

Affect and Investment in Language Learning: The Case of English in Saudi Arabia

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Sameer Satardien

224196036

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Supervisor: Professor Ansurie Pillay

DECLARATION

I, Sameer Satardien, declare that

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how affective experiences shape students' investment in learning English within a preparatory programme at a Saudi Arabian university. It argues that affect is not merely a psychological state but is also a social force that shapes how students engage, belong and construct meaning in English learning contexts. Adopting an interpretivist research paradigm, the study implemented a qualitative research approach and utilised a descriptive case study design. Data were collected using two open-ended questionnaires and two narrative writing tasks administered to Saudi Arabian first-year preparatory university students. The questionnaires were completed by 394 students (Questionnaire 1 and Narrative 1) and 230 students (Questionnaire 2 and Narrative 2). A thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns across emotional experiences, motivational processes and investment trajectories. The findings show that emotions such as confidence, pride and enjoyment induced sustained investment, whereas frustration, fear and anxiety (test anxiety, the fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension) led to withdrawal, avoidance, and defensive learning postures. This study reveals that the emotions experienced by students were, at times, socially mediated through teacher behaviour, assessment pressure, and peer judgment, showing that affect and investment are dynamically linked. Two emergent concepts in language learning, namely emotional detachment and emotional displacement, explain how students redirect or suppress negative emotions in response to repeated failure or exclusion, demonstrating that affect can reshape long-term motivation and investment. The study introduces the affective pathways model of investment, which integrates emotion, identity, and engagement, to understand a student's lived experiences of language learning. This contribution expands current theoretical understandings and demonstrates the methodological value of large-scale qualitative design. It aligns its pedagogical significance with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the Graduate Attributes Framework, which emphasise developing confident, adaptable, and globally competent graduates prepared for meaningful participation in an interconnected world.

KEY TERMS: Affective factors, Language learning investment, Language learning identity, Motivation, Anxiety

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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

1. Introduction

Globally, English language learning has acquired a pivotal role in educational systems and in transforming how societies interact (Crystal, 2003). For students in non-native English-speaking countries (NNESCs), English is not only a tool of communication but is also a gateway to better educational and career opportunities (Alrabai, 2014; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020). However, despite years of studying English, a significant number of Saudi Arabian students learning the language fail to achieve the desired proficiency levels in it (Alrabai, 2014; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020). The literature on the topic highlights the main reason for this state of affairs as affective barriers to effective language acquisition (Alshammari, 2022). In a Saudi Arabian context, moreover, English proficiency is closely linked to national development goals that have been outlined in *Saudi Vision 2030*. Furthermore, these goals place emphasis on educational and economic diversification (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024).

Despite the importance placed on English through *Saudi Vision 2030*, however, learning English presents students with unique challenges in a predominantly Arabic-speaking country whose language embodies the cultural and religious identities of Saudi Arabians (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Almesaar, 2022; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). This study factored in these complexities as I explored how Saudi Arabian students' affective factors and English language investment shaped their language learning journeys.

Drawing on Krashen's (1982, 1985) concept of affective filters, and Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin's and Norton's (2015) concept of investment, I have aimed to understand how affect and investment shaped the English language learning experiences of Saudi

Arabian university students at the preparatory level of study, which is discussed further on.

In this chapter, I establish the foundations of my study by providing the rationale for exploring the learning of English among Saudi Arabian students, and I more fully outline the purpose of the study, the study's problem statement, and the context of Saudi Arabia and its educational landscape. I then discuss my research objectives and research questions in order to provide a roadmap for my study and offer a brief overview of the research process. Finally, I cover my stance as the researcher in this study and note the study's delimitations before outlining the thesis structure.

1.1 Rationale for this Study

My motivation for carrying out this study stemmed from a combination of factors, which included my personal interactions, professional observations and experiences with students as a teacher of English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia, and also an interest in second language acquisition. Working closely with Saudi Arabian university students studying at first-year preparatory level over the years, I have observed at first hand the challenges they face in learning English. These challenges extend far beyond linguistic difficulties, and include emotional, motivational, religious, and socio-cultural factors (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Almesaar, 2022; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020). Witnessing the challenges experienced by students and the impact these challenges had on their language-learning journeys deeply influenced my desire to explore the possible underlying causes and their implications.

More specifically, I have observed how students' prior negative experiences with English language learning create a cycle of disengagement and low self-efficacy in preparatory classrooms. Many students struggle to participate actively for fear of making mistakes or being judged, which further limits their exposure to, and interaction with, the English language and any opportunities to improve their skills and mastery.

Academically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on second language acquisition by examining the interplay between affective factors and investment in language learning. While much research has explored the role of emotions and socio-cultural influences on second-language acquisition, studies specific to a Saudi Arabian

context remain limited (Alrabai, 2020). Only a few researchers, such as Assalahi (2019) and Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi (2020), have explored motivation and investment as intertwined aspects of language learning. By doing this study, therefore, I have aimed to gain insights into, and contribute to the literature on, the ways in which Saudi Arabian students invest in English language learning and how affective factors shape their English language learning; and also, to understand the relationship between affective factors and investment in language learning in a Saudi Arabian context. While often used interchangeably, second language refers to use beyond the classroom in institutional and social contexts, whereas foreign language learning is largely classroom-bound (Ellis, 1994).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the complex interplay between affective factors, such as anxiety and motivation, among others, and English language investment among Saudi Arabian students in the preparatory year. Affective factors impact students' language learning journeys and this study aimed to identify how these factors shaped students' learning of English.

In addition to understanding the affective factors shaping students' learning experiences, the study aimed to explore the students' investment in learning English. For Saudi Arabian students, investment in English often stems from external pressures such as parental expectations, social expectations, and career aspirations (Assalahi, 2019; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020). In examining these and other external factors, the findings could shed light on the factors that drive and hinder students' investment in learning English.

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

In Saudi Arabia, English serves as a vital tool for academic achievement and economic mobility (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Almesaar, 2022). The importance given to English can be seen from the compulsory status of the language at school and at university (Alqahtani, 2021). Yet, despite being given the opportunity to learn English from a young age, many Saudi Arabian students find it a persistent challenge to achieve the level of proficiency needed for their academic and professional careers (Almesaar, 2022; Mustafa & Hamdan

Alghamdi, 2020). This discrepancy suggests that systemic and individual factors, particularly those related to emotional and cultural areas of learning, may hinder effective language acquisition (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Almesaar, 2022; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020).

The concept of affective filters provides valuable insight into these challenges (Moafa, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, studies have highlighted several key affective factors influencing English language acquisition and learning, including anxiety, varying degrees of motivation, and the lack of student-centred approaches (Alghamdi, 2019; Alqasham, 2022; Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017). A recurring affective theme in English- language learning literature in Saudi Arabia is anxiety. Students' fear of making mistakes often leads to reduced classroom participation overall, and to reluctance to participate in classroom speaking practices in particular (Al-Saraj, 2011; Moafa, 2024). This anxiety is further heightened by socio-cultural pressures, such as fear of negative evaluation among one's peers, with fear of failure discouraging students (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2017).

The concept of investment in English language learning has gained significant attention in studies globally (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2010, 2013), but remains underexplored in a Saudi Arabian context. In addition, there is a lack of literature examining the interaction between affective factors and investment in shaping students' language learning journeys in a Saudi Arabian context. By addressing this in my study, I have aimed to contribute to the existing literature by providing educators and researchers with insights on the relationship between investment and emotional factors for school and university students learning in English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 The Saudi Arabian Context

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is often referred to simply as Saudi Arabia, is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula, with a demographic shaped largely by its Islamic heritage and tribal traditions (Bowen, 2008; Al-Saraj, 2011). It spans approximately 2,240,000 km and most of its territory is covered by one of the largest deserts in the world, the Empty Quarter (Al-Saraj, 2011). Saudi Arabia shares its northern borders with Jordan,

Kuwait and Iraq, its eastern borders with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman, and its southern border with Yemen.

Founded in 1932, Saudi Arabia is an Islamic monarchy, governed by the Al-Saud tribe. During its first six years, its economy relied primarily on traditional practices such as trading in dates, the exporting of camels and pearl fishing. However, the discovery of oil in 1938 revolutionised its economic landscape, transforming Saudi Arabia into one of the largest global exporters of crude oil and a symbol of wealth and prosperity (Ramady, 2010). Saudi Arabia's political and religious systems are intertwined because the country is governed by Islamic law based on the Muslim religious book (Salameh, 2018). The king serves as the head of both state and government, with religion influencing legal policies and cultural norms (Ramady, 2010; Salameh, 2018). Islam plays a central role in the lives of Saudi Arabians. All Saudi Arabian citizens are Muslim, with approximately 98% being Arabs, and their official language is Arabic, the language of the religious book. Moreover, the dominance of Islam in every facet of people's lives reflects Saudi Arabia's commitment to preserving its religious values (Bowen, 2008; Ramady, 2010; Salameh, 2018).

Saudi Arabian culture is a mixture of Islamic practices and traditional social norms. These cultural norms are deeply rooted in religion, with Islamic principles guiding the country's legal systems and daily life. For example, Saudi Arabia enforces a strict policy forbidding alcohol production, distribution and consumption, which reflects its commitment to the tenets of the Islamic religion (Bowen, 2008). Another important religious/cultural feature is its segregation laws in public and private life. Interactions between men and women are strictly forbidden outside familial relationships, as Islam dictates that women may only interact with specific male relatives such as fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers, or milk brothers (a boy child who was breastfed by the same woman as a girl child) (Bowen, 2008; Doumato & Posusney, 2003). Furthermore, in the education system, boys and girls are separated from the second grade onwards and occupy their own educational buildings. This means that a school or university in Saudi Arabia will have two buildings (at times at a great distance from each other), one for boys/men and the other for girls/women. Furthermore, men are not allowed into women's buildings: if a male teacher

is to teach women, this is done via a closed-circuit video system, i.e. without the man entering the building or the classroom (Doumato & Posusney, 2003).

1.4.1 English Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabian citizens have access to free education in public schools and public universities. However, studies have shown that students face challenges with the curricula and teaching practices in both sectors when it comes to learning English (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alqahtani, 2021). Enrolment into primary school normally begins at age seven, with students typically completing high school at 18 years of age. Most teachers teaching English in public schools are from Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alqahtani, 2021). In 2012, many concerns were raised by teachers regarding the excessively rigorous English education curriculum and the poor quality of teachers (Alhawsawi, 2013). By 2021, these concerns were still being raised, highlighting possible deficiencies in English-language teaching, and emphasising the need for better-qualified teachers of English in public schools (Alqahtani, 2021).

The growing importance of English in Saudi Arabia stemmed from the nation's economic transformation after oil was discovered (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010). Once Saudi Arabia realised the global importance of English for business, the economy, and diplomacy, it initiated educational reforms to ensure that English was included as a core component of the curriculum. This led to English being a compulsory subject from Grade 4 in all public schools across Saudi Arabia. However, recent educational reforms changed this requirement to Grade 1 instead, showing the country's commitment to preparing citizens, from a young age, for global engagement and employability (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, 2021).

The government has invested in the vision of global engagement and improved employability for its citizens by establishing programmes and initiatives designed to support English proficiency among Saudi Arabian students and professionals (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010). For instance, the Saudi Arabian government introduced a scholarship programme to send Saudi Arabian students to English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010). The goal was to ensure that Saudi Arabian students abroad were

immersed in English-speaking environments where they would be able to acquire the English language skills needed to enhance the employability of the Saudi Arabian workforce (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010). In addition to these overseas scholarships, the government also established many language centres across Saudi Arabia to improve English learning for those unable to study abroad. The aim of these centres is to provide quality English education by employing teachers who are native speakers of English (Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010). Despite these initiatives, however, the disparity in the level of English learning between public schools and private schools persists, raising further questions regarding the overall effectiveness of the reforms (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alqahtani, 2021; Donn & Al-Manthri, 2010).

The teaching approaches in public schools have come under immense criticism. Alhajeri, (2020) has pointed out that English in these schools is often treated as a subject rather than an opportunity to improve communicative skills. In public schools, according to Alhajeri (2020), Alhawsawi (2013) and Alqahtani (2021), the grammar-translation method remains the dominant teaching style, with students focused on the memorising of grammar rules rather than practical language use. Studies have shown that this method is a barrier to achieving language proficiency because it limits students' abilities to use English in real-life contexts (Alhajeri, 2020; Alhawsawi, 2013; Alqahtani, 2021). In contrast, private schools with their high school fees offer a more immersive experience of English language learning. Unlike public schools that use the grammar-translation method, private schools teach all subjects, including English, via the medium of English, thereby fostering greater proficiency among students (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Jarf, 2006). This pedagogical difference makes private schools more attractive to students who want English proficiency and can afford the costs, but the exclusivity of private education underscores the socio-economic inequalities in access to quality English language learning (Alhajeri, 2020; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Jarf, 2006).

With *Saudi Vision 2030*, Saudi Arabia has once again placed significant emphasis on the role of English in education to drive the economy and national development. This vision outlines several fundamental educational objectives to be achieved by 2030 (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alshahrani, 2016; Alsudais, 2017). The vision aims to advance the country's economic, educational and political sectors in order to equip citizens with critical

and creative thinking skills and prepare them for both the local and the international job markets, thereby expanding its communication globally and attracting international investments (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alshahrani, 2016; Alsudais, 2017). Achieving these goals is supported by the Saudi Graduate Attributes Framework, which emphasises the need to promote critical thinking, effective communication, innovation, adaptability, and career readiness across all academic programmes (Hassan et al., 2024). To achieve this, students will be guided towards informed and suitable career choices, the Saudi Arabian educational standards will align with global standards, and at least five Saudi Arabian institutions will earn a ranking among the top 200 universities worldwide (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alshahrani, 2016; Alsudais, 2017). To ensure that these aims are met by 2030, the Saudi Arabian government has prioritised the development of modern curricula to meet the high standards of globally-informed teaching materials and methodologies. Furthermore, efforts to guarantee that the aims are met include the frequent tracking of progress and outcomes to ensure that education aligns with job-market demands - by investing in the development of student skills, enhancing educational planning, and evaluating educational processes (Al-Seghayer, 2015; Alshahrani, 2016; Alsudais, 2017; Bayazeed, 2022).

1.4.2 English and Islam in Saudi Arabia

English in Saudi Arabia is intricately linked to the religious and cultural outlook of the country's people. Islam is the official state religion and law that influences Saudi Arabian tradition, culture, and educational policies. Thus, there is a cautious approach towards English language learning owing to fears that it may distort cultural values and have the potential to slowly erode Islamic teachings and values (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Alrabai, 2016).

Islamic teachings focus on the importance of maintaining cultural and religious integrity. Historically, the Saudi Arabian educational system prioritised Islamic teachings by dedicating a significant portion of the curriculum to religious studies. The focus was to preserve Islamic identity among citizens and to ensure that their education aligned with religious principles (Alkhuzay, 2015; Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023). When English was first introduced into the Saudi Arabian educational system in 1927 (before the official

founding of Saudi Arabia), there was considerable debate (Alkhuzay, 2015; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). There was a great degree of concern that the inclusion of English into the education system (even though there was no set curriculum) would introduce the students to foreign cultures that might undermine Islamic traditions; and that Western culture and ideologies would conflict with the core tenets of Islamic principles (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016).

English was then introduced into primary schools, starting from Grades 4, 5 and 6 in 1937 (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). However, many parents in Saudi Arabia expressed strong resistance to the idea of their young children being taught English (Alkhuzay, 2015; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). The parents wanted schools to focus on Arabic so that their children could become proficient in Arabic at an early stage of their educational journeys, largely because fluency in Arabic would allow them full comprehension of Islamic texts (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). These Islamic texts are central to Saudi Arabians' religious and cultural upbringing and parents felt that the early introduction of English would hinder their children's ability to develop a deep understanding of their native language and Islamic heritage (Al-Mwzaiji & Muhammad, 2023; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016). Moreover, there was a prevailing sentiment among parents that the incorporation of English into the Saudi Arabian curricula might be part of a broad conspiracy to destabilise the Arabic language and Islamic traditions. Critics feared that prioritising English would lead to the gradual loss of cultural and religious authenticity in the country (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2016).

1.4.3 English and Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

With the formation of Saudi Arabia in 1932, the focus on Islamic education meant that there was no need for a secular higher education system. This reflected the country's commitment to preserving Islamic identity and providing its citizens with Islamic knowledge (Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1992; Salameh, 2018). It also meant that Saudi Arabians who desired secular education had to travel abroad to countries such as Egypt to acquire secular degrees (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1992; Salameh, 2018). Only in 1957, with the establishment of King Saud University, were secular studies offered in Saudi Arabia. Although the university had only 21 students and nine staff members, it

represented a defining moment in the provision of secular degrees to Saudi Arabians in their own homeland. (King Saud University was not given full university status until 1982, after it had expanded significantly (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1992; Salameh, 2018)).

In many Saudi Arabian universities, the primary language of instruction continues to be Arabic, in line with the national policy aiming to preserve the cultural and religious identity of Saudi Arabians (Alhawsawi, 2013; Salameh, 2018). Universities in Saudi Arabia are nevertheless permitted to use other languages such as English as the primary medium of instruction, based on their specific needs (Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1992; Massri, 2019; Salameh, 2018). This dual-language approach allows universities specialising in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) to transition to using English. For instance, King Fahad Petroleum and Mineral University, a prestigious university in Saudi Arabia for STEM careers, began using English as the primary medium of instruction in 1970 in order to align with the needs of the global oil industry. The decision was taken so that the Saudi Arabian workforce would have proficient English-speakers, English being a critical communication tool in global trade and industry (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Massri, 2019).

In 2008, the Ministry of Higher Education introduced a preparatory year for all universities in Saudi Arabia (Massri, 2019). This preparatory year is compulsory and serves as a bridging year that equips students with foundational knowledge in English, mathematics, chemistry and physics to prepare students for their undergraduate studies (Alhawsawi, 2013; Massri, 2019; Salameh, 2018). The lessons are delivered using English as the medium of instruction and a significant portion of the course hours during the preparatory year is dedicated to learning English. This reflects the growing importance of English in higher education and professional fields (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Massri, 2019).

Over the years, preparatory programmes in Saudi Arabia's higher education system have gained praise for the role they have served in enhancing students' English proficiency. This is because students are being equipped with the skills required for academic and professional success (Alhawsawi, 2013; Al-Rawaf & Simmons, 1992; Massri, 2019). Furthermore, this strategic focus aligns with *Vision 2030*, which emphasises educational

reforms and the promotion of English to drive national development and global competitiveness (Alhawsawi, 2013; Massri, 2019; Salameh, 2018).

1.5 Overview of Key Studies Dealing with the Topic

Krashen (1982, 1985) introduced the concept, affective filter hypothesis, which posits that emotional states such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence directly affect the student's access to linguistic input. This model laid the groundwork for understanding affect as an active regulator of learning. Building on this, Ryan and Deci (2000) introduced their self-determination theory, which differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), optimal learning occurs when three basic psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy (a sense of control over one's learning), competence (feeling effective in one's efforts), and relatedness (a sense of belonging and connection with others).

Further to this, Dörnyei (2001, 2005) introduced the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS), which reconceptualised motivation as a dynamic and context-dependent process involving the ideal L2 self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience. His framework provided an integrated view of how students' self-image and aspirations shape effort and persistence in language learning.

Several studies provide parallel evidence. For example, Pekrun et al. (2010) demonstrated that emotions predict academic engagement and achievement across disciplines. Ryan and Deci (2000), through their self-determination theory, showed how intrinsic motivation and emotional safety enhance persistence. Moreover, more recent studies into institutional factors (Blasche et al., 2023; Herlambang et al., 2021; Kotnik et al., 2024) show that prolonged instructional periods and cognitive overload lead to mental fatigue, emotional disengagement, and diminished learning quality.

Findings in a Saudi Arabian context support Krashen's (1982, 1985) argument that negative emotions increase the affective filter which restricts a student's language input and performance. For example, studies (Almesaar, 2024; Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Shoaib, 2022) reveal that unrealistic curricula, institutional pressures and teacher behaviour produce the degree of affective strain that may result in reducing students' motivation and engagement. In addition, research (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alali & Alruwaili,

2024) documents the effects of systemic fatigue, heavy workload, and scheduling intensity on students' emotional well-being and academic focus.

In parallel with affective theories, Norton (2000, 2013) extended second language theory into the social domain through the concept of investment. Based on the work of Bourdieu (1986), Norton (2000, 2013) argued that students' engagement in language learning is tied to their identity, imagined futures, and perceived access to symbolic and material resources. Darvin and Norton (2015) updated this model by highlighting the intersection of identity, ideology, and capital in shaping a student's participation. Together, these models form the basis for analysing how emotional and social forces intertwine in the Saudi Arabian English-learning context.

Research on investment in a Saudi Arabian context has also deepened. For example, Alali and Alruwaili's (2024) study shows that students who imagined positive future identities for themselves invested more deeply in English. Similarly, Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi (2020) show that Saudi women's investment in English was motivated by self-development and economic prospects. These, and other studies, will be discussed in much greater detail in the Literature Review and Theoretical Framework chapters.

1.6 Research Objectives and Research Questions

Research objectives and research questions are a fundamental part of any study because they provide a clear focus for the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My objectives and questions served as a guide for the methodology I employed, the data-collection tools I designed, the data I generated, and my analysis processes.

1.6.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of my study were, first, to identify the affective factors that shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English. My second objective was to understand why affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English. My third objective was to explore how affective factors are demonstrated by Saudi Arabian students learning English. My fourth objective was to ascertain Saudi Arabian university students' investment in the learning of English. My fifth objective was to understand how Saudi Arabian university students' affective experiences shape their investment in English

language learning. Finally, my sixth objective was to explore the relationship between affect and investment in language learning in a Saudi Arabian university context.

1.6.2 Research Questions

My research addressed the following questions:

- 1.1 What affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?
- 1.2 Why do affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?
- 1.3 How are affective factors demonstrated by Saudi Arabian students when learning English?
2. What is Saudi Arabian university students' investment in the learning of English?
3. How do Saudi Arabian university students' affective experiences shape their investment in English language learning?
4. What is the relationship between affect and investment in language learning in a Saudi Arabian university context?

1.7 An Overview of the Research Process

In this study I adopted an interpretive paradigm, which is grounded in the concept that reality is socially constructed and can best be understood through the subjective experiences of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009). The interpretive paradigm aligned well with my study's objectives and provided me with a framework for interpreting my data.

Further to this, I employed a qualitative approach because that was suitable for gaining the depth and richness that were needed to understand the participants' experiences through open-ended responses and narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005, 2018; Yin, 2018). This approach allowed for a deep understanding of the factors influencing English language learning among Saudi Arabian students and provided valuable insights that are context-specific as well as transferable to similar educational settings.

To ensure that I achieved my objectives, I chose a descriptive case study design for an in-depth exploration (Yin, 2013, 2018). This design allowed for the generation and

analysis of rich, detailed data. By focusing on a specific group of Saudi Arabian university students within the preparatory year programme, I could ensure that I had a comprehensive study capable of answering my research questions.

These aspects will be discussed more fully in my Methodology chapter.

1.8 Researcher's Stance

For my study, I have opted to adopt a first-person voice to position myself transparently and to reflect my personal engagement and involvement in the research process. Because I have opted for an interpretive paradigm, using the first-person voice allowed me to be subjective and to be an active participant in the co-construction of knowledge between myself and my participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My personal journey of learning a second language – Arabic – while working as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Saudi Arabia has provided valuable insight into the emotions, challenges and teaching strategies involved in acquiring a language. In my first few months of learning Arabic, I often felt lost in lessons and was particularly shy and afraid to speak in front of my peers for fear of making mistakes.

While learning Arabic, I experienced varying levels of anxiety, motivation and confidence. At the beginning of my Arabic language learning journey, I felt anxious about participating in activities, especially since there was only one other English-speaker, a student from England, in my class. I hardly participated in group work because not only was I a beginner in Arabic, but I was also afraid that my group would judge me for not knowing the language. However, I was driven to succeed by my desire to learn the language so that I could better understand the language and prove myself worthy of participating in group discussions, while also increasing my understanding of Saudi Arabian culture. This led me to improve over time, and my confidence grew until I was eager to express myself in Arabic so I could show (myself and my classmates) that I could achieve competency in the language.

Reflecting on my experiences as a student in Saudi Arabia led me to identify and reflect on the teachers who I felt had successfully helped and guided me to learn the language. They had created an environment in which I felt that I was an active participant in learning;

and made learning Arabic easy to understand and fun. They were patient and supportive, and used basic language tailored to my level. They encouraged me to express myself without fear of making mistakes and would often praise me for my efforts.

A few of my teachers, on the other hand, would speak too fast; or would concentrate too much on the grammatical aspects of sentences, thereby reducing the available time for group work and practising what we had learned. These experiences have heightened my empathy for students who have previously navigated similar challenges on their language learning journeys.

Based on my own experiences of learning a language, as a teacher, I shape my teaching strategies to provide an environment in which I engage my students through meaningful, fun, and interactive activities, make it clear that making mistakes is part of learning, and try to lower the anxiety levels in my classrooms.

These experiences thus lead me to acknowledge my relationship with the participants based on a dual role: that of an insider who is familiar with the educational context; and that of an outsider, in which I am positioned as the researcher. By using a first-person voice, I aim to emphasise the interplay between my personal and professional perspectives, while critically reflecting on how my positionality shapes my research processes and findings.

1.9 Delimitations

For my study, I focused on Saudi Arabian students who were learning English as a foreign language in the university preparatory year, and I narrowed my research site to focus on one university in Riyadh. I intentionally narrowed the scope to students in this specific academic context to ensure that I was able to gain a deep, context-specific understanding of the interplay between these students' affective experiences and their investment in English language learning. Within this focus, and because the preparatory year for the data-generation site was deemed sufficient for the nature of my research, I excluded other educational levels (secondary and postgraduate education), and other universities.

I also limited the research approach to a qualitative one employing open-ended questionnaires and narratives as data-generation methods. No other tools for data

generation were considered because the chosen methods were deemed sufficient to capture the participants' subjective experiences in a rich and detailed manner. Using this approach, I aimed for in-depth insights, ensuring transferability, but not necessarily generalisable findings.

Furthermore, I did not cover factors unrelated to affect or investment unless these directly influenced the students' affective experiences or investment. These boundaries enabled me to concentrate on students' affective factors and their investment in English language learning in a culturally specific context.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

My thesis consists of eight chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce my study and address the rationale for carrying out this research. I further outline the purpose of my study, provide the problem statement, and describe the context of Saudi Arabia and its educational landscape. Additionally, I present my research objectives and my research questions, provide an overview of key studies, and state my delimitations.

In the second chapter, I explore the literature and provide an analysis of the existing research related to affective factors and investment in English language learning. The literature has aided me in situating my current study within this broader body of knowledge.

In the third chapter, I lay out the theoretical framework that underpins my study. I explore the key theories considered in the study, including Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis, and the model of investment developed by Norton (2000, 2010) and by Darwin & Norton (2015). These two frameworks were essential in understanding the interplay between affective factors and language learning investment.

In the fourth chapter, I describe the methodology I used to guide my generation of data. I unpack the research paradigm, approach, and design I used, and also explain my reasons for choosing the qualitative methods I employed. In addition, I outline both the procedures I used for generating my data and the framework I used for my analysis to ensure operational thoroughness throughout my study. Furthermore, I explain the

methods I employed to achieve trustworthiness, and I acknowledge the limitations of my study.

In the fifth chapter, drawing on Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis, I provide and discuss the findings of my data (first open-ended questionnaire and narrative task), and show how emotions such as confidence, enjoyment and anxiety shaped students' motivation and engagement in learning English.

In the sixth chapter, I continue to provide the findings on the affective strand of my study, and show how curriculum demands and assessment pressures created emotional strain, reducing motivation and limiting engagement. In addition, I discuss how teachers' attitudes shaped classroom emotions, with supportive teachers fostering student confidence and unsympathetic ones increasing student anxiety.

In the seventh chapter, drawing on the model of investment developed by Norton (2000, 2013) and then by Darvin & Norton (2015), I discuss my findings from the second questionnaire and narrative task, and show how students invested in the English language.

In the eighth chapter, I summarise the findings, answer the research questions, consider implications of the study, and highlight how affect and investment shaped Saudi Arabian students' learning of English.

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I established the foundations of my study by outlining the rationale, purpose, problem statement, and contextual background that shaped the study into affect and investment in English learning among Saudi Arabian university students. I also presented the study's research objectives, research questions, methodological orientation and delimitations.

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I review the existing literature on affective factors and investment in language learning to understand what has been researched and discovered in the field; and discuss the key literature relating to motivation, anxiety and investment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

Over the years, researchers in foreign language learning (Gardner, 1985, 1986; Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982; Ryan & Deci, 2000) have explored and identified the affective aspects of English learning to understand these aspects and, in turn, to improve the processes involved in teaching and learning a foreign language. Affective factors encompass a wide range of emotional and psychological factors such as motivation, self-confidence, attitudes and anxiety, which may significantly shape a student's language learning experience and possibly also the student's investment in the language.

Investment in language learning, as defined by Norton (2000, 2010), refers to the efforts and resources with which students will invest in order to learn a new language. This investment is shaped by a student's personal, cultural and societal situations, which may either positively or negatively influence their language learning experience.

In this chapter, I review the existing literature in affective factors and investment in language learning to learn what has been studied and discovered in the field. This allows me to base my study within the scope of the existing literature and will serve as the foundation on which to base my research questions and answer them.

2.1 Affective Factors in Foreign Language Learning

Affective factors play a crucial role in foreign language learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Krashen, 1982; Horwitz et al., 1986; Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008). These affective factors influence a student's emotional state, including their motivation and anxiety, and shape the student's language learning process and experiences. Understanding these affective factors is crucial in developing supportive approaches to aid students in learning a foreign language.

2.1.1 Motivation in Language Learning

There is a general consensus among researchers that motivation is a key aspect of the affective factors related to the acquisition of a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2001; Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008). Motivation establishes the level of

intensity, interest and engagement, and also the strategies, that language students apply when learning a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2001; Ushioda, 2008).

Motivation in foreign language learning is often defined as the desire students have to learn a foreign language, a desire that they activate in order to guide and propel themselves towards engagement in language acquisition activities (Dörnyei, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Gardner (1985) notes that motivation in foreign language learning involves the combination of a student's effort, a favourable attitude towards the processes of learning, and a strong desire to achieve the language being learned. Furthermore, motivation is not a static concept but fluctuates depending on internal factors such as emotional state, self-efficacy and interests; and on external factors such as classroom environment, parental expectations and access to resources (Dörnyei, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008). This means that students who are motivated will engage more deeply with the material that is used and employ more effective learning strategies. In contrast, when motivation decreases, students will not fully engage with the material. They will reach a lower level of performance, and may ultimately drop out of language learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Kruk et al., 2021; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018, 2020; Noels et al., 2000; Pawlak et al., 2020).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) divided research on second language motivation into four distinct periods:

- The social-psychological period (1959–1990): This period was founded on the work of Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, who introduced the concepts of integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The focus was on how social context and attitudes towards the target language community influenced motivation.
- The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s): Influenced by cognitive and educational psychology, this phase shifted focus towards motivation within the immediate learning environment. One of its key ideas was that students' beliefs about their own abilities affected motivation in the classroom.
- The process-oriented period (late 1990s to mid-2000s): This period focused on understanding motivation not as a static trait but as a dynamic process that

changes over time. Research during the period focused on how motivation fluctuates and evolves throughout the learning experience.

- The socio-dynamic period (from 2005 onwards): The current period views motivation through a complex dynamic systems approach. It considers motivation as a complex, contextual and fluid system influenced by internal and external factors. This is the period that saw the development of Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system (L2MSS).

In this section of my literature review, I will discuss the evolution of motivation theories in language learning. By examining these developments, I will provide an overview into how motivation in language learning evolved and explain why there was a need to understand the complex dynamics of motivation in language learning.

2.1.1.1 Integrative vs Instrumental Motivation

With motivation considered an important aspect of language learning from a social-psychological viewpoint, Gardner and Lambert (1972) categorised motivation into (1) instrumental motivation and (2) integrative motivation. While they initially posited these two concepts as distinct factors in language learning and viewed integrative motivation as far superior to instrumental motivation, later studies (Noels et al., 2000) showed that integrative and instrumental motivation do overlap and may at times even shift in priority depending on the learning context (Noels et al., 2000). This means that, at times, instrumental motivation may be the more prominent form of motivation for practical reasons; and that integrative motivation may not exist at all but may develop at a later stage. For example, a Saudi Arabian student learning English may start learning it instrumentally to pass a test but, over time, may shift to integrative motivation by showing interest in the language and culture of native English-speakers (Noels et al., 2000).

Integrative motivation thus refers to students' desire to learn a language to connect and interact with the people, the culture and the community related to the target language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). For example, a student studying English in Saudi Arabia who wishes to communicate with English-speaking friends, or to live in an English-speaking country, is more likely to be motivated by integrative factors. A student who displays

integrative motivation often shows higher levels of motivation and language proficiency, accompanied by long-term language retention (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Many studies have supported Gardner and Lambert's (1972) view of integrative motivation. For example, in their examination of the motivation levels of 237 Hungarian students studying English, Csizér and Kormos (2009) found that students who had the desire to be part of an English-speaking community had a higher sense of integrative motivation and were more successful in their language learning process. They also came to the conclusion that integrative motivation plays an essential part in achieving any language learning goals.

However, their focus on Hungarian students specifically raises the question of whether their findings can be extended to a non-European context. It is possible that students of English in Hungary, a European nation, may have more opportunities to interact with English-speaking people – either through tourism or international interaction – than students in Saudi Arabia where English is learned mostly in class, with little to no interaction with English speakers.

Moreover, although the Csizér and Kormos (2009) study relied on potentially valuable self-reported data, it may have been subjected to bias. It is possible that the students in the study felt a need to overemphasise their integrative motivation, as this may have been deemed favourable to the researchers and to their society. A qualitative or mixed methods approach may have yielded different results by exploring how integrative motivation develops over time; and how it interacts with instrumental goals in various contexts.

To sum up, the strong connection between integrative motivation and the success of the students in the study supports the integrative-instrumental model. However, the study does not take into account ways in which certain external factors such as cultural and social pressures or educational policies might influence the motivation of students. These factors are crucial in a Saudi Arabian context, where practical needs and goals often overshadow integrative desires.

Kimura et al. (2001) found that integrative motivation played an important role in the English language learning journeys of their 1,027 Japanese participants. They reported that participants who showed a desire to learn English so as to understand and interact

with English-speaking communities showed higher levels of commitment during classes and scored much higher on their English language proficiency tests. They concluded, therefore, that integrative motivation is a critical component in language acquisition, especially in contexts where English is being learned as an international language in order to communicate and interact with other speakers of the language.

However, even though the study gives valuable insights into integrative motivation, generalisability of the findings may not be possible owing to the specific cultural context involved.

Another point to make is that while Japanese students, similarly to Saudi Arabian students, have been learning English in a context where direct communication with English speakers is limited, contact with English-speaking persons in both contexts has recently been made possible through social media and technology.

The fact that the study used proficiency tests may also have impacted the results, since these tests tend to focus on linguistic skills rather than communication skills or confidence in using a language. Moreover, the study grouped integrative and instrumental motivation together. This could have led to oversimplifying the fact that integrative and instrumental motivation operate independently of each other in influencing success in English language learning, making it difficult to ascertain whether integrative motivation alone is the key to success, or whether students need a combination of both to excel in language learning.

Yashima's (2002) study found evidence of integrative motivation in 160 Japanese students learning English. She found that her participants wanted to learn English so that they could communicate and connect with people from other cultures. Yashima (2002) classified this desire to connect and communicate with others as 'international posture'; and found that participants who displayed international posture were highly motivated to learn English.

Yashima's (2002) concept of international posture proposes a valuable extension to motivation, because students may show integrative motivation or instrumental motivation to engage with the global community rather than a specific English-speaking culture. This view of international posture is particularly relevant presently, when English is seen as a

means to communicate with English speakers around the world and learn about different cultures instead of solely with native English speakers.

Despite the merits of the research, in terms of my study I need to recognise that it was done in Japan. It is possible that the English learning pressures and English learning motivations of Saudi Arabian students are different from those of Japanese students. For instance, English is commonly used for international communication in Japan whereas, in Saudi Arabia, English is commonly viewed in relation to academic and professional enhancement.

Studies exploring integrative motivation in language learning in a Saudi Arabian context have produced their own interesting results. Shaalan's (2023) study looked at 66 participants studying Arabic who showed high levels of integrative motivation. This was because the majority of her participants were Muslim and were studying Arabic to integrate into the culture and its people.

Shaalan's (2023) study adds value to the discussion even though its focus is on students learning Arabic. It provides clear support that religious and cultural factors contribute to integrative motivation. Shaalan's (2023) study, however, may not resonate with my study involving Saudi Arabian students learning English. Both languages have cultural importance for Saudi Arabian students, but the purposes of learning Arabic and English differ. Learning English in Saudi Arabia is usually motivated by career growth while learning Arabic as a second language is usually aligned with cultural and religious reasons.

Shaalan's (2023) study can be extended to evaluate academic achievement. This would show whether students studying Arabic do so for integration purposes only; and provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the different forms of motivation affect learning a language in cases where the target language is tied to cultural and practical reasons.

According to Shoaib's 2022 qualitative study of 10 females, participants' sustained motivational behaviour displayed itself when they had long-term identity goals, positive emotionality, and self-perceptions of being competent English users. Even though this study is framed within the Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) paradigm, such identity-

driven orientations to some extent resonate with the principles of integrative motivation. This is especially evident in the notion that students are motivated when they envision an ideal self that is connected to the target language and its attendant community. For this reason, although Shoaib (2022) does not address integrative motivation, the relevance of identity, emotional investment and self-meaningful motivation in sustained motivation is evident in her work.

While Shoaib's (2022) study offers good insights into motivation driven by identity and emotions, we have to remember that its findings are specific to the postgraduate students in the blended-learning programme she studied. It is possible that motivational drives would look different in other Saudi Arabian learning environments. For example, in places where the pressure to pass exams or get a job is really strong, instrumental motivation may be more important. Thus, doing a wider study with different groups of learners could be a way to establishing how integrative, instrumental and DMC-related motivation all work together, or even change over time. These kinds of comparative and longitudinal studies would help us figure out if the identity-based motivation we saw in Shoaib's research also shows up in other Saudi educational settings.

On the other hand, instrumental motivation refers to the motivation and desire a student has in order to learn a language for practical reasons such as academic or career achievements or societal expectations (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). This means that an individual would learn a language not to integrate with speakers of the language, but because of the practical opportunities it leads to. For example, a student in Saudi Arabia, studying English in Saudi Arabia and who wishes to gain access to higher education or better job opportunities, is more likely to be motivated by instrumental factors.

Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) explored the role that instrumental motivation played in English language learning in Taiwan. They surveyed 387 teachers of English in Taiwan and found that instrumental motivation was high among their participants because they were motivated by practical factors such as the need to pass the exams and/or to gain better career opportunities. Their study provides valuable insights into the role of instrumental motivation. These results are particularly relevant in a Saudi Arabian context where students often learn English for practical reasons. However, it is to be noted that

the cultural and educational systems in Saudi Arabia and Taiwan differ and that those differences could affect how integrative and instrumental motivation manifest in these two contexts. While their study focused primarily on short-term practical goals such as passing exams, possibilities about the long-term implications of instrumental motivation might indicate whether these short-term objectives might turn into long-term ones if students grew interested in the language.

Moreover, despite the fact that the study points out practical motivation, it does not fully address how instrumental goals might mix with integrative motivation. Even though the study does not provide evidence for it, it is possible that a student might begin a language journey having instrumental motivation with immediate goals and later develop a deeper interest in the language owing to its culture, which would activate integrative motivation.

Lamb's (2004) study of 192 Indonesian students showed that many students were motivated primarily by instrumental factors because they wanted to increase their chances of accessing higher education or improve their career prospects. In this instance, students did not learn English to integrate with the speakers of the language, but learned the language to gain access to more practical, immediate goals. Lamb's (2004) findings with these students align with other research (Aljuaid, 2021; Mahmood & Ali, 2022), which found that in non-native English-speaking countries students are often driven by instrumental motivation. Lamb's (2004) findings are particularly relevant to Saudi Arabia as a non-native English-speaking country. Nonetheless, when considering Saudi Arabia, cultural or class factors do come into play which Lamb's (2004) study does not take into consideration.

Aljuaid (2021) conducted a study exploring what motivates 157 Saudi Arabian students when learning English. What the research found was that both the instrumental reasons (such as needing a job) and the integrative reasons (such as wanting to connect with the culture) are probably the main aspects that drive their motivation. Aljuaid (2021) highlights the real-world academic and financial pressures these students deal with daily and how those aspects fuel their drive to master English. The study confirmed that these two types

of motivation are linked, but it does not explain how students juggle both motivations at once; or discuss whether those motivations fluctuate as the students get better at English.

Daif-Allah and Aljumah (2020) conducted a study on the integrative and instrumental motivation of 247 Saudi Arabian students studying English in Saudi Arabia. The study found that instrumental motivation was higher because Saudi Arabians do not have easy access to English-speaking people. A literature review of studies focusing on Saudi Arabian students learning English by Mahmood and Ali (2022) established that instrumental motivation was a recurring theme concerning student success in the studies covered. This was because students in the various studies viewed English as a ticket to getting a good job. In their review, the two authors showed that students exhibited both integrative and instrumental motivation, with instrumental motivation being more common in most of the studies. However, Mahmood and Ali (2022) pointed out that the main studies they reviewed seemed to employ the same instruments, the same methodologies and the same surveys, bringing to the field a theoretical flatness and underscoring the need for rich and thick studies of a different design, such as longitudinal studies.

However, one of the biggest critics of the integrative/instrumental motivation model by Gardner and Lambert (1972) was Dörnyei (1994, 2005). He argued that many previous researchers had misinterpreted the concept of integrative and instrumental motivation because it is too simplistic; and that motivation entails a complex dynamic with many facets. For example, Dörnyei (1994, 2005) pointed out that the integrative/instrumental motivation model does not take into account the way different motivations can interact in various social aspects. This meant that integrative motivation and instrumental motivation may overlap; that instrumental motivation may be the dominant motivation in non-English speaking countries; and that motivation encompasses more than just two categories. Motivation may in fact be influenced by many factors, including personal, contextual and social factors. In addition, Lamb (2004) stated, motivation is dynamic and fluctuates: it is not a static concept categorised merely by integrative and instrumental motivation. Students may also be influenced by their socio-cultural environments, and may even

aspire to bicultural identities that incorporate both local and global aspects of their self-concept.

In summary, this section has shown the complex interplay between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation in the literature on the subject. It is also clear that many of the studies have many aspects in common. For example, the studies by Yashima (2002) and Csizér and Kormos (2009) indicate high levels of integrative motivation and yet Saudi Arabian students encounter English primarily for academic purposes. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on self-reported data across studies raises concerns about participant bias. In addition, the studies by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) and Aljuaid (2021) focus on short-term goals and it is unclear whether students used English after achieving their goals.

2.1.1.2 Intrinsic Motivation vs Extrinsic Motivation

Understanding that motivation is not static, Deci and Ryan (1985) developed their self-determination theory (SDT), which is grounded in the theory that human nature produces certain traits that demonstrate dedication to one's life and inherent growth. Deci and Ryan (1985) classified motivation into three types: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation. Amotivation refers to the lack of intention and motivation from students. These students may not act at all in a classroom, or they may act without intent (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The first aspect of motivation in the self-determination theory is called intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that three psychological factors, namely self-autonomy (a student's actions and pursuits are self-determined and not influenced by others), competence (a feeling of accomplishment), and relatedness (feeling connected to others) were the driving forces behind intrinsic motivation. This meant that for students to be motivated, they needed to have the desire to do something; and that they would be classified as unmotivated if they showed no desire or impetus. Ryan and Deci (2000) specified that intrinsic motivation stemmed from the desire and pleasure of performing an activity.

This means that students will do an activity in class because they have a strong desire to participate in the activity. Students with intrinsic motivation feel no internal or external

pressure; they will complete the activity for the pleasure of it. They also expect no incentives for completing activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Eccles (1987) had earlier suggested that intrinsic motivation would only manifest if a person found the task interesting or obtained satisfaction from doing the task. This meant that for students to have intrinsic motivation and be actively involved in a task, the task should not activate students' anxiety, and should also not have a high difficulty rating or probability of failure. This could be extremely relevant in a Saudi Arabian context where students learn English mostly in a classroom, with little to no contact with English speakers outside the classroom: if the activities are relevant and interesting to the students, as opposed to monotonous and hindering of student engagement, higher levels of intrinsic motivation may occur.

Gottfried et al. (2001) conducted a study to explore the development of motivation over time. Their longitudinal study found a constant trajectory over time, but there were some fluctuations influenced by a variety of factors, such as parental support, educational environment and socio-economic background. The study also found that intrinsic motivation was a predictor of academic success. This means that if activities are intrinsically interesting, they can have long-term benefits. However, the study did not explore how external factors such as social and cultural factors or teaching strategies affected intrinsic motivation. Despite these limitations, the study's results are particularly relevant to my study as they provide me with a foundation from which to explore how external factors shape motivation in English language learning in a Saudi Arabian context.

Kashefian-Naeeini et al. (2024) conducted a study involving 100 female bachelor's degree students enrolled in various majors at a public university in Iran. Their study utilised a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between students' backgrounds (including age, major subject and professional status) and their levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The findings indicated that the specific background factors did not significantly influence intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, although positive correlations with overall motivation were observed. This means that while age, major

subject and professional status may not directly shape intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, they may contribute to overall motivation when considered collectively.

This study by Kashefian-Naeeni et al. (2024) reveals interesting findings that may be pertinent to my research. For example, their study has shown that intrinsic motivation towards learning a language can be achieved regardless of background variables such as age or major. This suggests that, in the case of university students in a Saudi Arabian context (which shares some conservative cultural aspects with Iran), intrinsic motivation may be unaffected solely by demographic factors.

Taylor et al. (2014) applied Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT to forecast academic performance over time. Across their three new longitudinal studies involving a total of over 600 participants, the study found that intrinsic motivation contributed to achieving better results regardless of the presence of extrinsic rewards. In addition, it highlighted that intrinsic motivation was the most consistent form of motivation showing a positive relationship with academic achievement. This suggests that intrinsic motivation could play a crucial role in predicting a student's success. However, similarly to the study by Gottfried et al. (2001), Taylor et al. (2014) focused on self-reported data and did not extensively address potential external factors such as social and cultural challenges that may have influenced students' ability to engage intrinsically.

All in all, researchers have done extensive research on intrinsic motivation in a Saudi Arabian context. For example, Alotaibi and Abahussain's (2024) study explored how learning English affects the identities of 70 Saudi Arabian university students with a mixed methods approach. Focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the results indicated that students viewed English as a means to personal and professional development that was driven by a combination of external rewards and intrinsic interests. The study further linked identity formation with motivation, thereby offering valuable insights into how language learning influences personal and cultural identity. The findings demonstrated that although many students did not believe that English language learning caused a change in their identities, intrinsic motivation not only influenced language learning success, but also played a key role in shaping students' engagement with the

language. This connection enhances the understanding of how emotional factors contribute to long-term engagement in language learning.

Similarly, Alzubi and Nazim (2024) conducted research on 200 university students learning English, in which intrinsic motivation in academic writing was explored. The study found that students had a high level of intrinsic motivation, which was positively correlated with autonomous learning and classroom engagement. This study speaks to my research with university students in Saudi Arabia, particularly regarding the significance of the affective factors shaping motivation and engagement within the local educational context.

Owaidah (2024) carried out a study of 80 Saudi Arabian female university students studying English by exploring the relationship between emotional intelligence, anxiety, self-confidence and motivation. Emotional intelligence is defined as being able to recognise, understand and manage our own emotions and as being able to understand and recognise the emotions of others (Goleman, 1995). The findings show that aspects of emotional intelligence such as self-regulation and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a significant role in shaping the emotional experiences and language outcomes of students. The study brings a unique perspective to motivation in a Saudi Arabian context by linking emotional intelligence to motivation and highlighting the reciprocal relationship between them. Moreover, even though the focus on female students was intentional, it would be interesting to see whether similar findings came up with male students.

The second aspect of motivation in the self-determination theory is extrinsic motivation. Compared to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is considered a less effective form of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, extrinsic motivation has been viewed as a form of constraint on intrinsic motivation. This means that extrinsic motivation may result in students losing their intrinsic motivation towards learning and attempting a task. However, Deci and Ryan (1985) showed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can coexist if the student shows a high sense of self-determination. Moreover, extrinsic motivation

can never transform into intrinsic motivation owing to external pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Gao et al. (2023) explored the correlation between motivation and academic success in 81 Chinese undergraduate students. Their key findings indicated that there was a strong positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and academic success, but no correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic performance and success. Even though the study pointed out the positive correlation, the researchers did not provide any suggestions as to why there was no relationship between extrinsic motivation and academic performance. They did, however, recognise that the questionnaire design might be the reason for this, as it had been designed to measure intrinsic motivation.

Khaliq et al. (2023) carried out a study to investigate the effects extrinsic motivation had on the academic achievement of 321 undergraduate students in Pakistan using a self-developed Extrinsic Motivation Scale (EMS). The findings showed a positive correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic success. Even though this was the case, however, the overall levels of extrinsic motivation were low. The study nevertheless offered a clear focus on extrinsic motivation and provided practical insights into the role of external factors in shaping students' academic outcomes. For example, the study showed how rewards and recognition heighten a student's extrinsic motivation in relation to academic success. The authors provided no explanation for the finding that the extrinsic motivation levels were so low, however.

When we look at the studies of Gao et al. (2023) and Khaliq et al. (2023), we find conflicting results regarding extrinsic motivation and academic success. Khaliq et al. (2023) found a positive correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic success in Pakistani undergraduate students learning English. In contrast, Gao et al. (2023) did not find such a correlation in their study of Chinese undergraduates' learning of English. There could be several factors contributing to these conflicting results, for instance the role of the educational context. It is possible that in Gao et al.'s. (2023) study, English learning is perceived mostly as a necessary tool, and extrinsic motivators as not being needed to achieve success. Moreover, Gao et al.'s (2023) predominant focus was

predominantly measuring intrinsic motivation and the lack of focus on extrinsic motivation might have affected the results. On the other hand, the finding by Khaliq et al. (2023) that students responded positively to external motivators such as praise and rewards may possibly have been the result of teachers employing these strategies more effectively in that learning environment. In addition, Khaliq et al.'s (2023) study highlights the role of motivational techniques used by teachers, which may explain why it found a strong correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic success.

Within a Saudi Arabian context, extrinsic motivation has been explored by numerous researchers. For example, Bhuiyan (2016) conducted a study involving 178 students across two prominent universities, which showed that external factors such as government initiatives, parental influence and classroom environments significantly shaped the extrinsic motivation of tertiary students learning English. The findings revealed that, even though students were aware of the importance of learning and speaking English, the participants viewed English as a subject to pass rather than as a tool for long-term professional growth. One of the key issues of the findings is the lack of intrinsic motivation found and the dominance of extrinsic motivation. This means that students' extrinsic goals, such as parental influence and expectations, are critical: most parents in the study were focused solely on grades instead of actual language competency and proficiency, a situation that could reduce long-term investment in English language learning in Saudi Arabia (Bhuiyan, 2016).

Hussain (2018) looked into the effects of extrinsic motivation on preparatory year Saudi Arabian students learning English. Through a survey of 200 adult EFL learners and interviews with teachers and administrators, the study found that extrinsic motivation, influenced by external factors such as jobs and economic benefits, played a crucial role in shaping students' motivation. Hussain's (2018) study highlights the importance of extrinsic motivation in a Saudi Arabian context, and the role teachers play in maintaining this form of motivation. The research also pointed out the barriers to extrinsic motivation,

for example cultural resistance to learning English by some students who viewed English as irrelevant in their daily lives.

Hussain's (2018) study is important to my study, as I too work with preparatory year students.

In the same year as Hussain's study, Sharma's (2018) study of 100 participants found that extrinsic motivation played a critical role in the language journeys of Saudi Arabian students learning English. The study found that external factors, such as the educational environment and teachers' communicative styles, were important motivators for students. However, while the study indicated a positive correlation between extrinsic motivation and learning, it also highlighted several demotivating factors. For example, the study covered challenges within the educational system, such as a lack of speaking practice and an overreliance on learning grammar rather than communication skills. These challenges hindered students' progress, and the study suggested that absent teaching strategies should be put in place. In addition, there was no indication of intrinsic motivation mentioned, especially in relation to the demotivating factors.

This section highlights the intricate interplay between internal desires and external factors in language learning and how this shapes student's engagement with and success in a language. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory shows that intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in nurturing deep engagement with, and success in, a language. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, can either support or hinder intrinsic motivation depending on the academic situation in which students (and teachers) find themselves.

2.1.1.3 The Motivational Self System

Having made the point that none of the earlier models of motivation represented the complex nature of motivation in foreign language learning, Dörnyei (2005) introduced the second language motivational self-system (L2MSS). The L2MSS was introduced as a more comprehensive model permitting an understanding the complexity of motivation in foreign language learning. In developing the L2MSS, Dörnyei (2005) relied on the findings of his and Csizér's empirical study of Hungarian students and their learning attitudes

(Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002). He further drew upon the reconceptualisations of foreign language motivation theories by Noels (2003), who emphasised the importance of self-determination and the internalisation of motivation through autonomy, competence and relatedness; and by Ushioda (2001), who highlighted the dynamic and context-dependent nature of motivation, focusing on the student's experiences and personal goals.

The L2MSS includes three significant elements:

- i. The ideal L2 self, which symbolises the student's aspirations to be proficient and competent in the language;
- ii. The ought-to L2 self, which reveals external pressures and obligations to learn;
- iii. The L2 learning experience, which encompasses the immediate environment and experiences within a student's language learning journey.

Globally, the L2MSS has proven to be a versatile framework for researchers, allowing them to understand the complex dynamic of motivation in language learning across various educational contexts (Gong, 2023; Zhu, 2024). For example, studies in China, where English is taught as a foreign language, established that the ideal L2 self, which consists of a student's aspirations to be proficient and competent in the language, is a crucial factor directly linked to better learning outcomes for, and continuous task engagement by, students (Li, 2024; Gong, 2023; Zhu, 2024). Zhu's (2024) study of 126 Chinese candidates going through the international English language testing system (IELTS), for instance, found a strong correlation between the ideal L2 self and IELTS scores that surpassed the motivational influence of the ought-to L2 self. These results indicated that students who were motivated by self-imposed goals, instead of goals that were the result of social pressure, appeared to be more effective. Self-imposed goals tended to have a stronger motivational impact because they made it possible for students to envision specific, personal benefits tied to English language proficiency (Zhu, 2024).

On the other hand, the ought-to L2 self reflects a student's perception of external factors. These factors may arise from their family, society in general, or educational institutions wishing to avoid negative outcomes such as low grades or failed exams. In Chinese contexts, the ought-to self is influential, but it plays a secondary role to the ideal L2 self. For example, Li's (2024) study of 182 Chinese students learning English in an English-

medium instruction context highlighted that students were often motivated by societal expectations to be proficient in English for career advancement. However, the study showed that the ought-to self-presented mixed results that were based on academic background. For instance, the students in the liberal arts felt stronger external pressures to meet linguistic expectations than did their science counterparts. These results show that although the ought-to self can be a good motivating tool, it may lead to anxiety if it is not integrated with a student's personal goals (Li, 2024).

The third crucial component of the L2MSS is the L2 learning experience. This refers to the immediate learning environment, which includes the teacher, the student's interactions with peers, and classroom dynamics. The L2 learning experience component is often found to be the strongest predictor of intended learning in language learning. Gong (2023), who reviewed the existing literature since 2005, emphasised that the L2 learning experience significantly impacted motivation in educational settings. This highlights the teacher's role in creating a safe space for learning by ensuring that students are in a positive, engaging learning environment. Gong (2023) further showed that a positive learning environment, with effective teacher feedback and intercultural exposure, enhanced motivation significantly. Moreover, the study highlighted that even though the ideal L2 self and the ought-to self provide vision and direction, it is the L2 learning experience that impacts day-to-day motivation levels. This is especially true when students have limited access to English outside the classroom (Gong, 2023).

Saudi Arabia's cultural landscape adds layers of complexity to how students form their ideal L2 self within the L2 motivational self-system. Almesaar (2024) points out, in his analysis connected to *Saudi Vision 2030*, that the status of English in the country has been shifting for some time. He explains that official narratives try to balance the push towards modernisation with the need to maintain cultural and linguistic identity. English sits right in the middle of this tension. On the one hand, it is linked to social mobility and economic opportunity, while on the other it raises concerns about Western influence and the preservation of Arabic and Islamic traditions. Because of this, English becomes both necessary and potentially disconcerting, and it forces students to negotiate what it means to be modern while still protecting the cultural values many Saudi Arabians consider fundamental.

Alqahtani's (2018) study adds another layer to this by showing how these wider cultural debates appear in individual motivational patterns. He found that military cadets' ideal L2 selves were shaped by personal aspirations that were strongly influenced by parental encouragement, religious values and their general attitudes towards the learning environment. A supportive environment helped strengthen their idealised future self, whereas a negative one increased anxiety and fed into the ought-to L2 self, which reflects pressure and obligation. Although the two studies focused on different aspects of motivation, the broader cultural ambivalence that Almesaar describes helps explain why ideal and ought-to L2 selves may develop differently in Saudi Arabian contexts; and why some learners might feel pulled in conflicting directions when imagining themselves as future English users.

In Saudi Arabia, the ought-to self is influential because cultural and family expectations significantly influence students' motivation. Altalib (2019) conducted a study comparing the ought-to self-motivation levels of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students and English for General Purposes (EGP) students in the preparatory year at four universities in Saudi Arabia. His findings were that the ideal L2 self was notably stronger for ESP students, but that the ought-to-self showed no difference between the two groups. This is possibly because external obligations and expectations surrounding English remain the same from society and parents regardless of students' career paths. These findings suggest that, in the Saudi Arabian context, the stability of the ought-to self is shaped by societal expectations rather than by course type. For the L2 learning experience, Altalib (2019) revealed that ESP students reported a more positive experience because their studies were directly linked to their future careers.

However, Almesaar's (2024) study shows that Saudi Arabian students still have to deal with dual feelings towards English. Some Saudi Arabians view English with admiration and as an important part of academic and professional advancement, while others view English with aversion, reflecting ongoing cultural resistance to Western influences. This creates conflicting feelings for students, which may affect their ought-to self because they may feel obliged to learn English for academic or professional reasons, yet still struggle with cultural concerns that frame English as a challenge to traditional values.

Relatively recent research (Blasche et al., 2023; Herlambang et al., 2021; Kotnik et al. 2024; Sievertsen et al., 2016; Williams & Shapiro, 2018) has expanded the discussion of motivation to include the ways in which institutional structures and time-based pressures shape students' engagement.

For example, Kotnik et al. (2024) make an important contribution to understanding how prolonged instructional periods may induce mental fatigue and emotional disengagement among university students. Their observational study investigated 27 first-year Slovenian physiotherapy students during a four-hour theoretical class to measure fluctuations in mental fatigue, boredom and sleepiness. The results demonstrated a significant increase in fatigue and sleepiness as class time progressed, with a temporary improvement following a short break and a later rise in boredom during the second half of the session. The findings underscore the psychological toll of extended class duration and the restorative value of mid-session breaks. This aligns with studies showing that when institutional scheduling demands and lecture duration are excessive, cognitive engagement declines and fatigue increases (Blasche et al., 2023; Herlambang et al., 2021; Sievertsen et al., 2016; Williams & Shapiro, 2018).

However, the study by Kotnik et al. (2024) has limitations. Its reliance on a limited sample of students within a specific discipline and its use of self-reported measures restrict the generalisability of its findings, particularly to different pedagogical contexts such as language learning where affect and motivation are central. Furthermore, the study's narrow examination of short-term subjective fatigue omits the long-term emotional consequences of sustained curricular overload, such as chronic demotivation and sustained disengagement. Nonetheless, the research provides empirical support for the argument that institutional and temporal structures directly influence students' emotional states and cognitive capacity, reinforcing the need to consider scheduling design and

cognitive workload as key determinants of affective well-being and sustained engagement in higher education.

These findings collectively suggest that institutional and temporal factors not only influence motivation but also heighten the emotional strain that often manifests as anxiety in learning contexts.

However, after nearly two decades, scholars (Al-Hoorie et al., 2024; Al-Hoorie et al., 2025; McClelland & Larson-Hall, 2025; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2025) have urged to move away from this system due to its lack of falsifiability, constant validity issues, and limited practical relevance. These scholars (Al-Hoorie et al., 2024; Al-Hoorie et al., 2025; McClelland & Larson-Hall, 2025; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2025) argue that the model has failed to provide meaningful, causal insights for classroom practice.

2.2 Anxiety in Language Learning

Anxiety in foreign language learning has been a subject of interest for many decades (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Al-Khasawneh, 2016; Botes et al., 2020; Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Scovel, 1978), but early research (Scovel, 1978) showed conflicting results arising from the study of language learning anxiety. Scovel (1978) reviewed the existing literature on language learning anxiety to ascertain the reason for the conflicting results and found that the reason was the researchers' differing views and assessment tools.

Anxiety as a state differs and varies over time from student to student (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Spielberger, 1972). Trait anxiety, defined as a person's general tendency to perceive situations as threatening, manifests itself in various situations but is mostly stable (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Spielberger, 1972). Situation-specific anxiety refers to anxiety that is limited to a specific task (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Spielberger, 1972).

This led Scovel (1978) to suggest that researchers specify whether they were exploring state anxiety, trait anxiety or situation-specific anxiety.

Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualised foreign language anxiety and identified it as an individual feeling of tension and worry in response to a specific situation. Horwitz et al. (1986) designed a foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) and categorised

foreign language anxiety into three categories, namely communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. This scale has been the cornerstone for testing anxiety levels in foreign language classrooms since then (Ran et al., 2022).

In this section of my literature review, I explore the main categories of foreign language learning anxiety as conceptualised by Horwitz et al. (1986). I review the literature on communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation with the aim of clarifying the distinct ways in which students experience anxiety in language learning.

Top-down processing is the method through which students use what they already know about the world, the topic and how conversations usually work to predict what a text means. Essentially, they use context clues to fill in the gaps, which allows them to grasp the main idea even if they don't know every single word and skip over some (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). This enables the student to reach a general level of understanding even when the text contains unknown words and sentences that are difficult to understand. Research indicates that top-down processing is a way of coping with reading-related anxiety and a lack of knowledge of the language so that meaning can be created without the person getting frustrated to the level of withdrawing from the activity (Stanovich, 1980; Tsai & Li, 2012; Zhou, 2017). Furthermore, studies (Anderson, 2002; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Teng, 2021) have indicated that higher levels of metacognitive awareness result in greater flexibility in coping mechanisms and fewer negative emotions during reading tasks. This is because top-down strategies help reduce the emotional distress associated with reading apprehension, allowing students to approach the less familiar language with a more effective and confident style (Nadea & Jumariati, 2021).

Studies over the years (Lin, 2024) have shown the negative effects that anxiety has on language learning performance. Wang (2023) examined the correlation between anxiety and foreign language learning among university students in China, focusing on communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The study highlighted that communication apprehension was a primary source of high levels of anxiety for students, especially during speaking tasks. The heightened apprehension was

caused by the students being concerned about their linguistic competence, which restricted their willingness to participate in classroom speaking activities.

Furthermore, the study indicated, test anxiety negatively impacted students' performance in language tasks. The reason for this was their concern about their ability to excel in language tasks. This means that test anxiety was heightened because of their concerns around achieving high grades. Additionally, the study found a negative correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic performance. Wang (2023) found that students would limit their participation in classroom activities because they feared their peers and teachers would judge them. The study found that this type of anxiety was prominent in situations where students were called upon to give answers to tasks in front of everyone in the class.

Wang's (2023) findings align with previous research (Botes et al., 2020; MacIntyre, 2017; Zheng & Cheng, 2018) that shows a negative correlation between anxiety in language learning and academic performance. However, even though Wang (2023) offers valuable quantitative data and insights, the study would have benefited from a more qualitative approach permitting understanding of the underlying factors prompting each type of anxiety (e.g. personal experiences or classroom dynamics).

Many researchers (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Almesaar, 2022; Moafa, 2024) have explored anxiety and language learning in a Saudi Arabian context. These studies show the different ways in which anxiety affects students' experiences in English classrooms. For example, communication apprehension was highlighted as having a negative impact on students and their oral performance (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Moafa, 2024). Alaqeel and Altalhab (2024) found that this form of anxiety was heightened during classroom discussions and speaking tasks. The students experienced high communication apprehension based on the way they viewed their linguistic abilities and their lack of self-confidence. Similarly, Moafa (2024) observed that communication apprehension was particularly high among Saudi Arabian students, where students often avoided speaking in order to minimise their feelings of inadequacy and to prevent potential mistakes.

Test anxiety in a Saudi Arabian context has also been shown to be prominent in English language learning classrooms. This is caused by a mix of Saudi culture and language

proficiency levels. For instance, Alaqeel and Altalhab (2024) showed that test anxiety is closely linked to pressure to perform well in assessments, especially because grades carry strong expectations. Although Almesaar (2022) found that the main FLCAS factors did not statistically predict achievement, the study still showed that Saudi Arabian students experienced notable levels of trait anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. These results suggest that a test-centric approach, combined with cultural expectations around academic success, contributes to the heightened anxiety levels Saudi Arabian students experience.

These studies further show that fear of negative evaluation affects students' willingness to participate in classroom tasks. For example, Almesaar (2022) highlighted the effect this form of anxiety has on student performance by showing that Saudi Arabian students frequently had heightened forms of fear of negative evaluation, in particular when receiving feedback from teachers and classmates. This fear stemmed from the fact that students were afraid of criticism from teachers and classmates, which led to them being withdrawn in tasks and in turn limiting their opportunities to practice English.

It is seen that anxiety in foreign language learning negatively affects students' participation and learning experiences, even though not all studies found a direct link between anxiety and academic performance. Anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors, including a student's cultural, academic and classroom situations. Furthermore, communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation create a challenging classroom environment hindering students' progress in foreign language learning.

2.3 Investment and Language Learning

Investment in foreign language learning has emerged as a pivotal concept in understanding students' continued engagement in learning new languages (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000; Norton, 2013). While motivation in language learning is typically attributed to a student's personal desires and goals, the concept of investment focuses on students' social, cultural and economic contexts (Norton, 2013). For students in contexts where English learning aligns with social or economic requirements, language learning becomes intertwined with opportunities for improving one's social status (Norton,

2000). For instance, in Saudi Arabia English is evolving from a mere academic requirement into a language with social and economic importance. This is made possible and reinforced by the *Saudi 2030 Vision*'s emphasis on English for economic growth (as covered in Chapter 1).

This section of my literature review examines studies on language learning investment from both global and Saudi Arabian perspectives. By examining these studies, the literature review gives an understanding of the dynamics of language learning investment informing the unique Saudi Arabian educational context.

Studies globally have explored investment in various scenarios. For example, Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) conducted a study to investigate how higher education students' investment is affected in a compulsory language learning environment. The study was based at a university in Mexico, and the participants were second-year undergraduate students who were completing their fourth compulsory EFL course. The study adopted a Likert-scale questionnaire in order to investigate the levels of motivation, engagement and agency in relation to investment. The study's findings indicated that students had a high level of motivation and engagement but showed a reduced sense of agency that negatively impacted long-term investment. The authors expressed concerns that mandatory learning environments might lead to disengagement over time if students felt restricted in their language choices. These findings are particularly relevant to Saudi Arabia, where English is a required subject. Furthermore, the findings show the importance of fostering students' agency and sense of purpose to sustain investment in language learning.

Soltanian et al. (2018) quantitatively explored language learning investment in Iranian students studying English as a foreign language at various proficiency levels from elementary to advanced. This study is significant for the broadening of methodological approaches in exploring language learning investment, especially in a foreign language learning environment. The authors reviewed the existing literature extensively, conducted consultations with experts, held student interviews and then generated quantitative data from students. Their findings led them to identify six key components of investment in language learning:

- Student commitment, which refers to the historical and social commitment students have to learning the language. It reflects how willing students are to devote their time and efforts to achieving this.
- Identity as a dynamic process, which refers to the shifting nature of students' identities and how these shifts impact their commitment and engagement with language tasks.
- Seeking recognition, which is related to students' efforts to be seen as legitimate speakers of the language, thereby reinforcing their sense of belonging.
- Gaining valuable capital, which refers to the various forms of capital enhancing students' social status and opportunities, for example social, economic, symbolic and cultural capital.
- Exercising autonomy and choice, which speaks to the sense of control and freedom students have in making choices on their language learning journey.
- Forming a new identity in English, which refers to the possibility that students may develop new aspects to their identities the more proficient they become in English; and as English becomes more important to their self-concept.

The six components identified by Soltanian et al. (2018) provide a comprehensive outline for understanding language learning investment. The components further show the multifaceted nature of language learning investment by illustrating how students' social, personal and economic ambitions shape their investment on their language learning journey.

Stribling (2018) conducted a qualitative study of 15 adult immigrants in a grant-funded English programme to explore investment and persistence. The findings challenge assumptions that success is based on privileged backgrounds; and instead show that achievement was dependent on successfully negotiating cultural, situational and emotional barriers and challenges. Participants reported experiences of marginalisation because limited English proficiency and emotional burnout were equated with low intelligence or worth, a finding also found in other studies (Alhamami, 2025; Wang, 2023). The results highlight how identity, power and investment are shaped by social structures

and underscore the importance of supportive academic contexts in ensuring stable and sustaining language learning trajectories.

In the Saudi Arabian context, studies on language learning investment have provided insights into the complex factors that influence students' investment in learning English. For instance, Alali and Alruwaili (2024) examined the ways in which imagined identities might shape the investment of Saudi Arabian students learning English for technical training purposes. The study found that when students envisioned positive future identities, they invested in English to a greater extent. This was because students saw English proficiency as a means to extend their identities, practise agency, and affirm their right to speak.

In another study, Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi (2020) focused on personal motivations and socio-cultural influences and explored the push and pull factors that impact Saudi Arabian women's decisions to invest in English. Their study found that women in Saudi Arabia were driven by self-development and economic prospects but were also heavily influenced by religious and cultural concerns that pulled them towards studying English within Saudi Arabia rather than abroad. Although the study provided rich qualitative detail, the authors acknowledged the limitation of the small sample size of only nine participants, which might limit the generalisability of the findings.

Scott (2023) conducted a qualitative study of female Saudi medical students to examine the intersection of investment, agency and identity during their simultaneous study of medicine and English. Scott (2023) used semi-structured interviews with three participants who narrated their personal journeys by highlighting the emotional, social and educational barriers they faced. The findings showed that identity negotiation and language learning were central to enhancing cultural capital and social power. At the same time, they also highlighted the under-documented struggles of Saudi women who need to balance medical training and their acquisition of English.

2.4 Conclusion

The studies I have cited in my literature review point to complex dynamics in both affect and investment in English language learning contexts, including in Saudi Arabia. Research shows that if classroom settings are ideal and are conducive to being safe

spaces for language learning, anxiety is decreased and investment is increased (Dörnyei, 2005). On the contrary, negative emotions such as anxiety and dissatisfaction in a learning environment can reduce investment, leading to lowered engagement and perseverance (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Furthermore, the studies show that students' language learning journeys are affected by a number of variables, including religious and social norms. For example, Alqahtani (2018) depicted the ways in which Saudi Arabian cultural and religious factors shape students' motivational self-concepts, particularly their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. I use these studies to explain my data; and to explore the manner in which relationship between affect and investment in language learning shapes a student's learning of English in a Saudi Arabian context.

In the next chapter, I provide the theoretical frameworks that underpinned my study, including Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses and Norton's (2000, 2013) model of investment (Darvin & Norton 2015, 2021). These frameworks provide a foundation for understanding the relationship between affective factors and students' investment in English language learning within a Saudi Arabian context.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. Introduction

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature on affective factors such as motivation and anxiety alongside studies conducted on investment in language learning. These insights provided an understanding of the emotional and sociocultural aspects, and of the efforts and resources that contribute to the students' participation and achievements in English language learning. In this chapter, I describe the theoretical framework that has underpinned my study.

In drawing up this theoretical framework, I have drawn upon 1. Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis and 2. Norton's (2000, 2010) model of investment (Darvin & Norton 2015). I have used Krashen's (1982, 1985) hypothesis as a lens through which to examine how affective factors such as anxiety and motivation influence Saudi Arabian students in their learning of English; and Norton's (2000, 2010) model (Darvin & Norton 2015) to highlight the students' sociocultural dynamics that shaped their agency and investment in language learning. Together, the hypothesis and the model guided my research questions, the design of data-generation tools and the interpretation of my generated data, thereby allowing me to explore the interplay between affective and sociocultural factors, and student efforts and resources, in the language learning journeys of Saudi Arabian students.

Earlier methods of teaching and learning English, such as the grammar-translation method, the audio-lingual method and the reading method prioritised linguistic accuracy and structural drills (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

The grammar-translation method of language teaching typically has lessons taught in the students' native language, which offers very little to no practical engagement with the target language (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014). Vocabulary is memorised in list form, with almost no contextual or conversational application. Lessons are grammar-focused, prioritising the memorisation of word forms (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). This approach has introduced students to classical texts early on, at

which point translation has become the primary focus (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

In the reading-based approach in second language teaching, reading comprehension is prioritised while other aspects to language acquisition are overlooked (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014). Unlike the grammar-translation method, where grammar is the focus of the lesson, the reading method teaches only the grammar needed to understand the reading texts (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Grellet, 1981; Leschinsky, 1983). This approach also incorporates translation as a major component of second language learning, but its primary focus is on developing a student's reading abilities. There is little to no focus on oral proficiency or fluency in the reading-based approach (Brown, 1996; Celce-Murcia, 2014; Grellet, 1981; Leschinsky, 1983).

The audio-lingual method, previously known as the Army Specialised Training Program (ASTP), the army method for short, became a popular method after World War II (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 2014). What distinguished it from previous methods was that new material was taught in the target language and in dialogue form. Repetitive drills were used to teach structural patterns, with listening and speaking taught first. Reading and writing in the language were postponed (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 2014). Unlike in previous methods where translation was a core component, focus was placed on correct pronunciation. There is little to no grammatical explanation in the ASTP approach, and grammar is taught inductively (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 2014).

However, these approaches often overlooked the emotional and social dynamics that influence language learning (Brown, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 2014). The shift towards communicative competence, introduced by Hymes (1966, 1971, 1972), marked a turning point by emphasising the sociolinguistic contexts of language use and the need for meaningful communication. Communicative competence is defined as the ability to know what to say and when to say it, including the ability to know the rules in both linguistic and sociolinguistic settings (Hymes, 1966, 1971, 1972). Additionally, communicative competence describes the student's overall speaking and listening capabilities dependent

on two key components: tacit knowledge and the ability to use it effectively (Hymes, 1966, 1971, 1972).

The ASTP paved the way for methodologies such as Terrell's (1977) natural approach, which aligned more closely with the principles of Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis and Norton's (2000, 2010) focus on identity and agency.

Terrell's natural approach (1977) was developed to implement a teaching style aligning with the findings of naturalistic studies in second language acquisition, with the aim of developing students' communicative skills (Markee, 1997; Terrell, 1977). This approach gave teachers the ability to introduce communicative practices and act as facilitators to language learning (Markee, 1997; Terrell, 1977). It meant that teachers were able to break away from rote memorisation practices and to introduce visual aids to their teaching practices in order to create a supportive and engaging classroom that would help lower students' affective filters (Markee, 1997; Terrell, 1977).

By situating my study within this theoretical framework, I aimed to explore the interplay between affective factors and investment in the language learning experiences of Saudi Arabian students, providing a nuanced understanding of their motivations, barriers and long-term engagement.

3.1 Krashen's Hypotheses

With the shift in teaching methodologies covered in the previous section, Krashen (1982) introduced his five hypotheses of language acquisition. His aim was to break away from the more form-focused approaches (e.g. the grammar-translation method) and to ensure that language classrooms were focused on communication and meaning-making (as described above). Krashen and Terrell (1983) combined Terrell's (1977) natural approach with Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses to create a comfortable learning environment and to lower affective barriers to language learning.

Krashen's (1982) theory of language acquisition introduced five interrelating hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Although I focused only on one of these hypotheses to build the framework of my study, I feel it is imperative to mention

all five hypotheses – for the reason that even though they could act independently, they are also intertwined.

3.1.1 The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

For his first hypothesis, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, Krashen (1982) posits that there are two ways students develop language skills: acquisition and learning. Krashen (1982) makes a clear distinction between the two and theorises that acquisition occurs naturally and subconsciously. Acquisition, therefore, will take place in a setting where the focus is solely on meaningful communication. In contrast, learning will occur as the result of students consciously focusing on understanding the rules and structure of the language. Krashen (1982) contends that acquisition is far more effective in helping students to use language fluently and naturally. The reasons Krashen (1982) makes the distinction between acquisition and learning are to be found in his natural order and monitor hypotheses (which I mention further along in this section).

The acquisition-learning distinction means that if a Saudi Arabian student were to learn English by watching TV shows and chatting with English-speaking friends without thinking about grammar rules or trying to memorise vocabulary, the student would naturally pick up words and phrases (acquire the language) from hearing and using them. Then again, it could be said that a Saudi Arabian student who studies English by reading books and memorising vocabulary lists would also be learning the language. They would be learning the rules on how to construct sentences and practise using them in written exercises. According to the acquisition-learning hypothesis, however, the first student is more likely to become fluent and proficient in English thanks to engagement with the language in a meaningful, communicative way. Whereas the second student may struggle to use the English learned in a conversation scenario drawing on a real-life situation.

Taking these distinctions into consideration, one notes an emphasis on meaningful input that has significant implications for instructional design (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). To clarify: activities that are interactive, such as storytelling and role-play, would provide an authentic context capable of promoting subconscious acquisition. Furthermore, explicit instruction could help students address complex language structures. These complementary approaches may allow a balance between the fostering of fluency through

acquisition and the gaining of accuracy through explicit learning (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Various critics (Ellis, 1984; McLaughlin, 1984; Towell & Hawkins, 1994) argue that the distinctive line drawn by Krashen (1982) between acquisition and explicit learning is not as clear-cut as he suggests, because the two processes are interconnected. For example, Saudi Arabian students consciously learn a grammar rule in a classroom setting but then acquire it later on by repeatedly using it in natural conversation. For example, they may learn that adding -ed to a regular verb turns it from present to past tense. At the beginning, they may struggle to apply this rule to verbs in conversation. However, after they repeatedly hear and use verbs in the past tense in various communicative contexts, they will start to apply the rule automatically without consciously thinking about it. In this manner, what began as learning has been transformed into acquisition over time (Ellis, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The interconnectedness of acquisition and explicit learning is especially evident in formal educational settings. Krashen (1982) believes that acquisition opportunities are best provided or most likely to occur in naturalistic environments, whereas critics of the hypothesis (Ellis, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Hassan, 2022) note that classroom instruction can also consciously create opportunities for acquisition. For example, teachers may set up group discussions in class in which students are encouraged to focus on meaning rather than accuracy. In the course of such an activity, students may subconsciously acquire new vocabulary and expressions while practising the language within a communicative scenario. This challenges Krashen's (1982) assertion that acquisition takes place in a natural environment only; and that learning is a completely separate process (Ellis, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Hassan, 2022).

Another criticism of the acquisition-learning hypothesis is that it downplays the role learning performs in language development (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021). For example, Krashen (1982) highlighted that fluency is gained through acquisition, whereas critics have stated that learning is also important in gaining fluency – by allowing students to master complex linguistic structures and vocabulary. They point out, for instance, that advanced students will still need to be taught (learn) the correct structures for, and use

of, the conditional mood for English verbs, because these are not easily acquired via natural conversation. In an instance such as this, learning would provide the foundation to achieving fluency and accuracy in a language (Ellis, 2005; Hassan, 2022; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Despite these criticisms, Krashen's (1982) emphasis on acquisition has had a deep impact on language teaching (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021). The acquisition-learning hypothesis highlights the importance of ensuring that students are learning, and engaging with, their L2 in a natural way. For example, using multimedia tools such as videos or podcasts will provide logical input that would help students acquire new elements of language subconsciously. Furthermore, the hypothesis also challenged the traditional approaches to language teaching, such as the grammar-translation method, which focuses heavily on explicit learning. As an alternative, Krashen and Terrell (1983) advocated for the more communicative natural order approach, which reduces anxiety and creates a more comfortable learning space for students (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

In a Saudi Arabian context, the hypothesis has important implications for English language acquisition and learning. In most schools in Saudi Arabia, English is taught as a foreign language, an approach that limits opportunities for naturalistic acquisition. For the majority of students learning English in Saudi Arabia, the classroom serves as their primary or only exposure to the English language, making formal instruction (learning) critical in their language development (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). However, because the focus of instruction in Saudi Arabian schools is purely on grammar rules and written exercises, students struggle to use English fluently and accurately in real-life, communicative situations (Alrabai, 2016; Hassan, 2022; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). This could be because inadequate teaching methodologies often lead to an emphasis on rote learning rather than practical communication skills (Alrabai, 2016; Hassan, 2022; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). For instance, students who have memorised the rules for forming questions in English may still hesitate to ask any questions in a conversation owing to a lack of practice in unstructured communicative activities (Alrabai, 2016; Hassan, 2022; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). To address this challenge, teachers in Saudi Arabia could adopt strategies that integrate acquisition and learning, for example

role-play, which will allow their students to learn the rule consciously but also practice applying it in a meaningful way so as to attain its acquisition (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

3.1.2 The Natural Order Hypothesis

In his second hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, (Krashen, 1982) posits that second language acquisition follows a predictable and consistent sequence, with students acquiring certain grammatical rules and structures earlier than others. Furthermore, they acquire these rules and structures naturally, regardless of their first language or the instructional sequence used in a classroom setting. Krashen (1982) further asserts that this predictable and consistent sequence is determined by the inherent difficulty of linguistic forms, and by a student's cognitive readiness, rather than by external factors such as teaching methodology or classroom setting. For example, according to this hypothesis, Saudi Arabian students learning English are likely to acquire plural forms before they master the third-person singular form, and to do so with greater ease (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

Krashen (1982) advocates that this natural sequence should guide language instruction, so as to provide students with meaningful, comprehensible input rather than force them to follow a set syllabus. They will then acquire grammatical structures naturally, in the correct order (Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021). At the same time, Krashen (1982) highlights that, while this sequence of acquisition is universal, it may differ from how a first language is acquired: students studying a second and/or foreign language often rely on conscious processes when learning grammatical structures and forms. Moreover, because individual factors such as first language interference may significantly influence the sequence of acquisition, second language acquisition involves greater cognitive efforts (Krashen, 1982; Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

The natural order hypothesis further posits that the natural order of acquiring a language is at most times not aligned with the order in which grammatical structures and rules are taught in a classroom. For example, an English grammar lesson may be tailored to teach verbs with irregular past tenses early on, whereas students may acquire these naturally

later on as their cognitive readiness develops over the time spent learning English (Krashen, 1982; Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

Despite the appeal and foundational role of the natural order hypothesis in the literature of L2 acquisition, this hypothesis has faced significant criticism.

Towell and Hawkins (1994) found that the natural order of grammatical structures did appear consistently when students had to produce language spontaneously; but that the observed order of acquisition changed when students were given time to plan their responses to activities. The findings raised many questions about whether the natural order sequence is genuinely universal or is simply context-based. This means that if the planning of responses changes the sequence of language production, then the natural order hypothesis is not as predictable as Krashen (1982) proposed (Hassan, 2022; Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021).

Mitchell and Myles (1998) argued that the natural order hypothesis relies too heavily on morpheme studies that concentrated on how students acquired specific grammatical markers such as adding -s for the plural and -ed for the past tense. These morpheme studies measured accuracy instead of acquisition, which makes it unclear whether the observed patterns truly reflect natural learning (Hassan, 2022; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Lichtman & Van Patten, 2021). In addition, because these studies focused on morphemes, they provided a narrow outlook on language learning by neglecting broader aspects such as syntax and semantics (Hassan, 2022; Mitchell & Myles, 1998; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Another limitation of the natural order hypothesis is its failure to account for individual differences among students. For example, it does not take into account factors such as age, motivation, the learning environment or the first language background, which may significantly influence the acquisition process (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). Moreover, Krashen's (1982) natural order hypothesis assumes a uniform sequence of language acquisition, one that oversimplifies the complexities of second language acquisition but ought to be contextualised in terms of individual learning experiences. For instance, a student learning English may develop the structure used to form a question in English early on in the process of acquiring the new language, thanks to the presence of a similar

syntactic structure in their first language; whereas another student with a first language with a different linguistic structure may struggle with the same form (Hassan, 2022; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Such limitations of the natural order hypothesis have an effect on students learning English in a Saudi Arabian context. This is because Arabic, which is the first language of Saudi Arabia, differs significantly from English in terms of syntax, grammar and morphology, which leads to many challenges in acquiring grammatical structures. For example, Arabic's preferred sentence structure is verb-subject-object instead of subject-verb-object. Arabic does not have a present perfect tense, relying instead on the use of particles with verbs in the past tense to convey a completed action that has present relevance. And although it has a definite article (in the form of the prefix al-), it has no indefinite article, preferring instead the absence of al- and the presence of double vowels (Ajaj, 2022; Alharbi, 2015; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Various researchers (Ajaj, 2022; Alharbi, 2015; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Al-Seghayer, 2014) have also shown that English education in Saudi Arabia relies on rote memorisation of grammatical rules rather than the comprehensible input suggested by Krashen (1982). This style of learning often leads to a superficial understanding of grammar, with students able to recite rules but unable to apply them in communicative scenarios (Al-Mohanna, 2024). As a result, many Saudi Arabian students struggle with practical English language use, especially speaking and writing, where grammatical accuracy is imperative in conveying proper meaning (Alharbi, 2015). The lack of authentic language scenarios further intensifies these challenges, which limit the manifestation of the natural order sequence suggested by Krashen (1982).

3.1.3 The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis evolved from the acquisition-learning hypothesis, with Krashen (1982) differentiating sharply between the two processes; and stating that learning the language plays only a small role in second language acquisition, acting primarily as a monitor to refine language performance. This monitoring mechanism empowers students to correct their errors and improve their linguistic productivity once certain conditions are met. More importantly, Krashen (1982) specifies that the monitor is secondary to

acquisition because the ability to produce fluent and accurate language stems predominantly from subconscious acquisition rather than conscious learning.

For the monitor to function effectively, Krashen (1982) outlines three fundamental conditions:

- Time to think: Students must have the time to think about the grammatical rules to consciously apply the correct grammatical rules for accuracy.
- Focusing on form: Students must focus on being grammatically accurate rather than prioritising meaning.
- Knowing the rules: Students must have extensive knowledge of the grammatical rules to apply them correctly for accuracy.

Krashen (1982) further classifies students into three categories based on their use of the monitor system:

- Monitor over-users: These students over-rely on their conscious knowledge of grammatical rules. Focusing on grammatical form results in frequent self-correcting, which impedes fluency.
- Monitor under-users: These students rely predominantly on their acquired knowledge, paying no attention to, or sometimes disregarding, the rules they have learned. Because these students rely on their acquired knowledge, they will have fluency. Owing to the frequent errors made, however, they will not have accuracy.
- Optimal monitor users: These students balance their acquired knowledge with their learned knowledge. They only use the monitor at selected moments, to refine their language output.

While this hypothesis has provided the field with valuable insights into second language acquisition, it has been met with significant criticism. A major critique of the monitor hypothesis is that it oversimplifies the complex interplay between acquisition and learning; and suggests that students are a form of mechanistic processor of the language (Zafar, 2009). Furthermore, critics have argued that this form of reductionist perspective to

language learning fails to consider the dynamic, interactive nature of language learning, which includes social, emotional and cultural factors (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Krashen's (1982) three fundamental conditions have been criticised as well. This is because studies have shown that the monitor can be used during written tasks, but that students will struggle during spontaneous communicative tasks (Ellis, 2005; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021), as follows:

- Time to think: This condition can be met in classroom activities where time is provided to complete a task, but it is often difficult to meet in spontaneous communication where time constraints will prioritise fluency over accuracy (Ellis, 2005).
- Focus on form: This condition is difficult to meet because even though it leads to accuracy, it disrupts the natural flow of communication (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).
- Knowing the rules: This condition is extremely difficult for beginners. Knowing the rule and thinking of the rule while simultaneously engaging in real-time language production is a great challenge (Ellis, 2005; Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

In the Saudi Arabian context, the monitor hypothesis is particularly relevant where students rely on rote memorisation and grammar-focused instruction, which leads them to fall into the monitor over-user category (Alrabai, 2016; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alshammari, 2022; Hassan, 2022). This approach often results in accuracy-focused production that impedes fluency and meaning. Moreover, the lack of opportunities for authentic English language use in a Saudi Arabian context limits students' ability to develop communicative competence (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alshammari, 2022; Hassan, 2022). To mitigate the issue of monitor overuse, teachers in Saudi Arabia can incorporate classroom activities such as role-play, which offers a balance between accuracy and fluency. Role-play will foster a balance between fluency and accuracy by allowing students to mimic a real-life scenario while still giving them the opportunity to refine grammatical structures (Alshammari, 2022).

3.1.4 The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis explains the manner in which students acquire new aspects of a language through exposure to comprehensible input. This happens when students are exposed to content that is slightly above their current level, which Krashen (1982) refers to as $i+1$, where i is the student's current level and 1 is the new input that is not so difficult as to impede comprehension. Krashen (1982) argues that exposure to comprehensible input slightly beyond a learner's current level ($i+1$) is sufficient for the natural acquisition of grammatical structures, without the need for explicit instruction. For example, through repeated exposure to contextualised input containing past tense verb forms (e.g. *she walked home*), students may begin to acquire the functional use of past tense morphology as part of meaning-focused language processing. The core principle to the input hypothesis is that meaning has to precede form. This is because Krashen (1982) advocates that students acquire language naturally by focusing on meaning rather than on form, because form will naturally be understood over time (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

The input hypothesis has had a major and important influence on second language teaching by promoting communicative approaches that focus on meaning-making, and by distancing itself from rote learning in grammar-based instruction (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021). For example, classroom settings using simplified language and multimedia tools such as visual aids have become vital in creating an environment with comprehensible input. This allows teachers to access aids such as pictures and role-play to ensure that students understand new material; and to facilitate the implementation of $i+1$. The strategies used by teachers make scaffolding possible, which results in material that is slightly above a student's level – i.e. comprehensible (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021).

Even though the input hypothesis challenged popular, traditional methodologies such as the grammar-translation method and significantly influenced L2 teaching, traditional approaches still persist in the Saudi Arabian context (Alrabia, 2014; Al-Muhanna, 2024). The hypothesis has also had its critics. A major criticism turns on the gap in knowledge that results from focusing on input without considering the student's output. Thanks to

students who noticed and commented on this limitation in the course of her study of French immersion programmes, Swain (1985) developed the output hypothesis. The output hypothesis critiques the input hypothesis by arguing that input alone is not sufficient for complete acquisition. This is because, even with sufficient $i+1$ input, the students in Swain's (1985) study struggled with their productive skills of writing and speaking (Swain, 1985). While Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis highlights an important function in second language acquisition, Swain's (1985) critique underscores the importance – for a student's development in L2 learning – of a balanced learning approach including both input and output.

In a Saudi Arabian context, the input hypothesis has particular relevance owing to the country's emphasis on English as a foreign language (EFL) education. English is a compulsory subject, and students are exposed to large amounts of input thanks to curriculum textbooks. However, it has been noted that, in certain contexts, English is still taught using rote memorisation skills. This persistent situation eliminates opportunities to implement the $i+1$ factor, thereby hampering comprehensible input and limiting the capacity for productive output (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alshammari, 2022; Hassan, 2022).

3.1.5 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which is the hypothesis that I used as part of the theoretical framework for this study, posits that emotional and attitudinal factors serve as a filter that hinders a student's second language acquisition. The concept of affective filters has been studied extensively, and research shows how positive emotions such as confidence and motivation lower the filter and enhance language acquisition (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Furthermore, studies have shown that negative emotions such as anxiety and fear increase the filter, which then obstructs comprehensible input from being effectively acquired (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Comprehensible input, as explained above, is the $i+1$ of language input for the target language (Krashen 1982, 1985, 1992, 2003). However, negative emotions may act as filters significantly impeding the acquisition of comprehensible input (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Because of negative emotions, students may perceive

comprehensible input as incomprehensible. Incomprehensible input then often leads to frustration and disengagement when students are unable to connect meaningfully with the material (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Bailey et al., 2000; Ellis, 2008; Ushioda, 2009; Young, 1991). This happens because the filter influences the way input is processed and absorbed, resulting in incomprehensible input for the student even when the $i+1$ is sufficient and met.

The metaphorical filter of negative emotions determines whether language input reaches a student's language acquisition device (LAD). The LAD is a concept Chomsky (1965) introduced to explain the universal innate linguistic abilities all people possess. It enables us to process and internalise grammatical structures from the language input we are exposed to, and it ultimately facilitates the acquisition of languages.

Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985, 2003, 2009; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) identified three key components that influence the affective filter and hinder language acquisition:

- **Motivation:** Students who were highly motivated generally did better in acquiring a second language. They would engage with the material and actively seek opportunities to practice the language. They viewed challenges as opportunities to improve their language ability, and this kept their affective filter low.
- **Self-confidence:** Students with self-confidence tended to do better than students without. The more confident they were, the more risks they were willing to take in their language learning. They experimented with the language and looked at errors as part of the learning process. By having this outlook to language learning, they naturally enhanced their internal ability to grasp linguistic patterns.
- **Anxiety:** Students with low anxiety acquired a second language more easily and much more productively than students with high anxiety. This is because students with high levels of anxiety would avoid partaking in tasks and would deem their efforts inadequate. Furthermore, students with high levels of anxiety were unable to access the comprehensible input, thereby blocking it from reaching the LAD.

The interplay between emotional factors and language acquisition and learning has been acknowledged by many researchers, as shown in the literature review (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1986; Krashen, 1982; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008).

Despite the extensive literature showing the effects emotional factors have on language acquisition and learning; however, this hypothesis has come under immense criticism for its lack of specificity and empirical grounding. One of the core critiques is its vagueness in identifying, defining and operationalising the affective filter. Krashen (1982) gives no clear explanation as to how the filter functions or what it consists of. For instance, it remains unclear how emotional states selectively block or allow certain types of input, which limits the validity of the hypothesis as it cannot be tested (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021; Zafar, 2009).

Furthermore, critics (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021; Zafar, 2009) criticised the emotional categories into which Krashen (1982) placed students as being too simplistic and as failing to account for the potential complexity of emotional and cognitive factors. Emotional states are dynamic and are influenced by variables including situational, cultural and individual factors, which makes it difficult to generalise about the impact they have on language learning (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

Another major criticism emerged from Gregg's (1984) study of a Chinese woman who had close to native-like fluency and accuracy in English, except for her incorrect usage of the third person singular. This raised concerns as to how the affective filter decides what input is screened in or out during language acquisition and learning (Gregg, 1984). If emotional factors were the only determinants of input, then such specific and systematic errors would be difficult to explain. There have also been many cases where students managed to remain highly motivated but did not attain language proficiency (Lichtman & VanPatten, 2021; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2013; Zafar, 2009).

Krashen (1985, 2003, 2009) acknowledged the criticism aimed at the affective filter while defending its conceptual validity. Even if the filter's exact mechanism was not understood (Krashen, 1982, 2003, 2009), there were numerous studies (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1986; Krashen, 1982; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008) highlighting the negative impact affective filters had on students learning languages. As part of his argument, Krashen (2009) stated that affective barriers are understood to be external to the LAD. Krashen (2009) was thus of the opinion that while affective factors

hinder comprehensible input, they do not alter the inherent process of language acquisition.

As for the criticism regarding the operationalisation of the affective filter, Krashen (1985, 2003, 2009) used the studies of Dulay and Burt (1977) to demonstrate that students in lower anxiety settings acquired languages much more effectively. Krashen (1985, 2003, 2009; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) further argued that classroom practices such as the implementation of the natural approach had successfully lowered students' anxiety levels by implementing communicative activities and creating a positive classroom environment, aiding acquisition.

In response to the criticism about the lack of specificity concerning the affective filter, Krashen (1985, 1993, 2003) argued that the affective filter hypothesis serves as a tool to explore affective factors rather than a scientific model. He further encouraged researchers to explore the interplay between affective and cognitive factors, stating that the hypothesis highlights a critical yet often overlooked aspect of language acquisition (Krashen 1985, 1993).

Despite the fact that the affective filter hypothesis has been criticised, particularly for its lack of specificity and lack of individual variability, there is enough literature, as highlighted in the literature review (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1986; Krashen, 1982; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008), showing that affective factors do hamper language learning. Furthermore, by understanding what affective factors Saudi Arabian students experience and how they experience them, teachers may tailor their strategies to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of language learning, ultimately empowering students to be confident and increase their investment in language learning.

In my study, the affective filter hypothesis played a pivotal role – by giving me a lens through which I could examine and understand the emotional experiences of Saudi Arabian students in the preparatory year. Unlike Krashen's other (1982) hypotheses, the affective filter directly addresses the conditions under which acquisition is optimised, as shown by the literature (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1986; Krashen, 1982; Horwitz et al., 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ushioda, 2008). This focus is of particular importance for my study because it points out exactly how affective factors such as anxiety can hinder

access to language input – even when it is comprehensible input that meets Krashen's (1982) $i+1$.

Furthermore, the emphasis in the hypothesis on lowering affective factors for effective acquisition aligns closely with my objectives, especially that of understanding why and how the affective factors in play impede English language learning in Saudi Arabian students. By identifying and addressing these factors, my study will add to the literature by informing teachers about ways of maximising effective language acquisition. This will help to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary interventions to cater for the affective profiles of Saudi Arabian students. In addition, this hypothesis provided me with the theoretical foundation for analysing how emotional states correlate with language learning investment.

The affective filter hypothesis thus caters to the broader theoretical framework of my research, but has also helped me develop the practical insights allowing me to address the challenges faced by these students directly.

In summary, this section has highlighted the foundational contributions of Krashen's (1982) five hypotheses. It gave an explanation of the following: why Krashen differentiates between acquisition and learning, the natural order of learning, the reasons why students should monitor their errors and correct them, the need for comprehensible input, and the filter impeding language acquisition. The section also highlighted key critiques of Krashen's (1982) hypotheses.

Despite these critiques, Krashen's (1982) hypotheses, which are advocates for a more communicative approach to language learning, are suited to the overall approach in my research.

3.2 Norton's Model of Investment



Figure 3.1: Norton's model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 42)

Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) argued that the views on motivation held by different theorists (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner, 1985; Krashen, 1982) in the field of second language acquisition were unfair to the student. She pointed out that theorists such as Dörnyei (1990), Gardner (1985) and Krashen (1982) placed students into unfair categories, such as a motivated student vs an unmotivated student or a good student vs a bad student. Furthermore, their view of motivation does not take other factors, such as social, cultural, racial or religious aspects, into consideration. For this reason, Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) preferred to use the term investment instead of the fixed, unitary personality trait suggested by the term motivation.

Investment is defined by Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) as the student's commitment to the identities, learning goals and practices that are constantly challenged within various power structures. Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) found that a student may be highly motivated but may lack investment in classroom practices because they may deem it socially, racially or religiously inappropriate. This then drives the student not to partake in activities and, later, to be deemed an unenthusiastic/lazy/poor student. Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) also preferred looking at investment from a post-culturist viewpoint,

one in which language students could (re)construct their identities. She further pointed out that certain social constraints, such as gender or religion, could hamper a student's investment in language learning.

Although motivation and investment are often intertwined, we can say that the differences between them represent the lens through which we try to understand why students commit to learning a second language. Motivation is framed as a psychological, internal construct that drives students to learn a language (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2008); whereas investment is a sociological construct grounded in identity, power and access to resources (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

Norton's model of investment (Figure 3.1) rotates around three main aspects: identity, capital and ideology.

3.2.1 Identity and Language Learning

The first aspect of the model of investment is identity. Norton's (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) definition of identity relates to how students view themselves relative to the world; and to the ways in which their identity is (re)structured relative to the spaces around them. This view challenges static and essentialist notions of identity by highlighting their relational and situational nature. This means that when students speak the language they are learning, they do not only exchange information but also (re)organise who they are.

Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) argues that students' identities directly influence their level of investment in learning a language. This is because students' identities shape their willingness to engage with language tasks and opportunities. For example, Saudi Arabian students learning English may view proficiency in the language as a gateway to better career prospects that would reshape their identities as global citizens rather than local participants. This form of identity transformation can lead to an increase in motivation and active participation in language learning because the students' identities are evolving to match their linguistic goals.

Furthermore, the fluidity of identity also indicates that students may experience conflicts when their developing self clashes with societal expectations or cultural norms. For

instance, Saudi Arabian female students may struggle with the traditional Saudi Arabian cultural and religious expectations regarding gender roles while on their English language learning journey (Norton & Toohey, 2011). These identity negotiations show the importance of understanding language learning as a social and identity-driven process.

One of the most important contributions of Norton's (Darvin & Norton, 2015) model is the emphasis it places on the negotiation of identity during a student's language learning journey. Because identities are not fixed, students are continually (re)constructing their identities during their language learning journey as a result of their interactions with others as well as their social, cultural and religious environments. For example, in a Saudi Arabian classroom where teachers encourage their students to express their opinions in English, their identities as autonomous, confident students may emerge. However, in a classroom where Saudi Arabian students' linguistic or cultural backgrounds are marginalised, students may adopt an identity marked by passivity or resistance, which may hinder their investment in language learning. Students who view themselves as capable and valued participants are more likely to invest in language learning. Conversely, students who feel excluded or devalued tend to disengage (Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). This has significant implications for language teachers to create inclusive learning environments that validate students' identities to foster investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

Another important concept of identity, one central to understanding students' engagement and investment in second language acquisition, is the relationship between identity and power (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). The interplay between the two explains how societal structures, institutional policies and classroom dynamics shape students' identities and their ability to access language resources (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

Classrooms are microcosms of a much broader societal structure and reflect the power hierarchies that impact students' ability to assert their individual identities (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2012). Teachers wield significant power when it comes to classroom interactions because they are viewed as the authoritative figures of the classroom. This can lead to teacher bias, even unintentional favouritism, as a result of which students who

conform to dominant cultural or linguistic norms may alienate the other students. Because teachers often favour the students with more dominant language proficiency, the other students' investment may be discouraged if they start feeling inferior or end up perceiving their identities as incompatible with teacher and classroom expectations (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

Gender and cultural norms further interact with power dynamics that shape students' identities. In conservative societies, traditional and cultural gender roles may restrict women's ability to engage fully with access to educational opportunities. Saudi Arabian women often face societal pressures to conform to cultural norms rather than pursue their individual aspirations, a state of affairs that may limit their ability to fully assert their identities and to invest in language learning (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alrabai, 2016).

3.2.2 Cultural Capital and Language Learning

The second aspect to the model of investment is capital. Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2013) prefers the view that every student is naturally motivated. However, if students are invested in the language, they are usually aware of the greater access to cultural capital made possible by fluency in English. Cultural capital encompasses the skills and information necessary to advance socially and climb the social ladder to attain a higher social status (Bourdieu, 1986). This suggests that a person's education and cultural background are fundamental sources of information and resources, which make up their cultural capital.

Cultural capital has symbolic power and the ability to be converted into economic worth (Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between three types of cultural capital: (i) embodied capital (ii) objectified capital and (iii) institutionalised capital. Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) proposes that if students are invested in learning English, they will have access to a better imagined future with more desirable options, an

ideal job, and, ultimately, an improved lifestyle that elevates their status and power within society.

This section explores the three types of cultural capital, highlighting the implications each has for students' language learning journeys (Bourdieu, 1986).

- **Embodied capital:** This relates to the internalised skills and competencies attained by students through their socialising. In language learning, embodied capital includes the linguistic abilities, the accents and the knowledge of the target language's social etiquette the student possesses (Bourdieu, 1986; Duff, 2012). For example, a Saudi Arabian student learning English may acquire an accent or conversational style resembling that of a native speaker. This enhances the student's credibility and perceived competence, granting the student extra opportunities to participate in social, academic and professional settings (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). By embodying these linguistic and cultural traits, the student gains capital capable of increasing acceptance and legitimacy from cultures that value native-like proficiency; and which will, in turn, increase their investment in language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).
- **Objectified capital:** This relates to material cultural items of symbolic value, such as books, art and technology (Bourdieu, 1986; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). In a language-learning environment, this form of capital includes textbooks, and language-learning apps or other resources that help attain proficiency in the target language. These resources not only aid a student's learning but also signify the student's investment in competence in that language (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).
- **Institutionalised capital:** This relates to the specific capital resulting from a student's education that legitimates the skills and knowledge the student possesses. For example, a student attaining a degree or attending a prestigious English-speaking institution may significantly improve their social and professional

prospects (Bourdieu, 1986; Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

These forms of capital enable students to negotiate with social hierarchies. Students' access to cultural capital often leads them to better jobs, enhanced social networks and increased cultural legitimacy.

Furthermore, Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2013) argues, students' investment in language learning is closely linked to their desire to unlock cultural capital. Unlike motivation, which is an internal psychological trait, investment takes into account the external rewards students seek to obtain via language proficiency (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). When students invest in a language, they view it as a means to access resources that will elevate their status and power within society, and that investment thus holds symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1986; Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

3.2.3 Ideologies and Language Learning

The third aspect of Norton's model of investment is ideology (Darvin & Norton, 2015). As the system of ideas, values and beliefs that dominate societies and individual actions (Darvin & Norton, 2015), ideology highlights the various intersecting layers of power, social structures and cultural norms that influence language learning. Thus, ideology is a multi-layered and complicated area where ideas, behaviours and institutional components intersect, and, at times, conflict with one another.

Furthermore, dominant ideologies position certain languages as prestigious. In the case of English, its framing as the world's lingua franca represents substantial economic and cultural capital (Phillipson, 1992). Students are driven by this prestige positioning to invest in English as a doorway to improved opportunities. However, the situation also creates tensions for students whose linguistic, cultural or religious identities do not align with the dominant ideology (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

In the Saudi Arabian context, students are caught in this tension because they need to preserve their cultural and religious values while participating in the target language and content that is predominantly in English (Alrabai 2016; Al-Mohanna 2024; Hassan 2022).

Students understand that the use of English is necessary for progress, but fear that the use of the English language poses a risk of cultural loss (Al-Muhanna 2024).

The dynamic between ideology and power makes the position of Saudi Arabian students even more intricate. For example, students from wealthy families often receive English-medium education at elite institutions, unlike students from lower-income communities, who are much more likely not to be exposed to quality English language learning (Al-Muhanna, 2024). Such disparities in the availability of resources play a role in exacerbating existing differences in social class, and in endorsing ideological depictions of the English language as a path to success and prestige. However, even in the face of such domination, students and educators in Saudi Arabia are known to counter such ideologies by distilling religion and culture into English language teaching practices, thereby trying to preserve their cultural and religious identity (Al-Muhanna, 2024; Hassan, 2022).

In summary, Norton's (Darvin & Norton, 2015) model of investment (Figure 3.1) highlights that language learning is not a unitary, static cognitive process but instead is deeply rooted in a student's social, cultural, traditional and political contexts. Students' language investment is thus shaped by how they are positioned in relation to others. Students who feel included will have a greater sense of belonging in a classroom, will feel more valued, may invest more, and may show a higher level of engagement. On the other hand, if students feel excluded or deemed less competent, their willingness to invest in the language may diminish.

Students' investment is further shaped by the affordances and perceived benefits they recognise. Affordances refer to the opportunities and challenges facing students in the environment in which they are learning a language. Students will invest in a language because they recognise that it will provide specific benefits. For example, a Saudi Arabian student learning English may perceive the language as affording opportunities for better career prospects, social ranking and access to various global opportunities.

In addition, students' investment is shaped by the systemic patterns of control that limit their access to learning resources. Such patterns include policies and institutions, and students' individual socio-economic situation. While English is often positioned as a

gateway to global economic and social advancement, access to quality English language education is often limited owing to socio-economic status or ideology. Students from marginalised backgrounds may face systemic barriers that restrict them from fully investing in language learning. These barriers control students' experiences in ways that ultimately influence their investment in language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

3.2.4 Agency in Language Learning

The concept of agency plays a critical role in L2 acquisition and learning and explains how students actively navigate their learning environments while negotiating their identities (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). While identity reveals how students see themselves and the way they are perceived in sociocultural contexts, agency represents the ability to act upon and influence these perceptions. This means that in L2 acquisition and learning, agency is defined as the active involvement of students in their language learning process, allowing them to take ownership of the content they acquire (Dewaele, 2009; Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). Furthermore, agency is not a static trait; rather, it is continuously (re)constructed through the student's interactions with others (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001).

3.2.4.1 Agency and Identity Negotiation

Agency is most observable in students' ability to (re)negotiate their identities in response to shaping their societal and linguistic backgrounds (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). This is because students are not inactive participants: they are active agents who navigate multifaceted power dynamics in order to affirm their identities (Norton, 1997, 2006, 2013). Therefore, students make choices about how they engage with language-learning practices, respond to marginalisation, and envision their future selves (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

For example, a Saudi Arabian student may choose to join English-speaking clubs or online programmes to assert their identity as a global citizen. These actions will reflect the student's ability to reshape their identity to align with their imagined future (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Moreover, students often feel the urge to go against and question the status quo. For example, a Saudi Arabian woman who is restricted by the society in which she lives could be facing

limited opportunities to learn or practice her target language. Through their agency, such students may manage to deal with barriers of this kind, maintaining their right to learn and practise the target language despite social pressures (Al-Mohanna, 2024).

3.2.4.2 Agency and Power Dynamics

Agency, to some extent, relates to power because the latter helps define the scope for students' actions within a constraining or supportive environment. Power is widespread and functions through social structures, processes and relations that determine what is achievable or acceptable to people (Darvin & Norton, 2021). In these social relations, power dynamics determine the range of resources available for students; the number of opportunities open to them; and the recognition they receive. In contrast, agency enables students to navigate and resist these power dynamics, thereby inevitably creating opportunities for greater investment.

An example would be the economic and social gaps in rural communities. Saudi students from a lower-income rural background where English materials are not readily available, could overcome these institutional limitations by activating their agency. For instance, students subjected to such educational power constraints may decide to access free courses available on the internet or use social media for language exchange. This type of action would show how the notion of agency enables students' active resistance against existing power structures; and allow them to shape their own spaces for language investment and language learning (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alshammari, 2022).

3.2.4.3 Agency, Investment, and the Right to Speak

The notion of the right to speak stems from the idea that the speaker is a legitimate and worthy speaker (Bourdieu, 1977). The notion rests on the perceived worth and authority of the speaker among the audience. This means that when students speak, they do not speak only to be heard, but also speak to be credible, influential and deserving of respect (Bourdieu, 1977).

Norton (1997; 2000; 2006; 2013) adds to this by stating that, if given the opportunity, students can assert their right to speak both in and out of the classroom. This is because teachers can play a crucial role in recognising the diverse identities of students in order

to foster an inclusive and supportive classroom environment within which students can claim their right to speak in various situations (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013). Moreover, teachers hold the power to decide who gets to speak, and how often they do. Teacher bias, whether intentional or not, can favour those students with greater fluency and marginalise the rest, making them feel as though they are not legitimate speakers of the language and their voices have less value (Duff, 2012; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

The right to speak is closely related to a student's investment in language learning. The reason for this is that if students view themselves as legitimate speakers of the language, their investment will lead to meaningful engagement. Therefore, students who invest deeply, invest in language learning could use their agency to overcome the barriers they face in exercising their right to speak (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

For example, a Saudi Arabian female student learning English would have to resist the societal norms that may discourage her from public speaking. Such a student, even if she excels academically, may, through her investment in the language, use her agency to assert her right to speak (Al-Muhanna, 2024; Alshammari, 2022). For instance, she may join English-language clubs online to overcome the barriers that limit her voice and establish herself as a legitimate speaker, thereby claiming her right to speak (Norton, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2013).

In summary, this section has concerned itself with limitations to motivation by taking a general look at the effects sociocultural, racial, gender and religious factors have on students' language learning journeys. Norton's model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) provides a more comprehensive framework, expressing how students' identities, goals and practices are influenced by power dynamics and external constraints.

The section also showed that identity is fluid and evolves as students progress through their language learning journeys and navigate societal and linguistic situations. Examples from Saudi Arabia show how traditional gender ideologies and cultural disparities may either encourage or hinder investment in language learning. Additionally, teachers play a

crucial role in stimulating students' investment by fostering safe environments in which to express themselves.

Moreover, this section highlighted how cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutional) affects students' access to resources and social status. It also highlighted the prominent role of dominant ideologies in creating tensions for students, especially in contexts such as Saudi Arabia.

Finally, this section brought into focus the link between agency, investment and the right to speak. Students who consider themselves legitimate speakers of the language are more likely to exercise agency, resist systemic barriers and reclaim their voice and their right to speak.

Norton's model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015), along with Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis, built the framework of my study. I chose the model and the hypothesis because, together, they enabled a more holistic analysis of my data. In addition, using the model and the hypothesis allowed me to identify any inconsistencies in my data. They also helped me to answer my research questions, by allowing me to identify 1. which affective factors students encounter and 2. how these factors interact with students' investment.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the key theories that underpinned my study: Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis and Norton's model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015). These frameworks offered a balanced perspective from which I could examine the interplay between the affective factors and the socio-cultural factors that influence the English language experiences of Saudi Arabian students in the preparatory year.

Furthermore, the affective filter hypothesis highlighted the emotional and psychological conditions under which students acquire language, while emphasising the importance of motivation and low anxiety in order to gain comprehensible input.

Norton's model of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015) extended this analysis by placing the learning experiences of students within a socio-cultural context. It allowed me to shift

my focus from internal factors such as motivation and anxiety to external ones such as cultural capital, agency and investment. The model provided a framework from which to explore the participating students' investment in English language learning and how this shaped their journeys.

In the next chapter, I explain my research paradigm, research approach, research design, data-generating tools and procedures, data-analysis methods, recruitment and sample. I also discuss the trustworthiness and limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the key theories that underpinned my study regarding affective factors and investment in English language learning among Saudi Arabian first-year preparatory university students.

In this chapter, I provide the methodology used in my study. I begin by outlining my research paradigm, which provided the basis for my research design. After this, I explain my research design and describe the data-generating tools and procedures I employed to generate my data. Furthermore, in this chapter, I elaborate on the data-analysis methods and my recruitment strategy, and I detail the steps I took to ensure trustworthiness, ensuring that my findings are credible. Finally, I address the limitations of my study and how I managed them.

4.1 Research Paradigm: An Interpretive Paradigm

A research paradigm is based on the beliefs the researcher has regarding the nature of reality (ontology), which shape how they view and interpret the world around them (Richards, 2003). In addition, the study's epistemology (the nature of theoretical knowledge and the way it is acquired) is crucial because it influences the approach the researcher applies to their study to explore various phenomena (Grix, 2004). Therefore, understanding various research paradigms is essential because it allows researchers to correctly situate their work within established frameworks (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The most widely recognised research paradigms include positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory.

The positivism paradigm is based on the belief in a single, observable reality that can be objectively measured using scientific methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023); whereas the post-positivism paradigm accepts that an objective reality exists, but that all observations are imperfect and influenced by theory. The post-positivism paradigm,

therefore, calls for a more cautious and evaluative approach to understanding knowledge (Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

Critical theory focuses on identifying and addressing social injustices as its foundation while examining and challenging existing power structures, with the goal of using research as a tool for societal transformation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).

The interpretive paradigm is grounded in the notion that reality is subjective, unlike the positivist paradigms that focus on objectivity and universal truths (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and also focuses on the co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. Interpretivism recognises that phenomena are influenced by social, cultural and historical contexts, which require the researcher to engage with the participants to extract meaning (Berryman, 2019; Charmaz, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

This means that an interpretive paradigm is best suited to exploring the experiences and behaviours of participants while seeking to understand the why and the how of a phenomenon (Berryman, 2019). Therefore, the role of the researcher within an interpretive paradigm is not to be distant and objective, but to engage actively with the participants to create shared interpretations and insights (Berryman, 2019; Charmaz, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Advantages of the interpretive paradigm are its practical applicability, its flexibility and its adaptive design. This means that as the research progresses and new insights arise, the researcher can modify questions, refine methodologies, and explore different avenues of enquiry (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This flexibility and adaptability are critical in studies where prediction and categorisation would do an injustice to the study, owing to the complexity of the phenomenon (Berryman, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stewart et al., 2007).

For example, in my study I explored the experiences of Saudi Arabian students learning English, which entailed navigating a dynamic landscape of linguistic, cultural, religious and pedagogical influences (Erickson, 1986; Fowler, 2009). Furthermore, by considering cultural sensitivity and the authentic representation of the participants' voices, I could ensure that the data and findings reflected the richness and diversity of my participants' lived experiences (Berryman, 2019; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). By using this paradigm, I

could navigate these complexities ethically; and at the same time ensure that the perspectives of the participants remained central to the analysis (Fowler, 2009; Stewart et al., 2007).

Despite the many advantages of the interpretive paradigm, however, it has its disadvantages too. For example, major challenges of this paradigm are researcher bias and researcher misinterpretation (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Because the researcher is an active participant in the co-construction of knowledge and insights, there is a possibility that their own assumptions and perspectives may inadvertently shape the interpretation of the data (Berryman, 2019; Creswell, 2009; Stewart et al., 2007). Furthermore, subjectivity, while a crucial component of the interpretive paradigm, raises concerns regarding the reliability of the findings (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fowler, 2009; Stewart et al., 2007). To mitigate these concerns and risks, I ensured that I critically examined my own biases and assumptions throughout the research process by making sure that I was transparent in my methods by documenting every interaction. By doing this, I can justify the steps taken during the process, which will then result in the credibility of the findings (Berryman, 2019; Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Stewart et al., 2007).

Ironically, a disadvantage of an interpretive paradigm could be its reliance on rich, qualitative data. While qualitative data provides valuable insights, a study of a large size and/or featuring extensive data sets could be overwhelming to analyse (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Berryman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers gain a balance between capturing sufficient depth and managing the practicalities of the data analysis. Too little data may result in incomplete interpretations, whereas too much data could lead to an information overload or the risk of losing sight of the research questions (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Berryman, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). To address this concern, I employed specific strategies during my data-analysis process to enable me to extract sufficient meaning from the responses. Firstly, I applied a minimum threshold of five-word responses to ensure that only responses with sufficient depth were included. Next, I reviewed the codes and refined them before grouping them into broader sub-themes based on relevance and frequency. Furthermore, I evaluated each code and theme to ensure that it contributed directly to my research questions. Any

data that did not serve this purpose or introduced redundancy were excluded from further consideration and analysis. Doing this allowed me to manage large quantities of data; keep the focus on my objectives; and answer my research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Additionally, the fact that the paradigm is subjective raises concerns regarding the generalisability of the findings. Critics of the interpretive paradigm often argue that the findings may not be applicable to broader populations owing to paradigm's context-specific nature (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). However, while the findings may not be generalisable to all populations, they may be applicable to contexts similar to the one in which I worked.

Despite the limitations, I have opted for an interpretative paradigm because it afforded me the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences while at the same time focusing on the meaning and understanding of their experiences. In the end, the interpretive paradigm allowed me to analyse the data generated to answer my research questions. It also allowed me to gain contextualised insights into how cultural and social contexts shape Saudi Arabian students' English language learning. In addition, the design of my questionnaires and the number of participants I recruited provided me with adequate responses and rich data, both of which reduced any possible limitations of the interpretive paradigm.

4.2 Research Approach: A Qualitative Approach

Previous research (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023; Fraenkel et al., 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991) has shown that for researchers to provide a deep and clear understanding of the matter being studied, an appropriate research approach is vital. The three primary research approaches are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research approaches concentrate on gathering and analysing numerical data to test hypotheses or determine the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023). In contrast, qualitative research aims to explore human experiences and social phenomena using non-numerical data such as interviews; observations; or open-ended responses (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023). Mixed methods combine the two approaches to seek

an in-depth and contextualised understanding of a research problem by integrating numerical trends with contextual insights (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023; Fraenkel et al., 2011; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). For this study, I employed a qualitative approach because it aligned with my objectives of exploring my participants' experiences, perspectives and responses to my research questions.

A qualitative research approach, therefore, focuses on answering the why? questions of a piece of research while emphasising depth and meaning (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This approach also prioritises the participants' voices, allowing me to explore their lived experiences, thoughts and emotions (Becker, 1998; Smith, 2008; Walia, 2015). Unlike the quantitative research approach, which focuses on analysing numerical data to quantify phenomena, a qualitative research approach delves into the subjective dimensions of human nature and social issues (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Drobot, 2012; Flick, 2014; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2010; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Moreover, the flexible nature of qualitative research enables researchers to adapt their structure to emerging insights. This is a benefit that researchers can use especially when questions need to evolve in response to the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Richards, 2009; Saldana, 2016).

A defining characteristic of a qualitative research approach is its interpretive nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This means that researchers using a qualitative approach can uncover patterns and themes that will provide greater meaning and a deeper understanding of a phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002; Smith, 2008). This is possible because researchers can analyse, compare and evaluate the responses of their participants (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Silverman, 2010). The approach is thus well-suited to exploring complex social issues that cannot be fully explained by capturing numerical data (Becker, 1998; Drobot, 2012; Yeh & Inman, 2007). My study is an example of this, focusing as it does on the social interactions, cultural factors, individual motivation and language learning investment that are at play while students learn a language. Basically, a qualitative approach was capable

of offering study insights that would not have been apparent with a quantitative approach (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Walia, 2015).

Qualitative research has its weaknesses too. For example, inadequate researcher expertise and researcher bias are major limitations capable of negatively impacting the findings of a qualitative study. An inexperienced researcher may misinterpret data, leading to discrepancies between what is said and how it is analysed. To address this, I engaged in extensive reading of qualitative research methods prior to data generation and consulted regularly with my supervisor to ensure that my interpretations remained grounded and accurate. I also critically examined my own biases and assumptions throughout the research process, maintaining transparency in my methodology. This included keeping a detailed research journal and documenting all the interactions that took place during the study; all the decisions taken; and all the changes made. These steps allowed me to reflect on my positionality and justify the procedures I followed (Berryman, 2019; Creswell, 2009, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Stewart et al., 2007).

4.3 Research Design: A Descriptive Case Study

Choosing a research design is critical for any study, because it shapes how data are generated, analysed and interpreted.

In qualitative studies requiring an in-depth, contextual exploration of a specific setting, instance, group or phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018), the case study is a popular research design. Case studies are often used when the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and its context are not clearly evident to the researcher. In addition, case studies allow researchers to explore complex social, cultural or institutional processes as they unfold (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Thus, a case study provides the type of rich, thick descriptions that help researchers understand why or how certain outcomes or behaviours occur (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Furthermore, case studies can focus on a single case or multiple cases. The instruments typically used to gain a holistic understanding of the research problem in case studies are interviews,

observations, documents and artifacts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have used a descriptive case study as my research design.

My case study involved a group of Saudi Arabian university students learning English in the preparatory year. The focus of the case study was to study the affective factors and investment among these students. Because my case study focused on a group, it allowed me to gain comprehensive insights into various participants' experiences, beliefs and desired future outcomes when learning English within a specific educational, cultural and social context.

Case studies are well-established as a research design in qualitative research and there are various forms of case studies researchers may utilise, depending on the specific needs of their study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). For example, intrinsic case studies are suited to researchers who have a personal interest in a topic; and who are then able to offer a deep understanding of a unique situation (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Instrumental case studies are used to explore broader issues through the lens of a single case, while collective case studies analyse multiple cases simultaneously to provide comparative insights (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

By situating the experiences of my participants within the broader literature on language learning investment and affective factors, I could identify areas of convergence and divergence that would allow me to highlight the unique aspects of the case and its broader implications (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). This research design not only enhanced my study's theoretical contribution but also ensured that my findings were relevant and applicable for transferability to similar contexts (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013).

However, a descriptive case study has its own limitations (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995), and I had to take these into consideration to ensure that my findings were credible. For example, one limitation is the perceived lack of generalisability. The reason for this limitation is that, because case studies focus on a specific context, the findings may not be applicable to other settings, social contexts or populations (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2013). However, the aim of the findings is not to generalise them to other contexts, but to enable transferability capable of informing similar settings or contexts, so that researchers may

decide whether the findings are relevant to their own contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

In my study, I took steps to mitigate the potential limitations of a descriptive case study and to maximise its strengths. The use of a descriptive case study ensured that my processes for data generation and analysis were focused on providing a deep understanding of my participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Furthermore, my questionnaires were designed with careful consideration of the theoretical framework, ensuring that they would capture the key dimensions of the affective factors and the investment in the language learning journeys of my participants.

4.4 Recruitment of Participants: The Recruitment Process

Recruiting the correct participants for any study is critical to ensuring that they align with the objectives of the study so that rich, meaningful data may be generated.

The recruitment process began in the second week of January 2025, which corresponded to the second week of Semester Two of the academic year. At this point, students were settled into their courses and routines and understood the university's policies.

For this study, participants were recruited with the assistance of teachers. Teachers were informed about the purpose of the study; and were asked to email invitations to students to participate in the study. The invitations to participate included all the information relevant to the study, including the participants' involvement and the informed consent required. (See Appendix A: Informed Consent Form for the English version; and also, Appendix B for the Arabic version.) On receipt of informed consent, two questionnaires were sent to the students.

4.5 Sample: A Purposive Approach

I used a purposive approach because it allowed me to select participants based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. This allowed me to ensure that my sample aligned with my research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants were aged between 18 years and 19 years and were enrolled in the preparatory-year programme. This programme is designed to equip students with the necessary English skills for their academic pathways. The English proficiency levels among the participants ranged from

beginner to upper-intermediate, reflecting the diverse educational backgrounds and experiences of the participants.

In this study, the inclusion and exclusion of participants were based on the following:

- Inclusion criteria:
 - The participants had to be students of the research site.
 - The participants had to be enrolled in the preparatory year.
 - The participants had to be studying in one of the three tracks (medicine, science, the humanities).
- Exclusion criteria:
 - Students who were not enrolled in the preparatory year at the research site.
 - Students who were enrolled in the preparatory year at the research site but did not study English.

This approach ensured that I had selected participants who were directly related to my research objectives and the context of my study.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire 1 and Narrative Task 1

Questionnaire 1		
Total responses 405	Total Participated 394	Track
	Male Participants 224	Medicine Responses 102
	Female Participants 170	Science Responses 125
		Humanities Responses 167

Table 4.2 Questionnaire 2 and Narrative Task 2

Questionnaire 2		
Total responses 247	Total Participated 230	Track
	Male Participants 141	Medicine Responses 56
	Female Participants 89	Science Responses 74
		Humanities Responses 100

4.6 Ethics, Gatekeeper Approval, Informed Consent

Ethical considerations are central to the recruitment and sampling process. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I applied to the ethics committee of the proposed university where the study was to be conducted to request gatekeeper permission. I explained the nature and scope of my study and received permission to generate data. (See Appendix C: Gatekeeper Permission.) Once I received permission, I applied to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for ethical clearance. Once this was done (See Appendix D: Ethical Clearance), I started to recruit my participants, obtaining their informed consent and clarifying the purpose and nature of my study. In addition, I made it clear to the participants that they were not obligated to answer any questions, and that their participation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, participants were made aware that they had the right to leave the study at any time without any consequences to them, and that all generated data would be confidential and anonymous. (See Appendix A: Informed Consent Form for the English version; and Appendix B for the Arabic version.)

4.7 Data-generation Strategies: Open-ended Questionnaires and Narratives

The methods chosen to generate data are integral to the success of any research project; and need to align with the research objectives in order to generate rich data and, in turn, provide meaningful insights. In this study, I generated data using two open-ended questionnaires that each included a short narrative writing component. This dual approach allowed my participants to share their experiences, opinions and reflections in their own words, which provided me with sufficient data to understand the phenomenon at hand.

4.7.1 Open-Ended Questionnaires

In qualitative research, open-ended questionnaires are widely used as reliable tools for generating data because they allow participants to respond to the questions in an unrestricted manner (Agee, 2009; Burck, 2005; Farber, 2006). In contrast to closed-ended

questionnaires that limit participants to choose from a set of predetermined options, open-ended questionnaires enable participants to express themselves freely by being able to articulate their emotions, thoughts and experiences (Agee, 2009; Burck, 2005; Farber, 2006). This flexibility in a data-generating tool was extremely valuable for my study, because it allowed my participants to share their perspectives on their language learning journeys in relation to their social, cultural and educational contexts (Sutton & Austin, 2015); and to reflect on the affective factors shaping their learning of English, and their investment in learning English in the Saudi Arabian context.

One of the reasons I chose open-ended questionnaires was the richness of the data this allowed me to generate. I could access detailed and diverse responses, which were expressed in the participants' own words and therefore enhanced the depth and authenticity of my findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019; Madill et al., 2005). This richness of data was especially important in my study because the voices and personal experiences of the participants were essential to my research objectives. In addition, the fact that the responses were anonymous probably allowed my participants to express themselves fully without the fear of being judged (Abbott & Earnshaw, 2020; Farber, 2006; Madill et al., 2005).

However, open-ended questionnaires may also present some challenges. For example, a key disadvantage is the potential for incomplete or low-quality data if participants fail to fully engage with the questions (Agee, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another risk is students not understanding the questions owing to questions being poorly worded by the researcher (Farber, 2006). Moreover, the fact that participants complete questions independently (and there is no opportunity for any misunderstandings to be clarified in real time) could affect the quality of data generated (Abbott & Earnshaw, 2020; Farber, 2006; Madill et al., 2005).

When I designed the open-ended questionnaires for this study, I employed several strategies to ensure that I mitigated the challenges open-ended questionnaires provide. Taking all advice into consideration in order to minimise ambiguity and maximise clarity, I carefully worded my questions using simple, clear and direct language, so that the participants could easily understand them. In addition, the questionnaires were presented

to the participants in both English and Arabic. This allowed them to respond in whichever language made them feel most comfortable. Choosing a bilingual approach was extremely important in the context of my study, as it accommodated the participants who may have lacked the confidence to respond and fully express themselves in English (Pavlenko, 2007).

Furthermore, I ensured that all the teachers I recruited to provide their students (the study participants) with the required link to the questionnaires would encourage the students to engage fully and openly with the questions. Having the teachers emphasise the importance and value of the students' input fostered a sense of investment and accountability among the participants. This played a role in my eventually receiving many rich responses.

The first of my two questionnaires (see Appendix E: Questionnaire on Affect) consisted of 20 questions. Of these, 17 were designed to answer my research questions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; while 3 were designed around the participant investment aspects within my research questions 2, 3 and 4. This questionnaire aimed to explore participants' affective factors, such as the emotions, attitudes and motivations that have an influence on how they learn the English language. It also involved a narrative writing exercise where learners were required to talk about their English learning journeys, reflecting on both their negative and their positive experiences.

The second questionnaire (see Appendix F: Questionnaire on Investment) was focused on investment and consisted of 20 questions as well. It explored the emotional and practical resources expended by the participants in their language learning. It included a narrative question where they had to consider the extent to which they believed English would be relevant to their future careers. This questionnaire was designed to have 13 questions aligned primarily with research questions 2, 3, and 4; and 7 questions having a slight overlap and exploring emotional factors as they relate to investment.

The inclusion of narrative responses enhanced the richness and contextual depth of the data. Through the narratives, the participants were able to explain the personal experiences related to their English language learning journey, both negative and

positive; and to comment on their goals in a more comprehensive way, illustrating how emotionally and cognitively engaged in language learning they were.

4.7.2 Narrative Writings

In recent times, narratives have become a key aspect of research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pavlenko, 2007). This is because narratives offer unique insights into how participants construct, present, view and reflect upon their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). In addition, narratives play a pivotal storytelling role by not merely recounting past events but also showing how participants actively construct the self (Bruner, 1990; 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988). Furthermore, because narratives are a dialogic storytelling process, participants simultaneously create and reveal their identities to readers or listeners (Bakhtin, 1981; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This process of storytelling has made narratives valuable in linguistics and education because they provide windows into the lived experiences, social interactions and linguistic journeys of the participants (Elliott, 2005; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Thus, by merging personal experiences into coherent stories, narrators can make sense of their past while at the same time constructing their present and imagined futures (Clandinin, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

In this study, Question 20 of both questionnaires was directed at students and encouraged them to reflect on their English language learning journeys. The responses were often in the form of brief personal narratives, including reflections on early language exposure, emotional turning points, and the long-term impact of teachers, schooling or personal motivation. I analysed these extended responses thematically, while also attending to the emotional tone, temporal sequencing and identity positioning embedded in the students' storytelling. This allowed me to interpret not just what students experienced, but how they made sense of those experiences in shaping their relationship with English.

The use of narrative inquiry has become extremely popular in linguistics. The benefit of being able to explore experiences through the lens of language learning has made narratives popular among linguistic researchers (Gee, 1999; Pavlenko, 2007). The reason for the popularity of narratives is that they often reveal three core dimensions, with

participants able to explore their feelings, past experiences and current circumstances, thereby adding depth to their stories. The three core dimensions are:

- Interaction: This dimension allows participants to draw upon their personal and social experiences, thereby expressing their emotions and aspirations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).
- Continuity: This dimension allows participants to connect their past experiences to their present experiences. Continuity, thus, enables participants to highlight their language learning journeys through the various phases they have experienced, giving a holistic view of their development (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008).
- Situation: This dimension allows participants to contextualise their experiences within a specific setting, thereby enriching their narratives with special and temporal elements (Clandinin, 2006; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Another benefit of narrative writing is that it makes it possible for researchers to delve into the private worlds of participants, enabling the former to see how individual language learning processes connect to broader sociocultural phenomena (Elliott, 2005; Pavlenko, 2007). For instance, in diachronic and sociolinguistic research, narratives offer a longitudinal view of language development (Gee, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), with participants providing an exclusive view, from their individual perspectives, on changes across time and space. Narrative writing also reveals how participants navigate their linguistic and cultural identities, which offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between their personal aspirations and the expectations of society (Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

Furthermore, reflective narratives in qualitative research also offer rich and multifaceted data because they allow participants to evaluate, assess, and reflect on, their thoughts and experiences (Clandinin, 2006; Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007). However, what makes reflective narratives different from traditional narratives is that they encourage participants to engage critically with their past (Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007; Pavlenko, 2007). This leads them to identify patterns and themes that shaped or reshaped their experiences. For instance, as participants recount their language learning journeys, they may consciously reflect on key moments, such as the challenges they have faced or the

successes they have achieved, and how these shaped their linguistic development (Mendelowitz & Ferreira, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

Although narrative inquiry offers rich and multifaceted data, it also presents its own challenges. One of the biggest challenges researchers may face is not getting rich data, especially if the group of participants have limited proficiency in the target language (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pavlenko, 2007). Furthermore, misinterpretations from researchers or incomplete narratives from participants would undermine the validity of the findings. (Pavlenko, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

To mitigate these challenges, I gave my participants the choice of responding in either English or Arabic. Most of my data were generated in my participants' native language, then translated into English. Research shows that, if the researcher and the participants share a language, and if participants face potential linguistic barriers, this is a better approach (Pavlenko, 2007). The approach ensured that my participants were able to express themselves fully and accurately, which allowed me to generate richer and more authentic narratives.

4.8 Data Analysis: A Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most popular methods for analysing data in qualitative research. It assists researchers with a robust and structured method for text-based data analysis. The data in my study were analysed employing thematic analysis and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework as a guide.

Table 4.3 The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with the data
Phase 2: Generating initial codes
Phase 3: Identifying themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
Phase 6: Producing the final report

By using these phases as a guide, I was able to carefully locate, arrange and systematically analyse the meaningful elements within the generated data. This method ensured that the analysis I carried out in this study was thorough and well documented and was also based on the data that had been generated. My analysis also included deductive and inductive coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which served to ensure that the findings were both guided by the theory and receptive to the new ideas that emerged from the themes and patterns within the data. I also analysed each questionnaire separately, to ensure that I fully understood the data in terms of my research questions.

Phase 1: For the first phase of this framework, I had to do an initial reading of the responses to gain a broad understanding of what my data contained (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase required that I read my data multiple times and write initial notes about any patterns and ideas that stood out (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the initial reading, I had to translate Arabic responses into English so that I could accurately reflect the participants' words and meanings (i.e. without changing the essence of what they had said).

Although crucial, translating qualitative data for thematic analysis can be challenging. Incorrect translation can make the research results unreliable and invalidate the research (Brislin, 1970; van Nes et al., 2010). To be effective, the translation needs to preserve the

integrity of linguistic nuances and the cultural meaning of participants' responses (Brislin, 1970; van Nes et al., 2010). Translation in qualitative research is not just a technical operation: it is also an interpretive act that requires sensitivity to cultural and contextual subtleties (Brislin, 1970; Regmi et al., 2010; Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010). With my translations, therefore, I had to make sure that I did not distort the original meaning; and that I remained as close as possible to the original cultural and linguistic nuances (Brislin, 1970; Regmi et al., 2010; Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010).

To address the challenges of translating qualitative data, I employed two strategies. The first strategy I used was back-translation (Brislin, 1970; van Nes et al., 2010). Back translation involved translating the data from the source language (Arabic) to the target language (English), then back again into the source language. This allowed me to identify any discrepancies and ensure that my translated data were as close as possible to the original (Brislin, 1970; van Nes et al., 2010). The second strategy I employed was to have two Saudi Arabian teachers cross-check my translations to ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' linguistic and cultural meaning (Brislin, 1970; Regmi et al., 2010; Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010).

Once I had completed all the translations, I read the data many times over to become even more familiar with them. My intention was to be fully immersed in them, so as to identify the patterns and ideas that stood out as meeting the requirements of this stage.

This stage and the measures I employed for the translation of my data laid the foundation for, and ensured the trustworthiness and integrity of, my translated data, while also maintaining their alignment with the original responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Brislin, 1970; Regmi et al., 2010; Squires, 2009; Temple & Young, 2004; van Nes et al., 2010).

Phase 2: Once I completed my first phase, and I was familiar with my data, I moved onto the second phase where I started to generate my initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes are succinct labels or phrases that capture the essence of specific pieces of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldana, 2016). I thoroughly read my data many times so that I was able to systematically highlight recurring concepts, patterns, and notable features. I

enhanced the coding process by employing both deductive and inductive coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

For deductive coding, I was guided by the literature review, theoretical framework and research questions, which ensured that the analysis focused on my pre-identified areas of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, concepts such as motivation, anxiety and investment were pre-identified as codes. Inductive coding, on the other hand, allowed me to discover new themes and ideas that emerged directly from the data and were independent of the initial research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This dual approach ensured that my data analysis process remained comprehensive and open to unexpected insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I employed a manual method for this stage, using hard copies of the data and colour-coded markers. Different colours were assigned to deductive and inductive codes. I did this so that I could have a clear differentiation between pre-identified concepts and emergent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Phase 3: Once I had coded my data, I started to group the codes into broader themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes reveal patterns of meaning within the data that are directly significant to the research questions; while sub-themes provide further detail to gain a holistic understanding of the researched phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, I grouped my codes together to form coherent categories. This allowed me to create a structured framework to interpret the findings of my generated data. These themes served as the foundation for my analyses of how my participants' experiences aligned with my research objectives and the existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldana, 2016).

Phase 4: After identifying my themes and sub-themes in Phase 3, I thoroughly reviewed them to ensure that they were accurately identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To achieve this, I read through the coded groups many times to confirm that each code and theme were supported by sufficient evidence; and that my groups were logical (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also had to check for any overlapping themes and for themes that required refinement. By doing this, I ensured that my themes accurately reflected the data I had

generated, providing me with a clear and robust framework for my final analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 5: Once I was convinced that I had finalised the previous phase (and that my themes and sub-themes reflected the data), I defined and named each theme and sub-theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I had to make sure that I clearly articulated what each theme represented, how it related to my research questions, and what aspects of the data it encompassed. By ensuring that my themes and sub-themes were defined and named, I ensured that my analysis was transparent and accessible (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 6: The final phase of my thematic analysis involved synthesising my findings into a coherent report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this final step, I had to discuss the themes and sub-themes in relation to my research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework. I did this by providing illustrative examples from the data, such as quotes from my participants, to support each theme and sub-theme in demonstrating how my findings aligned with the existing literature.

This approach helped me to analyse the complex interplay between affective factors and investment in English language learning by focusing on the participants' experiences. Thematic analysis was the most appropriate approach for clarifying the experiences of Saudi Arabian English language students studying in the preparatory year.

In addition, when analysing the data, I categorised the participants as follows:

Table 4.4 Participant Coding

R = respondent
M = male / medicine
F = female
S = science
H = humanities

For example, R109-MM stood for respondent 109, male, medicine; while R102-FM stood for respondent 102, female, medicine.

4.9 Storage and Disposal of Data

The data that I generated via two Google Forms questionnaires were securely stored on my password-protected Google Drive account to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participant responses. I was the only one who had access to the data, and my drive is safeguarded using a two-factor authentication system.

Once I completed the translations, I downloaded all the responses and printed them for manual thematic analysis. The printed copies are kept locked in a drawer in my personal workspace, with no one else able to access them. This ensures that my data are secure while being analysed. All my work in electronic format is not only stored on my computer with password protection: it is also stored on an encrypted USB device that has been safely stored together with the responses that I printed.

To verify that I have followed the code of ethics put in place by my university, the printed data will be kept for a maximum period of five years. Afterwards, they will be properly shredded. My digital files will be permanently deleted using secure data-deletion software, to ensure no traces remain. I will implement these strategies to ensure that I have upheld the confidentiality and ethical requirements of my study.

I took these approaches to make sure that the confidentiality and ethical standards of my research were met throughout the study.

4.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is an essential part of ensuring the authenticity of the findings. I guaranteed trustworthiness in this study by leaning on a framework emphasising credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

To ensure that my data were credible, I opted to triangulate them using two open-ended questionnaires (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004), both of which used a narrative task. The first questionnaire focused largely on affect. It also contained some questions on investment in language learning, plus the narrative task on affective factors. The second questionnaire focused mostly on investment in language learning and contained the narrative writing task on investment in language learning. This allowed me

to generate data from different data sources and with different foci, to ensure that triangulation was met and, in turn, made my findings as credible and authentic as possible (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1999, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

For transferability to be achieved, I provided sufficient information for the application of my methodology to other situations. This was done by describing the university; and also the number and description of the participants included in the study. I also described the data-generating methods I used and described the period during which the data were generated. Lastly, I described any restrictions I may have come across (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

To achieve dependability, I ensured that my research process was logical and documented. I maintained an audit trail that encompassed my data-generating methods, my research design and my data analysis processes. This is available for scrutiny, and for others to replicate my study if need be. In addition, I engaged with my peers and my supervisor, requesting informed feedback on my analysis to enhance the dependability of my study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

To enable confirmability and to ensure that my study was free of researcher bias, I practiced reflexivity by reflecting on my own role as both an insider and an outsider, ensuring that I understood the data and topic at hand. Furthermore, my audit trail ensured that others will be able to trace my process of analysis and see how I have drawn my conclusions. Furthermore, because my data was triangulated, I was able to see the responses from more than one source. This confirmed that my conclusions were drawn based on the experiences and perspectives of my participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

4.11 Limitations of the Methodology

In research, limitations are inherent and vary depending on the methodology used in a study. These limitations may arise from various factors, such as design, instruments or the study's approach. Acknowledging these limitations adds to the transparency of the

study. Like all studies, my study had limitations. In this section, I discuss my limitations and the way I mitigated these challenges.

The main limitation to my methodology emanated from the fact that I did not have any direct communication with my participants. Interviews, for instance, would have allowed me to formulate follow-up questions to answers provided and to gain access to important nuances from my participants. However, owing to the nature of my research, interviews were not possible. First because of the large number of participants involved; and secondly because Saudi Arabian culture meant that I was not allowed to interview female students in person. Nevertheless, the two questionnaires and two narrative pieces supplied by a large group of students helped me to mitigate this limitation by triangulating my data and ending up with rich, detailed data in return.

A second limitation of my methodology was that my data generation was limited to one university, which could have meant that generalisability could not be considered. However, my detailed description of the research site will allow for transferability, with other researchers understanding the site, the participants and the findings. Researchers working on research sites that are like the one I used will be able to relate to the study and its findings.

A third limitation is the nature of self-reported data. Participants may exaggerate their positive experiences and underplay their negative ones. To mitigate this, I ensured that participants understood that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. In addition, I allowed them to respond in their preferred language and designed my questions in such a way as to encourage honest and detailed responses.

While my study had limitations that were inherent to the nature of my methodology, steps were taken to mitigate these limitations to ensure that my findings were robust, meaningful, authentic and trustworthy.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided a detailed account of the methodology used in my study. I substantiated my reasons for choosing an interpretive paradigm; a qualitative approach; a descriptive case study design; and my specific data generation tools, showing why

these were best suited to align with my research objectives. I substantiated my choice for the thematic analysis of my data and established a structured framework to extract meaningful insights from the data. In addition, despite the many limitations inherent to my study, I provided a detailed method to ensure the trustworthiness of my study, showing how I had achieved credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability while mitigating my study's limitations.

In the next chapter, I begin to present a discussion of my findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS; AFFECT: EMOTIONS AND MOTIVATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

5. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I covered the methodology that I implemented in this study, including the data analysis methods I undertook when analysing my data.

In this chapter, I provide and discuss the findings from my data analysis; and the themes and sub-themes that have emerged from the responses to my first questionnaire, including the narrative writing linked to affect. However, this chapter covers only the analysis of the first theme and its sub-themes. The next chapter will look at the remaining two themes and sub-themes. Chapter 5, therefore, is guided strictly by the affective strand of the study for the first theme and addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1.1: What affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?

RQ 1.2: Why do affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?

RQ 1.3: How are affective factors demonstrated by Saudi Arabian students when learning English?

Theme 1 below will be addressed in this chapter and themes 2 and 3 will be addressed in Chapter 6. The themes linked to investment (RQ 2–RQ 4) will be addressed in Chapter 7.

The extracted themes for the affective strand of my study are as follows:

1. Emotions and motivation in language learning
2. Institutional strain and structural barriers in English language learning
3. Affective environment: The emotional influence of the English teacher

These three themes collectively highlight the affective factors that shape Saudi Arabian university students' English learning experiences, by providing deeper insights into why and how these factors influence their learning.

For my discussion process, I have chosen quotes in which the keywords were most common. Students had the choice of answering in English or Arabic. All Arabic data were translated into English.

5.1 Emotions and Motivation in Language Learning

The data analysed for the first theme provided three sub-themes:

- Positive and negative emotions in language learning
- Anxiety in language learning
- Motivation in language learning

5.1.1 Emotions in Language Learning

The data showed that students experienced both positive and negative emotions related to language learning.

5.1.1.1 Positive Emotions and Their Role in Language Learning

Among the participants, 153 (70 male – 83 female) responses indicated that students experienced positive emotions in their English language journeys. These emotions were clearly visible with the vast number of responses that included words such as *happiness*, *joy*, *passion* and *enthusiasm*, particularly when describing successful communication or comprehension in the language:

- (R6-MS) *[I am] happy because I want to speak freely with foreigners.*
- (R11-FH) *I feel that I am educated and able to communicate with everyone, and this gives me great confidence in myself and that I can go and do everything I want without fear that I will encounter communication problems.*
- (R13-MS) *Feelings of pride and courage and that there are no barriers [preventing me from] learning the English language.*
- (R20-MS) *Enjoyable, because it is an easy and fun subject, and the teacher interacts with the students.*
- (R95-MS) *A feeling of enthusiasm and joy for learning a language which causes an obstacle in most scientific subjects.*

- (R132-MM) *Learning a new language is fun, especially in adding customs and traditions to this language. I think this is due to the nature of the time, as you must learn this language for most worldly matters.*
- (R182-FH) *I really feel so proud and happy because I want to learn the English language so much. I hope to learn it and become fluent soon because learning English is very important to me*
- (R321-FH) *I feel so happy because English is my favourite language.*

Positive emotions did not surface merely as reactions to academic progress, but also as indicators of deep personal meaning. Students described happiness, joy and pride as feelings that were anchored to real-world aspirations and empowerment.

For example, R6's response about wanting to speak *freely with foreigners* expresses more than just linguistic ability: it also expresses a desire for social inclusion beyond national boundaries. This suggests that English proficiency provides a form of affective mobility, serving as a bridge for social connection and personal freedom. In this context, it could be said that English is not only a language but also acts as a symbolic passport to participate in global conversations and communities. This emotional drive reflects Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter conditions where motivation and reduced anxiety allow for greater acquisition and in turn fluency. This emotional satisfaction comes not only from being able to speak fluently, but also from having a sense of authorisation and confidence to engage in social encounters that once felt foreign or intimidating. Therefore, positive affect such as confidence enables students to take risks and interact meaningfully, which is a condition that is essential for language input to become comprehensible (Krashen, 1985; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In the Saudi Arabian context, imagining oneself engaging with broader communities has been associated with stronger motivational orientations (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024).

Similarly, R11's statement links to personal power. The words *I can go and do everything I want without fear* highlights that learning English also provides emotional safety. The language is not framed just as a skill but also as a tool for emotional autonomy. This means that being able to speak English enables students to take independent action to speak, engage, and navigate situations without hesitation or emotional dependence on

others. This aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that confidence and low anxiety lower the affective filter. Learning English then makes students more emotionally equipped to engage in communication. Thus, language becomes a buffer against fear and enables students to manage their own emotional states in high-stakes or unfamiliar contexts. For students such as R11, therefore, English becomes not just a means of expression but also a psychological instrument that reshapes how students relate to themselves and the world around them. This is also reflected in findings where Saudi students' positive perceptions of English and its role in their future opportunities contribute to stronger motivational orientations (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Noels et al., 2000).

We see this further in R11's narrative writing excerpt:

Over time, I began to change my perspective on mistakes. I realised that language is not just a tool for communication, it's a means of self-expression, and mistakes are part of that process. This shift in mindset helped me deal with challenges more effectively.

This excerpt indicates a transformative shift in the student's emotional and cognitive relationship with the English language. R11 reframes English: from being just a tool for communication, which indicates an instrumental function, it becomes a means of self-expression. In addition, the shift in mindset indicates metacognitive awareness whereby the student is able to regulate affective reactions to linguistic challenges. This aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that affective conditions such as motivation directly influence how input is processed and shape whether students can sustain engagement through challenges. Furthermore, R11's statement that *mistakes are part of that process* suggests a significant reduction in communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. The student no longer views mistakes as a threat to self-worth but as an opportunity to feel *great confidence in myself*. This emotional evaluation demonstrates a lower affective filter and a readiness to participate without emotional inhibition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). In the Saudi Arabian context, such affective regulation mirrors the findings of Alaqueel and Altalhab (2024), who noted that self-confidence and reduced fear of negative evaluation play a crucial role in reducing language anxiety. It is clear that R11 has internalised

English as a psychological instrument through which the student constructs self-perception, navigates emotions, and engages more confidently in academic and social spaces, aligning with studies showing that positive perceptions and motivational orientations support sustained engagement (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Noels, 2003).

Emotions such as pride and confidence are linked to competence and self-image. For example, R13 and R182 illustrate how their emotional language signals a powerful internal transformation on how they view themselves in relation to English. Both responses highlight pride as a central affective experience. However, the pride here reflects a reframing of self, from previously being limited by language to now being capable and courageous.

This can be seen in R13's use of the word *courage*. This is particularly telling because courage normally implies risk, vulnerability and the overcoming of fear. By pairing *courage* with *pride*, R13 signals that learning English is not a neutral or a causal journey: it is a journey that requires emotional bravery. This part of the response echoes Krashen's (1982, 1985) argument that emotional states such as anxiety or confidence can either block or facilitate language acquisition, depending on whether the affective filter is high or low. Furthermore, the phrase *there are no barriers* does not merely represent linguistic ease: it also reflects a psychological breakthrough in which social, cultural and cognitive barriers have been challenged and dismantled. In this way, *pride* and *courage* indicate a shift towards emotional safety and perceived competence, which are key conditions for sustained learning (Bhuiyan, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This emotion of *pride* suggests that students view themselves no longer as outsiders but as individuals who are legitimate English users, which aligns with findings showing that Saudi learners often develop positive perceptions of English and its role in their identities (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024).

R182 deepens this emotion by linking pride and happiness to aspiration. The desire to be fluent in English shows that the emotions of being *proud* and *happy* are central to the learning experience. These emotions are not reflective outcomes, but they are affective motivators that reinforce the student's engagement with English. This is in line with

Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that positive emotional states can lower the affective filter, which then supports sustained language acquisition. The statements *I want to learn ... I hope to become fluent ...* suggest that the student displays not only ambition but emotional longing too; and is committed to the process, hoping that mastery of the language will be achieved. R182 notes that *learning English is very important to me*, suggesting that English is not just a required subject but is also emotionally significant. The word *important* carries emotional weight, conveying a level of seriousness, value and urgency.

Furthermore, R182's response shows how positive emotions reinforce persistence. The fact that emotions such as happiness and pride are expressed demonstrates that emotional satisfaction can emerge during the language learning journey, especially when students feel a sense of progress that aligns with their hopes. This reflects findings in previous studies showing that emotional significance and positive self-evaluation can strengthen motivation, help learners persist through challenges, and support a shift in how they view themselves as English users (Alqahtani, 2018; Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Dörnyei, 2001; Noels et al., 2000).

The responses of R20 and R132 show how enjoyment serves as a significant emotional driver in language learning. This is especially true when students experience English as accessible, personally meaningful and/or socially relevant. The use, in R20's response, of words such as *enjoyable ... easy ... fun* suggests that the student is free from emotional burdens such as anxiety or resistance. R20 demonstrates a sense of being emotionally safe and in control. This ties in with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that students can absorb language input more effectively and engage more consistently when the affective filter is low.

Furthermore, the word *fun* adds another dimension to language learning by showing that learning English is not only manageable, but is at the same time emotionally stimulating, and actively pleasurable and enjoyable. Enjoyment here reflects not only task completion and satisfaction: it could be said that the student is reflecting on his overall relationship with the language at this stage of the language learning journey. This can be seen in other studies (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), which have shown that

1. when students experience positive emotions while learning English, they are more motivated and experience lower levels of anxiety and 2. positive affective states are key to promoting classroom engagement and long-term persistence in language learning.

R132's statement offers a broader emotional view by connecting enjoyment of the language to cultural enrichment and sociolinguistic necessity. R132 notes that learning English is *fun...adding customs and traditions...the nature of the time*, which means that R132 acknowledges the global relevance of English. Furthermore, the usage here of the word *fun* is not trivial or superficial but is rooted in the process of discovering different cultural knowledge and is also a window into new ways of thinking and living. This reflects studies where affective states such as enjoyment and relevance are understood to lower emotional barriers and deepen cognitive engagement in language learning (Krashen, 1985; Ushioda, 2008). In addition, the fact that R132 links English to *most worldly matters* shows that *fun* means realising that learning English is an emotional alignment with the modern world. R132 is displaying that English is not only enjoyable to learn but is also a means of staying globally connected and emotionally affirmed. This is because the student is aware that learning English is a means of acquiring a tool that has importance far beyond the classroom. This has been confirmed in other studies that found that when students perceive English as culturally meaningful, personally valuable, and connected to positive future goals, their motivation and emotional engagement increase (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2008).

Together, these responses by R20 and R132 express that learning English is not merely one-dimensional but may also arise from internal ease (R20) or from a broader emotional alignment with cultural relevance (R132). In both cases, enjoyment strengthens their readiness to learn, and students not only perform well but also feel well, which makes the experience rewarding. This aligns with studies showing that affective ease, expressed through states such as reduced anxiety, enjoyment and positive emotions, is critical to language acquisition, enabling students to approach learning with openness, lower anxiety and greater engagement (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Krashen, 1985).

The emotional vocabulary, including the words *enthusiasm*, *joy* and *happy*, used by R95 and R321, reveals that emotions do more than accompany learning; they energise, sustain and define the relationship of student and language.

While the process may seem simple, these two responses demonstrate profound affective processes underpinning students' engagement. For example, R95 provides a rich and paradoxical insight into learning English by using words such as *enthusiasm* even though the language is said to *cause an obstacle in most scientific subjects*. This could be because they are taught in English, which could be an obstacle if the student's English level is low. The word *enthusiasm* is particularly significant because it implies that R95 does not just have a passive interest in English but also demonstrates an active emotional readiness to engage with the language. This is echoed in various studies, which found that positive states reduce emotional resistance and promote deeper engagement with learning, even when structural or academic challenges are present (Dörnyei, 2005; Krashen, 1985; Noels et al., 2000).

R95 acknowledges the structural difficulty of English being a barrier in academic subjects, but at the same time offers an emotional response (*enthusiasm and joy*) that contradicts the very language that complicates the academic journey. This contrast is telling because, instead of demonstrating frustration, R95 displays positive emotional engagement despite cognitive or academic challenges. This shows that affective connection to English is not a state of ease. Instead, it is sustained by emotional significance, with personally meaningful emotions such as joy and pride enabling learners to continue despite difficulties (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Ushioda, 2008). In addition, it highlights that R95 sees learning English not as a burden but rather as a source of emotional stimulation and connection to the language in a cognitively demanding environment. A similar pattern is reflected in other studies of Saudi Arabian students, where motivation is reinforced by personal aspirations and positive attitudes towards English, even when external pressures exist (Alqahtani, 2018).

R321 reinforces this notion, but from a different angle. The words of R321 may seem simple, but they are deeply rooted in an emotional preference that shapes the language learning journey. For example, the words *my favourite language* reveal much more than

mere preference, they reflect an emotional affiliation. This is because English is not seen merely as an academic subject but occupies a privileged space in R321's emotional world. This is because the satisfaction obtained from studying English is derived not just from success, but also from a deeper emotional connection to the language. This active connection may play a key role in sustaining R321's enjoyment of learning English over time, especially when learning challenges arise. Furthermore, *so happy* indicates a high-intensity emotional response which shows that English is not merely preferred but is in fact cherished. The patterns displayed by R321 support theoretical perspectives showing that personal connection and positive emotional engagement with a language may enhance motivation, strengthen persistence, and reduce affective barriers to learning (Alqahtani, 2018; Krashen, 1985; Ushioda, 2008; Noels et al., 2000).

The findings under this sub-theme demonstrate that positive emotional states such as pride, happiness, joy, enjoyment and a sense of safety play a pivotal role in shaping the language learning journeys of students in Saudi Arabia. Affective responses are not incidental but are, rather, core emotional conditions that influence how students engage with the language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dörnyei, 2005; Krashen, 1985; Ushioda, 2008). The findings also showed how confident students felt while using the language and how they viewed the relevance of English in their lives, a pattern echoed in Saudi Arabian-based studies where positive perceptions and the recognised importance of English have been linked to stronger motivational orientation (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alqahtani, 2018).

The data in this sub-theme address Research Question 1.1 by identifying a wide range of positive affective factors that shape learning. The following were expressed: happiness when using English socially, pride in the ability to communicate and progress, and enjoyment derived from the language's cultural and global relevance. These responses are clear indicators of emotional alignment with the language itself. This supports Research Question 1.3, as it shows how emotional experiences influenced students' responses to challenges and how they persisted through obstacles. The affective experiences were clearly demonstrated in their own words (*joy, happiness, enjoyment*), which offered authentic insights into the emotional landscapes of their English language learning journeys.

The findings in this sub-theme align with theories that view emotional readiness and low affective barriers as critical for processing language input (Dörnyei, 2005; Krashen, 1985; Ushioda, 2008). In the Saudi Arabian context, students who experience positive emotions such as pride, enjoyment and a sense of emotional safety are more likely to participate confidently, a pattern also reflected in studies showing that positive attitudes toward English and its perceived value strengthen students' confidence and motivation (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alqahtani, 2018).

This sub-theme reinforces the claim that positive emotional experiences are not divorced from language learning but are, instead, core aspects of language learning and acquisition. Positive emotions lower emotional defenses, allowing for an increase in participation and creating the internal conditions that are necessary for a deeper engagement with English.

5.1.1.2 Negative Emotions and Their Role in Language Learning

In the previous sub-theme, the responses showed how positive emotions facilitated learning. This sub-theme explores the negative emotions students encounter when learning English and how these hinder language learning.

Two hundred and fourteen (214) responses (87 male – 127 female) indicated that students experienced negative emotions in their language learning journey. These emotions were particularly evident in keywords such as *frustration*, *inferiority*, *boredom* and *exhaustion*. These words were often used to describe students' struggles with learning the English language:

- (R22-MS) *My feelings towards learning English are negative, due to my failed learning experiences and the time wasted. Everywhere they say that English is the future, it is everything, it is the most important thing for people currently. If you are not fluent in English, you are ignorant to them, even if you have a high level of knowledge. When I think about learning English, I try to change the subject to avoid feeling upset.*
- (R87-MH) *[I have] good feelings and I want to learn the English language, but I feel a little frustrated because [my] level of the language is very, very bad.*

- (R109-FS) *Boredom due to the way information is presented.*
- (R192-FM) *Boredom for a long time and a lot of groupwork from which I did not benefit anything.*
- (R288-MH) *Irregular feelings, especially when I must learn the language to pass the preparatory year.*
- (R380-FH) *It's annoying because I don't understand most of the words.*

R22's response is a telling articulation of the negative emotional experiences endured during his language learning journey. The emotions here are not merely personal frustrations but are also an affective by-product of broader societal pressure and perceived injustice. To do justice to this response, I feel it is necessary to analyse the entire response and not only keywords. R22 begins by stating unequivocally that *My feelings towards learning English are negative*. This immediately suggests that the negative feelings towards English are not temporary ones but have become entrenched during the language learning journey. This is further supported by the reason given: *due to failed learning experiences and the time wasted*. This points to the history of R22's language learning journey being enveloped in emotional hurt because the relationship with English is shaped by cumulative disappointments. This is further shown in *time wasted*, which implies not just academic inefficacy but emotional exhaustion also. R22 has invested effort and time without receiving emotional, intellectual or other tangible returns. This reflects the kind of emotional burnout that emerges when high effort is not met with proportional development or support.

However, this response quickly shifts from a personal to a more collective emotional climate. *Everywhere they say that English is the future ... the most important thing for people currently*. This portion of the response suggests that R22 is immersed in a linguistic ideology that glorifies English as a necessary marker of intelligence, success and relevance. But instead of feeling empowered by this notion, R22 expresses emotional detachment from it. Similar tensions have been documented before where students experience pressure from English as a symbol of global value but at the same time feel excluded from it due to systemic challenges (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Noels, 2003).

This is seen again in *If you are not fluent in English, you are ignorant to them*, which demonstrates an affective response of resentment, and emotional and linguistic marginalisation. Despite acknowledging the dominant status English has, R22 rejects the emotional validity of this notion, revealing a profound disconnect between external narratives of English as opportunity for success and internal experiences of English as pain and hurt. This portion of R22's response echoes previous research highlighting similar dynamics; and revealing that when English is used as a medium of instruction, it tends to marginalise students emotionally and academically by framing their non-fluency as a deficiency (Alhamami, 2025; Wang, 2023).

Crucially, this emotional detachment and rejection are not just intellectual but also display affective avoidance. *When I think about learning English, I try to change the subject to avoid feeling upset*. This sentence signals the presence of a powerful affective defense mechanism. The act of purposefully detaching and diverting away from English, mentally and conversationally, reveals the extent of affective trauma, which is a kind of emotional heaviness in which the mere thought or mention of the English language triggers emotional discomfort. R22's emotional state goes beyond low motivation and points to emotional detachment – because the language is associated with failure, exclusion, and even self-negation.

Moreover, this response highlights a phenomenon I am tentatively identifying as emotional displacement in language learning. Unlike anxiety, which typically develops during performance, or demotivation, which reflects reduced goal-orientation, emotional displacement in language learning involves a deeper affective mechanism. This means that it allows students to distance themselves emotionally from the language itself, to protect themselves from further emotional harm. While emotional barriers have been explored extensively in second language acquisition, for example the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985), language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), and demotivation (Dörnyei, 2001), these frameworks do not fully explain or capture what is occurring in R22's language learning journey. R22 is not simply overwhelmed or discouraged but is rather repositioning the language as a source of emotional discomfort and is actively trying to avoid it. While demotivation (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005) and anxiety (Horwitz et al.,

1986) offer useful explanations for what happens at the level of individual tasks, they do not fully account for the degree of emotional detachment here.

I propose, therefore, that the notion of emotional displacement in language learning may be able to offer a new conceptual lens through which to explain and understand affective withdrawal rooted in emotional saturation, in situations where the language itself becomes a trigger of negative emotions rather than an academic subject. Furthermore, this affective process is not an isolated development: several other students in this study demonstrated similar patterns of displacement.

For example, R15 reported an experience that was:

Very bad and discouraging, and it led to losing ambition for the goal of learning.

Here, the student describes emotional exhaustion so severe that it results in the loss of the desire to continue learning the language itself.

Similarly, R17 expressed his feelings thus:

When I think about learning English, I feel the urge to give it up.

This response indicates an internalised emotional detachment from, and rejection of, English, not because of performance challenges, but because of the emotional burden the language now represents.

R33 stated that:

If [learning] feels impossible, it's a difficult feeling, like loss or surrender.

This emotional framing equates the learning challenge not just with struggle, but also with affective defeat, a surrendering of the self to emotional strain. However, while this could fall under the spectrum of emotional disengagement, its relevance sits here because it is understood that R33 is referring to the language itself – and not to individual tasks that align with the broader pattern of emotional displacement in language learning.

These accounts echo Krashen's (1982, 1985) claim that students' negative emotions raise the affective filter and restrict language input. However, Krashen views the affective filter as situational, and dependent on students' emotional states. In such cases, the affective filter is so high and so long-lasting as to displace the negative emotions onto the

language itself, therefore suggesting a need for a deeper affective explanation such as emotional displacement in language learning.

In all these cases, students are not merely describing emotional difficulty but are also displaying patterns of redirecting their emotional pain toward the language itself. Therefore, from an affective perspective, R22's response illustrates the dangerous weight of language-linked emotional fatigue. The affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985) here is not just high, but is also reinforced by layers of emotional hurt, social judgement, and emotional detachment. Thus, R22's strategy of avoidance is not caused by a lack of resilience or motivation but is a result of being overexposed to emotional pressure without affective repair.

R22's narrative writing excerpt gives us even more insight into the student's language learning journey, and we get to understand why and how R22 developed emotional displacement in language learning. In addition, the extract shows us exactly why and when English became a symbol of emotional failure, frustration and detachment instead of growth and opportunity:

At first, the school experience was a failure by all standards, because I did not learn anything from it. Then I moved to the university, and I was optimistic about learning, especially since the Dean said in the introductory meeting that the English classes would be like a free intensive course for students. I smiled and said, perhaps I will study at the university. But unfortunately, I was with [a teacher], who spent the entire class talking about his personal experiences and life (in Arabic), and we did not benefit from him at all. My heart sank and I became pessimistic and said, maybe I will never learn English.

From the very beginning of this excerpt, R22 establishes the relationship with English through a lens of absolute failure because *the school experience was a failure by all standards*. This telling phrase reflects the school's academic shortcomings, and it provides the beginning of an emotionally drenched history in which English is associated

with systemic neglect and unmet expectations because R22 *did not learn anything from it*. This sentence does not reflect solely on the pedagogical aspects of the learning journey, but more importantly signifies years of time and emotional loss, as seen in R22's previous response of *my failed learning experiences and the time wasted*. This shows that R22's language learning journey was void of support, progress, success or emotional rewards.

However, there was a moment where R22 *was optimistic about learning* the language. This brief optimism reflects an initial motivational surge. This is a state in which students envision success and are emotionally and cognitively aligned with their goal. But, unfortunately, R22 was betrayed again, and *my heart sank, and I became pessimistic ... maybe I will never learn English*. This portion of the extract expresses emotional collapse, when pedagogical failure becomes personal failure as experienced by R22. These words mark a significant turning point, and the student no longer views English as a neutral subject. Rather, it is now viewed as a source of personal disappointment and immense emotional harm. The betrayal involved stemmed directly from the teacher's role, which is therefore pivotal. Instead of acting as a facilitator of input and motivation, the teacher became an obstacle, a situation where anxiety was high and therefore triggered the student's long-standing emotional wounds related to English. The classroom, which should have served as a zone for development, instead became a site of affective rupture and emotional detachment.

It is clear that R22 feels the failure as no longer systemic but internalised, which in turn shapes his emotional positioning towards the language itself. The student views English as a language and a subject associated with fear, dislike and, ultimately, detachment.

Students such as R22 are not merely demotivated, they are emotionally scarred by the language learning journey. In turn, for students such as R22, the best defence mechanism is emotional displacement in language learning. It appears as if anxiety and fear have given way to distancing. This then allows R22, and others like him, to develop some type of affective self-preservation to distance themselves from further emotional harm by redirecting the negative emotions experienced onto the language itself instead of reliving the emotional pain continued engagement would bring.

These responses by R22 show how students may respond when the affective filter is high. R22's responses highlight that when anxiety is high and motivation is low, language acquisition and meaningful input are obstructed (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Studies have shown that students may experience demotivation (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Noels, 2003) or withdrawal (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Owaidah, 2024); and in some cases, as this study has shown, emotional detachment and emotional displacement in language learning through the projection of negative experiences and feelings onto the language itself.

The remaining responses I have included in this sub-theme reflect a spectrum of low-intensity affective states in comparison to R22's state. However, they do reveal a distinct form of emotional erosion that could lead to disengagement if not addressed. Words from students such as *frustrated*, *boredom*, *irregular feelings* and *annoying* illustrate the respondent's emotional landscape, each pointing to a subtle but significant affective barrier (Krashen, 1982, 1985) in their language learning experiences.

For example, R87 shows a conflicted emotional state, having *good feelings* alongside being *frustrated*. This means that the desire to learn is actively undermined by self-internalised inadequacy describing his English level as a *very, very bad level*. This shows R87's internal emotional tension and conflict between his aspired aims and his self-perceived incompetence. This state of conflict may lead to emotional fatigue resulting not from external pressures but from the student's constant negative self-evaluation, which destabilises his hope for his future. The key emotional dynamic experienced by R87 is erosive self-assessment, where students are not rejecting English outright but are emotionally worn down through the repeated internal confirmation that they are not good enough. This may create a condition of chronic affective discomfort that may not be problematic at the moment, but which may develop and become erosive over time.

This finding ties in with the view that low self-confidence will raise the affective filter and hinder language acquisition and meaningful input (Krashen, 1982, 1985). It further supports the notion that self-perceived incompetence contributes to anxiety and reduced participation; and that negative self-appraisal erodes long-term motivation (Dörnyei, 2005; Horwitz et al., 1986). Moreover, several studies have shown that students often

experience internal emotional conflict, a situation in which high aspirations are hindered by self-doubt, leading to emotional fatigue and motivational decline (Almesaar, 2022; Arabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2005; Owaidah, 2024; Ushioda, 2011).

Both R109 and R192 express boredom. This is not seen as a personal defect but as a reaction to pedagogical conditions. R109's cause of boredom is directly related to *the way information is presented*. This may suggest a monotonous or disengaging delivery style from the teacher, which failed to capture R109's attention or to stimulate interest. Similarly, R192 expresses that *a long time and a lot of groupwork from which I did not benefit* caused boredom, which reveals that R192's boredom emerges from prolonged tasks that lack perceived value or relevance to the student. These responses suggest that disengagement is not rooted in language content or difficulty alone, but also in affective disconnection from the mode and structure of delivery.

These responses are significant because they show that boredom does not arise from cognitive incapacity, but rather from emotional disengagement, which is typically caused by tasks that are under-stimulating, repetitive, or disconnected from learner goals (Pekrun et al., 2010). In addition, these responses also show that a lack of engagement and meaningful input can diminish motivation, causing students to withdraw emotionally (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005). Therefore, these responses reflect a misalignment between students' emotional needs and the instructional environment that can erode motivation over time (Kruk et al., 2021; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018, 2020; Pawlak et al., 2020).

R288's phrase *irregular feelings* points to an unpredictable emotional state. This means that engagement is conditional and fluctuating, driven by the external pressures of passing and completing the preparatory year. It shows that students fluctuate between moments of effort and disengagement because they are driven by necessity rather than emotional alignment. This could mean that meaningful sustainable learning becomes fragile because the emotional groundwork is unstable. Therefore, such instability suggests a heightened affective filter where emotional tension interferes with the student's ability to process language input, regardless of cognitive capacity (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, the reason given for these irregular feelings, *especially when I must learn the language to pass the preparatory year*, suggests that the student's

motivation is extrinsically driven and not rooted in emotional alignment or personal interest (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This in turn suggests that the student's externally regulated motivation to *pass the preparatory year* can result in mechanical participation rather than meaningful engagement. As a result, for students like R288, the lack of a stable emotional foundation and low motivation may mean that language acquisition is likely to be superficial and easily disrupted (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

R380 responded with the term *annoying* owing to not being able to understand words in English. This represents low-grade emotional irritation that may stem from repeated cognitive blockage. Unlike anxiety or fear, annoyance is a signal of affective disruption at the micro level where comprehension failures become an emotional irritant. This then raises the affective filter, which limits the student's ability to process and internalise language input (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Over time, this could fester into a long-term barrier, with language becoming a source of mild but constant agitation and annoyance that hinder both motivation and confidence. Repeated negative emotional experiences, even subtle ones, may reduce the students' perceived competence and diminish their willingness to engage with the language. Therefore, for R380 and others like him, the irritation that stems from *I don't understand most of the words* could gradually erode their motivation and self-belief (Alqahtani, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), which could potentially lead to emotional detachment and displacement in language learning.

The findings in this sub-theme respond directly to Research Question 1.1. Students' descriptions of frustration, boredom, inferiority and emotional avoidance indicate that negative emotions function as significant barriers to language learning. Furthermore, the nature and expression of these emotions help address Research Question 1.2. Many students' feelings are shaped by cumulative past failures, societal pressure and an educational environment that overlooks emotional well-being. Finally, this sub-theme also sheds light on Research Question 1.3, by illustrating how these negative emotions manifest through avoidance, cognitive disengagement, emotional saturation and thoughts of dropping out. These affective experiences are not momentary reactions but form a

patterned emotional state that impedes language learning (Al-Khasawneh, 2016; Alrabai, 2014; Alqahtani, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Krashen, 1982, 1985).

These frameworks, while useful in illustrating affective strain, also leave room to explore the notion of emotional displacement in language learning put forward in this study. The notion of emotional displacement covers not just lowered motivation or anxiety but also takes a closer look at a process of emotional redirection. It seeks to understand why students have a negative emotional outlook towards the language itself and detach themselves from the language learning journey to avoid emotional harm. This suggested conceptualisation may offer a more nuanced understanding of how long-term emotional erosion can lead to affective withdrawal, thereby limiting meaningful language acquisition.

While this sub-theme has shown that frustration, inferiority, boredom and annoyance contribute to disengagement, these negative emotions differ from anxiety. Anxiety is rooted in fear and in performance-related stress (Horwitz et al., 1986). The next section of my first theme will explore the sub-theme Anxiety in Language Learning to ascertain why and how it shapes students' language learning experiences.

5.1.2 Anxiety in Language Learning

In this sub-theme, I provide the findings of data generated to explore test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension.

5.1.2.1 Test Anxiety in Language Learning

Test anxiety was a recurring theme that affected 258 (112 male – 146 female) students. Common keywords expressed included *nervousness*, *stress* and *fear*, which would negatively impact their ability to perform in English tests and exams:

- (R31-MH) *I feel a little nervous because it's an exam and I am afraid of making mistakes.*
- (R33-FH) *I like English, but I hate tests.*
- (R38-FH) *I sometimes feel stressed if I do not answer the question or if I am not sure that my answers are correct.*

- (R50-FM) *I am nervous, and for some questions, I don't know if they are correct or not.*
- (R67-MM) *When answering English tests, I feel a mixture of nervousness and anticipation. The stress comes from my desire to achieve a good result and the fear of making mistakes, especially in questions related to grammar or pronunciation. As for anticipation, I look forward to testing my progress in the language and seeing if I have learned from previous mistakes. I think this feeling is normal because tests are an opportunity to measure the level of understanding and application, and they carry some pressure to perform best.*
- (R199-MS) *feel nervous because there are many rules in the English language and your lack of understanding of the rest of the sentence affects your answer.*
- (R242-FS) *With fear and stress, because I often do not know the meaning of the words, and this makes it difficult for me to apply grammar and understand the required vocabulary.*
- (R310-FM) *I'm worried about losing grades because some of the questions are very difficult and not at my level of study!*

The responses above show that test situations trigger intense emotional reactions rooted in self-doubt, fear of failure, and cognitive overload. A core response that illustrates the complexity of test anxiety is offered by R67.

R67 begins the response with *a mixture of nervousness and anticipation*. This dual emotional conflict is important as it suggests that test experiences not only bring about fear but also carry emotional expectations. The word *nervousness* indicates a lower extent of emotional distress triggered by the test context, but it is a signal of internal pressure and self-monitoring. However, this nervousness is not abstract: it is directly tied to the desire for success and the fear of failure.

The word *anticipation* suggests that the student is emotionally invested in the outcome, not as a threat, but as a possible sign and hope of growth. The co-presence of these two emotions reveals a conflicted state, where the pressure of tests is accompanied by the hope of being successful.

R67 also points out two high-stakes linguistic categories – *grammar or pronunciation*. These two categories are typically associated with accuracy, and the student shows that accuracy is emotionally loaded. This response implies that certain areas of language knowledge trigger heightened anxiety. Studies have shown that these areas can function as emotional hotspots during assessment (Alqahtani, 2018; Ran et al., 2022). R67's response is important because it captures how test anxiety is not simply panic or fear, but an emotional tension between self-improvement and emotional risk. Each part of the testing process – such as anticipation, performance, errors, and outcomes – is emotionally charged and internalised (Krashen, 1985; Lin, 2024).

Another emotional pattern that emerged in this study reflects a persistent anxiety linked to performance and the fear of being incorrect in test scenarios. This can be seen in the responses by R31, R38 and R50, who illustrated a clear emotional discomfort that emerges when they are uncertain about their answers during test-taking. R31's phrase of *a little nervous* may suggest a mild response, but it still reveals that even minimal exposure to testing triggers emotional tension. Furthermore, the fact that R31 states being *afraid of making mistakes* as the reason for being nervous suggests that the student perceives errors not as a neutral outcome but as a source of emotional threat. This has also been shown in other studies, where students' fear tended to create emotional resistance, which turned performance into a stressful rather than a neutral task (Almesaar, 2022; Lin, 2024; Ran et al., 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

R50's response reflects what can be described as situational anxiety, where specific test items, rather than the test itself, will trigger emotional disruption. This means that anxiety in language learning is often task-dependent; and it is not evenly experienced across activities. Therefore, such micro-level spikes in anxiety indicate that certain linguistic features or questions can become emotional triggers that reduce performance quality and confidence (Moafa, 2024; Lin, 2024; Ran et al., 2022).

However, R50 elaborates on the matter in the course of the narrative writing, as seen in this excerpt:

Tests determine my level, even though in class I'm a very active and engaged student. It bothers me that in exams, I

sometimes don't get the grade I feel I deserve, so at times I see that as unfair.

This excerpt reveals a profound affective conflict between institutional evaluation and the student. R50 is constructed as a committed participant in English lessons who is *very active and engaged* and yet must rely on the test to *determine my level*. This disconnect between the test being used as a form of measurement and the student's own perception of performance creates an anxiety that is rooted not in linguistic incompetence but rather in a perceived recognition injustice. This is because the student's visible, active classroom efforts do not translate into measurable success. R50's confidence and motivation are high, and this should lower the affective filter and in turn enhance language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985), but his grades reflect differently.

R50 also reveals, in the narrative writing excerpt, the emotional strain this mismatch causes. The use of the words *bothers me* indicates a situation of frustration. This points to a quiet yet sustained affective discomfort that could build over time and erode the student's engagement and confidence, possibly leading to self-doubt and a negative self-evaluation. This happens because the student views the system as *unfair*, which indicates that the test anxiety here is then reframed – from a personal shortcoming to a misaligned testing system.

However, based on R50's earlier response, *I am nervous, and for some questions, I don't know if they are correct or not*, highlights that the issue may lie not solely in the system, but rather in the affective interference that occurs during specific moments of the test. This kind of situational anxiety raises the affective filter, making it difficult for even capable students to retrieve or apply what they know (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, the emotional tension in R50 stems not from the student's general incompetence, but rather from a clash between internal knowledge and high-stakes performance demands that ultimately undermine confidence and distort outcome (Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

R38 provides a slightly higher level of emotion because the term *stressed* signals a more intense emotion than nervousness. The student does not report that stress occurs because of the exam itself. Rather, he points to doubt in the answers provided. This may

signify that R38 does not fear the test itself, but fears being wrong in the test. This response shows that for R38, the emotional discomfort intensifies primarily when uncertainty arises. This finding aligns with research showing that unpredictability in the learning environment acts as a key trigger of affective discomfort, especially in contexts where lack of clarity raises anxiety (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024).

Together these responses suggest that test anxiety is neither uniform nor driven by content, and results from a psychological need not to be wrong in a test (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). The emotions here stem primarily not from the test scenario or the level of difficulty involved, but from students' internalised self-assessment. Therefore, it becomes clear that nervousness, stress and uncertainty are not general states: instead, they are emotional reactions to perceived inaccuracy, which shape students' test-taking experiences (Ran et al., 2022; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

Another pattern that emerged from the data reflects emotional strain, which is rooted not in performance alone, but also in students' self-perceived linguistic limitations. Students expressed anxiety that stems from being unable to fully access the language required to complete the test tasks. The students' emotional responses are shaped by either cognitive overload, gaps in vocabulary, or a sense of mismatch between ability and exam content.

For example, R199 expresses the emotional keyword *nervous*, yet the nervousness is linked not to the test-taking procedure itself but to the structure of the English language instead. This is shown in the phrase *many rules*, which suggests a sense of overwhelm or saturation, as though the grammatical system itself is a barrier. Furthermore, *lack of understanding* suggests that the focus of anxiety shifts from the grammar of the language to the comprehension of the language. This shows that anxiety is compounded not just by grammar difficulties but also by interconnected gaps in understanding. Several studies have found that, when anxiety increases, an emotional state is created in which every missing part increases the risk of being wrong, which in turn intensifies the fear of error, reduces student confidence and leads to the avoidance of participation (Alrabai, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982, 1985; Lin, 2024; Moafa, 2024; Ran et al., 2022; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

Similarly, R242's response opens with two emotional markers, *fear and stress*. These words indicate high emotional intensity and show that the anxiety is deeply felt and recurring. The trigger for R242, however, is not knowing the meaning of the words, which points to the vocabulary of the language as a barrier. Furthermore, the emotional weight increases because R242 experiences a domino effect when the lack of understanding *makes it difficult for me to apply grammar*. For R242, test anxiety is experienced not because of the test itself, but because the student is overwhelmed by the interdependence of linguistic skills beyond her control. This aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that anxiety raises the affective filter, limiting language processing. This finding also confirms findings from studies which found that when vocabulary deficits trigger anxiety, the result is broader cognitive shutdown and disengagement (Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Zhang, 2019).

R310 similarly uses *worried* as the keyword indicating anxiety that is future-oriented and tied to the outcome of the test. Again, the source of the worry is not the idea of having an English test, but the test content. This is seen in the sentence *some of the questions are very difficult and not at my level*, which illustrates that R310 does not feel cognitively well matched to the exam. This creates a disconnect between the effort expended for the exams and the content being asked of them. Finally, *losing grades* highlights the consequences of the mismatch. The anxiety felt by R310 is not caused by the idea of the test, or by her view of her cognitive ability: it is institution-related, driven by the belief that the test will punish her by presenting content not at her current level. This finding is echoed in other studies where students perceived assessment content to be misaligned with their abilities. This misalignment heightens test anxiety and reduces emotional availability to perform (Alrabai, 2014; Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Lin, 2024; Shoaib, 2022). Moreover, such institutional anxieties are often manifested in demotivation and self-doubt (Dörnyei, 2001; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024).

Together, the responses reflect an anxiety in which the test is feared not as a procedure but as a space where students are linguistically located. Thus, the data indicate that anxiety is rooted in the unpredictability of the language system itself, or the lack of content being taught. The students do not fear being tested or evaluated, but fear being unable to access the language tools needed to perform. Because of this, the test becomes not

just a challenge to them, but also a trigger that overwhelms them cognitively and emotionally (Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Moafa, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

A third pattern that emerged from the data reveals emotional responses rooted in a broader emotional disconnection from the test experience itself. The data indicated that students responded with negative emotions to the concept and structure of testing, also revealing a mismatch between their emotional engagement with the language and their experience of formal assessment. The responses showed that even students with a positive outlook towards English may emotionally detach themselves when placed in a test setting that is perceived as unfair or unjust.

For example, R33's brief but emotionally charged statement reveals a strong internal contrast. The use of *like* signals positive emotional engagement with the language itself as a subject. However, it is immediately followed by the harsh and forceful rejection *I hate tests*. The word *hate* suggests total emotional rejection. This contradiction in wording exposes a conflict where R33's positive orientation towards the language is not sustained during tests. It implies that tests are emotionally disruptive, breaking the steadiness of interest in the language and replacing it with emotional aversion. This hate is not tied to performance, failure or loss of grades, but is rooted in the experience of testing itself. Studies (Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Shoaib, 2022) have shown that even high-performing students may disengage emotionally during assessments owing to the psychological experience of tests, especially when tests feel alienating or rigid. This reflects how the implementation of tests, rather than their difficulty, can destabilise motivation and elicit strong emotional resistance (Dörnyei, 2001; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024).

Together, these responses suggest that emotional detachment from tests may arise even in motivated students, increasing anxiety and elevating the affective filter (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982; Lin, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

The findings in this sub-theme have addressed Research Question 1.1 directly. There was a clear indication that test anxiety was prevalent and emerged as a significant emotional barrier, which was driven by fear of making mistakes, cognitive overload and unfair test structures. These findings are consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) work on foreign language classroom anxiety, which identifies testing as a key site for heightened

anxiety. However, while Horwitz et al.'s (1986) model conceptualises test anxiety as rooted largely in personal fear of failure in evaluative settings, the current data reveal a more complex emotional landscape. In many cases, students were afraid not of the test itself, but of what the test represented and the consequences of what they perceived to be unfair. These patterns also address Research Question 1.2, because the sources of anxiety came from grammar and vocabulary gaps, and from perceptions of unfair assessment (Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Ran et al., 2022). In the case of Research Question 1.3, anxiety was demonstrated in cases where students were not sure about their answers. This led them to doubt themselves and their answers, a behaviour that was also observed in other studies (Alrabai, 2014; Al-Khasawneh, 2016; Almesaar, 2022; Botes et al., 2020; Moafa, 2024). These findings reinforce the idea that content difficulty does not cause affective disruption by itself but also show that emotional and cognitive interference are activated by uncertainty (Lin, 2024; Ran et al., 2022; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

In the next sub-theme, the focus shifts to fear of negative evaluation, with students expressing anxiety linked to judgment, comparison, and the anticipation of being perceived as inadequate by others.

5.1.2.2 Fear of Negative Evaluation in Language Learning

Fear of negative evaluation was experienced by only 50 students (11 males – 39 females). The students were concerned about others' perceptions of their language proficiency, and many students expressed their fear of making mistakes and being judged by others:

- (R66-MM) *When speaking English in front of people, I sometimes feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes, especially if the conversation requires precise pronunciation or grammar. I think this feeling comes from fear of judgment or criticism.*
- (R69-MM) *I am afraid that I did not finish my speech or that I would cause difficulty in front of them, especially if it was in front of people I know personally, because they would think that I did not have excellent English.*
- (R85-MM) *If you were a trainee before, such as giving a presentation, then I have no problem. As for my improvisation, I feel somewhat embarrassed because the*

English language has become something that is obligatory for the individual. Not speaking it gives the impression that you are ignorant.

- (R186-FH) *When I speak English in front of people, I feel nervous and anxious most of the time. The reason is that I am afraid that people will make comments on my mistakes or on the way I pronounce words. Sometimes I feel that I cannot express myself the way I want, and this makes me less confident. In addition, it may be difficult for me to follow the conversation quickly if the other person is speaking fluently, which increases my feeling of embarrassment.*
- (R233-MH) *I hesitate and try to translate it and listen to it before I say it so that I don't sound stupid.*
- (R363-FH) *I feel nervous when speaking English publicly because I worry about making mistakes or being judged. However, with practice and a supportive audience, my confidence improves over time.*

The beginning of R66's response, containing the words *in front of people*, immediately establishes that the emotional tension experienced results in a socially charged rather than a neutral learning moment. This is key, because it situates the student's emotional state not in language ability but in the social, interactional space where performance can be evaluated by others simply because they are present. In this instance, speaking is not a communicative act for the student. Instead, the student experiences it as a moment of performance in which one feels liable to being assessed and vulnerable. The student feels that the audience will judge or misunderstand what is being said, in case there are any instances of *making mistakes*. R66 positions linguistic errors as potential triggers to emotional discomfort. This can be seen in the words *nervous and afraid*, where the student chooses to express two layered emotional states. *Nervous* suggests a mild or moderate state categorised by anticipatory anxiety, whereas *afraid* carries a deeper sense of emotional risk. R66 thus deems that the situation of speaking in front of others is not only uncertain but is also potentially damaging socially, emotionally or reputationally. This means that R66 views *making mistakes* as events charged with social consequences rather than neutral learning.

Furthermore, R66 demonstrates that anxiety intensifies when linguistic accuracy is emphasised, *especially if the conversation requires precise pronunciation or grammar*. This indicates that not all speaking contexts are equal; and that those perceived as demanding owing to the requirement for language precision are more emotionally taxing for the student. The heightened anxiety stems from *fear of judgment or criticism* because R66 is aware that anxiety is shaped by the anticipation of external reaction. Therefore, this response shows that R66's emotional response is rooted not in language ability but in a deeper fear of negative evaluation and the social consequences of failure. This finding reflects communication apprehension, where the anxiety stems not from a lack of linguistic knowledge but from the fear of public performance and peer judgment (Horwitz et al., 1986). Additionally, other studies have found that students often disengage emotionally when their speaking requires high accuracy under social scrutiny (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024).

Another emotional pattern that emerged from the data shows that fear of negative evaluation intensifies in socially intimate contexts, especially those where students are surrounded by people they know personally. This means that anxiety is raised not only by linguistic inadequacies, but also by the fear of losing face, of being socially diminished, or of being seen as inadequate by those whose opinions carry weight.

This can be seen in the fact that R69 responds to the first trigger of anxiety by being *afraid*, which indicates a high-stakes emotional state and is deeply tied to the outcome of the performance (*did not finish my speech*) and the social consequences of that performance (*they would think*). R69 displays a sense of emotional responsibility by saying *cause difficulty in front of them*, which means that the concern here is not just about personal failure but is also about the perceived possibility of disappointing the audience. This emotional burden deepens further with the phrase *especially... people I know personally*. Here, R69 indicates that familiarity with the audience amplifies emotional risk, making the fear of negative evaluation more personal. Furthermore, concern is shown because the audience may think that R69 *did not have excellent English*, making the situation relational and reputational. R69 fears being reduced in the eyes of others, especially of those whose opinion matters, which adds extra layers of emotional discomfort.

R69 confirms this anxiety in the following narrative writing excerpt:

One of the biggest challenges I've faced is building confidence when speaking. At first, I was nervous and afraid of making mistakes. I was afraid that people would criticise me for my pronunciation or grammar errors. This fear sometimes made me avoid speaking even if I wanted to.

This narrative writing excerpt strongly reinforces R69's earlier articulation of performance anxiety. For R69, *building confidence when speaking* signals a prolonged internal struggle in which confidence has yet to be earned; and language performance becomes a psychological and emotional event. In addition, R69's being *afraid that people would criticise me* echoes the previous response relating to fear of negative evaluation. Here, the stakes are higher not because of the task but because of those watching.

However, the most important aspect of this excerpt is *This fear sometimes made me avoid speaking even if I wanted to*. This sentence reveals the extent of the psychological cost of sustained fear of negative evaluation. There is a conflict between desire to speak (*even if I wanted to*) and avoidance, which reflects affective tension where engagement collides with self-consciousness. R69 is not disengaged, or unwilling, or unmotivated. Rather, R69 is emotionally restrained by a fear of social exposure, which confirms that the anxiety is interpersonal and reputational.

The pattern in R69's responses aligns with the concept of anxiety in language learning, where fear of negative evaluation is a major affective barrier in second language performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). Further, studies have shown that students often avoid participation as the result of performance pressure and reputational risks in high-visibility tasks (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024).

R85 reflects a similar concern, by expressing the emotion of being *embarrassed*, which carries specific social connotations. It is an emotion that arises from the presence of others and carries a threat to one's social image. R85 does not view English as an optional skill but as something *obligatory* to social and cultural environments. Consequently, *not speaking it gives the impression that you are ignorant* is an emotionally loaded statement. It shows that R85 connects linguistic failure directly to moral or

intellectual judgement. The student internalises social expectations and fears that centre on ending up socially invalidated if and when they fall short. This finding aligns with the concept of anxiety in language learning, with research into the subject showing that high social anxiety raises the affective filter (Horwitz et al., 1986). Other studies confirm that using English in public increases emotional tension for L2 students on their language journey; and often results in avoidance, silence, or detachment from language use (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

Responses have also shown how fear of negative evaluation is rooted not only in speaking incorrectly but also in the anticipation of a breakdown in performance. Unlike the fear of being judged by known individuals, these responses focus more on internalised pressure. This is because the student's mind becomes preoccupied with the possibility of failure to perform.

R186 uses the words *nervous* and *anxious* as key indicators of emotional tension. In addition, the phrase *most of the time* shows that this is not a situational issue for R186 but is instead a habitual emotional pattern. Furthermore, R186 identifies *comments on my mistakes* and *the way I pronounce words* as specific fears that link the anxiety to both accuracy and delivery. The fear is not just about linguistic errors: it is also about the errors being noticed and publicly remarked upon. The phrase *cannot express myself the way I want* indicates affective frustration. This means that internal thoughts are hard to express, and that the student feels blocked. The blockage, which is not only linguistic but is also emotional, leads to R186 being *less confident*. The situation shifts from being nervous to diminished confidence and perceived lack of communicative value. R186 further adds that it is *difficult ... to follow the conversation quickly* when others speak fluently, highlighting a comparative deficit that feeds directly into *embarrassment*. R186's emotional arc moves from fear, to frustration, to shame, revealing how the anticipation of failure, especially when interacting with more fluent speakers, triggers layered emotional consequences.

The fear of being judged on pronunciation aligns with the notion of anxiety in language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Studies have confirmed that students who anticipate public correction or fluency comparison often experience persistent emotional inhibition, which

leads to disengagement and reduced self-confidence (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

R363 uses the word *nervous* and links it directly to *worry about making mistakes and being judged*. This shows that fear is rooted in external perception and internal fear of error, creating a fragile emotional state in which the act of speaking becomes emotionally charged. While the second part of the response sounds promising and optimistic, the student's indication that *confidence improves over time* is conditional because it is tied to two factors, *practice* and *a supportive audience*. Because the emotional safety of the environment determines whether or not R363's anxiety is reduced, it is possible to deduce that R363's motivation and confidence are not absolute but are emotionally dependent.

Both responses show how performance-based fear impacts students not just in the moment of error but also before they even speak. The anxiety is located in anticipation – in the possibility of saying something wrong, of being misunderstood, and even of being left behind.

While the previous responses described fear that arises during or after speaking, R233's response reveals a different pattern. The fear here is restructuring behaviour before the student even begins to speak. R233 does not wait for an external judgment to occur; rather, the student actively regulates and delays speech to avoid the possibility of embarrassment. This is a form of over-preparation and even self-censorship that is intended to mitigate emotional harm.

R233's response begins with the word *hesitate*, which is an emotion-linked behavioural marker that signals internal conflict. Hesitation here is not merely about uncertainty but is also about the presence of emotional tension that interrupts fluency. In this case, hesitation is strategic because it is part of a deliberate effort to avoid sounding *stupid*.

The word *stupid* here is not a linguistic description, it is a character judgment. It suggests that the student associates language error with intellectual deficiency and not with performance failure. This framing is telling in that it reflects an internal belief that mistakes are not forgivable or normal, but rather shameful indicators of incompetence. As a result, the student not only fears judgment, but also takes responsibility for avoiding it through self-silence and control. This is a personal and threatening form of judgment.

To try and overcome the judgement, R233 attempts *to translate it and listen to it before I say it*. This shows an internalised process of checking, filtering and validating speech before production. The student assumes that if they speak without translating and listening to the translation, they risk embarrassment. Rather than try to engage naturally or instinctively, R233 imposes a sequence of protective behaviours that reflect deep emotional discomfort with spontaneity. This cognitive loop slows down interaction but also reveals a strong desire to protect one's self-image from possible ridicule.

R223's response demonstrates that fear of negative evaluation can lead to more than just nervousness or avoidance; it can lead to the restructuring of one's communicative behaviour. R233 is emotionally bracing for criticism before he speaks, shaping his language use around a defensive emotional strategy while limiting spontaneity, natural flow and confidence. This is not done owing to a lack of knowledge, but because R233 anticipates the emotional cost of perceived inadequacy or judgment.

This finding aligns with the notion that fear of negative evaluation is a core component of foreign language anxiety, where anticipation of judgment directly influences student productive behaviour (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024). In addition, studies show that students often adopt restrictive, and/or rehearsed, and/or minimal language strategies in situations that are emotionally risky so that they may avoid criticism, even when they have the necessary linguistic knowledge to do otherwise (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024).

The findings in this sub-theme have directly answered Research Question 1.1 by showing the three patterns that the students expressed in relation to fear of negative evaluation. For some, the fear was heightened when social contexts were familiar, while for others fears were heightened by the anticipation of mistakes, with one student revealing how this fear led to behavioural modification through preemptive self-censorship. These patterns reflect the conceptualisation of fear of negative evaluation as a key dimension of language anxiety that reshapes student behaviour (Horwitz et al., 1986). Studies have further supported this by showing that a socially mediated fear of judgment, especially in familiar or high-stakes contexts, can lead to reduced risk-taking and communicative avoidance (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Noels, 2003).

The findings also address Research Question 1.2, by revealing that this fear arises not only in linguistic insecurity, but also in the students' desire to preserve their social image and avoid humiliation. This aligns with the fear of negative evaluation that is a source of language anxiety, especially when students feel that their social status is at risk (Horwitz et al., 1986). Studies have further shown that students often withhold participation to protect themselves against a fear of appearing incompetent in front of peers (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Noels, 2003).

In response to Research Question 1.3, fear of negative evaluation was shown through visible affective behaviours such as hesitation, avoidance, over-preparation, diminished confidence, and emotional withdrawal from communicative risk. Other studies (Lin, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018) have shown similar behaviours, with students often hesitating or withdrawing completely from the activity.

5.1.2.3 Speech Apprehension During Language Learning

Communication apprehension was a common challenge, experienced by 239 (118 male - 121 female) students. These participants expressed anxiety, nervousness, and lack of confidence while speaking English, especially in situations where they were required to speak in front of others:

- (R8-MS) *Stress due to my lack of complete ability to speak.*
- (R36-MH) *Stress and anxiety because I am not used to speaking in English in front of everyone.*
- (R37-FH) *With anxiety, fearing that the information was not conveyed well.*
- (R84-MH) *Feel stressed because of my bad level of English.*
- (R189-FS) *Shy and stressed. I think I may be speaking incorrectly.*
- (R345-FM) *Anxiety because when I speak, I forget some vocabulary even if I know it.*

One of the most prominent sources of communication apprehension to emerge from the data is the perception students had of their low speech proficiency levels. This fear stemmed not from the difficulty of the task itself, but from their internal belief that their ability to speak English was inadequate.

R8 captures this pattern concisely. The student's stress is triggered not by a single situation or speaking event but by a generalised belief that the *complete ability to speak* is lacking. The student is consistently on edge for fear of being exposed as not fully ready for the task. This anxiety is not momentary: it is a continuous cycle, highlighting that perceived inadequacy is not easily overcome. It acts as a backdrop that accompanies speaking opportunities regardless of context. This finding aligns with the concept of communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986), with a student's fear and self-perceived incompetence producing high anxiety in speaking situations (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024). Furthermore, studies have shown that students' lack of confidence affects their overall linguistic readiness (Alrabai, 2014; Botes et al., 2020; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

Similarly, R84's emotional state is clearly attributed to self-assessment. What stands out here is that stress emerges not from interaction or feedback, but from the student's own judgment of his performance potential. The phrase *my bad level* suggests an internalised stigma because the student labels his own ability as deficient, which reinforces stress. This finding aligns with the notion that self-perceived inadequacy may trigger language learning anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024). Studies have also found that students who experience heightened anxiety and reduced willingness to communicate may withdraw entirely when they rate their own abilities poorly (Horwitz et al., 1986; Moafa, 2024; Wang, 2023).

Furthermore, R189 adds another layer where anxiety combines shyness (social sensitivity) with uncertainty about correctness. The phrase *I may be speaking incorrectly* reflects a hesitancy rooted in doubt. This doubt may cause the student to self-monitor or even avoid speech altogether. This indicates that communication apprehension may be tied to the anticipation of failure in form and structure – and not to being evaluated. This is an affective response aimed at bridging a gap between what the speaker intends to say and what they believe they can accurately say. This finding aligns with the concept of communication apprehension, where anxiety stems from fear of inadequacy in expressing oneself correctly in the target language (Horwitz et al., 1986). This anxiety may lead to avoidance and self-monitoring (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024; Moafa, 2024). Research further shows that this form-focused anxiety can hinder fluency and spontaneity because

the student is preoccupied with correctness rather than communication (Botes et al., 2020; Wang, 2023).

Together, these responses demonstrate that, for many students, communication apprehension is tied less to an audience and more to an internal emotional judgment (the fear of exposing one's incompetence). The classroom or public space becomes threatening not because of others, but because it turns into a space of personal vulnerability, where any speech may confirm the student's own worst fears about their language ability.

The social visibility aspect of speaking is another form of communication apprehension evident within the data. For these students, the concern is not simply a perception of linguistic inadequacy: it also involves the emotional strain caused by the presence of an audience. Speaking English in these contexts becomes performative, not because the students doubt their general ability but because the social context heightens the emotional risk of expressing oneself verbally.

R36 uses the phrase *not used to*, which indicates that the anxiety is triggered by a lack of familiarity with the performance-like nature of public speaking. In addition, the expression *in front of everyone* reflects a heightened sense of exposure because the act of speaking becomes performative. For R36, the anxiety stems not from fear of being judged, but instead from the overwhelming attention placed on the speaker, which creates emotional pressure and vulnerability that are rooted in visibility instead of evaluation. The findings align with other findings that show that communication apprehension, in public contexts, stems from the emotional weight of speaking that becomes a social performance; and that even confident students may experience emotional discomfort owing to the fear of exposure (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024; Wang, 2023).

Another source of communication apprehension in the data stems from students' concern with message delivery. Their fear is related not to their level of linguistic ability, but to whether what they say will be understood as intended. In these cases, the fear is not limited to social exposure or self-assessed proficiency but is tied specifically to the anxiety of not communicating clearly, or of losing control during real-time speech.

R37's response centres on message failure as the emotional trigger. The phrase *not conveyed well* suggests that the student does not fear being wrong in terms of grammar but fears being misunderstood in terms of meaning. This is significant, because the emotional discomfort experienced lies not in the speaker's performance but in the gap between intention and perception. This type of apprehension is significant because the student is worried that, even if they talk, what they say will not be understood by the listener. This leads to anxiety which comes both before and after the speaking process and is an emotionally distressing state for engagement. This finding ties in with the notion of communication apprehension, where anxiety is rooted in the fear of being misunderstood or failing to convey meaning effectively (Horwitz et al., 1986). Previous studies have shown that the potential for message breakdown can lead to reduced confidence, increased hesitation, and avoidance of communicative situations (Lin, 2024; Moafa, 2024; Wang, 2023).

Similarly, R345's anxiety is tied not to public exposure or self-doubt, but to a specific breakdown in information retrieval. R345 is confident that the vocabulary is known (*even if I know it*) but still fears that it will not be accessible when it matters. This is an example of cognitive interference caused by anxiety, where the fear of forgetfulness becomes a self-fulfilling barrier (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024). In addition, this student's affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985) is high, hindering her ability for meaningful output (Swain, 1985). In this case, speaking becomes emotionally loaded because the student cannot trust her own memory in moments of pressure, which compromises both fluency and confidence (Alrabai, 2014; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

This kind of emotional inhibition is echoed in an excerpt of R68's narrative writing:

(R68-MM) *This caused anxiety, particularly when speaking with people who were fluent in the language. The fear of making mistakes affected my confidence, and those were discouraging moments that made me feel like I might never master the language as I had hoped.*

This excerpt reinforces the cumulative emotional impact of self-protective measures. R68 links anxiety directly to *speaking with people who were fluent*, where the social setting

heightens self-consciousness. In addition, the sentence *I might never master the language* displays how repeated moments of perceived inadequacy and communication apprehension evolve into a state of emotional hopelessness. This reflects the ways in which long-term communication apprehension impacts students; and the emotional cost of speaking then deters their engagement and reshapes their belief in future success.

R37, R68 and R345 highlight a specific emotional pattern in which the three students fear that the message being sent will not be delivered as expected. In this sense, studies show that communication apprehension is shaped by the fragility of real-time meaning-making because the emotional stakes lie in preserving the integrity of the message (Lin, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018). Furthermore, the emotional cost reflected in their responses is the loss of voice – not the fear of being judged but the fear of being misunderstood – and that, in itself, becomes a barrier to confident, spontaneous speech (Moafa, 2024; Wang, 2023).

The results in this sub-theme directly answer Research Question 1.1 and Research Question 1.3. Communication apprehension impacts speaking, participation and interaction in a student's language learning journey. The students' emotionally reflective experiences tie in with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) communication apprehension, which is constructed as a type of language anxiety characterised by the fear of speaking in a second language. The findings of the present research reinforce findings demonstrating that communication apprehension is not a single emotional event but is a multi-sourced affective process, rooted in skill insecurity, social visibility and message disruption (Lin, 2024; Moafa, 2024; Wang, 2023). Such fears do not manifest only during speech but also restructure behaviour before speaking begins, revealing the anticipatory and self-regulatory dimensions of emotional response in language learning (Lin, 2024; Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

5.1.3 Motivation in Language Learning

This sub-theme explores the motivation levels of students by exploring two distinct categories of motivation:

- Intrinsic motivation in language learning
- Extrinsic motivation in language learning

By exploring these two distinct categories of motivation, we can better understand how motivation shapes students' language learning journeys and influences their relationship with the English language.

5.1.3.1 Intrinsic Motivation in Language Learning

Intrinsic motivation emerged as a significant affective factor. Across the responses, students expressed a personal drive to improve that was rooted in the enjoyment of learning:

- (R101-FS) *When I'm in an English class, my usual mood is a mix of focus and excitement. I often feel excited because I see every class as an opportunity to improve my skills step by step, and this motivates me to engage with the lesson and work hard. However, I sometimes feel a bit nervous, especially when I need to speak in front of others or answer a difficult question. This nervousness comes from a fear of making mistakes or not expressing myself correctly.*
- (R138-FS) *My usual mood in English class is curious and motivated because I enjoy learning and improving my language skills, though it can sometimes feel challenging.*
- (R186-FH) *When I provide correct answers in assessments or when I share answers orally, I feel great pride and comfort. This gives me a feeling of confidence and motivates me to continue learning. I feel that I am making progress and that I am on the right track, and this raises my morale and increases my desire to improve my level further.*
- (R362-FH) *When I get answers correct in English assessments or when sharing answers orally, I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. This positive feeling comes from the validation of my hard work and understanding. It boosts my confidence and motivates me to continue learning and improving. The sense of success also encourages me to take on more challenges, knowing that I am capable of progressing.*

The findings show a key source of intrinsic motivation linked to the students' success and visible progress. The motivation is not tied to future aspirations or abstract ideals: it is tied

to real, affective experiences during language engagement. When students perform well, they often report feelings of pride, comfort, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment.

For example, R186 uses affective terms such as *pride*, *comfort*, and *morale*, which indicate that success in classroom tasks produces an emotionally affirming experience that enhances the student's confidence. The expression *on the right track* reveals a self-perception of progress capable of sustaining intrinsic motivation. R186's motivation is internal and self-reinforcing, which illustrates that positive affect can lower the affective filter while simultaneously strengthening the student's motivation. The final portion of the response, *desire to improve my level further*, reflects a forward-facing orientation, consistent with intrinsic motivation. These responses may be considered to be a stable predictor of long-term engagement. In this case, emotion is not a by-product of learning but is an essential catalyst for sustained effort and perceived growth. The response aligns with theory that posits that feeling capable enhances intrinsic motivation and promotes sustained learning behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It also reflects Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that high motivation lowers the affective filter, allowing more effective language acquisition. Moreover, studies highlight how positive emotions such as pride, enjoyment and confidence boost motivation and reinforce agency in English language learning (Alaqeel & Altalhab, 2024; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Kashefian-Naeeini et al., 2024; Moafa, 2024; Zhu, 2024).

Similarly, R362 uses words and phrases such as *validation*, *pride*, *confidence*, and *take on more challenges*. These terms suggest a motivational chain in which internal success builds confidence; and confidence then enables students to push beyond comfort zones and step into unfamiliar linguistic territory. The student views achievement not as an endpoint but as an invitation to pursue more demanding goals. Motivation is rooted in self-recognised capability, where the emotional satisfaction of progress reinforces the belief that effort leads to tangible reward. This response reflects the theory that when students perceive themselves as capable, they experience enhanced motivation – driven by internal satisfaction – to pursue increasingly complex tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This finding also aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that high motivation and self-confidence lower the affective filter and foster meaningful language acquisition. Various studies have echoed this finding, by showing that when students experience positive

affect such as confidence or reduced anxiety, they demonstrate greater willingness to engage in challenging tasks, which in turn supports long-term persistence (Almesaar, 2022; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Kashefian-Naeeni et al., 2024; Zhu, 2024).

Together, these responses show that, for many students, intrinsic motivation is closely linked to emotional confirmation of progress. These students are not participating merely to pass or comply but do so because they are emotionally engaged in a process in which achievement builds momentum. Therefore, the findings align with studies showing that intrinsic motivation is not static but is a dynamic emotional response to growth (Al-Mohanna, 2024; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Another form of intrinsic motivation that emerged from the data is rooted in students' emotional engagement with the language process. These students describe affective states such as focus, curiosity, excitement and eagerness, which indicates that motivation also arises from the act of learning and not just from outcomes. This means that it is linked to the personal satisfaction gained through participation.

We see this in R108-MS's narrating writing excerpt:

First of all, I am a person who loves the English language. I do not know why, but it is possibly because of a professor or a character in a series. I do not remember. My level was excellent in primary, middle, and secondary. I saw that I was stuck on the same level and needed to develop it more.

This excerpt shows R108's intrinsic motivation as it stems from a personal affection for the English language, with no ties to external rewards. This is seen in *I am a person who loves the English language*, which signals a clear internalised enjoyment. The fact that R108 cannot pinpoint where the love for the language stems from signifies that his motivation is affectively deeply entrenched rather than strategically driven.

In addition, R108's *I was stuck on the same level and needed to develop it more* signifies a self-evaluated need for growth and improvement that stems from an internal desire for progress. This ties in with theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) that indicates that the student is motivated by an internal standard of linguistic development, which means that a lowered

affective filter increases motivation (Krashen, 1982, 1985). In addition, it also ties in with studies that show that internal drive and ideal self-images sustain effort over time (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

R101 describes a mood marked by *focus and excitement* and associates each class with *an opportunity to improve ... step by step*. This steady progress results from an internal process of self-development and is not based on grades or obligation. Importantly, this student also uses the word *engage*, which suggests active, voluntary participation rather than passive compliance. However, the *excitement* R101 feels does not erase the *nervousness* which stems from a fear of making mistakes or not expressing myself correctly, but coexists with it. This reveals a nuanced emotional state where the desire to improve overrides the fear of error. R101's emotional balance shows that she has a lowered affective filter, with motivation and excitement helping her to manage her anxiety and maintain input (Krashen, 1982, 1985). In addition, R101's forward-focused motivation aligns with Dörnyei's (2005) concept of the ideal L2 self, while the internalised desire to engage mirrors the core of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), where autonomy and competence fuel sustained participation.

R138 reinforces this pattern by expressing a mood of curiosity and motivation which is specifically tied to the enjoyment of *learning and improving*. These words suggest a personal connection to language growth. In addition, they also reveal a positive environment that positions the classroom as a space for emotional and cognitive stimulation. R138 also acknowledges that, while learning can be challenging at times, the challenge itself becomes part of motivation, which means that the difficulty does not necessarily deter engagement. Instead, it may enhance the student's intrinsic motivation.

This interplay of challenge and motivation therefore supports Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that high motivation helps lower the affective filter, which allows for more effective language acquisition. It also reflects Dörnyei's (2005) notion of a motivated student with a strong ideal L2 self, and, at the same time, aligns with self-determination theory, which posits competence, autonomy and meaningful engagement as key aspects of sustained intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The findings of this sub-theme, which respond directly to Research Question 1.1, indicate that intrinsic motivation emerged as a central driver rooted in the emotional satisfaction of success and in personal engagement with the language learning journey itself. This aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that positive emotional states such as high motivation help reduce the affective filter and promote effective language acquisition. In addition, the findings also respond to Research Question 1.3 as they demonstrate how affective states such as pride, curiosity and eagerness are enacted through classroom participation, challenge-seeking and active engagement. These observable affective behaviours reflect low affective filter conditions (Krashen, 1982, 1985), where emotional readiness enhances student willingness to participate in, and engage with, input-rich environments.

5.1.3.2 Extrinsic Motivation in Language Learning

Extrinsic motivation emerged as a significant affective factor, with 289 (196 male – 93 female) students experiencing this form of motivation. Across the responses, students pursued English not from a personal drive to improve, but for the sake of graduation, employment and social acceptance.

- (R10-MS) *I began my journey with learning English at school, and the goal was clear: academic success. I never felt I was learning the language for enjoyment; the focus was always on passing exams and getting good grades.*
- (R74-MM) *To ensure I pass the English course, I focus on regular attendance and studying only for the grades, because I know it's necessary for graduation. I don't enjoy it, but I have no choice.*
- (R150-FS) *My journey in learning English was full of challenges. At first, I didn't like the subject, but since I knew I had to pass it for academic success, I began dedicating more time to it. It is always emphasised that English is necessary to get a good job, and this made me feel it was a burden more than an enjoyable subject. I study it because I am forced to, not out of love or interest.*
- (R175-FH) *My experience with learning: the positives, negatives, and motivations. Since I began learning English, I felt it was a difficult subject, but I knew I needed it for my academic and professional future. Everyone around me*

kept repeating that those who don't speak English will face difficulties. This pressure made me focus more on passing than understanding.

- (R196-FH) *My experience with learning English was full of challenges. I never liked the language, but I knew I had to pass it to move on to the next stage in university. I felt like I was learning just to pass exams, not because I really wanted to learn the language.*

A dominant pattern from the findings is the framing of English as an academic hurdle and not as a meaningful subject. Students indicate that their relationship with English is based on obligation, performance and survival. The emotional tone is shaped less by curiosity and enjoyment and more by duty and responsibility. The focus is not on learning at all, but on just getting the process completed.

R10 establishes this view very clearly. For this student, the goal is academic success, and he admits that he has never learned English *for enjoyment*. Instead, the language is useful purely for *passing exams and getting good grades*. R10's response signals a transactional mindset where the motivation is purely instrumental; and where there is no emotional connection to the language except for what it represents for the student. However, although the student is motivated, the pressure from *passing exams and getting good grades* may heighten his anxiety. This anxiety may raise the affective filter, limiting the student's ability to internalise language input effectively (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

R10 reinforces this framing of extrinsic motivation in the narrative writing section;

I see learning English as a tool that opens many doors for me, whether in education or in connecting with people from different cultures.

In this excerpt, R10 repositions English as a means to an end goal. He describes English as a *tool that opens many doors*. Here, English acts as a functional mechanism that is valued for what it can unlock and for the external outcomes and/or opportunities it could provide. This further shows that the student's motivation is driven by future utility, not by personal enjoyment of, or emotional engagement with, the language itself. This behaviour reflects what has been called identified regulation, a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation in which students adopt goals that they personally endorse even if the activity itself is not inherently enjoyable (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These responses from R10 align with the theory on extrinsic motivation and identified regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). R10's motivation reflects a strategic form of extrinsic drive, one in which the language is valued as a tool for accessing academic and social opportunities. Additionally, the emotional pressure described by R10 illustrates that high-stakes performance contexts may elevate anxiety; and, in turn, raise the affective filter, thereby limiting effective acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). These motivational and affective patterns are widely observed in the Saudi Arabian context, where students frequently report academic pressures alongside strong instrumental orientations towards English (Almesaar, 2022; Al-Mohanna, 2024; Alqahtani, 2018; Kashefian-Naeeni et al., 2024).

R74 echoes this instrumental view when stating that learning English is purely *for the grades* as he does not *enjoy it*. However, there is *no choice*. Here, the words *no choice* reflect a possible lack of student agency. The emotional tone is not of defiance to learning but appears to be one of resignation. For R74, English is something to be endured, not something that can be embraced. This student shows signs of external regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), in which learning is driven by pressure or obligation rather than internal endorsement. Furthermore, the absence of enjoyment and the presence of external regulation in this student's language learning journey may cause him to experience varying levels of anxiety. This means that, at times, his affective filter could be raised, hampering language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Moreover, although at first glance R74 may appear to be a demotivated student who is motivated only by external rewards, the apathy and disconnection in R74's statements hint at something deeper. Here the student is displaying an affective distance from the language, which this study has identified as emotional displacement in language learning, because he does not *enjoy it*.

R196's external regulation motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) pushes such feelings towards the language even further. This student states that *I never liked the language*, and that *I felt like I was learning just to pass exams*. Unlike R10 and R74, R196 frames English not as merely uninteresting but as unwanted. Here, the emotional tone shifts from indifference to dislike. This response suggests a deeper affective disconnection from English, one that

goes beyond low motivation or demotivation and dives into emotional displacement in language learning. The emotional discomfort of learning has not been processed within the act of learning: it has been displaced outward, onto the English language as a whole. The emotional displacement results in the language being stripped of any positive value and redefined by the student as a source of burden. In this sense, English is no longer just difficult – it is symbolically rejected by the student.

Together, these responses highlight the motivational structure based on academic obligations. They also carry a significant affective cost. R10, R74 and R196 represent externally regulated motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, R196 illustrates a more profound emotional shift, one that evidently moves beyond demotivation and towards emotional displacement in language learning. Rather than simply reducing effort, or redirecting frustration towards a task or a grade, R196's response reveals an emotional rejection of the language itself.

Another pattern to emerge from the data was extrinsic motivation driven by future career pressure. Related responses position English not as a subject to engage with meaningfully, but as a gatekeeper and requirement for measures of success such as employment and advancement, or even social survival. Moreover, even though this type of motivation is powered by external factors, it comes at an emotional cost revealed by terms that suggest a burden, stress, and compulsion.

R150 provides a clear example: even though English was disliked at the beginning, *more time* was dedicated to it. This is because, as R150 explains, *it is always emphasised that English is necessary to get a good job*. This is a clear reflection of how societal and academic pressures frame English as a gatekeeper to success. However, the emotional tone quickly shifts with the words *it was a burden more than an enjoyable subject*. The word *burden* implies emotional heaviness. This *burden* is not simply task-related stress, but a sense that English represents pressure and not an opportunity to learn the language.

R150 further adds *I study it because I am forced to, not out of love or interest*. This response shows external regulation because the student's motivation is driven by compliance and/or pressure rather than self-endorsement or intrinsic value. The student's

agency is diminished, and the language is no longer neutral because it is the source of emotional strain. This emotional redirection marks the beginnings of emotional displacement in language learning. This is because R150 associates the negative affect not with the learning tasks but with the language itself. In this case, English is not just challenging, but is emotionally recoded as a *burden*, a clear instance of the negative feelings being projected onto the language.

This combination of emotional burden and externally regulated motivation experienced by the student is consistent with negatively high affective states that may obstruct language acquisition if left unaddressed (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, R150's response illustrates the lowest form of extrinsic motivation, in which behaviour is shaped by external pressures rather than internalised values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Similarly, R175 frames English learning through a lens of social and professional necessity. The student says that even though English was difficult from the outset, she continued to pursue it because of its perceived utility in future success. This position aligns with identified regulation because, even though the student adopts externally set goals, which are personally important and valuable to her, the language journey is not necessarily enjoyable.

What drives the motivation here is not the language itself, but the fear of being left behind because *everyone around me kept repeating that those who don't speak English will face difficulties*. This repeated external narrative builds a sense of collective pressure, which the student internalises. Most telling is the fact that the pressure of needing English has made R175 *focus more on passing than understanding*. Here, the student's focus shifts from meaningful learning to mere survival and to navigating the pressure-laden environment English represents. In addition, this shift in emotional states represents the onset of emotional displacement in language learning. This is because the student no longer simply views English as difficult, but has recoded English as an obstacle to be overcome rather than a tool for engagement. Therefore, the emotional burden experienced by this student is projected onto the language itself instead of being processed through learning. This form of emotional detachment from the language can

raise the affective filter, thereby limiting meaningful acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985), and suppress autonomous motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In both responses, it is seen that English has become an emotional obstacle framed by coercion and obligation rather than a tool for expression and engagement. While both students continue to study English, this comes at a huge emotional cost. Both responses reflect a distinct form of extrinsic motivation under emotional strain, which is consistent with external and identified regulation. This happens because their motivation is shaped by perceived necessity rather than genuine interest (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is evident that the emotional framing of English as a burden or source of pressure suggests a loss of emotional connection, emotional detachment, and emotional displacement onto the language itself.

The findings in this sub-theme directly answer Research Question 1.1, by showing how external pressures, such as career prospects and societal expectations, drive motivation. This reflects the lowest forms of extrinsic motivation, particularly identified and external regulation, where students act owing to perceived importance or obligation rather than enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It also resonates with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that low motivation may result in a high affective filter that limits language acquisition.

The data in this sub-theme also answers Research Question 1.2, by revealing that these pressures shape motivation through obligation and fear rather than through interest or engagement which, in turn, causes emotional strain instead of empowerment. These pressures cause low motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and, subsequently, may cause high anxiety levels that raise the affective filter and hamper meaningful language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Finally, Research Question 1.3 is also addressed, in an analysis of how students demonstrate the pressure of learning English through the language of compulsion (*I am forced to*), of emotional burdening (*it was a burden*), and of reduced focus on comprehension (*focus more on passing than understanding*). These behaviours show that the students had low motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which raised the affective filter

(Krashen, 1982, 1985), and, in some cases, led to emotional detachment and emotional displacement in language learning.

This sub-theme not only affirms Krashen's (1982, 1985) assertion that affective states influence language input but also illustrates how extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) may carry affective costs that, in some cases, result in emotional displacement in language learning.

5. 2 Conclusion

The analyses in this first theme suggest that emotions and motivation are key components of the English language learning experiences of Saudi Arabian university students. The findings reveal that, regardless of whether the emotions were positive or negative, they significantly influenced students' language learning journeys, and their interactions and engagements with the language. Intrinsic motivation was driven by emotions such as fulfillment, progress and personal challenge, while extrinsic motivation was linked to pressure and notions of future success, often carrying emotional costs in the form of stress, burdening, and detachment. Furthermore, negative emotions such as test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension created strong affective barriers that impacted students' performance, confidence and willingness to speak. In some cases, emotional discomfort even led to the displacement of emotion onto the language itself, which then resulted in deeper emotional rejection rather than mere demotivation.

The findings in this first theme directly addressed my research questions. Research Question 1.1 identified the key affective factors (emotions, anxiety, motivation) the students experienced. Research Question 1.2 identified the sources of these affective factors (tests, speaking) and Research Question 1.3 demonstrated how students felt and expressed these affective factors (withdrawal, hesitation, obligation) in their language learning behaviours and emotional responses. In addition, these findings also align with Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis by confirming that emotional states influence acquisition and meaningful input. Research from Saudi Arabia (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Hussain, 2018) also supports these findings. It confirmed that emotions and motivation are deeply intertwined with language learning in

Saudi Arabian higher educational contexts. Therefore, this theme highlights that affect is not a by-product of language learning. Rather, it is a core emotional force that shapes the entire language learning journey of students.

However, the findings also highlighted that current literature does not explain certain phenomena experienced by some students. As a result, the findings go further by proposing the concept of emotional displacement in language learning.

In the next chapter, I will continue to provide and discuss the findings of the remaining two themes and sub-themes to the affective strand of this study.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

AFFECT: INSTITUTIONAL STRAIN, STRUCTURAL BARRIERS, ENVIRONMENT

6.2 Introduction

In the previous chapter (Chapter 5) I provided the findings of my first theme (Emotions and motivation in language learning) and its sub-themes. In this chapter, I continue to discuss the findings from the first questionnaire and the narrative writings linked to affect.

Chapter 6, therefore, is a continuation of the work in Chapter 5. It is guided strictly by the affective strand of the study for the second and third themes, and addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1.1: What affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?

RQ 1.2: Why do affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English?

RQ 1.3: How are affective factors demonstrated by Saudi Arabian students learning English?

Themes linked to investment (RQ 2–RQ 4) are excluded from this chapter and will be addressed in Chapter 7.

The themes discussed in this chapter are as follows:

- Institutional strain and structural barriers in English language learning
- Affective environment: the emotional influence of the English teacher

These two themes highlight the affective factors that shape Saudi Arabian university students' English learning experiences, by providing deeper insights into why and how these factors influence their learning.

My discussion process in this chapter remains the same as in the previous one. I have chosen quotes in which the keywords were most common, all Arabic data were translated into English.

6.1 Institutional Strain and Structural Barriers in English Language Learning

Theme 1 in Chapter 5 demonstrated the emotional and motivational responses that shape much of the English language learning experiences of Saudi Arabian students. Under this theme, a separate set of challenges emerged that are rooted not in affective states but in the structural realities of how English is taught and positioned. In this theme, students often described English as a subject that demands a great deal of time, attention and energy. This theme is divided into two sub-themes:

- Long hours and time overload
- Academic weight and subject pressure

6.1.1 Long Hours and Time Overload

A dominant pattern to emerge from the data was the consistent framing of English learning as structurally overwhelming owing to the demands of the many class attendance hours required. Students repeatedly emphasised that the duration of English instruction was mentally exhausting in comparison to that required in other subjects. The affective response here is not about the language itself but about the time structure imposed by the curriculum, which led to fatigue, disengagement, and a sense of academic burden.

- (R56-FM) *Sometimes I feel bored because of the long timing. Three hours daily is excessive. It drains my energy, and I can't focus in the other lectures.*
- (R102-MS) *Reducing the duration of lectures because one brain cannot accommodate three hours*
- (R146-FS) *Honestly, at university, I spend three hours a day suffocating and exhausted.*
- (R366-MS) *Learning is fun outside the university, but inside it is very bad because you are there every day for three hours, and the bigger problem is the large number of hours that make you stressed about both the subject and university.*

In addition to the questionnaire responses above, narrative data reinforced this theme. For example, R159's narrative writing reflected that:

(R159-FS) *My experience was enjoyable, considering that I love the language, but some negatives significantly affected the experience, such as the long lecture hours, which impacted the entire day and the focus on other subjects.*

In this excerpt, R159 indicates that even when students have positive attitudes towards English, it is not enough to withstand the draining effect of the long hours they need to endure. Furthermore, the emotional toil they experience carries over beyond the English classroom and its effects are experienced in other subjects. This reinforces the idea that institutional overload acts as a demotivator and leads to disengagement even among motivated students. According to Krashen (1982, 1985), students with high motivation, such as R159, should have their affective filter reduced, but this instance shows that even students with high motivation may experience reduced academic focus when systemic burdens outweigh emotional interest. The response by R159 reflects research showing that when students face structural and scheduling pressures, they develop cognitive fatigue and reduced engagement. It aligns with studies showing that when institutional scheduling demands and lecture durations are excessive, emotional and cognitive engagement decline (Blasche et al., 2023; Kotnik et al., 2024).

A pattern emerging in this sub-theme is that English lectures are structurally excessive, draining and ultimately unsustainable. Students consistently expressed their dislike of the time exposure and energy cost of engaging with the subject over long periods.

R56 provides a clear example of how institutional overload affects even those students who do not show signs of demotivation. This student uses the word *bored* to describe her emotional state. In this context, the word signals emotional disengagement from overexposure. This is because three *hours daily is excessive*, which highlights how extended class presence causes energy depletion. However, the deeper concern is that this fatigue affects the student's academic life as a whole because she cannot *focus in the other lectures*. This suggests that the emotional cost of English is not an isolated factor: it is structurally disruptive.

This example reflects how institutional design can trigger emotional overload. This overload may then lead to boredom and lack of input even in students who may otherwise

be motivated, a pattern observed in previous studies where affective strain diminished learner engagement and persistence (Dörnyei, 2001; Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The student does not express dislike of the English tasks, but rather that English has become a cognitive burden owing to systemic excess. As a result, the student experiences functional disengagement from other academic tasks as well. In this student's case, the affective filter remains high (Krashen, 1982, 1985), owing not to anxiety or fear, but to the boredom that stems from structural fatigue caused by excessive cognitive demand.

This notion is echoed by R102, who offers a succinct but powerful explanation of cognitive overload. R102's statement that *one brain cannot accommodate three hours* shows that the issue is not laziness or lack of motivation. Instead, the student recognises that a biological, cognitive threshold is being exceeded. R102, therefore, is indicating that learning capacities have limits and that institutional structures contribute to emotional strain. Similar concerns have been noted in studies highlighting institutional pressure and anxiety-inducing conditions (Almesaar, 2022); demotivating curricular and systemic factors (Dörnyei, 2001); and the role of academic fatigue and overload in disengagement (Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The issue here is not the student's engagement with content, but rather an overload of content that exceeds his ability to absorb, reflect and retain. This indicates that although the classroom may begin with an experience of engagement, as the lesson continues it becomes a space of mental saturation instead of learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985) is raised here because the cognitive demands exceed comfort levels and, in turn, the student's ability to process and retain language input is reduced.

R366 deepens this framing, drawing a clear contrast between learning inside and learning outside the university. While learning outside the classroom, either informally or perhaps at an institute, is described as *fun*, the institutional version of learning English is *very bad*. The language being studied has not changed, but the context transforms it into a burden that causes students to be *stressed*. This reflects how institutional structure can cause negative emotional environments that raise the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985) despite a student's initial interest.

In addition, R366 points to *three hours daily*, which appears to be a weight the student is forced to carry. However, R366 goes further: it is not just the class duration that is draining, but also the thought of having this class *every day for three hours*, causing emotional heaviness before class starts. This is not a case of the student's failure to engage with the material, or avoiding effort and giving up. It is the effect of being overloaded with emotions because the system appears to be draining the student's capacity to engage within a classroom before class has even begun. Similar findings were reported in studies which have shown that institutional pressure and anxiety-inducing conditions contribute to emotional strain (Almesaar, 2022; Pekrun et al., 2010).

This emotional toll is mirrored in R146's *I spend three hours a day suffocating and exhausted*. Here, the student refers not to the academic difficulty of the subject, but to the physical and emotional environment the structure creates. The use of the word *suffocating*, moreover, does not suggest exhaustion so much as a sense of being trapped, with the situation eliciting a sense of a need for sheer survival since the classroom appears to be transformed into an emotionally airless and psychologically oppressive space. This reflects the emotional cost of being exposed to English learning for many hours daily, with a slow affective depletion taking its toll to the point where just showing up for class is emotionally taxing. By pairing the word *suffocating* with the word *exhausted*, R146 is signalling a complete draining of physical, emotional and psychological resources. This response highlights that English is no longer being experienced as a subject. Rather, it is being experienced as a complete emotional ordeal the student must survive because it is built into the structure of the academic day.

R146 feels *suffocated* and *exhausted*, which may then cause anxiety before, during and after classes, raising the affective filter and blocking language acquisition (Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, these emotional experiences, created by the structural imposition of long hours, undermine autonomy and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Together, the responses in this sub-theme unite to form a shared reality where students are overloaded by institutional design. English here is framed as an institutionally induced strain and not as an academic challenge – because it is something that stretches across

the academic day and erodes the students' capacity to think, focus and recover. For the students, the issue here is neither the content, nor the teacher, nor the students: it is the system, and the unsustainable time demands it places in relation to a single subject. This supports the notion that negative experiences such as low motivation and anxiety (caused here by institutionally induced strain) raise the affective filter and limit language input and acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, it highlights how conditions that restrict autonomy can trigger reduced motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and emotional disengagement.

The findings in this sub-theme respond directly to my research questions. In relation to Research Question 1.1, students consistently described emotions such as exhaustion and boredom. Crucially, these emotions were tied not to the English language content as a subject, but rather to the structural burden of excessive daily class hours. This shows that time overload was the primary factor shaping students' emotional engagement with the language. These emotional experiences align with Pekrun et al.'s (2010) study, in which academic fatigue and emotional disengagement were triggered by prolonged exposure to demanding learning conditions. In addition, owing to the emotionally negative environment, the findings reflect Krashen's (1982, 1985) notion that negative affective factors (caused here by the long hours) may raise the affective filter and limit language acquisition.

In relation to Research Question 1.2, the underlying reason for affective disruption was the institutional design of English instruction, especially the three-hour daily lessons. This led to emotional fatigue, cognitive saturation, and reduced capacity to focus even in other subjects. This echoes Saudi Arabian research highlighting the emotional and motivational pressures students face in English learning environments (Almesaar, 2022; Shoaib, 2022). In terms of Research Question 1.3, the data show that students demonstrated affective states through emotionally weighted language such as *suffocating*, *exhausted*, *bored*, *stressed* and *very bad*. These words reveal the symptoms of prolonged institutional stress when students are emotionally depleted. Although different Saudi subject areas differ in terms of the focus they require, other studies have similarly reported that students' emotional and motivational experiences are shaped by structural and contextual pressures (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Shoaib, 2022).

To sum up, this sub-theme has highlighted that time overload is an affective burden that distorts students' emotional experience of learning English. The findings show that excessive hours entail an unsustainable emotional cost that impacts even motivated students. Therefore, time overload becomes an indirect yet powerful affective factor that ends up raising the affective filter, thereby inhibiting learning and increasing emotional fatigue, which, in their turn, lead to reduced capacity for engagement.

6.1.2 Academic Weight and Subject Pressure

A pattern that emerged from the data was the perception of English being heavy in terms of its academic impact on students' grades and their Grade Point Average (GPA). The issue points to an imbalance between subjects; and suggests that English not only dominates students' study schedules but also appears to pose a threat to their academic progression.

- (R2-MS) *Grades, because the course load is extremely heavy, four books*
- (R4-MS) *Duration of large classes and extra time when returning home*
- (R58-MS) *A lot of information in a short time*
- (R75-MH) *It is practical pressure, such as many assignments and tests*
- (R354-FS) *It is a very heavy subject. It has the most study hours, and it affects my GPA severely. It is worse than science subjects!*
- (R368-FH) *The consequences are very bad for me because I want a high GPA to major or transfer, and English takes up the most hours.*

R2's brief statement opines not that the subject is complex but that *the course load is extremely heavy*. The phrase *four books* represents a sense of imbalance that appears to disrupt the student's sense of control in the language learning journey, which then makes success in English feel less about effort and more about endurance. The student suggests that there is a misalignment between course duration and the resources available to manage it, which could threaten the student's end *grades*. This kind of academic pressure may provoke emotional fatigue, as a result of which students may detach from the subject emotionally or approach it with resentment rather than curiosity.

These findings align with the view that achievement pressure and unmanageable content loads can lead to emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Pekrun et al., 2010). Saudi Arabian research similarly shows that language-learning pressures, especially those linked to academic expectations and institutional structures, shape how students experience English and manage engagement emotionally (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014).

The responses by R4, R58 and R75 introduce additional dimensions of subject pressure. R4 highlights the temporal intrusiveness of English, which leaks into personal recovery time when the student is supposed to be relaxing *when returning home*. This time invasion points to the institutional demands that occupy the student's private space. To this student, English language learning begins to symbolise ongoing mental labour because it compromises the affective boundaries between institutional demands and personal well-being. Over time, this student may view English as a source of emotional exhaustion and begin to resent the language rather than view it as a subject of engagement.

This aligns with research showing that prolonged academic stress and emotionally taxing learning conditions can heighten fatigue and reduce motivation (Pekrun et al., 2010). Studies in a Saudi Arabian context also show that pressures tied to English learning, especially structural demands, shape students' emotional experiences of the language (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014).

In addition, R58 identifies what is termed cognitive compression. This is because the English course has *a lot of information* to get through while its duration is *a short time*. The amount of input from the demands of the course within a short time frame may generate cognitive fatigue and withdrawal. This then undermines the student's ability to process, retain, and engage with, the content effectively. This aligns with research showing that prolonged academic stress and emotionally taxing learning conditions may reduce engagement and shift students toward surface-level learning approaches (Pekrun et al., 2010).

R75 highlights the *practical pressure* resulting from frequent *assignments and tests*. It appears that students are learning English not for communicative goals, but to complete tasks and avoid low grades or failure. Furthermore, the *practical pressure* this student

experiences from *tests* could mean that the student experiences test anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986); and that the affective filter is raised owing to that particular anxiety (Krashen, 1982, 1985). In addition, research shows that pressure-driven learning environments can heighten negative emotions and reduce students' willingness to engage meaningfully with English (Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010). Such emotional strain may contribute to students forming negative associations with the language, and to English becoming perceived as a stressful academic obligation rather than a meaningful skill.

R354 clarifies this imbalance by stating that English has *the most study hours* of any subject and is a direct threat to the GPA, which makes it *worse than science subjects*. The student recognises that the demands of English surpass those of science subjects – not because of its content, but owing to its demands in terms of time, emotional investment and structural requirements. This implies that, for this student, English is a barrier to academic progression because it demands disproportionate resources from her. For R354, English is not a subject to engage with or enjoy, it has to be survived, and heavy penalties have to be paid to prevent it from severely affecting one's GPA. Previous studies have shown that academic pressure and curriculum overload can heighten negative emotions and reduce motivation, leading to emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010). R354 is projecting negative emotions onto the language by declaring that it is worse than science subjects. This could be a sign of emotional displacement in language learning, with the student classifying English as the worst subject because it has the power to affect her GPA negatively in a major way . This academic burden is further exemplified in the narrative writing of a student who shared a reflection on how English in Saudi Arabia reshapes academic futures:

(R138-FS) *My goal was medicine, and I could enter it, but I rejected it due to my lack of confidence in passing English. So, I decided to choose a major that involved numbers and enrolled in the Scientific Preparatory Year. To my surprise, even this track depended heavily on English. In English, in the university context, considered the standard for determining a student's level in all other subjects, to the extent that so many*

marks are based on it? Do they believe that someone who excels in math and physics but is weak in English does not deserve high grades?

This excerpt from R138's narrative writing displays the academic weight English carries, and the pressure it exercises, in university contexts, especially in the Saudi Arabian higher education system. R138's declaration, *My goal was medicine, and I could enter it, but I rejected it due to my lack of confidence in passing English*, underscores the high-stakes consequences of linguistic insecurity and how it redirects academic trajectories. This is an important statement, as it shows how a lack of confidence or fear of failure inhibits performance and influences educational decisions. The student's decision to forego a goal reveals that English operates as a gatekeeper limiting access to non-language disciplines, a recurring finding in Saudi Arabian studies where English proficiency is tied to academic and career opportunities (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014)

R138 recognises the presence of a systemic bias equating English proficiency with intellectual merit, regardless of subject matter relevance. By realising that the Science track *depended heavily on English*, R138 recognises that academic fields have turned English into a universal currency of academic legitimacy. This part of the response reflects previous research showing that students often experience anxiety and emotional strain when external language demands exceed their cognitive and emotional readiness (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010).

The student shows awareness of structural injustice in a situation where linguistic performance takes precedence over subject-specific excellence. Instead of being a communicative tool, English becomes an ideological filter that undermines the abilities of students who excel in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects but falter in English, possibly because of non-English speaking backgrounds, schooling or social exposure. This reaction reflects research findings in which students questioned the fairness of language-based systems that undervalue disciplinary talent and create unequal access to academic opportunities (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010)

Ultimately, the excerpt from R138's narrative writing illustrates how academic weight, language-based gatekeeping, and systemic misrecognition unite to restrict students' agency, redirect goals, and reroute academic futures. This pattern reflects findings in Saudi Arabian and broader educational research showing that structural pressures around English can shape opportunities and constrain academic pathways (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010).

The findings in this sub-theme respond directly to Research Question 1.1, with students repeatedly expressing negative emotional reactions to the structural role English was playing in their academic lives. This was not because of its linguistic difficulty. Instead, it was the result of an excessive curriculum load compressed into a short time frame. These experiences echo those noted in previous studies, where negative academic emotions were seen to arise when students perceived demands as exceeding their emotional and cognitive capacity (Alrabai, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In response to Research Question 1.2, the stated reason for students' emotional distress was the unbalanced position English occupies. Students described the language's domination of their timetable, the requirement for many English textbooks, and the invasion of personal recovery time after class. The responses suggest that the language is institutionally over-emphasised. These pressures are consistent with research showing that emotional and motivational pressures within academic English environments, including issues with curriculum design and general academic demands, can generate negative affect and reduced motivation (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Pekrun et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In response to Research Question 1.3, these affective disruptions were demonstrated through emotionally charged phrases such as *worse than science subjects*, *very heavy*, *four books*, *practical pressure*, and *affects my GPA severely*. R138's narrative writing revealed that she even abandoned her career goal owing to her low self-confidence in, and fear of failing, English. This shows a high level of emotional impact, where English becomes a psychological and academic threat. Furthermore, the emotional and behavioural demonstrations of this structural strain are evident. Responses from students express emotional heaviness before class, an inability to focus during other lectures, and

strategic survival behaviour because they are forced to endure these structural barriers to mitigate damage to their GPA.

In summary, this theme reveals that, for these students, the core barriers to learning are the institutional conditions surrounding it. Students framed English as an academic obstacle to be endured for the sake of their academic career. The students are not rejecting the language owing to demotivation: it is their response to systemic overload, a response marked by strategic disengagement, stress and emotional erosion. Therefore, what begins as structural fatigue may come to manifest as emotional distancing in a system that feels extractive and unbalanced.

6.2 Affective Environment: The Emotional Influence of the English Teacher

This theme consists of two sub-themes.

- Positive teacher support and emotional encouragement
- Negative teacher behaviour and its emotional impact

6.2.1 Positive Teacher Support and Emotional Encouragement

One of the most notable affective enablers identified by students was the role of supportive and emotionally attuned English teachers. Students remember these teachers because they had good instructional skills; and because they made the students feel motivated, seen, and safe.

- (R56-FM) *In secondary school, I had a teacher, and she was one of the people who encouraged me the most. I was impatiently waiting for her class to come, and she developed my skill a lot.*
- (R91-MH) *One of my English teachers was very successful because they made lessons interactive and engaging. They used real-life examples, encouraged open discussions, and gave constructive feedback, which made learning enjoyable and effective.*

- (R112-MS) *There was a teacher in the middle school whose explanations were very excellent, and he made the language very easy. I only enjoyed English with him.*
- (R114-MS) *His style was sweet and motivating and he talked about his life in a nice way. I felt like he was a role model for me.*
- (R120-MS) *In high school, [the teacher] used beautiful methods of explanation and teaching, and the actual development began from that moment. Most of the time, he spoke in English with the students in class, and this increased the students' development of speaking skills.*
- (R149-FS) *One of my English teachers made learning enjoyable with creative lessons and encouragement, which helped me improve my skills and gain confidence.*

A recurring pattern extracted from the data was the emotionally reinforcing ability of some teachers. Their presence in the classroom was motivational and relational. For these students, the English teacher was not merely a means of English instruction, but an anchor who helped them to steady their unstable emotions and offered unwavering encouragement. The relationship with the teacher was emotionally charged in a positive way, and was marked by attachment, admiration, and transformation. Learning occurred not just through the delivery of content, but also through the way the teacher made the student feel.

This is clearly stated by R56, who *was impatiently waiting for... class to come*. This sense of anticipation by the student points to more than just enjoyment: it reflects a sense of emotional safety and motivation rooted in the teacher's personal influence. In addition, R56's description of the teacher as someone *who encouraged me the most* shows that the teacher not only motivated the student but also likely helped to build strong self-confidence in the student. Such qualities elevate the teacher's role to beyond just academics and to that of an emotional anchor. The emotional framing of the teacher by the student suggests that affective trust is not incidental to learning: it is central to it. Having a teacher who made the student feel emotionally safe, as R56 states, *developed my skill a lot*. This indicates that personal encouragement from the teacher did not merely

make the student feel good in class. It also led to enjoyment of English as a subject and measurable academic progress.

This finding is echoed in previous studies showing that positive emotional environments created by teachers fostered both psychological comfort and academic success (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Alrabai, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022). Furthermore, it aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) findings that, when students experienced low anxiety, high motivation and strong self-confidence, they acquired language more effectively. In R56's case, the emotional support the teacher provided appears to have contributed to a low-anxiety learning environment. This environment in turn boosted R56's motivation, potentially facilitating effective language acquisition. In addition, *she developed my skill a lot* is the result of a lowered affective filter resulting from low anxiety, high motivation, and strong self-confidence (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

R112 demonstrates the emotional impact of teacher clarity, stating that the teacher's *explanations were very excellent ... and I only enjoyed English with him*. This seemingly simple statement carries a powerful implication. The teacher's clarity made the subject enjoyable, but the enjoyment was not transferable across contexts and other teachers. The reason for this is that it was not English that the student enjoyed in isolation, but the way the teacher delivered the language to the student. This suggests that emotional engagement with a subject is often relationally mediated; and points to students feeling differently about content depending on who delivers it and how they feel in the space created by the particular interaction.

The emotional dependence on the quality of instruction experienced by R112 reflects findings in broader studies that show how teacher effectiveness and communication style significantly influenced student affect and motivation (Alqahtani, 2018; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Noels, 2003; Owaida, 2024; Shoaib, 2022). What led to the student finding the English *language very easy* was pedagogical clarity, which caused low anxiety that then lowered the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985). This was possible because the teacher created an environment in which affective filters were

reduced, which aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that low-anxiety and comprehensible input foster engagement and acquisition.

R114 expresses the deep link between emotion and learning by describing the teacher's teaching style as *sweet and motivating*. R114 adds that the teacher *was a role model*, which points to a strong identity-level connection. The student enjoys the class, develops an emotional connection and sees the teacher as a personal ideal. In this case, the emotional connection reflects a sense of comfort, with the student internalising the teacher as part of his academic identity. Internalisation such as this suggests that teacher influence extends beyond classroom performance and into the formation of an academic self-concept. The teacher is not only a guide, but is also an emotional reference point that helps shape how students view English, learning, and themselves. This finding ties in with previous literature, in which the teacher's encouragement and motivation allow students to build an emotional relationship with the teacher; and also to increase their motivation and self-image (Dörnyei, 2005; Goleman, 1995; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022).

Together, these responses form a clear emotional arc. The students are not merely reacting to teaching techniques: they are attaching emotionally to the teacher as a person. This attachment allows students to find motivation, confidence and – ultimately – academic development. In this sense, the teacher's presence operates as an affective catalyst and not only as an instructional force. The classroom becomes a space where students are safe, seen, and inspired, and therefore a healthy environment for language acquisition and emotional alignment, making language learning both possible and enjoyable.

Another pattern that emerged from the data was the way students responded to instructional quality, especially when teachers employed methods that were creative, interactive and clear. Students' emotional tone was directly tied to the design and delivery of lessons that made learning enjoyable – because of the teacher's personality and ability to make the content accessible, practical and engaging.

R91 highlights this sentiment by referencing *interactive lessons*, *real-life examples*, and *constructive feedback*. These elements point to the teacher's approach being both

cognitively and emotionally engaging for the students. The emotional tone here indicates that the response is not just about enjoyment of the lessons, but also about relevance and safety. When lessons reflect the real world, students can relate to them and are encouraged to engage without fear, at which point the classroom becomes a space of participation and growth.

The engagement displayed by this student aligns with findings that show how interactive teaching and authentic content improve student motivation and reduce affective barriers (Alqahtani, 2018; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022). In addition, research shows that real-world relevance and feedback-rich classrooms foster emotional security and active learning (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2005). When the classroom situation is such that it does not increase student anxiety, students' affective filter is lowered, allowing meaningful learning to take place (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

R149 also links *creative lessons and encouragement* to emotional and linguistic outcomes. These elements helped the student *improve ... skills and gain confidence*. The creative structure of the lessons and the teacher's affirming feedback likely made the learning environment and process feel emotionally more accessible and less threatening to students. The response shows that the student's confidence is presented not as a fixed trait but as something that was built through instruction and interaction with the teacher. This suggests that teachers can create environments capable of actively reshaping how students perceive their own learning capacities, and, as a result, turn language learning classrooms into safe spaces where growth feels possible and attainable. For R149, the teacher's methods removed the emotional weight of English and replaced it with a sense of satisfaction and progress. The student's confidence is therefore a product of good instruction that resulted in emotional recovery and confidence.

This response aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) theory that when affective filters are lowered through positive emotional experiences that reduce anxiety and increase motivation, language acquisition becomes more effective and better sustained (Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, this finding also resonates with broader literature that shows that creative instruction and teacher encouragement play a key role in reducing emotional

barriers and fostering learner self-belief (Alqahtani, 2018; Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022).

R120 describes the teacher's *beautiful methods* and explains that *development began from that moment*, indicating a clear shift in both language proficiency and emotional engagement. This means that there was an emotional shift along with linguistic growth. With the introduction of this teacher, the student could view English as something possible and responsive to effort instead of an emotional burden. The change that *began from that moment* also suggests that the teacher's method led to a new sense of personal agency and momentum. The emphasis here is not on what was taught, but on how it was taught. The student also mentions that the teacher spoke English most of the time, which helped him improve his speaking skills. This shows that immersion, when paired with teacher clarity, becomes both affectively and academically productive.

This transformation (*actual development began from that moment*) aligns with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that comprehensible input delivered in a low-anxiety environment fosters meaningful language acquisition. Several studies (Alqahtani, 2018; Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022) similarly note that emotionally supportive and immersive teaching styles reduce anxiety and fear and, in turn, increase confidence. When students feel safe and emotionally empowered in their language learning environments, their motivation and sense of agency increase, especially in speaking-oriented classrooms (Alqahtani, 2018; Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022).

The findings in this sub-theme directly answer my research questions. In relation to Research Question 1.1, they highlight how teacher encouragement, clarity and relational presence shape students' experiences of English. These positive teaching behaviours fostered low anxiety and increased motivation, making students more emotionally available to engage with language learning. This reflects Krashen's (1982, 1985) assertion that affective variables, such as motivation and low anxiety, effectively lower the affective filter and enhance language acquisition. This statement is also supported by studies which show that teacher encouragement plays a pivotal role in shaping the emotional tone in classrooms (Alqahtani, 2018; Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Owaidah,

2024; Shoaib, 2022). Therefore, teacher–student rapport and emotionally intelligent instruction significantly affect learner engagement and persistence.

The findings also answer Research Question 1.2, by showing that teacher behaviour shapes emotional engagement through the lowering of affective barriers to learning. This aligns with Krashen’s (1982, 1985) view that low anxiety learning conditions are optimal for effective language acquisition. Studies (Alqahtani, 2018; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Owaidah, 2024; Shoaib, 2022) confirm that emotionally supportive teaching reduces anxiety and creates conditions for affective investment.

The findings also show that when teachers are supportive, relatable, and clear, students report emotional safety, enjoyment, and a renewed willingness to participate. These affective responses are manifested in increased confidence, improved skill development, and a reorientation (from avoidance to acceptance) towards English, meaning that the findings address Research Question 1.3 as well. They also align with Krashen’s (1982, 1985) view that low anxiety lowers the affective filter, and that meaningful input can be internalised more effectively once this has happened. This conclusion is further supported by studies that document how confidence and skill development improve when students feel emotionally supported (Alqahtani, 2018; Dörnyei, 2005; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024).

In summary, the findings for this sub-theme demonstrate that a positive teacher presence is not just supportive of students. It is a reconstructive factor, in that it allows students to gain confidence and enjoy a subject they once disliked. This emotional restructuring, when sustained, becomes the foundation for genuine language enjoyment and engagement. As the following sub-theme will show, when this support is absent, or when the classroom becomes a space of fear, judgement or disconnect, then the emotional cost of English rises significantly, pushing students away from meaningful engagement and towards emotional resistance and emotional displacement in language learning.

6.2.2 Negative Teacher Behaviour and Its Emotional Impact

This sub-theme explores the emotional toll exerted by negative teacher behaviour. Several students described learning spaces where the teacher’s actions or omissions

created emotional strain, psychological discomfort, and – in some cases – long-lasting harm:

- (R26-MS) *From my point of view, he was at the highest level of failure in education, and he was speaking to us in Arabic under the pretext that speaking Arabic with beginners is easier for them to learn, noting that the average level of the class is higher than that of the beginner! And everyone I know studied with other teachers, they developed and their language improved, but no one in my class improved at all because of him. And if I told him about a weakness I had in one aspect, he would not help me at all and would not give me solutions to strengthen this weakness. His lecture was psychological pressure. All I hoped for in the semester was just to pass the class on any grade.*
- (R31-FH) *She was explaining the lesson to us but she didn't understand it. She just read from books to us and got angry when we asked about something. The class always makes me sleepy.*
- (R149-FS) *One of my English teachers was not very successful because the lessons were disorganised and difficult to follow. This made it hard to stay engaged and improve my skills.*
- (R197-MH) *My experience with an English language teacher who was not successful was a difficult and frustrating experience. I felt that the teacher did not care about the different levels of students and did not try to simplify the information or present it in a way that suited us. He focused on memorising grammar and vocabulary without giving us enough opportunities for practical application or speaking, which made me feel that I was not achieving real progress. Sometimes the teacher would criticise mistakes in a way that made me feel nervous and afraid to participate in the class. He did not provide a comfortable or supportive environment, which made learning the language seem more difficult and stressful. This experience made me realise the importance of the teacher being supportive and understanding, and that learning requires patience and encouragement, not just providing information. However, I tried to look for other ways to improve my level, such as watching educational videos or practising the language with friends.*

- (R246-FH) *When I was little, I think I was traumatised by my English teacher in elementary school. She called me to the board and asked me to write a word. I did write it right, but I did not write the letter E from top to bottom. I did it the other way around. So, this teacher brought a student from a younger class to write the letter in the way she thinks is right. That was humiliating for me and scared me till maybe high school.*

A noticeable pattern in the data was the emotional detachment reported by students who were placed in classrooms that lacked pedagogical energy and coherence, and also emotional attunement. What emerged was the quiet withdrawal of students who were physically present but emotionally absent.

R31 presents an instance that reveals more than just poor instructional delivery. The account exposes a classroom dynamic where the teacher's lack of understanding of the content being taught leads to an emotional and cognitive shutdown of students. The teacher's role is reduced to one of passive transmission, with the content *just read from books* and not interactively delivered, clarified or contextualised. This lack of instructional clarity would likely produce confusion and emotional disengagement. The result is the student describing the class as one that *always makes me sleepy*, which suggests not only physical fatigue but also emotional and cognitive retreat as a coping mechanism.

What is more telling is the fact that the teacher *got angry when we asked about something*. The teacher's reaction stripped the students of their emotional safety and introduced a subtle yet persistent threat to the classroom space. Instead of being encouraged to ask questions, they were forced to suppress their need for clarity. Over time, this situation would have created an environment where curiosity was replaced by compliance; and where emotional energy was conserved by opting out of participation.

This student's response highlights how poor instructional practices and emotional insecurity in the classroom act as barriers to language acquisition. What the teacher did by getting *angry when we asked about something* most likely created a high anxiety, high stress and low engagement environment for her students. This ties in with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that students who experience anxiety will find their affective filter raised and their language acquisition hindered. Such emotionally unsupportive learning spaces

limit students' cognitive engagement because emotional safety is also a precondition to learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Goleman, 1995; Krashen, 1982, 1985; Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024).

Furthermore, studies have shown that harsh teacher behaviour correlates strongly with emotional disengagement, classroom boredom and withdrawal in students. This is because negative teacher–student rapport dynamics contribute to heightened classroom anxiety and emotional withdrawal, which would often lead students to shut down emotionally and cognitively (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024).

In a previous (questionnaire) response, R149 presented an account of time spent with a successful teacher. Here R149 presents a telling account of dissatisfaction with teaching style. This response highlights a classroom environment stripped of emotional safety and marked by disrupted cognitive processing and emotional disengagement. The student's description of the lessons as *disorganised* reflects a lack of structure and a breakdown in the mental sequence students use and rely on to make sense of new input. Because there was no clear instructional arc, the learning process is now disjointed and the student is left to figure out the fragmented new input. The fact that the student found it *difficult to follow* the lesson does not relate to content complexity, but to missing pedagogical scaffolding that ultimately leaves her unfocused and confused.

However, confusion and lack of focus are not the only concerns here. Emotional fatigue is also involved, since the student is exerting more cognitive effort in trying to track the meaning of the lesson than in engaging with the content. In such settings, furthermore, student growth (*improve my skills*) is stunted. The opportunity to develop exists, but the teacher creates a pathway for the students that is unclear, fragmented and emotionally unrewarding.

R149's narrative writing, moreover, states the following:

From an emotional standpoint, I began to hate the English language course because of its difficulty, the fact that it was not explained in a sufficient way for understanding.

This excerpt reflects a crucial affective turning point in the student's experience. Based on the previous responses, it seems this happened after R149 had a positive experience with a successful teacher. However, R149's emotional rejection of the language course is rooted in how it was taught. The emotional word *hate* signals a breakdown in the affective trust between teacher and student. This points to emotional detachment and emotional displacement in language learning. The student, instead of directing frustration exclusively towards the instructor or the teaching methods, turns the emotional fallout onto the language itself.

In relation to the previous sub-theme, R149 had a positive outlook on English, which shows that this hatred and aversion towards English is not intrinsic, but is the result of the inadequacy of teaching that has now made the experience emotionally burdensome. In this instance, the negative teacher behaviour (insufficient explanation, lack of instructional clarity) acts as a trigger for emotional displacement in language learning (with students needing to protect themselves against ongoing frustration). Here, the affective filter is high not because of content, but because of the need for a protective mechanism that distances the student from further disappointment and failure.

The responses from this student indicate that he has experienced emotional displacement in language learning. The emotional discomfort here was brought about by inadequate teaching, which caused the student to lose motivation because it was *hard to stay engaged*. This ties in with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that low motivation raises the affective filter and blocks language acquisition and meaningful input. The lack of emotional safety made it difficult for the student to focus and process the lesson (Goleman, 1995; Krashen, 1982, 1985). Furthermore, numerous studies (e.g. Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014) have found that ineffective instruction, coupled with negative teacher–student rapport contributed to long-term disengagement and frustration.

Together, these responses highlight that when teaching is reduced to mechanical delivery – i.e. when students are provided with content without any connection to them or are not provided any opportunities to engage with it – the emotional landscape of the classroom is negatively affected, and learning becomes unsustainable (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014).

A more telling emotional pattern emerged in other responses. For those students, the experience was not one of disengagement through boredom, but of retreat through psychological strain. In those classrooms, students were not simply uninspired: they were emotionally restricted and the teacher's behaviour became the source of emotional tension and pressure.

R26 presents an emotionally charged and intellectually incisive account of what he describes as the *highest level of failure in education*. The teacher's decision to speak in *Arabic under the pretext that speaking Arabic with beginners is easier* signals more than a pedagogical shortcut as it reflects a misdiagnosis, by the teacher, of the students' capabilities. The teacher positioned the students below their actual proficiency level. The use of *under the pretext* is especially revealing because it suggests that the student perceives this justification as both inaccurate and disingenuous. This results in the teacher's language choice becoming a barrier to learning, instead of a bridge to helping the students understand content. This, in turn, reduces English input and intensifies stagnation.

R26 further contrasts his own experience with English against that of peers who *studied with other teachers*. Their experience was completely different, in that they *developed and their language improved*. This comparison by the student reveals a sense of academic exclusion. The frustration is caused not only by the fact that the student did not improve, but also by the knowledge that others did under different instruction. The feeling of being left behind is sharpened by the observation that *no one in my class improved at all because of him*. Here, the emotional weight shifts from personal failure to collective stagnation. This suggests that the problem was caused not by the students, but as the result of a systemic flaw within the classroom environment. This means that improvement was not achieved because it was made structurally inaccessible.

The student's frustration deepens when describing the teacher's unwillingness to engage with student concerns within the classroom. When the student *told him about a weakness*, the student received no *help* and no *solutions* from the teacher *to strengthen this weakness*. This absence of support signals a pedagogical and emotional void, where vulnerability is ultimately met with silence. As a result, the classroom becomes a space

of neglect and not development. In such an environment, the students' needs are neither recognised nor addressed, which not only hinders their progress but also eventually leaves them feeling unsupported and unseen.

Perhaps the most crucial and telling part of the account is the statement that *his lecture was psychological pressure*. These words indicate that the classroom was a space of ongoing mental strain. Attending classes generated anxiety and withdrawal rather than insight and engagement. However, the pressure experienced by the student is not tied to content or performance demands. It stems, rather, from the pedagogical measures employed by the teacher; and from the emotional burden of being in an unwanted, unpleasant, unresponsive, and non-nurturing environment.

The final statement, *to just pass the class by any grade*, sums up the student's affective resignation. The desire *to just pass* reflects a goal that changed from his eagerness to learn to his needing to escape the *psychological pressure*. This shift reflects demotivation, which is not rooted in disinterest in the language, but is a consequence of prolonged *psychological pressure* and pedagogical disregard.

R26's account is striking in its clarity and for its description of an experience in which the teacher becomes an obstacle to progress and a source of emotional strain. Instead of the classroom being a safe, engaging environment, where students are nurtured and encouraged to grow, it becomes an environment dedicated merely to survival.

This response from R26 shows that emotionally disconnected and pedagogically inappropriate teaching can create an environment of *psychological pressure* instead of growth. The student's goal shifted from wanting to learn to a desire *to just pass*. These two phrases indicate high anxiety (*psychological pressure*) and a clear shift from motivation to demotivation (*to just pass*), which had the generalised effect that *no one in my class improved at all*. This ties in with the view that high anxiety and low motivation may both raise the affective filter and block meaningful input and acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985). The anxiety and demotivation were caused by the teacher's refusal to respond to student concerns, and several studies have shown that when emotional safety is absent and student voices go unheard, classrooms become cognitively barren and emotionally exhausting spaces (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Lin, 2024;

Owaidah, 2024). Therefore, as was the case with R26, the classroom becomes a space of pressure, not progress, with the possibility of students ultimately withdrawing from learning English (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

R197 presents another comprehensive and emotionally loaded reflection on a *difficult and frustrating experience* with an English teacher. The teacher's approach failed to meet the student's cognitive and affective needs. The teacher is described as someone who had a *lack of care for the different levels of students* and a refusal to *simplify the information or present it in a way that suits us*. This language indicates a classroom that was cognitively inaccessible and emotionally indifferent. Here, students were treated as a homogeneous group rather than individuals with varied linguistic abilities, learning needs and learning styles. Instruction was delivered uniformly, regardless of whether the students could understand, engage with, or follow the lesson, and this inflexibility of teaching style led to emotional strain rather than academic support.

In addition, the teacher's emphasis on *memorising grammar and vocabulary* rather than *giving us enough opportunities for practical application or speaking* further intensified the emotional disconnect. The classroom became a space for rote learning, where language was reduced to memorisation rather than active use. This instructional model ensured that the learning experience was both static and emotionally unfulfilling. The absence of interaction and real-world language practice contributed to the perception that the students were *not achieving real progress*. Here, 197's words, *not achieving*, speak to a loss of momentum because sustained effort failed to produce growth. This was not because of the student's lack of motivation or effort, but because of the classroom environment created by the teacher, which failed to foster meaningful engagement.

Furthermore, the student's emotional discomfort is amplified even further because of the teacher's practice of *criticising mistakes in a way that made me feel nervous and afraid to participate in the class*. This is not professional feedback: it is, instead, feedback that hurts, silences, and stunts student engagement.

The student's use of words such as *nervous* and *afraid* reveals the consequences of the teacher's feedback method: speaking becomes emotionally risky while, just as

problematically, participation is transformed from an opportunity to engage into fearfulness and the possibility of liability. In addition, the teacher's feedback strips away the emotional safety that ought to frame language learning; and instead creates a heightened, anxious, environment where fear of judgment accompanies the student's speaking. It is an environment that strips the student's confidence, and that discourages risk-taking and the willingness to practise English as a means of increasing one's command of it. Stated differently, the student's agency is suppressed by the emotional conditions under which the content is delivered in class.

The phrase *he did not provide a comfortable or supportive environment* captures the collapse of relational trust between student and teacher. Without support from the teacher, the classroom cannot function as a space for growth. Instead, it functions as a place of stress, fear and emotional discomfort. The act of learning itself becomes *more difficult and stressful*, and this is not because the subject is inherently challenging, but because the emotional weight attached to the experience makes it harder to access and sustain attention, motivation, or belief in one's ability to improve.

However, this reflection does not end in resignation from the student. Instead, the student notes that *this experience made me realise the importance of the teacher being supportive and understanding*, which reveals not only emotional insight but also a recalibration of expectations, a recognition that despite the actions of the teacher, language learning is not simply about receiving information: it is also about being encouraged, guided, and emotionally anchored. The student finally shifted towards self-reliance and *tried to look for other ways to improve my level, such as watching educational videos or practising the language with friends*. Therefore, despite the emotional weight of the classroom, this student sought to reclaim agency through alternative learning strategies, finding both practical relevance and emotional safety outside formal instruction.

R197's response brings together a complex range of affective layers such as frustration, fear, disappointment, reflection and resilience. It also reveals a learning environment that failed to nurture the student and, instead, created emotional distance, performance anxiety, and communicative silence. In addition, the experience highlights how poor

instructional choices, emotionally unsafe classrooms, and critical, punitive feedback may collectively raise the affective filter and prevent students from engaging meaningfully with the language they are learning. These factors made the student *feel nervous and afraid*, which ties in with the theory that fear derived from negative feedback may cause anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024), raise the affective filter, and block language acquisition (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Several studies have confirmed that when students feel anxious, judged, or unsupported in classrooms, they are likely to withdraw emotionally from learning (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024). However, R197's case also illustrates that, when the classroom environment fails and the formal learning space becomes a site of affective harm rather than growth, the student may still survive by maintaining motivation (*look for other ways to improve my level*) beyond the classroom (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024; Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001; Gottfried et al., 2001; Noels, 2003).

What these students describe, therefore, is not the failure of students to learn English, but the teacher's failure to make them feel safe enough to experiment in their learning. Where the cost of error is too high, the teacher is experienced as unpredictable, and the classroom becomes emotionally unstable. In such cases, learning does not stop owing to lack of exposure: it stalls because of subtle, persistent psychological strain (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

R246 provides a raw and emotionally loaded reflection of a classroom experience that highlights how a student can be *traumatised by my English teacher*. This student chose to respond in English, and the choice of the word *traumatised* is striking. It does not, however, reveal a moment of embarrassment or discomfort, but instead signals a deeply embedded emotional pain that accompanied the student for a prolonged period, eventually shaping her view of the language and her self-concept as a student. What is telling is that her trauma did not originate from academic failure per se, since she verifies that *I did write it right*. Rather, the teacher took issue with the way the student wrote the letter E. This seemingly minor technicality became the gateway to what the student

describes as *humiliating*. This shows that inappropriate correction from the teacher was what created emotional harm.

The decision *to bring a student from a younger class to write the letter* intensifies the emotional shame, with the teacher inserting a deeply damaging comparative frame for the student. This carries symbolic weight, especially in a conservative country such as Saudi Arabia, because it publicly repositions R246 as not only incorrect but as inferior too.

R246's mistake resulted in her not participating in the learning process because of an error *that was humiliating for me*. This humiliation contains within it a sense of social displacement, through which the student's place in the classroom is altered. Moreover, it is not momentary or specific to the occasion, since it *scared me till maybe high school*. This suggests that the moment was internalised, and that an English classroom became a space of judgement, surveillance, and emotional risk.

Ultimately, R246's account shows that humiliation in the language classroom is not a momentary lapse in teacher judgment: it results in a pedagogical failure, with emotional consequences that may follow students for years. For this student, a single interaction at the board set the tone for how she would engage with English for years. The teacher raised the student's affective filter not through content, but through a moment of unnecessary comparison that stayed with the student for years. This ties in with Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that high anxiety (*scared me*) hinders language acquisition. As seen from this student's response, the emotional residue from such experiences may remain long after the specific moment has passed (*till maybe high school*), transforming language classrooms into spaces of high anxiety rather than linguistic growth (Horwitz et al., 1986; Lin, 2024).

Various studies have shown that students who face negative emotional experiences and harsh criticism or negative comparison from teachers can suffer lasting emotional consequences that extend far beyond the moment of correction (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

The findings in this sub-theme answer Research Question 1.1, with a consistent and long-lasting pattern of emotional disruption being identified. These emotional disruptions –

whether through pedagogical neglect, emotional pressure, or public humiliation – stemmed from teachers; and led to the students experiencing a range of negative emotions that shaped their learning. This supports Krashen's (1982, 1985) assertion that negative affective experiences such as anxiety and low motivation raise the affective filter, in turn hindering the student's ability to acquire the English language and process meaningful input. Furthermore, studies have shown that when teachers fail to create safe, supportive environments, students experience emotional disruption that diminishes motivation and participation, and may cause withdrawal (Almesaar, 2022; Alrabai, 2014; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024).

The sub-theme's findings also address Research Question 1.2, by highlighting that teachers' negative behaviours altered the classroom space, turning it from a safe one conducive to learning into a negative emotional environment that raises students' affective filter. This then causes the classroom's emotional tone to become more demanding than the academic content, so that students are then naturally forced to shut down emotionally to safeguard themselves from what they perceive as risk, irrelevance or personal threat. These findings confirm Krashen's (1982, 1985) view that high anxiety environments interfere with language acquisition. In addition, studies support this by demonstrating that harsh correction, lack of emotional support and public embarrassment by teachers lead to emotional withdrawal and raised anxiety (Alrabai, 2014; Dörnyei, 2005; Lin, 2024; Owaidah, 2024; Pekrun et al., 2010; Shoaib, 2022).

Finally, the findings address Research Question 1.3 as well, by showing that affective responses are behavioural because students withdraw from participation, lower their academic expectations, detach emotionally from the subject, and, in extreme cases, develop long-term fear or trauma linked to English. This supports the concept of anxiety in language learning; and shows that affect is not just internal but is also behavioural in nature. Studies confirm that negative affect can suppress student motivation and limit engagement over time, especially when classrooms are emotionally unsafe (Almesaar,

2022; Alrabai, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986; Noels, 2003; Owaidah, 2024; Pekrun et al., 2010; Shoaib, 2022).

To sum up, this sub-theme shows that negative teacher behaviour does not merely affect a student's mood for the day: it may reshape the classroom environment in ways that suppress the student's ability to learn in the longer term. The findings indicate that emotional damage may in fact play a central role in a student's failure to learn a language.

If students feel unseen, unsupported, or humiliated, they do not just struggle but ultimately stop learning even if they are physically present in the class. Negative teacher behaviour may therefore mean the end of effective learning.

6.3 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter indicate that affective experiences are not secondary to language learning, but are central to how students engage, perform, and perceive their own potential in English. Across both themes, it is evident that teacher clarity and relevance in the classroom fostered meaningful learning. Emotional disruption, whether caused by structural overload, rigid systems, or harmful teacher practices, led students to experience cognitive, emotional, and behavioural detachment from the learning process, which ultimately contributed to emotional displacement in language learning. The findings show that students do not just learn English: they experience it. These experiences leave emotional imprints that affect their willingness to participate, their perception of success, and their relationship with the language over time. When emotional alignment is absent, language learning becomes less about learning and more about perseverance. In addition, the findings across the data indicate that emotional displacement in language learning may be a recurring response pattern across themes of anxiety, academic pressure, and teacher-induced negative emotional states.

While further exploration is needed, the presence of emotional displacement in language learning across the sub-themes suggests considering it as a conceptual contribution.

While this chapter and the previous chapter focused on the affective landscape of the language learning journeys of students in Saudi Arabia, the next chapter shifts the focus to the concept of investment. Analysing the findings from Questionnaire 2 and the

participants' narrative writing on investment, Chapter 7 explores how students imagine, commit to and negotiate their futures through English.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: INVESTMENT

7. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed my findings for the first questionnaire and triangulated them with narrative writings linked to the themes of affective factors.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of my data for the second questionnaire and the narrative writings linked to investment. This chapter is strictly guided by the investment aspect of the study and addresses the following research questions:

2. What is Saudi Arabian university students' investment in the learning of English?
3. How do Saudi Arabian university students' affective experiences shape their English language learning investment?
4. What is the relationship between affect and investment in language learning in a Saudi Arabian university context?

The extracted themes for this chapter are as follows:

- Investment through agency, effort and strategic action
- English as a gateway to futures and success
- Identity, voice and emotional ownership of English

These three themes collectively highlight the findings that inform the language investment aspects of Saudi Arabian university students. For my discussion process, I have chosen quotes in which the keywords were most common. I have also given the translated responses in italics.

7.1 Investment Through Agency, Effort and Strategic Action

The first theme extracted from the data has provided two sub-themes.

- Learner agency
- Commitment and perseverance

7.1.1 Learner Agency

Following data analysis, my findings reveal that some students actively exercised agency by engaging in various strategic behaviours to improve their English independently of their university English classes. These strategies included setting daily goals, using digital applications, changing social media content to English, and employing problem-solving techniques to overcome barriers with unfamiliar language. Students were often self-motivated when implementing these strategies beyond the classroom, which demonstrates a proactive stance towards learning. We see this in the following responses to the open-ended questionnaire:

- (R16-FS) *To improve my level of English, I devote time daily to studying new vocabulary and try to memorise some of the phrases that I need in my daily life. I read short clips in English, whether they are clips from the internet or short stories, and sometimes I check the meanings of words that I do not understand using the dictionary. I listen to audio clips or video clips in the language. To train my ears to understand the correct pronunciation and the different contexts of words, I sometimes participate in simple conversations with friends who are fluent in English, and if I feel that I do not understand, I ask them to clarify the meanings or to speak slowly. I use educational applications that help me in learning new grammar and vocabulary. I review the lessons continually and make sure to repeat what I have learned until it sticks in my mind.*
- (R58-MS) *The most difficult aspect of learning English for me is pronunciation and speaking fluently. I work to improve it through continuous practice with native speakers and listening to audio content such as movies and programmes.*
- (R149-FM) *If I cannot understand what is being said or written in English, I first focus on the general context of the conversation or text to try to infer the meaning. If I can't understand it, I look up strange words or phrases in a dictionary or apps to translate them. I might ask the other person to clarify the meaning or rephrase the sentence in a simpler way. I also sometimes listen or read the text again with greater focus and use other resources such as videos or articles that explain concepts in clearer ways.*

- (154-FH) *Everything I follow, I try to put it in English content. For example, on YouTube, if I'm searching for information, I try to put it in English. And for entertainment content, specifically TikTok, I put all the clips I watch in English in order to improve my listening.*
- (R206-MH) *I practice the language outside the university campus, such as speaking on call with foreign store employees, restaurants, and coffee shops, watching series and movies in English.*

The findings offer a compelling story of how students take ownership of their language learning process. This ownership is based on micro decisions the students take on a daily basis. Beyond the classroom, they decide what they consume, how they consume it, how often they do so, and what they do when comprehension fails. These students are shaping their learning environments, routines and available resources to maximise their English exposure and interaction, especially in the absence of the scaffolding that ought to be provided by teachers. This is therefore not an instance of students passively complying with academic requirements. Rather, it is a deliberate orchestration, with students actively designing the conditions for their own linguistic growth.

A distinguishing aspect that became salient through the data is that students were not using single methods in isolation. Instead, they were combining multiple techniques such as listening, reading, dictionary work, clarification, repetition and conversation to build adaptive learning routines. For example, R16 is not passive but constructs an active, multi-layered system of reinforcement that reveals both strategic intent and metacognitive depth. This is seen in the words *devote time daily to studying new vocabulary*, which are a clear sign of both discipline and goal-setting. This dedicated practice is a commitment in time, energy and resources that reflects the student's agency, current self, and desired, imagined identity as a proficient English speaker. This aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin and Norton's (2015, 2021) model of investment, which frames such dedicated practices as a manifestation of the student's agency to 1. negotiate their social identity and 2. access desired communities.

However, this is merely the foundation, because R16 extends this by confirming that *I read short clips in English, I check the meanings of words ... using the dictionary, and I*

listen to audio clips or video clips in the English language. Each of these strategies is deliberately selected by R16 to target different language modalities. Furthermore, R16's use of audio input to *train my ears* to ensure that *correct pronunciation* is achieved shows a refined understanding that language proficiency is situational and not static.

More importantly, R16 is not content just with solitary study. She also ensures that she participates actively in *simple conversations with friends who are fluent in English* and asks them to *clarify the meanings* if there is any misunderstanding of words. This shows a willingness to learn and grow even at the risk of social exposure. In addition, requesting others *to speak slowly* is an act of control. Here, R16 is able to reclaim power in a communicative setting. There is a notable shift in her role, from that of passive listener to that of active, guided participant. Furthermore, R16 actively builds a recursive system by incorporating *educational applications* to learn *new grammar and vocabulary*, so that she can be assured that the new content *sticks in my mind*. By doing this, R16 makes sure that new knowledge is tested, reinforced and stabilised through iterative exposure. The strategies implemented by R16 are not a random collection, but a deliberately engineered learning ecosystem that has been fine-tuned over time. What this demonstrates is that R16 is ensuring that the self-directed strategies implemented are a means to a personal infrastructure of growth that is strategic, sustained, and deeply invested.

This pattern aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2021) model of investment, which highlights that a student's sustained, active and deliberate engagement in diverse language practices reflects a commitment to increasing their range of linguistic resources. Similar patterns have been observed in studies in which students engage in investment-driven practices, such as aligning their efforts with desired imagined identities and strategically adapting their engagement based on perceived proficiency and context. These practices are often driven by personal and social aspirations that deepen their commitment to language learning (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Soltanian et al., 2018).

This multi-layered learning approach is echoed in R58's account, but this time with emphasis and focus on productive fluency. This can be seen in R58's opening statement, *the most difficult aspect of learning English for me is pronunciation and speaking fluently.*

Here, R58 is not complaining about the language, nor is he framing pronunciation and fluency as immutable deficits. Rather, he is framing them as skills. Skills, moreover, that are capable of being improved, targeted, and made responsive to strategic intervention. Even though R58 acknowledges the difficulty entailed, he does not accept it passively. We see this in the next part of the response, where R58 affirms that *I work to improve it through continuous practice with native speakers*. This part of the response reveals a mindset that aligns improvement with exposure-based confrontation; and through which, instead of avoiding them, the student creates communicative situations that demand fluency. In addition, *continuous practice* demonstrates the student's sustained commitment of the type required for long-term engagement and for the negotiation of identity over time, which is a core component of Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin and Norton's (2015, 2021) investment model. This mindset reflects a strong sense of the student's agency in creating opportunities to reinforce his imagined identity as a proficient English user.

The kind of self-exposure with native speakers that R58 creates, especially in a context where such access is limited – as in Saudi Arabia (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020) – and potentially intimidating, highlights a blend of emotional courage and strategic targeting. It reflects a decision through which R58 is not just wanting to practice English, but is wanting to practice English in the most demanding and potentially destabilising linguistic settings. Furthermore, the fact that R58 employs a strategy of *listening to audio content such as movies and programmes* shows a tactical decision by the student. This means that listening becomes a preparatory space where internalised speech, including aspects such as speaking rhythms and pronunciation patterns, is absorbed and then tested via live interaction in the real world. This system of internal rehearsal through listening, followed by external deployment through live conversation, represents a feedback loop of applied learning in which each skill now reinforces the other.

R58's account is evidence of strategic self-improvement; a concept Norton (2000, 2013) and Darwin & Norton (2015, 2021) argue is a manifestation of the student's agency and investment in the language. Thus strategic self-improvement is driven by the desire to negotiate a better social identity and gain access to valued resources and communities

(Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). The student actively seeks out situations that elicit growth by design. This form of agency is where difficulty becomes direction, and the student deliberately introduces a challenge into the language learning environment as a process of growing in the language (Norton, 2000, 2013). Furthermore, the student's focus on developing his skills through both preparatory listening and applied speaking resonates with other findings, where self-directed and varied strategies implemented by students, such as seeking out authentic content, adapting their communication, and leveraging social platforms for low-stakes practice and observation, directly supported their long-term engagement and investment in the language (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Soltanian et al., 2018).

The data show that R149 developed a highly evolved model of autonomous problem-solving that resisted her situation as a passive student waiting for instruction. Instead, she engaged in a tiered reconstruction of meaning that required a series of strategies indicating cognitive resilience and flexibility. When R149 indicates that *I first focus on the general context ... to try to infer the meaning*, she is implementing a top-down comprehension model that draws on broader discourse cues to predict meaning before having to descend to word-level decoding. This means that R149 utilises prior knowledge, expectations and context to predict meaning (Grabe & Stoller, 2019; Nadea & Jumariati, 2021; Stanovich, 1980). This is not a simple strategy, and its sophistication indicates a form of linguistic intuition that has been shaped by consistent exposure to learning and by cognitive self-monitoring (Anderson, 2002).

Beyond that point is a strategic escalation of effort, in which R149 goes on to *look up strange words or phrases in a dictionary or apps to translate them*, which reflects both the student's resourcefulness and the personal learning infrastructure she employed (by incorporating digital literacy). In addition, *look up strange words or phrases* implies that there is a distinction between what is known and what is unknown territory, and points to the willingness to venture into unknown territory rather than to shy away from it. This strategy deepens even further, because if R149 does not understand a certain aspect of the conversation, then she *might ask the other person to clarify ... or rephrase the sentence in a simpler way*. This strategy ensures that the student is no longer in a state

of communicative vulnerability, with failure potentially imminent. Instead, the situation is redefined as a learning tactic because it takes confidence to admit confusion in real time. Even after these layers, R149 points out that *I sometimes listen or read the text again with greater focus*, which indicates that instead of discarding difficult material, R149 revisits it with renewed attention and focus. To add to that, R149 then makes use of *other resources such as videos or articles*, revealing a thorough process of triangulation through multiple inputs and angles.

This multi-layered and strategic approach by the student aligns closely with theory in which a student's sustained engagement, even in challenging language practices, reflects both agency and commitment to expanding linguistic resources (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). The deliberate scaffolding of comprehension, resource use and clarification displayed by R149 may contribute to the accumulation of linguistic and cultural capital over time, reinforcing the student's ability to navigate and benefit from diverse communicative contexts (Bourdieu, 1986; Norton, 2000, 2013). Similar patterns have been observed in studies where long-term engagement and maintained investment in language learning were found to be the result of varied strategies implemented by students – among them the seeking out of authentic content (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Soltanian et al., 2018).

Another strategy to emerge from the data is the deliberate reconstruction of a student's sensory and linguistic environment. This immersion into English most likely comes about progressively, until the student switches entirely to the new language, with the switch offering a refined strategy for sustained exposure to English.

R154 shows this by not just consuming English media occasionally. Rather, R154's entire digital landscape is reconfigured, reflecting an internal commitment to linguistic exposure that transcends the classroom. This is seen in *Everything I follow, I try to put it in English content*, which reveals a reorientation of daily life towards language acquisition. This shows the student's cognitive discipline and intentionality, especially since the student's background is one in which the Arabic language dominates social and informational settings. In such an environment, systematically replacing Arabic input with English input

shows a truly conscious effort. Because this goes against default linguistic norms, it amounts to a quiet act of academic resistance.

More importantly, this is not a surface-level practice. It is a symbolic declaration that English is not just a subject, but is a lens chosen by the student to view the world. This aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin and Norton's (2015, 2021) view that students demonstrate agency and actively invest in an imagined identity that transcends the classroom context. This switch allows R154 to reshape the cognitive and affective conditions under which language is encountered, absorbed, and normalised. In turn, this transforms R154 from a passive receiver of language to an architect of learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). This act of linguistic architecture, which is quiet, habitual and invisible to others, demonstrates a powerful act of agency (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013).

R206's brief response shows how students create immersive and real-world interfaces for language use instead of depending solely on academic or instructional settings. R206 shows how students deliberately step outside the confines of institutional learning and into authentic and unpredictable communicative environments. R206's strategy of *speaking on call with foreign store employees, restaurants, and coffee shops* is especially revealing because this is not a pedagogically structured space. Instead, these are high-stakes, socially exposing and unscripted spaces where there is no teacher to guide the flow or mediate any confusion. This choice entails a strategy where courage is needed considering the strategic vulnerability R206 is placed in. What this means is that R206 is purposefully choosing to be placed in situations where confusion and misunderstandings may well (or are even extremely likely to) appear, but learning is inevitable.

The act of calling these places to speak to them rather than messaging is telling. Oral communication takes place in real time, removing the luxury of pausing, re-reading, and editing. Therefore, by choosing oral communication, R206 introduces spontaneity and time-pressure into the scenario. This is probably done because the student is aware that it will improve listening, speech speed, and response accuracy. This is not performance for an assessment: it is linguistic performance in the real world, where moments of struggle become training grounds for fluency.

Moreover, R206 mentions another strategy for practising English: *watching series and movies in English*. This cannot be viewed as a passive form of learning. It acts, instead, as comprehensible input, with the student absorbing the content not for pleasure but to improve his English. Here the student builds a mental library of pronunciation, speech pacing, turn-taking, and cultural nuance. This strategy of active oral output (calls) and receptive input (media) reveals a self-engineered cycle of listening and expression where the one activity feeds the other. The student is probably obtaining the native rhythm of speech from *series and movies*; then rehearsing this input; then stress-testing it through real-life calls.

The high-stakes, real-world interactions that R206 deliberately engages in, expand both linguistic resources and communicative competence (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). This combination of immersive oral practice and input-based conditioning reflects findings from recent studies where students could maintain long-term engagement and investment based on the varied routines implemented in language learning (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Soltanian et al., 2018).

The findings in this sub-theme directly answer my Research Questions 2, 3, and 4. In addressing Research Question 2, the data clearly demonstrate that students are actively constructing personalised learning systems outside formal classroom settings. The data also show that students allocated time, resources and emotional energy towards English proficiency, which indicates a clear act of sustained investment in their language learning journeys (Norton, 2000, 2013). In response to Research Question 3, the findings reveal that emotional positioning such as risk-taking, courage and persistence significantly shape students' engagement with high-stakes communicative settings. The findings are echoed in other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Soltanian et al., 2018). Research Question 4 is addressed through the way in which students' emotional settings actively reinforce their investment behaviours. The students' actions are emotionally charged, with affect acting as a driving force that transforms discomfort into an active learning opportunity.

In summary, the student behaviours identified in this sub-theme strongly align with several key studies reviewed in the literature. The strategic autonomy and personalised goal settings reflected in the findings of this sub-theme support Soltanian et al.'s (2018) finding that investment is shaped by student commitment and the capacity to exercise autonomy and choice. While Saudi Arabia's educational context does impose English as an academic requirement, the findings show that students subvert institutional constraints by developing meaningful learning pathways beyond the classroom. Therefore, the findings reinforce Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi's (2020) observation that socio-cultural constraints do not eliminate investment: rather, students use those constraints and transform them into adaptable behaviours that align with their cultural positioning and academic aspirations.

7.1.2 Commitment and Perseverance

The findings in this sub-theme reveal that students' aspirations are fuelled by future-orientated objectives and daily commitment. The students demonstrate that their engagement with English is a deeply internalised process shaped by attitudes of enthusiasm, perseverance, and practical utility.

- (R16-FS) *My attitude towards learning the English language is positive because I consider it a necessary skill for my future at work and study, and I believe that learning will help me communicate better with others in various situations. This attitude gives me a strong motivation to continue learning the language and my commitment to improving my skills.*
- (R41-MH) *I am very motivated. I want to communicate with foreigners and be able to communicate in a better way than now. I can play games without Google Translate and order from restaurants without spelling the letters of the order.*
- (R58-MS) *My attitude towards learning English is positive and enthusiastic, as I see it as a powerful tool for communicating and achieving my academic and professional goals. This attitude reinforces my commitment to continuous practice and striving to continually improve my skills.*
- (R149-FM) *My attitude towards learning the English language is generally positive, as I see it as a vital tool that opens many opportunities for me both at work and in*

my personal life. This situation enhances my enthusiasm to continue learning the language and improving my skills in it. When I have difficulty in a particular aspect, I view it as a challenge to be overcome rather than a source of frustration. This positive outlook makes me more committed to daily practice and continuous development. I also see that every small step in improving my language contributes to achieving my personal and professional goals, which increases my motivation to continue.

R16's statement offers layered insight into how commitment is emotionally anchored and forward-thinking. The student begins the response by declaring a *positive* attitude towards learning English as an opportunity tied to personal growth and future development. In addition, by framing English as a *necessary skill for my future at work and study*, R16 reveals that commitment is driven by strategic foresight, which is a recognition that English proficiency is a gateway to imagined futures and social capital.

Especially telling is the student's assertion *I believe that learning will help me communicate better with others in various situations*, which shows that R16 envisions communicative, real-world, socially embedded interactions. Such perspectives demonstrate the value English has in a spectrum of life contexts. The student's self-conviction, portrayed in *I believe*, also reflects a sense of personal agency – i.e. a form of internalised purpose that is an essential component of long-term perseverance.

The final portion of the response, *This attitude gives me a strong motivation to continue learning the language and my commitment to improving my skills* shows a powerful bridge between affective orientation and behavioural perseverance. It shows how positive emotion acts as fuel for sustained action, initiating a cycle where a positive outlook and motivation solidify commitment.

Here, R16 has created a sustained psychological, self-renewing, and long-term contract with the language that is anchored in real-life aspiration. The student realises that English unlocks *my future at work and study*. This illustrates that R16's emotional and cognitive engagement is tied to expanding linguistic resources and social positioning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). This response also shows that the student's investment is shaped by aspirations for social participation and access to cultural capital

(Bourdieu, 1986; Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). Studies have revealed that when students connect their language learning to tangible personal and professional goals, such as securing a better job, pursuing post-secondary education, or gaining access to global media and social communities, they are more likely to sustain long-term commitment and self-directed engagement (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018). These concrete aspirations, which are often driven by imagined future identities, provide a clear purpose that fuels a student's investment beyond the confines of academic requirements. This aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) view that investment is a commitment to a desired future self and a particular social identity, which are sustained through engagement with imagined communities (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021).

R41's response sums up a powerful fusion of intrinsic drive, everyday communicative ambition, and digital-world fluency. *I am very motivated* serves as a bold declaration which, although short, is loaded with emotional certainty. R41's drive is rooted in practical, social interactional goals because the student would like *to communicate with foreigners*. This shows that R41 is envisioning an imagined future using English as a gateway to communication and participation in global communities. In addition, it highlights how language learning is driven by the desire to enter new social worlds and legitimate English-speaking spaces. Furthermore, R41's emphasis on improving communicative competence *in a better way than now* highlights a self-reflective awareness of current limitations and a desire for progression. The word *now* explicitly highlights the perceived gap between the student's current identity and the desired imagined future self he is striving to achieve through dedicated effort and perseverance – a pattern found in other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018). This reveals a growth mindset through which the student aspires to ease and dignity in communication. In addition, the next examples: *play games without Google Translate* and *order from restaurants without spelling the letters of the order* are deeply revealing. These statements show that the student's aspirations are tied to agency within cultural and social spaces such as online gaming and restaurant interactions.

The student is placed in high-stakes environments where exposure to real-time processing demands, native-level language, and potential embarrassment, are all likely to be faced. Yet, R41 chooses the environments as personal benchmarks of fluency, which suggests that these acts of independence represent emotional victories. Furthermore, the act of ordering *without spelling the letters* indicates that the student wishes for naturalness, and to be identified as a legitimate user of English. This can be linked to the concept of linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986), where the student attempts to project a fluent identity to acquire symbolic power and gain recognition as a legitimate user of English in a social hierarchy. Furthermore, it reinforces Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2021) view that students commit to investing in a desired imagined identity with membership of an imagined community of fluent speakers. R41's strategies display how commitment and perseverance support sustained investment, a pattern echoed in various studies where students strategically managed their social identity and linguistic performance by avoiding practices that marked them as non-native speakers to gain legitimacy (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stafford, 2018; Stribling, 2018).

R58's response indicates a strongly emotional and instrumental view towards learning English. The words *positive and enthusiastic* reveal that this motivation is present; and more importantly, that it is emotionally enriched. By pairing the two words, R58 expresses more than general interest: he underlines a type of affective momentum where enjoyment and purpose merge to create a motivational force that is enduring. This student views English as a *powerful tool*, which suggests that he has intention and control, and uses them for specific outcomes. Having this outlook creates a mindset in which English is functional, empowering, and directly connected to the student's life goals.

What is especially telling in R58's response is that he references both academic and professional goals, illustrating his investment in a multi-domain investment trajectory. What this means is that R58 is learning English not for a singular goal such as passing exams, but as part of a longer, multifaceted learning journey that gives the student access to English proficiency across academic and professional contexts. This layered goal-setting structure reflects the student's strategic perseverance, with R58 realising that

commitment must be sustained across different phases of life (first academic and then professional).

The closing sentence, *This attitude reinforces my commitment to continuous practice and striving to continually improve my skills*, further reveals the student's work ethic and investment. The fact that the student's *attitude reinforces my commitment* implies that emotion and attitude are not temporary states. Rather, they are acting as a mechanism that stabilises behaviour over time. In addition, the combination of *continuous* and *continually* implies long-term commitment and resilience. This is not a burst of momentary motivation: it is a steady, thought-out, deliberate process of self-improvement.

R58 is not merely reacting to classroom pressures, but is creating a form of investment that is not periodic. Instead, it is habitual, which means sustained through emotional conviction and personal alignment with established goals, as indicated in various studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

R149's response reflects a mix of emotional maturity, long-term vision, and resilience when faced with linguistic difficulty. Like R58, R149 frames English as a tool. However, R149 gives it extra emphasis by labelling it *a vital tool*. This choice of adjective amplifies the urgency and indispensability of English in R149's life trajectory. In addition, while R58 linked this tool to both the academic and the professional areas, R149 explicitly connects it to *work and ... my personal life*. This shift expands the motivational spectrum, suggesting that language learning is not only instrumental to career development, but is also fundamental to shaping the student's personal identity, relationships with others, and day-to-day navigation of life.

R149 also highlights a future-oriented mindset, in which English *opens many opportunities*, that is rooted in access and possibility. R149 therefore gives us an implicit indication that English is a gateway to broader life participation, which means that it is embedded in a socially situated, identity-laden process. Furthermore, R149's emotional framing of these goals *enhances my enthusiasm* to not only *continue learning the language* but also *improv[e] my skills in it*. This shows that an external opportunity acts

as a motivational amplifier, indicating how the perception of possibility fuels emotional energy towards learning the language.

However, unlike R58, who focused on positive emotions as a stabilising motivator, R149 highlights how emotional resilience can emerge during struggles with the language. This is seen in *When I have difficulty in a particular aspect, I view it as a challenge to be overcome rather than a source of frustration*. This statement is psychologically powerful because it reframes adversity as a motivational trigger rather than a demotivating block, indicating once again the student's perseverance. Here, R149 displays a form of cognitive reframing, turning hurdles into opportunities for growth. This mindset allows the student to turn failures into a part of the investment journey rather than a threat to it.

Furthermore, R149's mindset of believing that *every small step ... contributes to achieving my personal and professional goals* signals an incrementalist perspective on progress, whereby learning is not driven by results alone but is process-orientated, with the student committed to perseverance as a philosophy. This is telling because it reflects a sustained commitment across fluctuating emotional and performance states, one through which English becomes a gateway and a perseverance-building mechanism that is anchored in the student's personal, professional and affective environments.

R149's resilience-driven approach demonstrates how her agency actively shapes her language-learning trajectories to achieve personal and professional goals, a finding that supports Norton's (2000, 2013) view that sustained investment requires commitment and perseverance in the dynamic process of identity negotiation (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021). Research shows that when students integrate long-term objectives into their learning, they are more likely to sustain strategic, self-directed engagement (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

This sub-theme responds to Research Question 2, since the findings highlight that students' perseverance is a strategic, affect-driven process that is anchored in personal and professional growth alongside future aspirations. This finding aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) model of investment as a socially and emotionally situated process.

Students framed English as a vital tool, which reflects its symbolic capital and its role in shaping access to desirable future trajectories (Norton, 2000, 2013).

In relation to Research Question 3, the findings reveal that emotional orientations such as enthusiasm, hope and confidence, serve as stabilising forces that fuel the students' continuous effort and perseverance. In addition, the responses highlight that students' emotional states are not secondary to learning but are instead integral to sustaining long-term effort, especially when students transform challenges into motivational triggers. Furthermore, the findings answer Research Question 4, by showing clear patterns of emotional resilience, future planning, and daily commitment and perseverance. The findings also reveal that investment is not a temporary or isolated state. As indicated in other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018), it is a sustained, affectively layered and personally integrated process

In summary, this sub-theme demonstrates that Saudi Arabian students' commitment to English language learning is emotionally infused, future-driven, and socially guided. This is because students display dynamic investment in which motivation, perseverance and commitment interconnect. Furthermore, the findings here further support those of other studies. For example, Soltanian et al. (2018) identify student commitment as a core aspect of language learning investment. Similarly, Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) express that motivation alone cannot sustain investment without a strong sense of commitment and internal purpose. Unlike Soltanian et al. (2018), who focus on internal dimensions such as identity negotiation and autonomy, Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) emphasise structural constraints such as institutional obligation and curriculum design.

The distinction here in studies is useful. While students such as R16 demonstrate internalised purpose (in line with Soltanian et al., 2018), others reveal the effects of external expectations, echoing the concerns raised by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023). Furthermore, Alali and Alruwaili's (2024) finding that imagined identities enhance investment is clearly confirmed in the students' responses in this study, where English is described as the gateway to broader life participation. Finally, Mustafa and Alghamdi's

(2020) focus on motivation is also relevant here, with English being linked to both personal development and professional empowerment, illustrating how investment is negotiated across social, cultural and individual domains. Collectively, the findings confirm that emotional commitment and perseverance are central to understanding how Saudi Arabian students invest in English language learning, not only as an academic subject, but also as a sustained and meaningful declaration of self-formation and improvement.

7.2 English as a Gateway to Futures and Success

The second theme extracted from the data has revealed two sub-themes:

- Imagined futures
- Professional and academic leverage

7.2.1 Imagined Futures

The data in this sub-theme reveal that Saudi Arabian students perceive English as a gateway to expansive future possibilities. Across the responses, English is framed as a powerful key to career success, educational advancement, and cross-cultural interaction. These imagined futures are practical and aspirational, with students expressing the need to secure jobs and to build personal confidence in global spaces. Therefore, imagined futures form a critical pillar of their investment in language learning, which is driven by hopes for growth, opportunity, and global belonging. This is shown in the data from the open-ended questionnaire.

- (R16-FS) *For me, knowing the English language represents an essential means of communicating with the world. It opens many doors for me in the fields of education and work and gives me the opportunity to access information and scientific and cultural sources on a broader scale. The English language also helps me interact with people from different cultures and expand my understanding and is necessary in many ways in everyday situations such as travelling or using the internet.*
- (R16-FS) *Mastering the English language can play a major role in my future professional life, as it is a global language used in most academic and practical fields. Therefore, it will enable me to access various job opportunities, whether in*

international companies or in jobs that require communication with people of different nationalities. The English language is also considered a major tool in developing skills and learning from various sources such as books and online courses, which enhances my chances of success and advancement in my field of work.

- (R58-MS) *Mastering the English language can open me up to broad career opportunities, such as working in international companies, expanding professional networks, and accessing advanced educational and research resources, which enhances my chances for professional advancement.*
- (R149-FM) *For me, knowing the English language represents an opportunity to expand my horizons at various levels. It is a tool that enables me to connect with the world more easily, both at work and in my personal life. It opens the doors to learning and access to various sources of knowledge, which helps me develop my skills and achieve my goals. English is also a cultural bridge, allowing me to interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Ultimately, it is an empowering tool that allows me to interact confidently in a global community.*

R16's response offers a broad, visionary framing of the English language as an *essential means of communicating with the world*. This opening phrase immediately signals that the student's investment is not confined to academic or immediate practical outcomes. Rather, it is an aspiration grounded in a global and identity-expanding vision. The choice of the word *essential* here implies a non-negotiable necessity, while *communicating with the world* indicates a powerful global imagined identity that spans across cultural engagement and international participation.

Unlike R149, whose response in the previous sub-theme indicated that investment is anchored in daily commitment and overcoming immediate challenges, R16's focus is aspirational rather than behavioural. This is because R16 articulates a deep belief in English as a means of possibility and opportunity. This response paints a vivid picture of the student's imagined future – one that is deeply rooted in the possibility of opening *many doors in education and work*, and, at the same time, of unlocking access to *information, and scientific and cultural sources*. In addition, through the references to *doors*,

opportunity, and *access*, the student positions English as gatekeeper of the future by tying the language to mobility and global belonging.

Moreover, R16 introduces the transformative potential English has in formal domains (*education and work*), as well as in informal *everyday situations such as travelling or using the internet*. The fact that R16 blends academic, professional and personal environments suggests a vision of English as integrated into daily global citizenship, which is a characteristic of investment for an imagined future.

While R149 in the previous sub-theme, and R16 here, both speak of opportunity, its functions differ for each student. R149 invokes opportunities to fuel consistent effort and perseverance, with a positive outlook leading to daily practice. In contrast, R16 invokes the opportunity to construct an imagined self that is globally mobile, culturally fluent, and intellectually empowered. R16's investment is thus rooted in vision, identity, and imagined access, with English the passport to broader forms of knowledge, culture, and global interaction.

In a previous response, R16 echoed the expansive vision of English. This time, she positions it within a clearly professional and skills-oriented trajectory. Here, the student begins with a clear affirmation that *Mastering the English language can play a major role in my future professional life*. This statement immediately grounds the student's investment in a forward-looking, professional/occupational framework. In addition, framing English as playing a *major role* signifies that English is a foundational pillar upon which R16's envisioned future is built. This means that English is directly integrated into the student's conception of professional success. R16's focus on accessing *various job opportunities ... in international companies ... jobs that require communication with people of different nationalities*, reveals an identity linked to a multicultural, professional self. The vision is socially mobile and forward-looking; and the imagined future is about stability, advancement, connection, and global relevance.

Moreover, R16's acknowledgement that English is a *major tool* that is used to access *various sources such as books and online courses*, adds an important dimension to the student's investment, at which point what is being embraced has become autonomous, lifelong learning. R16 views English not merely as a job requirement, but also as a

channel for continuous intellectual and personal growth. Shifting English from a purely external requirement to a personal *major tool* signals a deep internalisation of investment: the student now envisions a future in which learning will be ongoing; and powered by the ability to engage with English-language resources.

Finally, the last clause, *enhances my chances of success and advancement in my field of work*, encapsulates and ties together the student's entire vision. It highlights the student's cause-and-effect structure: English gives access, access develops skills, and developed skills equal success. R16's response indicates a strategic logic with purpose-driven investment in the language. Compared to her previous response, which emphasised cultural and informational access, this response focuses on professional advancement and shows how imagined futures can take multiple angles or domain-specific forms within the same student's language learning journey.

Taken together, therefore, the two responses from the same student reveal that imagined futures are not singular or fixed, but are, rather, multi-dimensional. In this instance, one vision frames English as a passport to cultural and informational belonging, and the other adds a strategic instrument for professional empowerment and lifelong growth. This finding aligns with the investment model developed by Norton (2000, 2013) and Darwin & Norton (2015, 2021), which says that a student's investment is driven by multiple, fluid, and often contested, imagined identities that shape their engagement across multiple social and cultural contexts. Thus, a single student can hold both a global identity and a targeted career trajectory within the model of investment. This result aligns with the findings of other studies which found that students' investment strategies are not driven by a single, monolithic goal, but instead are often multi-faceted and encompass a range of personal, social and professional aspirations (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

While R58's response echoes themes articulated by R16, especially the view of English as a pathway to professional advancement and global relevance, R58 frames investment through a more practical and economically driven lens that focuses on *career opportunities, expanding professional networks*, and gaining *advanced educational and research resources*. Even though R58's response lacks aspirational and identity-framed

discourse of the kind seen in R16's response, however, its mention of *professional networks* does introduce a social capital dimension. The contrast reveals that, while students may share the same belief that English opens doors, the emotional and strategic framing of those doors differs between students. In summary, the doors range from deeply internalised visions of global belonging to pragmatic, outcome-orientated investments in academic and economic capital.

This instrumental logic is further expanded on in R58's narrative writing, where it shifts from specific outcomes to a broader worldview. This shows that English is deeply rooted in global systems of success across multiple domains:

(R58-MS) *English is considered a global language used in many fields such as business, technology, and science. Mastering it enhances my chances of getting better jobs and allows me to communicate with people from different cultures. Many educational and professional opportunities depend on knowledge of the English language, making it essential for future personal and professional success.*

In this narrative writing excerpt, R58 constructs English as a personal tool for advancement as well as a global imperative woven into the structure of modern life. R58's use of the passive voice while stating that *English is considered a global language* is telling. Here, the student is foregrounding a collective worldview rather than a personal stance. R58's choice of words further signals that English is positioned as a social fact, a truth endorsed by institutions, societies and systems. The student's perception of English, therefore, is rooted not in a personal opinion but in what he sees as a normalised belief about global success.

What stands out is the student's multi-sectoral framing of the language. English is not tied to a single imagined future, but spans across *business, technology, and science ... educational and professional opportunities*, and intercultural communication. This highlights an expansive, transdisciplinary, imagined identity, through which the student sees opportunity across varied globalised knowledge and communication economies. This is observed in *enhances my chances of getting better jobs*, which reflects a

pragmatic logic where investment in English is seen as a career catalyst. In addition, *allows me to communicate with people from different cultures* shifts the focus from transactional gain to relational engagement, adding a social and cultural capital dimension to the investment.

Finally, the fact that the student expresses that *Many educational and professional opportunities depend on knowledge of the English language* reaffirms the student's internalisation of dominant global narratives about what constitutes competence and readiness for success. R58 indicates that English is not optional: it is essential because it functions as a gatekeeping force that determines global literacy and participation.

While R58's earlier response focused on specific tangible outcomes such as *working in international companies* or *expanding professional networks*, this narrative writing excerpt provides the broader worldview that underpins that logic. It reveals the student's reasoning around success, which sees investment in English stemming from both instrumental reasoning and internalised societal discourse. Together, the two responses show that R58's imagined future is strategic and deeply shaped by external realities that make English the existing language of opportunity. This coincides with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin and Norton's (2015, 2021) view that a student's investment in a language is a strategic response to external power relations and social structures. The two responses, therefore, offer different entry points into the same investment logic, one pragmatic and goal-specific, the other ideological and worldview-based. This complexity is echoed in studies confirming that a student's investment is fuelled by a multi-faceted set of aspirations that includes both pragmatic career objectives and broader identity-based goals (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

R149's response offers a well-rounded expression of imagined investment. The student presents English as a multi-functional tool that enables personal, professional, academic, and intercultural expansion. This is seen in *an opportunity to expand my horizons at various levels*, which signals that English is imagined as a gateway to career advancement. In addition, R149 views English as vital in both formal and informal domains by establishing its role *at work and in my personal life*. This vision is further

layered through the description of English as both a *cultural bridge* and an *empowering tool* that allow the student *to interact confidently in a global community*. This phrasing by R149 reveals that English has become a means of constructing a globally fluent and culturally engaged identity.

In contrast to students such as R58, who framed English largely through economic and professional returns, R149 integrates these professional ambitions with emotional empowerment and global belonging. Similarly, while R16 articulated English as a passport to education, travel, and identity expansion, R149 views it using more emotionally resonant terms, such as *empowerment* and *confidence*. R149's imagined future is thus strategic, as well as socially and emotionally embedded, which demonstrates that the student's investment in English is about becoming a capable, connected participant in a globalised world.

When comparing R149's response in this sub-theme to her response in the commitment and perseverance sub-theme, we see R149's investment logic. In this sub-theme, the student focuses on empowerment and global participation, whereas in the earlier response, R149 focuses on perseverance, emotional reframing, and sustained effort in the face of linguistic challenges.

This pairing shows that, for R149, investment in English is not a fixed or a singular concept. It is both a process and a projection, both present-tense persistence and future-oriented hope, as articulated by theorists on investment and language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). The student does not separate professional and personal goals, nor cognitive effort and emotional alignment. Rather, R149 exemplifies a student whose imagined identity is shaped by dreams of global connection and the emotional discipline to make that vision real. This finding aligns with other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018) that show that imagined identities are fuelled by a desire for global connection; and may act as a powerful driving force that guides students' efforts to overcome personal and social obstacles.

The findings in this sub-theme respond directly to my research questions. In relation to Research Question 2, the findings show that students' investment is embedded in

expansive imagined futures where English is viewed as a gateway to global careers, academic advancement, and intercultural belonging, which indicates that their investment is driven by clear aspirations for growth and opportunity. This aligns strongly with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2021) model of investment which contends that students invest in language learning when they see the target language as a vehicle for accessing imagined futures and forms of capital, whether these be cultural, social, symbolic or economic. As concerns Research Question 3, the findings reveal that affective attributes such as empowerment, optimism and a sense of possibility are used as anchors to these imagined futures, which in turn intensify students' motivation to engage with and invest in the language. In relation to Research Question 4, the data illustrate how affect and investment intertwine. Students' positive emotional orientations sustain their day-to-day engagement and reinforce their long-term vision of becoming confident global participants. Collectively, these findings confirm that investment is a sustained, emotionally charged and future-oriented process that integrates personal identity with professional, societal and cultural ambition.

This sub-theme supplies clear evidence for Norton's (2000, 2013) argument that investment is shaped by students' perceived possibilities and future identities. These students are learning English, and are also emotionally and intellectually envisioning themselves within future spaces of success, connection, and legitimacy.

When these current findings are situated against the relevant literature, they confirm existing understandings of language learning investment. For example, they echo Alali and Alruwaili's (2024) study, which found that Saudi Arabian students' investment increases when they imagine positive future identities. Similarly, the emphasis on opportunity and empowerment in the current findings supports Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi's (2020) observation that Saudi Arabian students invest in English for self-development and economic mobility. Comparing the current findings with those of Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo's (2023) research in Mexico, however, did not result in a similar outcome, since what the two authors found there was high motivation but low agency in compulsory language learning environments.

The Mexican study may suggest the need to examine, in Saudi Arabia, higher levels of psychological and aspirational investment than might be expected within a mandatory system. In general, however, the current findings indicate that Saudi Arabian students maintain a strong sense of imagined futures even within this type of system. Reasons for this may be the perceived tangible value of English; the goals of *Saudi Vision 2030*; and the immediate usefulness of English in Saudi Arabia compared to its usefulness in the context of the Mexican study. As the findings in this study have shown, English in Saudi Arabia is viewed as the primary language of opportunity for professional empowerment and economic mobility. It offers, therefore, a crucial, real-world connection to the students' imagined futures. This strong external driver fuels their sense of agency and investment, even within a mandatory educational system.

In contrast, the context described by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023) may lack the same level of perceived immediate real-world application opportunities outside the classroom, which may lead to lower levels of felt agency despite general motivation.

7.2.2 Professional and Academic Leverage

This sub-theme reveals how Saudi Arabian students perceive English as a critical asset for professional and academic leverage. Students view the language as a gateway to employment and as a foundation for skill development, career mobility, and lifelong learning.

- (R16-FS) *Jobs that require proficiency in the English language include jobs such as translation, international correspondence, education, interpretation, public relations, work in international companies, jobs in technology, accounting, sales and marketing, hospitality and tourism, in addition to academic and media jobs and work in non-governmental organisations.*
- (R69-FS) *I see at the present time, the majority of jobs require proficiency in the English language, the most important of which are medicine, languages and translation, whose students are employed in the embassy, in the hospital, or in any work environment for translation and some other jobs.*

- (R154-FM) *I see that all jobs need it, especially in companies and hospitals, but in public places it is preferable to learn it, but it is not necessary because the employee often deals with the general public and most of them speak Arabic.*

R16's response presents a broad view of English as a prerequisite for professional access. The fact that R16 lists a wide range of careers across various sectors signals the student's internalisation of English as a default entry point for local and international domains in modern professional life. The range of sectors mentioned suggests that English is not tied to any single career aspiration. Instead, English in this response features as a globalised tool of access, reflecting the extent to which it is perceived as helpful and structurally embedded in the mechanisms of employment.

What is telling about R16's response is the absence of the conditional mood in the language used. R16 does not say that English may be useful in these jobs, but lists them as though English proficiency were a prerequisite, revealing the view that English is the professional baseline language worldwide. This view is found in other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stafford, 2018; Stribling, 2018), which highlight that students' investment is profoundly shaped by their perceived necessity of English as a professional prerequisite and a key form of social and economic capital. This affirmation supports the idea that students are responding to perceived labour market requirements. Moreover, R16's inclusion of service-based professional roles (*marketing, hospitality ... tourism*) demonstrates a belief that English has become a cross-sectoral currency and a requisite for both elite and service-based jobs.

Furthermore, the reference to *academic and media jobs* links English to knowledge production and dissemination. This reinforces the idea that language proficiency is tied to accessing and participating in knowledge economies. Similarly, the fact that R16 mentions NGOs indicates that the student sees English as possessing social and global capital because it is needed in humanitarian or advocacy-based roles, which traditionally prioritise values over profit. This response thus offers a clear example of how English is imagined as an occupational necessity intertwined with the structure of modern professional life. It is clear that R16's investment in English is built on a perceived

systemic requirement, with English determining access, legitimacy, and employability across all sectors of relevance to the student.

This response reflects the model of investment in which language learning is tied to identity, access, and the accrual of symbolic and material resources (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). Similar patterns have been observed in studies where students link English to concrete professional goals such as securing better jobs, achieving economic mobility, and transitioning into post-secondary programmes; and to personal goals such as self-development, gaining confidence, and the desire for global and cultural connection (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

R28's response in the narrative writing excerpt builds on the broader sectoral relevance outlined by R16. The response also offers a more structural, globalised justification for why English is seen as indispensable in both professional and academic domains.

(R28-MS) *On the professional level, English has become a basic requirement in most jobs. Many international companies rely on English as the main language for communication between different work teams. If you are seeking to work in a multinational environment or in a global company, proficiency in the English language is key to success. In addition, English is the language of science and technology. Most scientific research is published in English, and the largest online educational platforms offer educational courses in English. Therefore, mastering the language opens the way for continuous learning and acquiring new skills.*

R28's opening statement in the narrative writing excerpt, *English has become a basic requirement in most jobs*, reflects the student's internalisation of English as a non-negotiable prerequisite across the modern labour market. In addition, the use of definitive language such as *basic requirement ... key to success* signals the student's belief that English is deeply rooted in professional systems. This means that investment in English

is the student's reactive stance to systemic expectations in an increasingly interconnected global workforce and is not only aspirational.

What distinguishes R28's response is the way it moves from a general need for English in the workforce to the specific role it plays. This is seen when the student states that English is *the main language for communication between different work teams*. Here, the student reveals an awareness that English is both a prerequisite for employment and a key component of functioning effectively within multinational work environments. This positions English as the default communicative medium in the global workforce, thereby reinforcing its status as social capital that enables participation in multinational workspaces. This perspective aligns with the work of Norton (2000, 2013), who explored how students invest in language to build social capital and gain access to desired social and professional networks.

Furthermore, R28's statement, *English is the language of science and technology*, elevates the language beyond economic gain and positions it as the primary medium of knowledge. This is seen in *most scientific research is published in English*, which emphasises how the language acts as a gatekeeper to knowledge and continuous skills development. This view reinforces the idea that students are investing (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013) in the language required for employment as well as ongoing personal growth and intellectual empowerment.

R69 and R154 both articulate the professional necessity of English. However, they do so with differing degrees of certainty, scope, and socio-linguistic nuance.

R69 asserts that most jobs will *require proficiency in the English language*, singling out fields such as *medicine, languages, and translation* as fields that are dependent on English. In addition, the student's reference to institutional domains such as *the embassy* and *the hospital* implies an imagined future situated in high-stakes multilingual and internationally linked spaces. R69's response reveals a form of symbolic capital (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013) in which English proficiency confers access to elite institutional domains and validates one's presence in formal work environments, a finding echoed in other studies that showed students investing in the hope of accessing

better jobs and higher-status professional environments (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018).

In contrast, R154 offers a more closely situated and differentiated view. The student's view is that *all jobs need [English]*, but she then immediately narrows down this statement by saying that in public *places it is preferable to learn it, but it is not necessary*. This reflects R154's awareness of contextual linguistic demands, in which English may be essential *especially in companies and hospitals* but less so in environments where the *employee often deals with the public* because they *speak Arabic*. This response shows that R154's investment is shaped by linguistic demographics and practical role functions (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013).

Together, these two responses highlight the ways in which students' investment in English is driven by perceived social roles, institutional demands, and sectoral positioning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). R69's investment leans towards imagining English as a key to elite professions, while R154's investment reflects a more context-dependent form of investment that weighs English against local communicative realities.

This sub-theme directly addresses my research questions. In relation to Research Question 2, the findings show that students invest in English as a tool for economic and career mobility. The strong references to employment and international environments reveal a view of English as a resource tightly linked to professional leverage, one that captures the practical facets of investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). The findings also respond to Research Question 3. For example, framing English as the *key to success* suggests that emotional alignment with professional identity reinforces persistence in language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). Importantly, this sub-theme also speaks to Research Question 4, because students' emotional perceptions convert into long-term commitment. This is seen in the findings showing that English is viewed as non-negotiable for future success, which reveals how emotional valuation of future selves feeds into ongoing investment.

This sub-theme supports Norton's (2000, 2013) view that investment is shaped by students' imagined identities as well as their perceived access to symbolic and material

resources. The findings demonstrate that students viewed English as an access point to fields such as *science*, *technology*, and *global* communication, which is a clear example of symbolic capital. Similarly, the emphasis on jobs such as *translation* and *hospital* settings shows how students imagine their future selves in a linguistically demanding role, aligning with Norton's (2000, 2013) idea of imagined communities. Furthermore, English is framed as a symbolic asset that grants legitimacy in elite professional domains; and also as social capital that offers access to networks and communicative functionality in multilingual or formal settings.

In summary, the findings in this sub-theme reveal that students perceive English as a strategic gateway for accessing future academic and professional domains. English is consistently framed as a form of symbolic capital that grants legitimacy in elite spaces such as embassies, hospitals and global corporations. In addition, this sub-theme has revealed that English functions as social capital through its role in transnational communication. Furthermore, students' view that English is the default communicative currency in science, technology and corporate settings supports the idea that investment is often a response to systemic structures that shape students' access to power, resources, and imagined identities, rather than based on personal preference alone.

Together, the two sub-themes illustrate that investment in English is affectively charged as well as strategically reasoned. The students in this study align themselves with future-oriented identities rooted in empowerment, success, and legitimacy. This demonstrates that their investment is not passive compliance with institutional expectations, but is an emotionally and cognitively engaged process. Therefore, these findings confirm that students' language learning investment is sustained by a dual logic – one related to vision and one linked to necessity.

7.3 Identity, Voice, and Emotional Ownership of English

The findings in this theme revealed two sub-themes.

- The right to speak
- The perceived role of English in personal identity

7.3.1 The Right to Speak

This sub-theme explores how Saudi Arabian university students negotiate their right to speak English by showing that it is a socially mediated performance.

- (R16-FS) *When I speak English in front of people, I feel nervous and anxious most of the time. The reason is that I am afraid that people will make comments on my mistakes or on the way I pronounce words. Sometimes I feel that I cannot express myself the way I want, and this makes me less confident. In addition, it may be difficult for me. I continue the conversation quickly if the other person is speaking fluently, which increases my feeling of embarrassment.*
- (R149-FM) *My level of confidence when using English to speak and write varies depending on the situation. When I speak, I sometimes feel nervous, especially in complex conversations or with people who are very fluent in the language. But with practice, confidence gradually begins to rise.*
- (R178-MS) *If the person in front of me is a native speaker and I must speak quickly, I may feel a little nervous, but if the place is quiet, I speak at ease.*

The findings in this study reveal that the right to speak emerged as a contested social and symbolic negotiation. The findings further reveal that speaking English is less about lexical command and more about negotiating visibility, vulnerability, and legitimacy within perceived hierarchies of fluency. Therefore, what appears on the surface as communicative hesitation is actually structural and related to psychological calculation and identity risk. The power imbalance attached to English speech – demonstrated by worry about how one is perceived, awareness of error and the unsettling effect of a fluent interlocutor – points to a key struggle in L2 investment.

R16's response reveals that speaking English is not only a matter of linguistic ability, but is also a negotiation in power relations. R16 explains that *I am afraid that people will make comments on my mistakes or on the way I pronounce words*, which demonstrates how legitimacy to speak is constantly monitored and distributed through social judgement. This situation reflects a form of symbolic surveillance where proficiency would determine who holds authority in interaction. In addition, *I cannot express myself the way I want* points to how language learning intersects with identity. The student's voice and self-

representation are constrained by social hierarchies of proficiency. This finding aligns with those of other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018; Stribling, 2018), which found that language students' perceptions of their proficiency profoundly impacted their willingness to invest in language learning and their ability to navigate their identity. This notion of hierarchy in proficiency also comes to the fore in the sense that the student's confidence collapses *if the other person is speaking fluently*. This moment highlights how linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) positions fluent speakers as more legitimate participants while silencing those with less proficiency, thereby stripping them of their right to speak. This resembles findings observed in other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Soltanian et al., 2018) which found that uneven power relations and discursive practices can lead to the silencing of less proficient speakers. R16's situation reflects how unequal symbolic power hinders investment through an external, social dynamic, where the presence of a more fluent interlocutor reinforces a perceived imbalance in power and status. Such experiences reinforce Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin and Norton's (2015, 2021) view that students' right to speak and sense of legitimacy are relationally constructed within the dynamics of communicative exchanges.

R149 reveals that communicating in English is an evolving negotiation of power relations, legitimacy, and investment, which *varies depending on the situation*, especially when interacting with those *very fluent in the language*. In encounters such as this, fluency functions as a symbolic power that establishes hierarchies to determine whose speech carries authority. However, the student's confidence *gradually begins to rise* as investment in the language deepens through practice, and power imbalances appear to lessen in contexts perceived as safe and affirming. This account shows that students' engagement is shaped by their perception of where they stand within social hierarchies of language use, and that participating in conversations becomes a means of renegotiating their place within those hierarchies to claim their right to speak. These findings align with other studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Stafford, 2018; Stribling, 2018), where an imbalance of power dynamics and perceived status influence a student's willingness to invest in a language and claim their right to speak. Such findings align with Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darwin

and Norton's (2015, 2021) perspective, which views investment, legitimacy, and the right to speak as relationally constructed through the constant negotiation of power in communicative exchange.

In the narrative writing activity, R154 introduces a departure from emotionally tentative or situationally bound notions of speech:

(R154-FM) *You must speak English, and I am a specialised person. I must speak English because I will work in a place where the patient may not speak Arabic, and the doctor may not speak Arabic or anyone there. There is life and death, and time is the most important thing in it. I have great determination to learn and speak the language and be one of its speakers.*

For this student, speaking English is not framed as a linguistic challenge, or an identity struggle. R154 is framing English as a professional imperative supported by ethical urgency. The repeated use of the modal verb *must*, including where the student affirms that *I must speak English*, signals a deep internalisation of duty. This indicates that R154 is not a passive acquirer of the language, but an active, *specialised*, participant in a high-stakes system where English is the sole communicative bridge between *life and death*. In addition, the clauses *where the patient may not speak Arabic, and the doctor may not speak Arabic or anyone there*, indicate the student's view of a fragile infrastructure of multilingual medical environments where R154 positions English as the only viable medium for response and survival. Here, English has been stripped of symbolic association with elitism, and has become a functional, ethical, and time-critical necessity. The student's investment in English is not driven only by aspirational capital or imagined futures, but also by the pragmatics of time-sensitive human care. This is further conveyed in *There is life and death, and time is the most important thing in it*.

Furthermore, the student concludes with a statement that reveals aspirational inclusion in the English world: *I have great determination to learn and speak the language and be one of its speakers*. Here, the student affirms a desire for fluency and for symbolic membership. To *be one of its speakers* is to cross the boundary from outsider to legitimate

participant in the English-speaking professional domain, which is an act that symbolically claims the right to speak, and, with it, a place within that English-speaking world.

R154 expresses a self-assigned legitimacy, where investment in English becomes an extension of professional ethics and personal resolve. The right to speak is not contested here. Instead, it is claimed, assumed, and enacted through purpose (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013). R154's narrative writing excerpt, therefore, represents a clear example of an active investment in the sub-theme of the right to speak (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018). English is not something R154 hopes to access: rather, it is something she is already preparing to embody with urgency and intent.

R178's response clearly illustrates how the right to speak, as framed by Norton (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton (2015, 2021), is contingent on the social and environmental context, and on perceived power imbalances. The student notes that he feels *a little nervous* when speaking to a *native speaker* and when required to *speak quickly* but feels *at ease* when *the place is quiet*. This contrast in situations highlights how spatial and social conditions regulate the student's perceived legitimacy to participate. The presence of a native speaker introduces a perceived power imbalance, where linguistic authority positions R178 as less entitled to occupy the speaking space and thereby diminishes his right to speak. On the other hand, a quiet environment symbolically equalises that speaking space, and the student's voice can emerge without the pressure of scrutiny. Furthermore, for R178, speech performance becomes an act of negotiating legitimacy within fluctuating conditions of power and recognition. This happens because the student's ease in calm settings, and hesitation under native-speaker dominance, highlights that communication and the right to speak are governed by social dynamics that structure who may speak, how they speak, and when they may speak. These findings align with those of previous studies (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024; Mustafa & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Scott, 2023; Stafford, 2018; Stribling, 2018) highlighting how students' engagement, investment and identity are intricately linked to their perceptions of 1. contextual power dynamics and 2. perceived proficiency hierarchies which could diminish their right to speak. Such patterns of the right to speak further illustrate Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2021) perspective that students' investment and

legitimacy are relationally constructed through continual interaction with the perceived power hierarchies embedded in language use.

The most revealing aspect of all these responses is the students' preoccupation with legitimacy. They not only want to speak English, but also wish to be recognised as legitimate speakers of English, a finding echoed in other studies (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018). Legitimacy is not the same as performance, since performance can be rehearsed. Legitimacy, on the other hand, must either be granted or internally constructed through symbolic resistance. For most of these students, the right to speak is mediated by their surroundings and by social conditions; and is dependent on others' responses and the listener's imagined judgement. The notion of an imagined community here is critical, because, as seen in the findings of other studies (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018), students want to belong to a world in which they are accepted as legitimate English speakers.

Ultimately, drawing on Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015, 2021) model, the findings suggest that the right to speak is structured by the student's perception of how they are seen, what kinds of mistakes they are allowed to make, and also whether speaking English amplifies or erases their sense of self. Thus, English is not just a skill to be mastered: rather, it is a space in which language, identity and power collide, a space to be negotiated. The responses show that students are not simply learning how to speak: Instead, they are learning whether they are allowed to speak or not; and whether that speaking will leave them more broken or more whole.

The findings in this sub-theme directly respond to my Research Questions. In relation to Research Question 2, the findings reveal that students' willingness to speak English is based not only on linguistic mastery, but also on their perceived legitimacy within English-speaking contexts. Investment is framed as an ongoing negotiation of visibility and participation, especially in relation to how students imagine their roles as English speakers (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018).

Regarding Research Question 3, this sub-theme shows that external factors such as peer fluency and social contexts shape whether students feel confident or hesitant to speak.

In this sense, the right to speak is situational and often fragile, depending on how students anticipate others will react to their speech.

Finally, this sub-theme also responds directly to Research Question 4. The findings indicate that, without legitimacy, students' investment becomes fragile and conditional. Thus, in most cases, students require safe environments or positive feedback for their investment to be sustained.

In summary, this sub-theme is deeply rooted in Norton's (2000, 2013) model of investment, which proposes that students acquire language to position themselves in social worlds where they are recognised as legitimate speakers of the language they are acquiring. The concept of the right to speak is particularly relevant here. The findings demonstrate that students are often held back by a lack of symbolic entitlement – and not by a lack of knowledge alone. This is seen in the data related to R16 and R149, in which the students express hesitation about speaking owing to the presence of more fluent interlocutors, thereby revealing that power relations and imagined social hierarchies mediate their speech. R154, on the other hand, presents a case of agentive investment, with English framed not as optional but as an aspirational, ethical and professional obligation. This is a clear example of how investment in imagined identities projects future selves that exist in spaces of legitimacy and power. In addition to legitimacy and power, R154 reflects how students wish to enter an imagined English-speaking community with competence and authority. According to the findings, therefore, Norton's (2000, 2013) claim that language learning is inseparable from identity, legitimacy and power is consistently validated. This reflects Norton's (2000, 2013) view of identity as multiple and shifting: students speak based on 1. who they are now and 2. who they imagine themselves to be in future speaking contexts.

Furthermore, this sub-theme resonates strongly with the empirical studies discussed in the literature review. For example, Alali and Alruwaili (2024) found that Saudi Arabian students' investment was strengthened when students could imagine themselves as future English users in socially and professionally recognised roles. This finding is echoed in the data, especially in R154's narrative writing excerpt, where the aspiration to *be one of its speakers* reflects a longing for symbolic capital and professional legitimacy. Mustafa

and Hamdan Alghamdi (2020) similarly emphasise the emotional facets of investment; and argue that students' self-concept and empowerment are central to their engagement. Both aspects are seen in the findings, with students experiencing deep emotional vulnerability around speaking.

Interestingly, the findings also contrast slightly with those of Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), who reported reduced student agency in compulsory learning contexts. While some students in this sub-theme do reflect a form of inhibition as a result of a power imbalance between themselves and more fluent speakers of English, they do not, however, disengage entirely from the act of speaking. Furthermore, R154 – a student who articulates high agency and ethical commitment – demonstrates a strong counterpoint to this power imbalance.

7.3.2 The Perceived Role of English in Personal Identity

The findings in this sub-theme position the acquisition of English as a process that is much broader than the mastery of a language skill, and reveal that students view English as part of their evolving identities. For some, English symbolises transformation, connection and belonging, while for others it stands for social adaptation and pragmatic inclusion. This variation indicates that identity is not static, but negotiated, and that investment in English is frequently intertwined with how students view themselves in both local and global contexts.

- (R44-MS) *To me, it represents half my life and another world.*
- (R47-MH) *When I look at what I have accomplished and what I have learned in English language I feel really proud and successful. In my opinion success is when you start learning and keep doing and trying your best to achieve your goal.*
- (R50-MS) *I feel a sense of belonging and that not knowing the English language is not embarrassing and is very normal.*
- (R97-MS) *A new way of life and learning a new language is like getting to know a new culture.*

The findings reveal that, for many participants, English is a defining element of personal identity as well as a tool of communication. For example, R44's assertion that *it represents half my life and another world* powerfully suggests that English has become a structural

pillar of the self. The metaphor *another world* implies both time investment and personal transformation, with English unlocking an alternative reality or self that might not have existed in the student's first-language environment (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018).

Similarly, R97 describes English as *a new way of life* which ties language acquisition directly to identity expansion. For this student, learning English is a technical skill but is also akin to acquiring cultural fluency, worldview shifts, and social reorientation. This is seen in *learning a new language is like getting to know a new culture*, which reinforces the notion that English reshapes how the self relates to others and to society, and highlights a shift towards intercultural competence and global selfhood (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018).

R47 reflects this internalisation of growth and transformation through affective empowerment. The student's statement that *I feel really proud and successful* indicates that the act of learning English has become part of the story of a successful learning journey. This story is told not in academic terms, but as a tale of persistence, self-affirmation, and identity-building. In addition, the words *keep doing and trying the best to achieve your goal* affirm that, for this student, English learning is not a passive or imposed experience: it is a chosen, agentic process that produces emotional reward and constructs a resilient sense of self (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018).

R50 adds a further, nuanced layer to this affective landscape. While the student acknowledges a sense of *belonging*, he simultaneously normalises linguistic imperfection. This is seen in the clause *not knowing the English language is not embarrassing and is very normal*. This student's position signals identity negotiation in which, even though English is part of *belonging*, he does not internalise shame or feelings of inferiority as a result of gaps in proficiency. This student's responses suggest a balanced view of identity, one that includes the need for progress but is not defined by existing deficiency (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018). Here, English becomes a mirror for personal transformation and a symbol of both aspiration and affirmation.

R41's narrative writing offers a socially attuned and empathetic reflection on English language learning that reveals identity as a process of practical and ethical positioning within a changing society:

(R41-MH) *It certainly does not mean that the one who does not learn it [English] is a failure, but I feel that it is better for him, and it makes it easier for him. There are now foreigners in Saudi Arabia, and there are restaurants. Even their menu does not contain Arabic, I think that it is better for him to learn it, even a little, than to abandon it completely.*

Unlike earlier responses that focus on internal transformation, pride, or symbolic belonging, R41's response reflects a compassionate view of identity. The student makes a clear moral distinction in stating that those who do not learn English are not failures, a stance that actively opposes the deficit framing often found in language discourse (Scott, 2023; Norton, 2013). Here the student positions English as a facilitator of access, ease, and inclusion, and not as a tool in gaining superiority. The student's emphasis on social interactions in multicultural spaces, *foreigners in Saudi Arabia, and ... restaurants ... their menu does not contain Arabic*, frames English as a bridge for communication in public life. R41 suggests that English become part of a public identity that allows for a way to exist more fluidly and kindly in a linguistically diverse society. So, for the student, the value of learning English lies in making life easier for others and not solely in personal gain or symbolic capital. The repetition of *it is better for him* highlights an inclusive framing which suggest that identity is also constructed through how one chooses to respond to societal needs.

Moreover, R41 does not frame English as an elitist marker or an all-or-nothing skill. Instead, the student advises others *to learn it, even a little*, and not *to abandon it completely*, and clarifies that *one who does not learn English is not ... a failure*, both of which point to a fluid, flexible model of identity. R41 affirms that partial proficiency is acceptable; and that effort itself signals ethical alignment with a shared public world. English is not internalised for self-elevation, but is instead embraced as a gesture of social

empathy, thereby reflecting how language choices inform one's sense of responsibility, openness, and belonging in a multicultural society.

Thus, R41's narrative writing offers a more benevolent type of investment in English – one that is rooted not in symbolic pride but in adaptive inclusion, identity modesty, and relational compassion. In addition, it adds diversity to the sub-theme of the perceived role of English in personal identity by showing that English, as part of identity, can also be pragmatic, ethical, and shared, rather than always deeply internal or emotionally transformative (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018).

This sub-theme responds directly to my research questions. In relation to Research Question 2, students' investment in English is shaped by how it reflects or extends their personal identity. For some students (R44, R47, R97), English is a transformative force that reshapes their sense of self (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018). For R41, it is a practical tool for navigating public life in a linguistically diverse society. These perceptions highlight why students invest emotionally and socially in English language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021; Norton, 2000, 2013; Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018). In relation to Research Question 3, emotional factors such as pride, belonging, and cultural empathy shape students' sense of commitment. In addition, R41 reveals that positive investment may emerge from ethical alignment with societal needs (Scott, 2023; Stribling, 2018) rather than from personal ambition alone. This shows that emotions such as compassion, responsibility, and modesty can sustain investment. Research Question 4 is reflected in the findings, showing how affect and investment are intertwined. Students' willingness to see English as part of their identity depends on emotional affirmation (R47's pride, R50's belonging), social visibility, and their imagined place in a multilingual world. Without this alignment, symbolic disinvestment or reluctance may occur.

Therefore, this sub-theme aligns with Norton's (2000, 2013) view that students invest in language to participate in communities where they are seen as legitimate – and not just for instrumental purposes. This is seen in the findings, especially those related to R41, where the student positions English for ethical and social participation and not for

dominance or identity self-elevation. This reflects Norton's (2000, 2013) emphasis on identity as multiple, shifting, and socially situated. Similarly, R44 and R97 illustrate ways in which students seek entry into broader social worlds (symbolic power), while R50 resists deficit narratives by affirming a more inclusive form of identity. In all the responses, the findings reveal that investment is not only linguistic, but is social, emotional and symbolic as well. This supports Norton's (2000, 2013) notion that language learning is tied to how students imagine their futures and their place in society.

In addition, this sub-theme resonates with other studies related to Saudi Arabia. For example, Alali and Alruwaili (2024) emphasise that identity and imagined futures shape investment in language. This is clearly seen in R44 and R97, who portray English as transformative and identity-expanding. In addition, R47's pride in effort and persistence highlights the emotional rewards that reinforce self-concept. Mustafa and Hamdan Alghamdi (2020) argue that students' investment is tied to empowerment and emotional self-positioning. The findings related to R50 reinforce this view, by rejecting embarrassment and affirming belonging despite imperfect fluency, thus echoing the idea of empowered identity formation.

On the other hand, a study by Dauzón-Ledesma and Izquierdo (2023), which explored reduced agency in English language learning in an institutional context in Mexico, did not resonate in this sub-theme's findings. R41's response, although he too emerged from a similar background of compulsory English language learning, offers a contrasting narrative. R41 asserts an emotionally responsible stance which indicates an ethical agency that 1. resists disinvestment and 2. generates an investment through social alignment instead of internal transformation.

7.4 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter reveal that students' investment in English is deeply tied to how they see themselves, how they wish to be seen, and how emotionally safe they feel when using the language. The right to speak emerges as symbolic, emotional, and identity-based negotiation. In addition, English is perceived as a tool for personal growth, ethical engagement, and social belonging. Across both sub-themes, affect and identity intersect to show how, why, and whether students invest in English.

In the next chapter, I offer the conclusions to my study by drawing together the key findings from the affective and investment strands; and demonstrate how each theme answered my research questions. In addition, I summarise how affect and investment intersect in Saudi Arabian students' English learning experiences; outline the theoretical and practical implications of these findings; and offer recommendations for policy, pedagogy, and future research.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

8. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the complex relationship between affective factors and investment in English language learning among Saudi Arabian university students enrolled in a preparatory English programme. Specifically, this study aimed to identify the affective factors (emotions, motivation, anxiety) that shaped the language learning journeys of students. It further aimed to understand why these affective factors emerge, and how they are demonstrated in students' learning behaviours and attitudes. Furthermore, this study also examined the nature of students' investment in English, how their affective experiences influence their investment, and the broader relationship between affective factors and sustained investment in language learning. Using two open-ended questionnaires (with 19 open-ended questions in each,) two narratives (one dealing with affect and the other with investment) and a qualitative thematic analysis, this study provided key insights into the emotional and identity-driven facets of language learning within a Saudi Arabian higher education context.

8.1 Main Findings

This section discusses my findings in terms of my research questions.

8.1.1 What Affective Factors Shape Saudi Arabian University Students' Learning of English?

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the affective factors shaping Saudi Arabian university students' English language learning span across emotional responses, anxiety-related barriers, and varying forms of motivation. Positive emotions such as joy, hope and excitement emerged as powerful enhancers of student engagement, encouraging students to participate more confidently. However, negative emotions such as frustration, fear and discouragement often resulted in disengagement and emotional withdrawal from the learning process.

Motivational factors were equally influential. Intrinsic motivation was shaped by students' desire for personal satisfaction, self-improvement, and internal growth. Many students

reported feeling motivated by a sense of achievement or the joy of learning a difficult skill in English. In contrast, extrinsic motivation stemmed from external pressures and incentives students faced. These were career goals, societal expectations, and the desire to meet academic requirements.

Anxiety was another affective factor reported by students. It took several forms, including test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication apprehension. These forms of anxiety created barriers that undermined students' willingness to participate in classroom activities, speak in public, or take risks on their language learning journeys. This often resulted in a reduced form of confidence and lowered classroom performance.

8.1.2 Why Do Affective Factors Shape Saudi Arabian University Students' Learning of English?

Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that affective factors shape English language learning because they are deeply embedded in students' cultural expectations, institutional environments, and personal goals. Emotions such as fear or confidence were triggered by external realities such as exam pressures, the perceived difficulty of English, and prior educational experiences. Students who had experienced frequent failures and/or embarrassment during English language learning in the past were more likely to report anxiety or avoidance behaviours in English lessons.

In addition, while students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were shaped by a desire for achievement and external expectations, affective factors were shaped by students' internalised expectations of success. Within this context, these motivations also carried significant emotional weight. For example, even minor setbacks were able to trigger students' frustration or self-doubt when English was seen as central to their future success.

Furthermore, institutional conditions also amplified affective states. This was seen where overloaded schedules, rigid assessment systems, and unsupportive classroom environments often left students emotionally overwhelmed. In contrast, when students encountered emotionally safe classrooms created by empathetic teachers, their affective experiences became more positive, and learning outcomes improved. Affective factors thus shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English because they are

closely connected to how students perceive their abilities and their place in the educational system.

8.1.3 How Are Affective Factors Demonstrated by Saudi Arabian Students When Learning English?

As shown in Chapters 5 and 6, affective factors were demonstrated through the observable behaviours of the students, their emotional reactions, and their learning choices. Positive emotional states were often reflected in students' confidence during participation in class activities and enjoyment of the use of English language media to improve language proficiency. These behaviours indicated a strong emotional drive, where feelings such as pride, hope and excitement turned into proactive learning actions. However, negative affect was frequently demonstrated through avoidance behaviours, silence during the classroom activities, and reluctance to participate in high-pressure activities such as oral tasks or assessments. The three forms of anxiety explored in this study (test, fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension) showed that anxiety caused students to withdraw, or to adopt defensive learning postures such as reduced effort and self-doubt during tests, over-preparation and self-censorship to avoid criticism, and avoidance of communication despite willingness to participate.

This study also identified patterns of emotional displacement in language learning. Students redirected difficult emotional experiences such as shame, frustration and inferiority onto the language itself. This was demonstrated in statements of rejection, loss of interest, or emotional numbing in response to repeated failure or perceived institutional and pedagogical neglect. Emotional displacement in language learning thus emerged as a key behavioural and emotional pattern through which students expressed the impact of negative affective experiences. Emotional displacement, therefore, amounted to an important additional lens to be used in understanding how affective factors become embodied in student behaviour.

8.1.4 What Is Saudi Arabian University Students' Investment in the Learning of English?

As shown in Chapter 7, students' investment in English language learning was multifaceted. It involved personal agency, future aspirations, and professional ambitions.

One core expression of students' investment was student agency. Students took independent steps to improve their English by engaging with the language beyond formal instruction. For instance, they resorted to using mobile apps, watching English media, and finding various creative strategies. These steps, moreover, were accompanied by evidence of commitment and perseverance. In addition, and despite setbacks or institutional challenges, students demonstrated long-term dedication to learning English.

Students also demonstrated their investment in English through their imagined futures. They viewed the language as a gateway to career advancement, international mobility, and social elevation. English was often framed as a necessary tool for achieving life goals, particularly in a globalised world. Students also viewed English proficiency as a key means of access to elite professions.

Another important facet of investment recognised in the findings was the right to speak. This encompassed students' confidence in language use, willingness to communicate, and belief in their legitimacy as English speakers. For some, the right to speak was supported by positive classroom spaces; whereas for others, it was undermined by emotional barriers or a lack of institutional support.

Finally, investment was tied to students' evolving personal identity. English was seen as a symbol of personal growth, global belonging, and intellectual empowerment. These findings too revealed that students' investment in English was not merely about acquiring linguistic skills: it was also about engaging aspirationally in complex processes of self-positioning and emotional meaning-making.

8.1.5 How Do Saudi Arabian University Students' Affective Experiences Shape Their English Language Learning Investment?

As demonstrated in Chapter 7, students' affective experiences, whether they were positive or negative, played an important role in shaping their investment in English language learning. Positive emotions such as enthusiasm and confidence acted as a stabilising force that helped students persevere through linguistic and institutional hurdles. These positive emotions enhanced students' willingness to engage in high-stakes, communicative performance settings by embracing risk-taking, courage, and a sense of possibility.

The findings further showed that emotional alignment with future goals increased students' investment in English. For many of them, imagined futures were emotionally rooted in optimism, empowerment, and personal growth. Because of these emotional connections, students could strengthen and deepen their drive in relation to English, especially when the language was seen as essential to social contribution or career aspirations.

On the other hand, negative emotions such as anxiety, fear of judgment, and comparison with peers often created emotional fragility. Students' willingness to speak or participate was shaped by how they felt in the environment. This made confidence highly situational and likely to be disrupted. However, some students displayed long-term perseverance when they were supported by deeper emotional values such as compassion or cultural belonging. This was especially true when their language goals aligned with ethical or public ideals.

8.1.6 What Is the Relationship Between Affect and Investment in Language Learning in a Saudi Arabian University Context?

Chapter 7 established that affect and investment were deeply intertwined in the English language learning experiences of Saudi Arabian university students. Emotional states such as confidence, hope, anxiety and fear were found to shape, in a direct way, the nature and intensity of student investment. Emotions including empowerment, optimism and belonging supported students' willingness to participate in, persevere with, and view English as a vital key to their future identities. In contrast, negative affective experiences such as fear of judgement, institutional pressure and emotional harm acted as a shaping force that disrupted their investment. This was seen when students showed emotional vulnerability resulting in hesitation, disengagement, or diminished motivation.

Importantly, Chapter 7 showed that the relationship between affect and investment is reciprocal, context-dependent, and emotionally charged. This is because students' emotional terrain shaped their willingness to speak, their perceived legitimacy to participate, and their sustained engagement with English. Understanding the relationship between affective factors and investment is crucial. It reveals that investment in language

learning is not simply strategic or cognitive, but is also emotional and contextually situated.

8.2 Theoretical Implications: Integrating Affect, Investment and Emotional Displacement

This section discusses the theoretical insights generated in my study by using Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis and Norton's (2000, 2013) model of investment, alongside the contribution of emotional displacement and emotional detachment in language learning. The following discussion outlines the value of using both these theories, what was learned in applying them; how my study contributes to existing frameworks; and how emotional displacement and emotional detachment in language learning could possibly expand the theoretical landscape of language learning.

8.2.1 The Value of Using Two Theories

The integration of Krashen's (1982, 1985) and Norton's (2000, 2013) frameworks proved highly effective in capturing the complex interplay between the emotional, cognitive and sociocultural factors that shape the language learning journeys of Saudi Arabian students. This is because Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis offered a social and psychological explanation for how affective factors such as anxiety, confidence, and motivation facilitate or inhibit the learner's ability to access and process comprehensible input. This theory provided a foundational lens through which I could understand student's moment-to-moment emotional responses as either enabling or blocking language input.

At the same time, Norton's (2000, 2013) model of investment added a critical sociocultural layer to my study by highlighting how students' decisions were shaped by their identities, imagined futures, and access to power. Norton (2000, 2013) and, later, Darwin and Norton (2015, 2021) argue that students do not wish to learn the language only in order to communicate. Rather, they invest in language learning so that they may (re)negotiate their identity, gain access to power, and claim imagined futures and possibilities.

While Krashen's (1982, 1985) framework explained internal emotional readiness, Norton's (2000, 2013) framework clarified how external conditions such as positioning,

legitimacy, and access to symbolic resources, shaped students' willingness to participate in the English learning journey (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2021).

Combining these two theories afforded me the opportunity to establish why and how emotions affected learning (Krashen, 1982, 1985) and why and how those emotions shaped broader patterns of engagement and agency (Norton, 2000, 2013).

8.2.2 Findings That Extend and Deepen Existing Theory

The findings of this study contribute to and extend both Krashen's (1982, 1985) and Norton's (2000; 2013) theoretical frameworks.

The findings confirm that emotions such as anxiety and fear raise the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985), which makes it harder for students to process language input; while confidence and motivation lower the affective filter, thereby improving access to learning. The findings in this study further revealed that affective states evolve through repeated emotional experiences such as failure, embarrassment, or teacher encouragement. This suggests the need for a more dynamic and socially mediated understanding of affect than originally proposed by Krashen (1982, 1985).

In relation to Norton's (2000, 2013) framework, the findings illustrate how affective experiences, especially those of emotional safety and fear of negative evaluation, mediate whether or not students choose to invest in learning a language such as English. While Norton (2000, 2013) and, later, Darvin and Norton (2015) emphasise identity, power, and imagined futures, my study shows that investment decisions are deeply shaped by affective conditions. For example, responses showed that some students who envisioned English as a gateway to global mobility or professional advancement simultaneously felt so emotionally excluded that they would emotionally disengage. Thus, affect was recognised as both a gateway to, and a barrier against, investment.

Most notably, this study introduces the concepts of emotional displacement and emotional detachment in language learning as a third element that links and expands both models.

8.2.3 Introducing Emotional Displacement and Emotional Detachment in Language Learning

Emotional displacement is a defense mechanism through which a student redirects a negative emotion from its original source to a less threatening target. The findings of this research indicated that some students did not merely withdraw from learning but also began to displace emotions onto the language itself as a result of negative experiences.

In these cases, English was not only a difficult subject: it was a symbol of failure, fear or emotional harm. Students associated English with humiliation or institutional rejection, which led them to deep-seated aversion. They then directed their feelings onto the English language (a safe target), rather than a real cause, which might be themselves. This emotional redirection onto the language is not accounted for in Krashen's (1982, 1985) hypothesis, which conceptualises affect as a situational filter that affects language input rather than as a mechanism for emotional displacement. Nor is it found in Norton's (2000, 2013) or later in Darwin and Norton's (2015) model of investment, which foregrounds social identity, power and imagined futures, but does not address how cumulative emotional trauma such as persistent failure, unmet expectations or symbolic invalidation may lead students to reject the language symbolically.

Emotional displacement therefore addresses this theoretical gap, by suggesting that constant and unresolved emotional harm may be displaced onto the language itself. The result is that students might then emotionally detach themselves from English as a way to protect their sense of self. The emotional detachment helps in explaining why some students not only begin to resent or fear English on an emotional level but disengage and detach behaviourally as well.

8.2.4 Visual Representation: The Dual Affective–Investment Pathway

The integrated model below, referred to here as the affective pathways model of investment, captures the emotional and cognitive trajectories students may follow. It incorporates Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis, Darwin and Norton's (2015) model of investment, and emotional displacement and detachment in language learning.

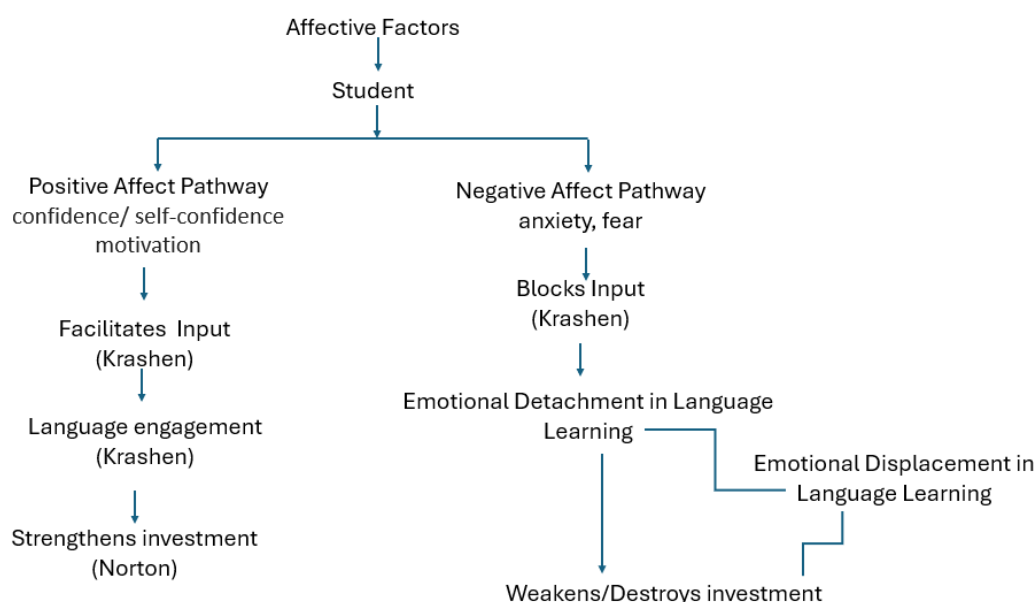


Figure 8.1 Affective pathways model of investment

8.2.4.1 Explanation of the Model and Key Factors

The model is based on Krashen (1982, 1985), Norton (2000, 2013), and Darwin and Norton (2015). It places the student at the centre of the language learning process, shaped by a range of affective and attitudinal factors. These include:

- Positive affect: confidence, self-confidence, motivation (Krashen, 1982, 1985)
- Negative affect: anxiety, fear (Krashen, 1982, 1985)

The diagram illustrates two broad emotional trajectories:

- Positive pathway:
 - Positive affect lowers the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985)
 - Facilitates access to input
 - Leads to language engagement
 - Leads to strengthened investment (Norton, 2000, 2013)
- Negative pathway:
 - Negative affect raises the affective filter (Krashen, 1982, 1985)
 - Leads to emotional detachment in language learning

- In some cases, may trigger emotional displacement in language learning
- Results in weakened or destroyed investment (Norton, 2013)

Emotional displacement in language learning is shown as a conditional emotional outcome. It is experienced not by all students, but may be experienced by those exposed to high pressure, exclusion, or repeated emotional invalidation.

8.3 Expanding Investment: Sociocultural and Structural Dimensions

According to Norton (2000, 2013), investment in language learning is shaped by individual effort, sociocultural structures, and symbolic power. My study confirms and builds upon this approach by showing how emotional experiences interact with key dimensions of Darwin and Norton's (2015) investment model.

Identity: In the investment model (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2000, 2013), identity is shaped by students' positioning within social contexts and their access to symbolic resources. While emotion is not explicitly foregrounded, my study shows that emotional responses such as confidence or fear actively mediate how students come to see themselves as English language users. Thus, affective states are not merely background conditions but actively participate in the construction and reconstruction of identity.

Capital: In the investment model (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2000, 2013), symbolic capital refers to resources, such as language proficiency or education, that grant students legitimacy. This study found that affective states such as confidence play a crucial role in determining whether students feel able to mobilise that capital. Therefore, when students lack confidence, they may feel emotionally and socially illegitimate despite possessing linguistic and educational skills.

Ideology: In a Saudi Arabian context, English is positioned ideologically as a language of power, prestige, and upward mobility. This symbolic framing creates pressure that heightens anxiety and fear, especially for students who feel they do not meet these expectations (Alali & Alruwaili, 2024). These ideological forces shape students' experience and their perceived legitimacy in the English language learning domain.

Perceived Benefits: In line with the investment model's notion of imagined futures (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2000, 2013), motivation is often driven by students' belief

that proficiency in English will lead to academic and professional advancement. However, when these benefits are no longer perceived as attainable because of institutional, personal or social barriers, students' willingness to invest in English weakens. This disillusionment often triggers emotional disengagement and/or emotional displacement and a re-evaluation of their language learning goals.

Systemic control: In a Saudi Arabian context, this study has shown, curricular rigidity, high-stakes testing, and limited communicative opportunities create institutional environments that elevate stress and discourage meaningful participation. These systemic conditions shape students' perceived access to learning while diminishing their sense of control, which together may ultimately weaken their willingness to invest in English. This is especially the case when systemic control is viewed as impossible to overcome or experienced as emotionally overwhelming.

Positioning: When students are positioned as weak, failing or inferior learners of the language, emotional harm often follows. In the investment model (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton, 2000, 2013) such positioning shapes how students perceive their legitimacy as students and their right to access to participation. This study extends that insight by showing that negative positioning may severely erode students' confidence and sense of legitimacy, thereby reducing their investment in classroom participation. This is especially the case when this type of positioning is repeated over time or institutionalised.

8.4 Policy Implications

This study has several important implications for English language education policy within the Saudi Arabian higher education context.

Saudi Vision 2030 emphasises many aspects related to English policy in the country – human capability development, global competitiveness, the preparation of a knowledge-based society, and calls for educational transformation that develops learners and students who are innovative, confident and globally competent – the findings suggest that increasing the number of English instruction hours is insufficient on its own.

Moreover, the Saudi Graduate Attributes Framework reinforces these aims by identifying the following qualities expected of Saudi graduates: effective communication, critical and

creative thinking, ethical responsibility, and adaptability in multilingual and multicultural environments.

Both existing policy initiatives therefore suggest that English language education in Saudi Arabia should focus on affective and pedagogical quality, with emotional readiness, institutional pressures and the affective experiences of students needing to be considered when designing effective policy interventions.

Many of the questionnaire responses showed that negative experiences, especially cases of emotional displacement in language learning, had stemmed from learning English at the school level. The findings therefore point to the urgent need for school-level policies that reduce affective barriers to learning English. Curriculum design and classroom pedagogy at school should actively seek to foster emotional safety, build students' confidence, and support student motivation and agency from the early stages of learning. This means that teacher-training programmes should be implemented to address not only content delivery but also emotional intelligence and supportive classroom practices.

In higher education, particularly in the preparatory programmes, the study found that institutional pressures, rigid assessment structures and limited communicative opportunities contributed to emotional disengagement and, in some cases, symbolic rejection of English (emotional displacement in language learning). This suggests that policies governing the preparatory year in Saudi Arabia should 1. include affect-sensitive assessment models; 2. integrate task-based and communicative methodologies; and 3. ensure that students are not positioned as failures based on their exam performances.

This study contributes to ongoing policy debates and proposes that language learning investment is emotionally mediated and shaped by broader systemic forces. Therefore, policy makers should consider affective dimensions when designing interventions aimed at boosting investment and agency to achieve English proficiency across educational levels.

In addition to pedagogical reforms, this study underscores the need for urgent re-evaluation of hours spent learning English on a daily basis, and of assessment practices across educational levels. The data show that students frequently link long hours with frustration and boredom. Moreover, this emotional fatigue often had an impact on other

subjects. In addition, high-stakes exams were frequently linked to anxiety, demotivation and emotional disengagement, which in some cases may contribute to emotional displacement in language learning – where students redirect their frustration towards a target safer than its original source – and the symbolic rejection of English.

Current assessment systems in Saudi Arabia, especially in the preparatory year, prioritise rote learning and written accuracy over communicative competence and confidence building. Therefore, a shift towards more formative, low-stakes, and task-based assessment is essential. Such models would not only reduce the emotional toll of performance and anxiety, but would also align with investment-orientated outcomes by recognising diverse student identities and pathways to proficiency.

Policies should prioritise assessment frameworks that evaluate students' growth over time, encourage participation, and validate communicative risk-taking, especially in oral and interactive contexts. This would dismantle emotional barriers and reposition English as an accessible, achievable goal for all students.

8.5 Methodological Implications

The use of open-ended questionnaires and narrative writings allowed for deep, student-centred insights that quantitative methods may have missed. This approach enabled students to describe the emotional landscape of their English language learning journeys in their own words and their preferred language. This produced rich, affect-laden data that informed the development of emotional displacement.

However, despite the richness of the data generated, the methodology had limitations. Because this study relied solely on written responses retrieved by using technology (Google Forms), some students with weaker writing skills may have been disadvantaged from not receiving necessary prompts from me to guide their written responses. This may have led them to withhold emotionally charged details or to underrepresent their experiences owing to linguistic constraints. On the other hand, students were allowed to use either English or Arabic in their responses and most of them used Arabic. The language choice was provided to enable effective communication.

Another methodological insight is that, because the focus of this study was on affect and investment, data related to linguistic development and classroom teaching strategies received less analytical focus. While a section addressed the emotional impact of teachers, themes such as classroom interactional patterns were not explored as themes.

Despite these limitations, the open-ended, exploratory design enabled the emergence of emotional detachment and emotional displacement in language learning, which might not have surfaced if closed survey instruments had been used. This underscores the value of qualitative depth when investigating emotional and identity-related constructs in L2 studies.

If I were to repeat this study, I would consider supplementing the written responses with follow-up interviews or focus groups. This would allow for a more detailed elaboration of emotionally nuanced experiences, especially for those students who may have struggled with written expression. It would have also allowed me to guide students with prompts to make the written aspects of their responses easier. I chose not to conduct interviews because I worked electronically with both male and female students: interviews with female students by a male researcher would not have been possible, and I would have had to ask a female colleague to assist. In addition, I would have placed the narrative writing first just in case students were fatigued by the 19 questions in the open-ended questionnaires.

8.6 Professional Practice Implications

This study has deeply informed my professional practice as a preparatory year English lecturer in a Saudi Arabian context. Firstly, it illustrated the centrality of emotion in shaping how students engage in learning, and whether they feel enabled and willing to participate and invest at all. Recognising this, I have begun to embed affective check-ins and create emotionally safe classroom routines.

The findings of my study also made me more aware of the symbolic weight English carries for my students. English is not just a subject. Rather, it is associated with power, identity, and perceived success or failure for many. This insight helped me reframe activities, especially communicative ones, to better align with students' imagined futures while at the same time validating their emotional challenges.

As a researcher, I learned that emotional honesty in responses is often earned through trust and open-ended methods. In addition, although the responses were anonymised, I recognise that my dual role as lecturer and researcher may still have shaped what students chose to disclose. Students may have moderated their emotional honesty based on assumptions about my expectations or perceived risks, even without direct identification.

At the personal level, this study allowed me to identify blind spots in my prior teaching. I placed too much focus on academic rigour without sufficient attention to the emotional wellbeing of the students. Since conducting this research, I have made intentional shifts in classroom atmosphere, feedback tone, and inclusivity. These have all been grounded in the understanding that affect is not a by-product of learning and investment, but is central to them.

8.7 Limitations to the Study

While this study offers valuable insights into the affective and investment domains of English language learning in a Saudi Arabian university context, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, since I generated the data via self-reported open-ended questionnaires, the study relied primarily on written responses. This means that the interpretation of emotion and investment was based on what students chose to express in writing. Other affective dynamics such as body language, tone, and non-verbal cues could not be captured. Although this instrument was effective in eliciting broad participation and truthful reflections, it may have lacked depth and spontaneity. The students may have filtered their responses, omitted sensitive details, or misunderstood questions, all of which may have affected the richness and reliability of the data.

Second, I conducted the study within a single institutional context – a preparatory year programme at one of the Saudi Arabian universities. While the sample size was substantial and demographically diverse, the findings may not be generalisable to other regions, institutions, or educational levels within or beyond Saudi Arabia. In addition, I did not disaggregate findings based on gender or academic track. Although participants came from varied demographic backgrounds, the analysis did not focus on how these

intersecting social factors may have shaped access, emotional safety, or perceived legitimacy in language learning.

Finally, although the study introduced emotional displacement and emotional detachment within the theoretical underpinnings of Krashen (1982, 1985) and Norton (2000, 2013), its theoretical development extends these frameworks by showing how students' affective experiences operate as transformative emotional negotiations that can either strengthen or sever their sense of investment, belonging, legitimacy, and identity in English language learning. Therefore, further empirical research across different contexts would be necessary to validate and refine the constructs.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a meaningful contribution to second language acquisition theory and practice by highlighting the emotional realities and identity negotiations that shape Saudi Arabian (and possibly other) students' engagement with English.

8.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations for future research are identified.

First, future studies could adopt longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to explore how affective experiences and investment evolve over time. This would allow a deeper understanding of how emotions and identity shift across different stages of English language development, especially in relation to sustained investment or withdrawal.

Second, while this study drew on a large number of written responses, future research could include interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations, with the intention of capturing more nuanced emotional dynamics, particularly those that would be difficult to articulate in writing. These methods could enrich our understanding of how affect and investment are performed, negotiated, and experienced in real-time environments.

Third, even though I had male and female students and different tracks, future research could examine gender-based, track-based, or regional differences in how affect and investment manifest. The research could identify distinct emotional and investment patterns across demographic lines, especially given the gender-segregated and socially

stratified nature of many educational contexts in Saudi Arabia. In addition, comparative studies across different institutions and/or cultural contexts would also help to test the transferability of the findings.

Finally, there is significant potential for further empirical development of the concepts of emotional displacement and emotional detachment in language learning. Future research could investigate these concepts across diverse linguistic and cultural settings. This will help determine whether similar emotional patterns appear, and under what conditions. Researchers could also explore how institutional factors, such as classroom atmosphere or teacher behaviours, contribute to the emergence or mitigation of emotional displacement and detachment

8.9 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions to the field of language learning and higher education.

8.9.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study advances theoretical understandings of language learning by extending and bringing together Krashen's (1982, 1985) affective filter hypothesis, Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment to create a more integrated lens to better understand the emotional, social, and identity-based dimensions of English language learning. While Krashen's (1982, 1985) hypothesis positions affect primarily as a psychological filter that influences language input and acquisition, Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015) model interprets language learning through the concepts of identity, power relations, and social positioning. By combining these two theoretical traditions, my study offers a comprehensive way of examining how emotional experiences are tied to students' sense of agency, legitimacy and investment within the classroom and beyond.

Building on this theoretical integration, the study advances both theoretical frameworks by including the concepts of emotional detachment and emotional displacement, which were derived inductively from the data generated. The findings reveal that when students face sustained negative affect such as anxiety, frustration, or shame, they may cope

either by emotionally withdrawing from the learning experience (emotional detachment) or by redirecting their emotional responses towards less threatening targets such as the language itself (emotional displacement). By identifying these processes as central affective mechanisms, the study refines Krashen's (1982, 1985) hypothesis of affective barriers, by showing that the affective filter may become a permanent state (as seen with R22); and that emotions do not merely regulate input but can also reconstruct students' motivation and willingness to invest in English learning. Simultaneously, it extends Norton's (2000, 2013) and Darvin and Norton's (2015) model by showing that students' identities and investments are shaped through these emotional negotiations, which affect their participation, endurance, and sense of belonging in multilingual educational contexts. Taken together, these insights propose a more unified theoretical perspective that connects affect, emotion, and identity, offering a richer understanding of the intricate emotional dimensions underpinning Saudi Arabian university students' language learning trajectories. Although the development of these ideas remains exploratory, they offer a foundation for future theoretical work that considers how emotions circulate between the individual and the social world in language learning. In this sense, the study's theoretical contribution does not aim to replace existing models: instead, it lies in deepening them through conceptual integration and contextual expansion.

8.9.2 Methodological Contributions

Methodologically, this study highlights the value of using large-scale qualitative questionnaires to explore affective- and investment-related phenomena. By collecting open-ended written responses from a substantial number of students, I was able to capture a wide range of emotional and reflective perspectives while maintaining the interpretive depth of qualitative research. In addition, this approach showed that qualitative instruments can be designed to balance breadth and depth, in order to generate data suitable for thematic and theoretical analysis. Furthermore, the integration of theory-driven (deductive coding) and inductive coding highlights how data can be read through existing frameworks, while at the same time allow for new conceptual insights to emerge. This unique combination of a large-scale qualitative design with a hybrid coding strategy offers a robust model for future studies seeking to connect emotional,

sociocultural, and identity-related dimensions of language learning within large participant groups.

8.9.3 Practical and Pedagogical Contributions

From a practical standpoint, this study makes contributions to the practice of English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabian higher education, especially within preparatory year programmes. By establishing that affective experience is central to students' investment in learning, it advances professional understanding that emotional engagement, safety, and legitimacy are fundamental conditions for effective language learning and teaching.

The identification of 1. emotional detachment and 2. emotional displacement in language learning as key affective mechanisms explains how students respond to prolonged frustration, anxiety, and social exclusion. This insight contributes to professional knowledge enabling teachers and curriculum developers to interpret student withdrawal not as a lack of motivation, but, rather, as a form of emotional adaptation. Understanding these affective responses will enhance teachers' capacity to design safer, more supportive learning environments; and to interpret student behaviour through a more empathetic and psychologically informed lens. This would situate teachers as affective mediators who intentionally cultivate environments that foster emotional security, positive reinforcement, and a sense of belonging and legitimacy.

At the policy and curriculum level, the study supports a more holistic conception of language education, one in which curriculum design and assessment systems can be aligned with the affective and motivational dimensions of learning. This allows for a framework through which emotional well-being and academic investment can be viewed as mutually reinforcing components of a student's success. Furthermore, it provides universities with a conceptual basis for integrating emotional awareness into teacher development and curriculum planning.

Finally, these contributions align with *Saudi Vision 2030* and the Saudi Graduate Attributes Framework, which emphasise the preparation of graduates who are confident, adaptable, and globally competent. By showing that emotional well-being enhances linguistic engagement and long-term investment, the study adds practical value to

national educational priorities that seek to develop emotionally resilient and communicatively proficient graduates capable of contributing to Saudi Arabia's human-capital goals and international competitiveness.

8.10 Conclusion

In bringing together the emotional, motivational, and identity-driven facets of English language learning, this study has sought to view students as emotionally and socially embedded individuals instead of passive recipients of instruction or performers of academic outcomes. The findings reveal that students' affective experiences play a pivotal role in shaping their motivation and emotional engagement and determine whether and how students invest in the language. By integrating Krashen (1982, 1985) with Norton (2000, 2010), and Darwin and Norton (2015) this study shows that language learning is either sustained or interrupted at the intersection of internal emotional states and external sociocultural access. Ultimately, this study calls for a more emotionally responsive approach to language education, one that attends to both the affective struggles and the aspirations that shape students' persistence, withdrawal, and identity transformation.

The study has taught me something often overlooked by teachers. Students may not walk away from a language because of weakness, but because their experience of learning it has wounded them; and, unnoticed over time, has taught them to resent it, leaving them no longer feeling safe enough to invest in it.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Sameer Satardien from South Africa. I work at King Saud University in the ELSD department. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research to gain an understanding of the affective factors that shape Saudi Arabian students' learning of English, ascertain Saudi Arabian students' investment while learning English and to explore how affect shapes students' investment in learning English.

The aim and purpose of this research is to identify the affective factors that shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English and to understand why affective factors shape Saudi Arabian university students' learning of English. Furthermore, I will also explore how affective factors are demonstrated by Saudi Arabian students when learning English. I will also try to ascertain Saudi Arabian university students' investment in the learning of English and understand how Saudi Arabian university students' affective experiences shape their English language learning investment.

Your involvement will involve answering two open-ended questionnaires where you will be given a link to access. There will not be any direct benefits to you or any risks involved to your wellbeing. However, the results of the study may help to improve the teaching and learning of the course.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] my supervisor or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

Supervisor's details:

Name: Professor Ansurie Pillay

Email: PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za

Tel No: +27 31 2603613

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any point. In the event of refusal or withdrawal of participation you will not incur any penalties or loss of any benefits to which you are normally entitled.

There will not be any benefits to you or any costs incurred by you as a result of participation in the study.

If you choose to be part of this study, I will adhere to the rules of ethics to ensure that anonymity and confidentiality are achieved by providing you and the institution with a pseudonym.

CONSENT

I have been informed about the study entitled “**Affect and investment in language learning: the case of English in Saudi Arabia**” by Sameer Satardien.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study and I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher [REDACTED]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

Supervisor's details:

Name: Professor Ansrie Pillay

Email: PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za

Tel No: +27 31 2603613

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix B: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research (Arabic)

ورقة المعلومات والموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

التاريخ:

السيد/السيدة المحترم/ة،

اسمي سمير ستاردين من جنوب أفريقيا. أعمل

أنت مدعو للنظر في المشاركة في دراسة تهدف إلى فهم العوامل الوجدانية التي تؤثر على تعلم الطلاب السعوديين للغة الإنجليزية، وتحديد استثمار الطلاب السعوديين أثناء تعلمهم للغة الإنجليزية، واستكشاف كيفية تأثير العوامل الوجدانية على استثمارهم في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد العوامل الوجدانية التي تؤثر على تعلم الطلاب الجامعيين السعوديين للغة الإنجليزية، وفهم سبب تأثير هذه العوامل على تعلمهم للغة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سأقوم باستكشاف كيفية تجلي هذه العوامل الوجدانية لدى الطلاب السعوديين أثناء تعلمهم للغة الإنجليزية. كما سأحاول تحديد استثمار الطلاب الجامعيين السعوديين في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. وفهم كيفية تأثير تجاربهم الوجدانية على استثمارهم في تعلم اللغة.

ستتضمن مشاركتك في هذا البحث إجابتك على استبيانين مفتوحين، حيث سيتم توفير رابط للوصول إليهما. لن تكون هناك أي فوائد مباشرة لك أو مخاطر على سلامتك. ومع ذلك، قد تسهم نتائج الدراسة في تحسين عملية التدريس والتعلم في هذا المجال.

تمت مراجعة هذه الدراسة أخلاقياً والموافقة عليها من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث في العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية بجامعة كوازولو ناتال (رقم الموافقة _____).

في حال وجود أي مشكلات أو استفسارات/أسئلة، يمكنك التواصل معي على الرقم 0 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني [redacted] ، أو الاتصال بلجنة أخلاقيات البحث في العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية بجامعة كوازولو ناتال، والتفاصيل كالتالي:

تفاصيل المشرف:

الاسم: الأستاذة أنسوري بيلاي

البريد الإلكتروني: PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za

رقم الهاتف: +27312603613

إدارة أخلاقيات البحث في العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية

مكتب البحث، حرم ويستفيل

مبنى جوفان مبيكي

54001X ص.ب

ديربان

4000

كوازولو ناتال، جنوب أفريقيا

هاتف: +27 31 2604557 - فاكس: +27 31 2604609

البريد الإلكتروني: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

المشاركة في هذا البحث اختيارية، ويمكنك الانسحاب في أي وقت. في حال رفض أو انسحابك من المشاركة، لن تتعرض لأي عقوبات أو فقدان لأي منافع تستحقها عادة.

لن تكون هناك أي فوائد مالية لك أو تكاليف تتحملها نتيجة المشاركة في الدراسة.

إذا اخترت المشاركة في هذه الدراسة، سالتزم بقواعد الأخلاقيات لضمان تحقيق السرية والخصوصية من خلال منحك أنت والمؤسسة اسمًا مستعارًا.

الموافقة

لقد تم إبلاغي عن الدراسة بعنوان "العوامل الوجدانية والاستثمار في تعلم اللغة: حالة اللغة الإنجليزية في السعودية" التي يجريها سمير ستاردين.

أفهم هدف وإجراءات الدراسة، وقد أتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة المتعلقة بالدراسة وحصلت على إجابات مرضية. أصرح بأن مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة اختيارية تمامًا، وأعلم أن لي الحق في الانسحاب في أي وقت دون أن يؤثر ذلك على أي من المنافع التي أستحقها عادةً.

إذا كانت لدي أي أسئلة إضافية أو استفسارات تتعلق بالدراسة، أفهم أنه يمكنني التواصل مع الباحث على الرقم الإلكتروني [REDACTED] أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

إذا كانت لدي أي أسئلة أو مخاوف حول حقوقي كمشارك في الدراسة، أو إذا كان لدي قلق بشأن أي جانب من جوانب الدراسة أو الباحثين، يمكنني الاتصال بـ:

تفاصيل المشرف:

الاسم: الأستاذة أنسوري بيلاي

البريد الإلكتروني: [PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za](mailto: PillayA3@ukzn.ac.za)

رقم الهاتف: +27312603613

إدارة أخلاقيات البحث في العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية

مكتب البحث، حرم ويستفيل

مبنى جوفان مبيكي

54001 X ص.ب

دير بان

4000

كوازولو ناتال، جنوب أفريقيا

هاتف: +27 31 2604557 - فاكس: +27 31 2604609

البريد الإلكتروني: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

التاريخ

توقيع المشارك

Appendix C: Gatekeeper Application

	English	Arabic
Researcher(s)	Sameer Satardien	
Topic	Affect and Investment in language learning: The case of English in Saudi Arabia.	
Abstract/Summary	My study explores the affective factors and investment in English language learning among Saudi Arabian university students in their preparatory year. Using a qualitative approach, the study integrates Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Norton's Model of Investment in language learning to focus on examining students' investment, attitudes, motivations, and emotional responses.	
Participants	About 200 Common First Year students learning English in all three tracks.	
Tools	Two Questionnaires with 20 questions per questionnaire. Each questionnaire will include a short narrative writing question.	
Risk Factors	None	

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance



11 December 2024

Sameer Satardien (224196036)

School of Education

Edgewood Campus

Dear S Satardien,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00008038/2024

Project title: Affect and investment in language learning: The case of English in Saudi Arabia

Degree: PhD

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 11 November 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 11 December 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix E: Questionnaire and Narrative Writing on Affect:

Open-ended Questionnaire 1 and Narrative Task 1

Instructions:

Thank you for participating in this study. Please read the following instructions carefully before you begin:

1. This questionnaire is designed to explore your thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to learning English. Your responses will help us understand the affective factors that influence English language learning.
2. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. Please answer each question as honestly and thoughtfully as possible, as there are no right or wrong answers.
3. The questionnaire includes several open-ended questions. Take your time to answer each question fully. The estimated time for completion is about 20-30 minutes.
4. For open-ended questions, please provide detailed responses where possible. This will help us gain a deeper understanding of your unique experiences and perspectives.
5. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to skip any question that you are uncomfortable answering or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.
6. If you have any questions or concerns about this questionnaire, feel free to reach out to the researcher at

Thank you for your time and for contributing to this research. When you're ready, please proceed with the questions below.

التعليمات

شكراً لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. يرجى قراءة التعليمات التالية بعناية قبل أن تبدأ

- ٢تم تصميم هذا الاستبيان لاستكشاف أفكارك ومشاعرك وتجاربك المتعلقة بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. ستساعدنا ١. فهم العوامل الوجدانية التي تؤثر على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية إجاباتك في ٣إجاباتك ستكون مجهولة وسيتم الحفاظ على سريتها. يرجى الإجابة على كل سؤال بصدق وبشكل مدروس، فلا توجد إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة ٤يحتوي الاستبيان على عدة أسئلة مفتوحة. خذ وقتك للإجابة على كل سؤال بشكل كامل. يُقدّر الوقت اللازم لإكمال الاستبيان بحوالي 20-30 دقيقة ٥بالنسبة للأسئلة المفتوحة، يرجى تقديم إجابات مفصلة قدر الإمكان. سيساعدنا ذلك في الحصول على فهم أعمق لتجاربك. ووجهات نظرك الفريدة ٦المشاركة اختيارية تمامًا. يمكنك تخطي أي سؤال تشعر بعدم الارتياح للإجابة عليه، كما يمكنك الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون أي عقوبة إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول هذا الاستبيان، لا تتردد في التواصل مع الباحث على البريد الإلكتروني . شكرًا لوقتكم ولمساهماتكم في هذا البحث. عندما تكون مستعدًا، يرجى متابعة الإجابة على الأسئلة أدناه

1. When you think about learning English, what emotions come to the fore? Please explain your answer fully by saying why you think such emotions are present.

١ ما هي المشاعر التي تتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما تفكر في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح إجاباتك بالكامل بقول سبب اعتقادك بوجود مثل هذه المشاعر

2. Generally, what is your usual mood when you are in the English class? Please explain why you think this is so.

٢ ما هو مزاجك المعتاد عموماً عندما تكون في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح سبب اعتقادك بذلك .

3. How do you feel about sharing your answers with the students in the English class? Why?

٣ كيف تشعر عند مشاركة إجاباتك مع الطلاب في حصة اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ولماذا؟

4. Please share your experiences of any English teachers who were very successful in teaching you English.

٤ يرجى مشاركة تجاربك مع أي معلم لغة إنجليزية كان ناجحًا جدًا .

5. Please share your experiences of any English teachers who were not successful in teaching you English.

٥. يرجى مشاركة تجاربك مع أي معلم لغة إنجليزية لم يكن ناجحًا .

6. What would you say is an ideal English class?

٦. كيف تعتقد أنه يمكن أن تكون الحصة الدراسية المثالية لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟

7. Please explain your attitude towards learning English.

٧. يرجى شرح موقفك حول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية .

8. Please explain what causes you anxiety or concern when you are learning English.

٨. يرجى شرح ما الذي يمكن أن يسبب لك القلق أو الاضطراب أثناء تعلمك للغة الإنجليزية

9. Please explain what brings about calmness when you are learning English.

٩. يرجى شرح ما الذي يمكن أن يجلب لك الشعور بالهدوء عند تعلمك للغة الإنجليزية .

10. How do you feel when answering English tests? Why do you think this is the case?

١٠. كيف تشعر عند الإجابة على اختبارات اللغة الإنجليزية؟ ولماذا تعتقد أن هذا هو الحال؟

11. How do you feel when you get answers wrong in English assessments or when sharing answers orally?

١١. كيف تشعر عندما تخطئ في الإجابات في التقييمات أو عند مشاركة الإجابات شفهيًا؟

12. How do you feel when you get answers correct in English assessments or when sharing answers orally?

١٢. كيف تشعر عندما تعطي الإجابات الصحيحة في التقييمات أو عند مشاركة الإجابات شفهيًا؟

13. If you failed the English course, what would be the consequences?

١٣. ما هي العواقب إذا رسبت في مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية؟

14. English is a class you have to pass. How do you ensure that this happens?

١٤. اللغة الإنجليزية مقرر يجب عليك اجتيازه, كيف تضمن حدوث ذلك؟

15. How would you describe your self-confidence when speaking in English?

١٥. كيف تصف ثقتك بنفسك عند التواصل باللغة الإنجليزية؟

16. How do you feel about speaking English publicly? Please provide reasons for your answer.

١٦. كيف تشعر عندما تتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام الناس؟ يرجى تقديم أسباب لإجابتك .

17. Please share how much English you use outside the class and say where you use it.

١٧. يرجى مشاركة مقدار استخدامك للغة الإنجليزية خارج الصف، وتحديد الأماكن التي تستخدمها فيها .

18. If you have trouble understanding English in any situation, what do you do?

١٨. ماذا تفعل إذا واجهت صعوبة في فهم اللغة الإنجليزية في أي موقف؟

19. What does English represent for you?

١٩. ماذا تمثل لك اللغة الإنجليزية؟

20. Narrative Task: In approximately 500 words, please share your English language learning journey so far. Share your positive and negative experiences and say how they made you feel at the time. Say how those experiences shaped your emotional responses to learning English.

٢٠. يرجى التعبير بما يقارب ٥٠٠ كلمة عن تجربتك مع تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية حتى الآن. شارك تجاربك الإيجابية والسلبية وقل كيف شعرت في ذلك الوقت. اشرح كيف شكلت هذه التجارب استجاباتك العاطفية تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

Appendix F: Questionnaire and Narrative Writing on Investment:

Open-ended Questionnaire 2 and Narrative Task 2

Instructions:

Thank you for participating in this study. Please read the following instructions carefully before you begin:

1. This questionnaire is designed to explore your thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to learning English. Your responses will help us understand the level of investment students have in this process.
2. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential. Please answer each question as honestly and thoughtfully as possible, as there are no right or wrong answers.
3. The questionnaire includes several open-ended questions. Take your time to answer each question fully. The estimated time for completion is about 20-30 minutes.
4. For open-ended questions, please provide detailed responses where possible. This will help us gain a deeper understanding of your unique experiences and perspectives.
5. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to skip any question that you are uncomfortable answering or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty.
6. If you have any questions or concerns about this questionnaire, feel free to reach out to the researcher at

Thank you for your time and for contributing to this research. When you're ready, please proceed with the questions below.

التعليمات

شكرًا لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. يرجى قراءة التعليمات التالية بعناية قبل أن تبدأ

٢تم تصميم هذا الاستبيان لاستكشاف أفكارك ومشاعرك وتجاربك المتعلقة بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. ستساعدنا
١. فهم العوامل الوجدانية مستوى استثمار الطلاب في هذه العملية إجاباتك في

٣إجاباتك ستكون مجهولة وسيتم الحفاظ على سريتها. يرجى الإجابة على كل سؤال بصدق وبشكل مدروس، فلا توجد
إجابات صحيحة أو خاطئة

٤يحتوي الاستبيان على عدة أسئلة مفتوحة. خذ وقتك للإجابة على كل سؤال بشكل كامل. يُقدّر الوقت اللازم لإكمال
الاستبيان بحوالي 20-30 دقيقة

٥بالنسبة للأسئلة المفتوحة، يرجى تقديم إجابات مفصلة قدر الإمكان. سيساعدنا ذلك في الحصول على فهم أعمق لتجاربك
ووجهات نظرك الفريدة

٦المشاركة اختيارية تمامًا. يمكنك تخطي أي سؤال تشعر بعدم الارتياح للإجابة عليه، كما يمكنك الانسحاب من الدراسة في
أي وقت دون أي عقوبة

إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات حول هذا الاستبيان، لا تتردد في التواصل مع الباحث على البريد الإلكتروني .

شكرًا لوقتكم ولمساهماتكم في هذا البحث. عندما تكون مستعدًا، يرجى متابعة الإجابة على الأسئلة أدناه

1. Please describe all the things you do to improve your English language proficiency.

١. يرجى وصف جميع الأشياء التي تقوم بها لتحسين مستواك في اللغة الإنجليزية؟

2. Would you say you are motivated to learn English? Please explain your answer.

٢. هل يمكنك القول أنك متحفز لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح إجاباتك.

3. Please explain what you do if you cannot understand what is being said or written in English?

٣. يرجى شرح ما يمكن أن تفعله إذا لم تتمكن من فهم ما يُقال أو يُكتب باللغة الإنجليزية؟

4. How do you feel about participating in English language events or activities outside of the classroom? Please explain your answer.

٤. كيف تشعر حيال المشاركة في فعاليات أو أنشطة متعلقة باللغة الإنجليزية خارج الصف؟ يرجى شرح إجابتك.

5. How do you feel about watching English movies or television programmes? Please explain your answer.

٥. كيف تشعر حيال مشاهدة الأفلام أو البرامج التلفزيونية باللغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح إجابتك.

6. Please describe your confidence levels in using English to speak and write and say how that affects your commitment to improve your English.

٦. يرجى وصف مستويات ثقتك عند استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية للتحدث والكتابة، وكيف يؤثر ذلك على التزامك بتحسين لغتك الإنجليزية.

7. Please describe your level of commitment to learning English and say why you think this is so.

٧. يرجى وصف مستوى التزامك بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وشرح سبب اعتقادك بذلك.

8. What does knowing English represent to you in your academic life, and how does this affect your experience of English tests?

٨. ماذا يمثل لك إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية في حياتك الأكاديمية، وكيف يؤثر ذلك على تجربتك في اختبارات اللغة الإنجليزية؟

9. When you meet people who are very competent in English, how do you feel about them? Please explain your answer.

٩. ماهو شعورك عندما تقابل أشخاصًا متقنين جدًا للغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح إجابتك.

10. When you meet people who are not competent in English, how do you feel about them? Please explain your answer.

١٠. ماهو شعورك عندما تقابل أشخاصًا غير متقنين للغة الإنجليزية؟ يرجى شرح إجابتك.

11. What would you say is your level of proficiency in English and explain why you think this is so?

١١. كيف تصف مستوى إتقانك للغة الإنجليزية؟ ولماذا تعتقد أن هذا هو الحال؟

12. As far as you know, what jobs would require English language proficiency?

١٢. حسب معرفتك، ما هي الوظائف التي تتطلب إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية؟

13. As far as you know, what jobs do not require English language proficiency?

١٣. حسب معرفتك، ما هي الوظائف التي لا تتطلب إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية؟

14. Please explain the role that English proficiency could play in your future career.

١٤. يرجى شرح الدور الذي يمكن أن يلعبه إتقان اللغة الإنجليزية في حياتك المهنية المستقبلية.

15. What is the most difficult aspect of learning English and how do you work on it?

١٥. ما هو أصعب جانب في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وكيف تعمل على تحسينه؟

16. What role does success play in your English language learning?

١٦. ما هو الدور الذي يلعبه النجاح في تعلمك للغة الإنجليزية؟

17. Please identify all aspects of English language learning that you find most difficult.

١٧. يرجى تحديد جميع جوانب تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية التي تجدتها أكثر صعوبة.

18. Please identify all aspects of English language learning that you find easy.

١٨. يرجى تحديد جميع جوانب تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية التي تجدتها سهلة.

19. What would you say is your attitude to learning English and explain how your attitude influences your commitment to improving your English.

١٩. كيف تصف موقفك تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية؟ اشرح كيف يؤثر موقفك على التزامك بتحسين لغتك الإنجليزية.

20. Narrative Task: "Knowing English is essential for my future career and personal success". In approximately 500 words, please respond to this statement with details about why you agree or disagree with it.

٢٠. "معرفة اللغة الإنجليزية ضرورية لمستقبلي المهني ونجاحي الشخصي".

يرجى كتابة مايقارب ٥٠٠ كلمة للتعليق على هذه العبارة مع ذكر تفاصيل عن سبب موافقتك أو معارضتك لها

Appendix G: Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report

- Processed on: 24-Nov-2025 9:34 AM CAT
- ID: 2826017879
- Word Count: 78598
- Submitted: 1

PhD.docx By Sameer Satardien

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[Almutlag, S. "Second language writing self-efficacy and tolerance of ambiguity : an investigation of their interactions and developmental change in the Saudi higher education context"](#)

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[Paula Winke, Tineke Brunfaut. "The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Language Testing", Routledge, 2020](#)

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[Shawn Loewen, Masatoshi Sato. "The Routledge Handbook of Instructed Second Language Acquisition", Routledge, 2017](#)

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[Richard E. Mayer, Patricia A. Alexander, Logan Fiorella. "Handbook of Research on Learning and Instruction", Routledge, 2025](#)

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<http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu>

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✖
[Kees de Bot, Wander Lowie, Marjolijn Verspoor. "Second Language Acquisition - An Advanced Resource Book", Routledge, 2005](#)

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<https://es.scribd.com/document/14558825/Ksa-Cultural-Mission-to-Usa>

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✖
[Foley, Peter Llewellyn. "Picking up a second language from television: an autoethnographic L2 simulation of L1 French learning", The University of Queensland, School of Education, 2018](#)

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[Jamilah Maflah Alharbi. "Acquisition of Vocabulary Among Arab ESL Learners: An Empirical Analysis of Affective Factors", World Journal of English Language, 2025](#)

ISABELLE DELVARE

BA (Hons) (Wits)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Editor and proofreader

Writer and materials developer

Lecturer/trainer in editing and proofreading techniques

Translator from English into French and French into English

Past Chair, Professional Editors' Guild

Past Acting Chair, Alliance of Language and Media Practitioners of South Africa

Past Board member, South African Book Development Council

Accredited in English editing with the Professional Editors' Guild

DECLARATION OF EDITING WORK

From: Isabelle Delvare

[REDACTED]

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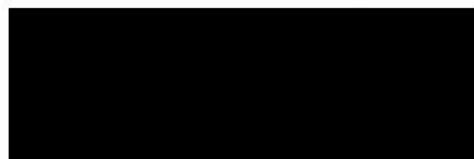
To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I have edited Sameer Satardien's Doctor of Philosophy thesis, entitled: AFFECT AND INVESTMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE CASE OF ENGLISH IN SAUDI ARABIA.

He is a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and his student number is 224196036.

I edited the dissertation for overall style and language, and for lapses in logic and syntax at the sentence level. I also queried content that was not entirely clear to me, with the work's intended readers in mind. Mr Satardien responded positively and professionally to the editing process. He has checked the whole edit carefully before accepting or rejecting my changes; and has handled all answers to my content queries himself.

I wish Sameer the very best in the future!



Isabelle Delvare

30 December 2025