Amera Alharbi)

The supervisors:

v.m.wright@soton.ac.uk (Vicky Wright)

k.borthwick@soton.ac.uk (Kate Borthwick)

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researcher, who will do their best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, don't hesitate to get in touch with the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to participate in research. This means that when you agree to participate in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed and for the purposes specified to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and can identify a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear about what data is being collected about you.

Appendix K

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/Is/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf>

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only to conduct our research and handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. Suppose any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly. In that case, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is legally required to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use our data. The lawful basis for personal processing information in this research study is for performing a task in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for three months after the study has finished, after which any link between you and your information will be removed.

We will use the minimum personal data necessary to safeguard your rights to achieve our research study objectives. However, your data protection rights – such as access, change, or transfer of such information - may be limited for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your data is used or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>) where you can make a request using our online form. Please get in touch with the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk), if you need further assistance.

Thank you.

Appendix L Motivational goals and sense of self

1- Motivational Goals

Below are the participants' responses to the survey (1&2) to question numbers in the survey focusing on mastery goals (MG), social goals (SG), performance goals (PG) and extrinsic goals (ExG).

<i>Student</i>	MG1	MG3	MG5	MG6	MG7		SG11	SG12	SG14	SG16	SG17
<i>Shoog 1</i>	4	4	4	3	3	<i>Shoog 1</i>	4	4	2	4	2
<i>Mona 1</i>	4	4	3	4	3	<i>Mona 1</i>	5	5	3	5	2
<i>Fooz 1</i>	4	4	5	4	5	<i>Fooz 1</i>	5	5	4	4	3
<i>Roaa 1</i>	4	5	4	5	4	<i>Roaa 1</i>	3	4	5	5	2
<i>Warda 1</i>	5	4	5	5	5	<i>Warda 1</i>	5	4	1	5	3
<i>Maha 1</i>	4	4	4	4	4	<i>Maha 1</i>	4	4	5	5	4
	MG1	MG3	MG5	MG6	MG7		SG11	SG12	SG14	SG16	SG17
<i>Shoog 2</i>	3	2	4	4	4	<i>Shoog 2</i>	4	4	3	2	2
<i>Mona 2</i>	4	4	4	5	4	<i>Mona 2</i>	4	4	4	4	4
<i>Foz 2</i>	4	4	5	5	5	<i>Foz 2</i>	5	5	5	4	5
<i>Roaa 2</i>	4	1	4	4	4	<i>Roaa 2</i>	3	5	5	3	5
<i>Warda 2</i>	5	5	5	5	5	<i>Warda 2</i>	4	4	5	5	5
<i>Maha 2</i>	4	2	3	4	4	<i>Maha 2</i>	4	4	4	3	4

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	PG2	PG3	PG8	PG9	PG10		Ex13	Ex15	Ex19	Ex22	
<i>Shoog 1</i>	2	4	3	2	4	<i>Shoog 1</i>	3	2	3	2	
<i>Mona 1</i>	1	5	3	4	4	<i>Mona 1</i>	5	4	4	4	
<i>Foos 1</i>	2	5	4	4	4	<i>Foos 1</i>	5	4	5	3	
<i>Roaa 1</i>	2	5	5	3	4	<i>Roaa 1</i>	5	5	5	4	
<i>Warda 1</i>	5	5	3	4	5	<i>Warda 1</i>	5	5	5	4	
<i>Maha 1</i>	4	5	5	5	4	<i>Maha 1</i>	4	4	4	4	
	PG2	PG3	PG8	PG9	PG10		Ex13	Ex15	Ex19	Ex22	
<i>Shoog 2</i>	4	3	2	2	4	<i>Shoog 2</i>	4	2	5	5	
<i>Mona 2</i>	4	4	3	4	5	<i>Mona 2</i>	4	2	4	4	
<i>Foz 2</i>	5	5	5	5	5	<i>Foz 2</i>	5	3	5	5	
<i>Roaa 2</i>	3	4	2	4	3	<i>Roaa 2</i>	5	1	5	5	
<i>Warda 2</i>	5	5	3	5	5	<i>Warda 2</i>	5	2	5	4	
<i>Maha 2</i>	4	3	4	5	4	<i>Maha 2</i>	4	4	5	4	

2- **Sense of Self:** Below is the participants' responses to the survey (1&2) to question numbers in the survey focusing on a sense of purpose (SP), Self-concept (SC), and sense of reliance (SR).

	SP18	SP20	SP21	SP23	SP24	SP25	SP26		SC27	SC28	SC29	SC30	SC31	SC32
<i>Shoog 1</i>	5	2	4	4	4	4	4	<i>Shoog 1</i>	3	3	2	1	3	2
<i>Mona 1</i>	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	<i>Mona 1</i>	3	3	3	4	2	3
<i>Fooz 1</i>	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	<i>Fooz 1</i>	4	4	2	4	4	4
<i>Roaa 1</i>	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	<i>Roaa 1</i>	4	4	2	3	4	1
<i>Warda 1</i>	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	<i>Warda 1</i>	4	4	1	4	4	1
<i>Maha 1</i>	5	4	4	3	5	5	5	<i>Maha 1</i>	3	3	3	3	2	4
	SP18	SP20	SP21	SP23	SP24	SP25	SP26		SC27	SC28	SC29	SC30	SC31	SC32
<i>Shoog 2</i>	2	3	4	4	5	4	5	<i>Shoog 2</i>	3	3	3	3	3	2
<i>Mona 2</i>	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	<i>Mona 2</i>	4	3	3	4	1	3
<i>Foz 2</i>	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	<i>Foz 2</i>	5	4	2	5	4	3
<i>Roaa 2</i>	2	4	5	5	2	5	5	<i>Roaa 2</i>	4	3	2	3	3	1
<i>Warda 2</i>	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	<i>Warda 2</i>	5	5	1	5	5	2
<i>Maha 2</i>	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	<i>Maha 2</i>	3	3	4	2	2	4
	SR33	SR34	SR35						SR33	SR34	SR35			
<i>Shoog 1</i>	2	3	3					<i>Shoog 2</i>	3	3	3			
<i>Mona 1</i>	4	4	3					<i>Mona 2</i>	5	4	4			
<i>Fooz 1</i>	4	4	4					<i>Foz 2</i>	4	4	4			
<i>Roaa 1</i>	3	4	4					<i>Roaa 2</i>	2	5	3			
<i>Warda 1</i>	4	4	4					<i>Warda 2</i>	4	5	5			
<i>Maha 1</i>	4	3	3					<i>Maha 2</i>	3	2	2			

Appendix M Engagement data in Excel

Below are students' responses to self-report (ESM) for cognitive engagement (CE), behavioural engagement (BE), positive emotional engagement (PEE), and negative emotional engagement.

	CE W1	CE W2	CE W3	CE W4	CE W5	CE W6	CE W7	CE W8	CE W9	CE W10	CE W11	CE W12	CE W13	CE W14
<i>Fooz</i>	4.0	4.0	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.3	4.7	4.0	4.3	3.3	4.7	4.0	4.0	4.0
<i>Mona</i>	2.7	4.0	4.0	3.7	4.0	1.7	2.3	3.3	1.7	3.0	2.3	1.7	4.0	
<i>Shooq</i>	2.7	2.3	1.7	2.3	2.7	1.3	1.3	2.7	2.7	2.3	1.7			
<i>Roaa</i>	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0			
<i>Warda</i>	3.0	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.7	3.0							
<i>Maha</i>	2.7	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0									
Student	BE1	BE2	BE3	BE4	BE5	BE6	BE7	BE8	BE9	BE10	BE11	BE12	BE13	BE14
<i>Fooz</i>	4	4	4	5	4	4	4.7	4	4	2.7	4.3	4	4	4
<i>Mona</i>	2.3	4.3	4.3	3	3.3	1.7	2.3	4	1.7	3	2.7	1.3	4.7	
<i>Shooq</i>	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	3.7	1.7	3	3.7	1.7	3	1.7			
<i>Roaa</i>	3.7	4.3	3.7	4	1.7	4.3	4.7	1.7	3	4.7	3			
<i>Warda</i>	4	4.3	4	4	4.7	3.3	4.3							
<i>Maha</i>	2	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.3									
Student	PEE W1	PEE W2	PEE W3	PEE W4	PEE W5	PEE W6	PEE W7	PEE W8	PEE W9	PEE W10	PEE W11	PEE W12	PEE W13	PEE W14
<i>Fooz</i>	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<i>Mona</i>	2.5	2	3.5	2	4	1	2	3	2	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	

<i>Shooq</i>	1.5	2	1	1.5	1	1	1	1	1	2	2			
<i>Roaa</i>	2.5	5	4.5	2.5	1.5	3	3.5	2.5	2	3.5	3			
<i>Warda</i>	2.5	2.5	3	2.5	3	2	2.5							
<i>Maha</i>	1	2	2	2	2									
<i>Student</i>	NEE W1	NEE W2	NEE W3	NEE W4	NEE W5	NEE W6	NEE W7	NEE W8	NEE W9	NEE W10	NEE W11	NEE W12	NEE W13	NEE W14
<i>Fooz</i>	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2
<i>Mona</i>	2.3	2.2	2	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.2	1	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.2	
<i>Shooq</i>	3.8	3.5	3	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.5	1.2	0.8	0.5	0.2			
<i>Roaa</i>	1.1	1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2			
<i>Warda</i>	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.1							
<i>Warda</i>	3.7	3	2.7	4.7	2.3	3.3	2.7							
<i>Maha</i>	1.3	1.7	2.7	1.3	2									
<i>Student</i>	SE W1	SE W2	SE W3	SE W4	SE W5	SE W6	SE W7	SE W8	SE W9	SE W10	SE W11	SE W12	SE W13	SE W14
<i>Fooz</i>	3.7	3.3	2.3	4	4	4	4.3	5	3	3	2.3	3.3	2.7	3
<i>Mona</i>	2.7	3	3	2.3	5	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.3	2	1.7	1.3	2.3	
<i>Shooq</i>	1	1.3	1.3	2	2	1.3	1	2.3	2.3	2.3	1			
<i>Roaa</i>	3	4	2	2	1	4	4	1	3	4	4			
<i>Warda</i>	3.7	3	2.7	4.7	2.3	3.3	2.7							
<i>Maha</i>	1.3	1.7	2.7	1.3	2									

Appendix N Braun & Clarke's (2006) TA Guidelines

Step	Description
1- Familiarise yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas
2- Generating Initial Themes	Creating interesting features of the data systematically across the entire
3- Searching Themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme data set, collating data relevant to each code
4- Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work for the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5- Defining and Naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6- Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating from the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Appendix O Themes and Codes

Name	Description	Sources	References
Behavioural Engagement (main theme)	The observed acts show that the student is active in learning.		
<i>Careful Listening and Focus (sub-theme)</i>	An indicator of behavioural engagement is when students listen carefully to the class.	6	10
<i>Participation (sub-theme)</i>	Behavioural engagement indicates when students participate and interact in the class.	14	31
<i>Persistence (sub-theme)</i>	Behavioural engagement indicates when students face challenges and decide to continue their learning.	10	18
<i>Self-Working on Activities (sub-theme)</i>	An indicator of behavioural engagement is when students work independently on the activities.	3	3
Cognitive Engagement (main theme)	The extent to which students can take part to make efforts in the task at hand (learning English)		
<i>Cognitive Growth (sub-theme)</i>	Cognitive development comes through understanding and comprehension	14	17
Camera Usage	Turning the camera on in synchronous classroom from the teachers' sides	7	10
Class Recordings	Recording synchronous	6	7

Name	Description	Sources	References
	classrooms to be available and accessible for online learners.		
<i>Metacognitive Knowledge (sub-theme)</i>	The learner's knowledge and reflection on their learning	9	13
<i>Metacognitive Regulation (sub-theme)</i>	The strategies the learners use in their learning	6	19
Emotional Engagement (main theme)			
<i>Negative Feelings (sub-theme)</i>	Uncomfortable feelings such as fear, frustration and worry	8	14
<i>Positive Feelings (sub-theme)</i>	Happy feelings as satisfaction and enjoyment	6	8
Engagement Meaning (main theme)		6	6
Factors Hinder or Enhanced Engagement (main theme)			
<i>External Factors (sub-theme)</i>	Factors outside the individual's control as an institution and society.		
Institutional			
Curriculum	English curriculum in the context of this study	5	6
Entrance Exam	The English entry exam, called STEP, tests students in vocabulary, grammar, listening and reading.	9	20
Teacher	Instructor (virtual teachers in this study in both different learning environments who taught English)	15	40
Workload	The number of assessments and activities that need	5	6

Appendix O

Name	Description	Sources	References
	to be done by the learners.		
Sociocultural Factors			
Caring Responsibilities	Taking care or being responsible for children, sick or older people.	3	3
Covid Impact	The effect of the pandemic on learners in Saudi Arabia	2	2
Culture	The customs and social behaviours of Saudi people	2	3
English Learning Experience	Previous English learning experience in the Saudi educational system or online courses.	6	13
Family and Relative	People who are connected to a person either by blood or marriage.	8	10
Lack of Support	The insufficient help that a learner needs	7	10
Work	workplace	6	8
<i>Internal Factors (sub-theme)</i>	Factors within an individual		
Motivational Goals	Goals that motivate a person to do a task.	12	20
Personality Traits	The unique characteristics of an individual.	3	16
Self-Efficacy	Individual's beliefs about his/her ability to do a task.	7	24

Name	Description	Sources	References
Social Engagement (main theme)	Communication in the online community		
<i>Building Relationships(sub-theme)</i>	Learners' effort to build a good relationship and maintain it in the online community.	3	4
<i>Sense of Belongings (sub-theme)</i>	The feelings of connectedness to others.	4	4
Collaborative Engagement (main theme)	The development of the different relationships with teachers, peers and institutions that support learning		
<i>Social collaboration (sub-theme)</i>	The attempt to communicate with others to achieve common goals.	10	20

Appendix P Research Journals

Research Journal 1 (reflection on the focus-November 2019)

As a language teacher at a blended university, I am interested in exploring students learning experiences in learning the English language through this approach. In the beginning, I was interested in engagement in general (first progression review) as I noticed in my teaching experience in this context that students were not fully engaged. Besides, the students kept complaining about the workload they must do through the blackboard and wished to learn traditionally. Recently, I heard many students suspect the university certificate because the term "blended learning" is in the certificate. They believe that the name will affect their chances of future jobs. This might be related to the country's previous thought of forbidding any online

Appendix P

certificates (they are not acceptable by the ministry of education). By their fears, Saudi students are not aware of the meaning of the concept (of blended learning) even though the university administration present that in the induction.

To narrow down the topic, I started searching for L2 motivation. I found PIT and explored that it is not used in L2 research, and King et al. (2019) recommend using it in L2 motivation research. From that time, I began to connect it to my real life to comprehend it more. As a mother and English teacher, I supported my kids to learn English as they spent some years in the US and now in the UK. Even though my kids have some factors on behalf of children's success as parents' level of education, the opportunity to study abroad, and social life, I have one son who avoids speaking in English and does not reflect self-efficacy in many matters. In analysing the previous incidents, I can connect this to a factor in Saudi culture at that time, as I hope it does not exist anymore. Comparing family members may affect children's behaviour, and it is worse if the teacher uses this among siblings at the same school. The older son was more competent than the younger, which led some relatives and teachers to compare the younger to his older brother, which affected the younger's behaviours in learning and life in general (one of these comparisons was speaking in English). So, I argue that in some contexts, even the collective one as mine, despite all the efforts parents make to support kids' learning, some issues affect learning in general and foreign languages. Therefore, I began to explore the theory more and decided to use it as a lens to understand students' engagement in blended learning.

Research Journal 2 (reflection on the survey, December 2019)

Designing and creating a survey was not a natural step for me. I started to search to find the original study for the university level, and I could not find it on a website or even in published articles. I found ISM on McInerney's websites; however, I was looking for the university version, which will save me time and effort. Contacting Professor McInerney, and he replied to me with supporting materials. The questions in the survey were designed to test many items such as self, goals and other conditions as parents, teachers, and peers. After having the questions ready, I wondered how I needed to choose between these questions, which are over 100. Despite their importance, I understand that the students will not answer them all. I start to select some questions on each scale.

I decided to translate the questions into the Arabic language despite having little experience. My Arabic teacher friends revised the translation to ensure that the content was explicit and there was no ambiguity. Creating the survey online was not easy too. I tried many websites such as isurvey, which the university supports and Google Docs. I am so happy I went through all these, so I will be well prepared and expect many things when dealing with accurate data. Initially, I thought it was not that difficult and could do it quickly. However, exploring websites and writing the questions (in two languages) is demanding. Also, there are some issues in using isurvey with Arabic languages, which encourages me to use google forum. Even applying to Ergo was not straightforward and required some days to finish the applications. Going through all these steps developed some skills and raised my awareness about the time-consuming process, which I should remember when studying.

Research Journal 3 (reflection on piloting the survey, January 2020)

Running the analysis for a survey was not easy for a person with little experience with statistical analysis. Although I took quantitative methods as a module in the first year of PhD year, I found understanding some concepts and procedures for analysis. I went to a workshop in London, explored YouTube videos, registered in Laerd (statistical lessons online), and bought a book for SPSS to teach myself. I learnt a lot through these; however, I found that most of these are not crucial to my studies, especially if they will be case studies for some participants, as I am not searching for generalisation.

In the beginning, I thought there would be differences between the different groups' sense of self and goals; however, there was nothing. This encourages me to find some cases that might be interesting to analyse and follow their engagement all the year.

Research Journal 4 (reflection on interviewing SEU students, February 2020)

Going to Saudi Electronic University after two years and a half was inspiring. There are many changes that I have heard about and noticed since I came to the UK for postgraduate study, and many changes were good to know about them before starting my actual data. For example, when I taught in the foundation year, students used different content in the virtual speaking classroom than at F2F. Besides, the student had to do a paper-based test. Nowadays, students must use the oxford platform and join virtual classrooms that follow the same content in their F2F. Also, students must do online tests instead of paper-based exams. In my previous experience, students had to use either laptops, Ipads, or books. In contrast, now, students must bring their electronic devices, or the university can allow them to borrow some if they need them.

Most foundation teachers are hired by a company and are not actual teachers of the university. The teachers have access to BB and use BB tools such as announcements and emails. They also assess students' works through blackboards to show students save assignment features from raising their awareness about plagiarism. Students must submit four written works and group presentations in the semester to be assessed. Also, the Oxford University Press provides a report about students' attendance and participation in three virtual classes weekly). By the end of the year, students must give a result for a standardized test (STEP) to continue in the university.

Interviewing students in a focus group was not easy. Despite the question I prepared for them, managing the conversation with different students was challenging. I found one student in the second group (morning group) who was shy, and if she disagreed with the others' comments, I found it interesting to hear and interrupt the others to listen to her views. Besides, some students like to keep talking all the interview, and I did not experience this with the first group. Hence, I think I was exposed to different groups of people who suggested that I manage the conversation properly to ensure that all participants could reflect their ideas.

I was excited when I applied the qualitative and quantitative methods in the piloting phase. I read many books about the challenges the researchers might face; however, I was not expecting something like what I had. Despite those students acknowledging that they were willing to participate in the interviews (in the survey and provided suitable time through Arabic communication), there was some confusion. For example, some students prefer the evening time; when I sent the information about the time in the evening, they replied that they come to the university in the morning and wish for the interview in the morning too. They provided a different time slot as they expected the interview to be virtual (through skype) despite there being nothing about virtual interviews. Another obstacle was that some students did not show up, although they revealed their willingness to participate.

In a situation like this, I was not expecting to find plan b. I visited the country for only one week. As there was no time to waste, I approached my colleagues (teacher). I asked them to tell the students if they were willing to participate in focus group interviews, which will be about their experience in learning through a blended learning approach. Some students participate, and their names are not on the list. This shows me how a researcher needs to plan very well all the steps that he-she must do and provide alternative plans and questions if matters are not as expected.

I transcribed the interviews for teachers and students; however, I will focus on the central issues highlighted to guide the plan due to the time and word limits.

Research Journal 5 (reflection on the methodology, March 2020)

In terms of methodology, there were many phases in the previously written methods in the first progression report. I planned to use questionnaires much time (beginning-middle and end of the semester) to measure students' engagement, interviews, observation, and reflective journals. However, after reading many engagement studies besides articles that applied personal investment theory, I devised a different plan. I decided to use PI components to give an overview of language learners' motivation in learning English in a blended modality and then find some cases to track through the experience sampling method to understand the students' engagement and explore more through interviews, data logs and experience sampling method. Piloting the data helps me plan the real study, particularly after finding no significant differences between the groups in reaching their goals. Besides, it enables me to engage with my research and understand more the practicality of research methods.

Discussing the plan of my methodology with my supervisor, Vicky, and she raised my attention to observe an online classroom where students communicate with different teachers (not current F2F teachers). I began to plan the methodology to implement online and F2F observation as this might reflect learners' engagements in different modes. I must put much consideration when I design the research methodology. I must start with a general questionnaire about students' goals, self, and conditions. Also, I must think about online and F2F observations at different times as one will not be reliable. I have also to consider measuring students' engagement through their data logs and reflection after F2F and online classrooms. For more data, interviews may enrich the study about students' engagement experience in blended learning.

Research Journal 6 (reflection on the Engagement Framework, June 2020)

After being away from my work due to the world COVID-19 pandemic, I had a chance to rethink my work. I revised my literature notes; I found that I wrote about the Motivation and Engagement Scale (MES). However, when I read the first chapter in the literature review, I chose Halverson and

Appendix P

Graham's 2019 Engagement framework. I went back to read more about the two frameworks, as both are considering engagements. I liked MES and thought it would help me in my study as I am using both constructs to understand non-traditional language learners' experiences in blended learning. I deleted the previous framework and started writing about the MES.

After two days, I was working on my research design; I found that I aimed to understand engagement through the lens of the PIT. That is to say, PIT will help me to understand students' motivation in BL, while the framework (Redmond et al., 2018) will help me to measure engagement at different times after F2F and virtual class. In contrast to MES, which would measure both constructs once. So, I decided with the confidence to go back and use Redmond et al. (2018) engagement model in online learning because of the worldwide situation with the covid pandemic.

Appendix Q Research Approval

19/10/2020 https://rtms.seu.edu.sa/_layouts/15/RTMS/DCAcceptFemale.html?reqn=اميره علي مريزيق الحربي&reqt=Exploring The Role of Blended/o...

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education
Saudi Electronic University
Deanship of scientific researches



المركز العربي للتعليم الإلكتروني
وزارة التعليم العالي
الجامعة السعودية الإلكترونية
عمادة البحث العلمي

سعادة الأستاذة/ اميره علي مريزيق الحربي حفظها الله تاريخ الموافقة : 27/02/1442
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ... وبعد:

إشارة إلى موافقة سعادة مدير الجامعة على ضوابط تعبئة أدوات جمع البيانات للباحثين المرفوعة بالخطاب

رقم 4239 وتاريخ 15/3/1436هـ، وبناء على توصية لجنة أدوات جمع البيانات للطلبات المقدمة إليها ومنها

طلبكم المقدم بعنوان: **exploring the role of blended/online learning and other contextual factors in non-traditional language learners engagement**

أفيدكم بصدور الموافقة على توصية اللجنة، وبإمكانكم البدء بالعمل..

نأمل منكم تزويد الجامعة لاحقاً بنسخة من البحث وأي بحوث منشورة بناء على هذه الدراسة.

هذا الخطاب صالح لمدة ستة أشهر من تاريخه.

وتقبلوا خالص التحية والتقدير ،،،

عميد البحث العلمي

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https://rtms.seu.edu.sa/_layouts/15/RTMS/DCAcceptFemale.html?reqn=اميره علي مريزيق الحربي&reqt=Exploring The Role of Blended/online Learning ... 1/1

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