Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

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Abstract

Student engagement is, today, a topic of importance in Higher Education research. Previous studies have mainly discussed the impact of student engagement on different aspects of the academic context. For example, Trowler (2010) states that universities should invest their resources and efforts in enhancing student engagement and improving the quality of learning outcomes. Zepke (2016) describes student engagement as an important research topic linked to student success and the quality of learning and teaching in Higher Education. Kahu and Nelson (2018), authors I shall draw on extensively in this thesis, state that student engagement has become important in discussions of student retention and success in Higher Education. However, research on promoting student engagement in language learning settings is relatively sparse, particularly with regard to Higher Education in Saudi Arabia. This PhD aims to add insights to enhance student engagement in Saudi Higher Education by exploring participants' perspectives on the English learning in a Saudi Arabia university's Preparatory Year Programme and it draws on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) Conceptual Framework of Student Engagement as a theoretical framework to explore student engagement.

This study was built on qualitative research methods to address and answer the research questions. This approach explores responses from the study's participants to investigate student engagement and its enhancement and to examine the main issues around student engagement and English learning in the Preparatory Year Programme (hereafter PYP) at Saudi University. Data was obtained through face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the primary tool to collect data from 30 participants: 18 students (PYP students and PYP graduates), and 12 teaching staff (from the English Centre and the College staff).

The responses from the data of this study revealed a number of factors that might influence student engagement. For example, students' expectations are likely to affect student engagement and meeting these expectations might lead to several academic outcomes such as student motivation, knowledge, success, and retention. This study notes that learning and pedagogy practices are expected to impact student engagement in the PYP. The data revealed student motivation, curriculum and pedagogical issues, such as teaching methods, and these also may be key factors influencing student engagement.

The study's data also pinpointed several challenges that may decrease student engagement in the PYP including issues related to promoting the learning environment in the PYP include a lack of involving students in making decisions about their learning and the lack of a thorough introduction to various university activities. Using English as a Medium of Instruction is another challenge highlighted in the data by the participants that may potentially affect student engagement. The responses from the data suggest that students' low proficiency level and a lack of English learning supporting resources and environment are key factors that led to challenges in using English as the Medium of Instruction. Drawing on engagement theory of I suggest that these challenges might impact students' self-efficacy, emotions, sense of belonging and well-being. As a result of this impact, students may experience difficulties improving self-confidence, communication skills and personal growth.

The participants in this study suggest various measures to enhance student engagement and English learning in the PYP. For student engagement, the data suggested that PYPs might need to encourage students to use self-learning, autonomous learning strategies, and that increasing student partnership might also promote student engagement. For English learning and teaching, the data suggested that the PYPs need to improve the curriculum, adding multiple learning levels and different learning paths and developing assessment methods in the PYP. Additionally, I propose a model to enhance student engagement in the PYP based on the study's findings and informed by Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement conceptual framework. It is hoped that this might contribute to facilitating student engagement through English learning in the Saudi PYPs and similar educational programmes.

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Dedication

To my beloved parents, whose love, encouragement and prayers have always strengthened me throughout my life and provided me guidance and great motivation to complete this research.

To my dear wife and beloved sons and daughter, who were always patient and best companions in the struggle of this journey and spared no time or effort to support and help me.

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Author’s declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Abbreviations

AUSSE	Australasian Survey of Students Engagement
BPNT	Psychological Needs Theory
CEFR	Common European Reference Framework
DAS	Deanery of Academic Services
ELC	English Language Centre
ELP	English Language Programme
EMI	English as the Medium of Instruction
HE	Higher Education
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
NTP	National Transformation Programme
PYP	Preparatory Year Programme
RMT	Relationships Motivation Theory
SDT	Self-Determination Theory

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There is a growing interest worldwide in developing the learning process in Higher Education, and engagement is an interesting factor in this regard (Quaye, Harper & Pendakur, 2019). Since English is considered a global language widely used in various contexts, especially the education sector, improving English learning and teaching practices is another key interest in developing Higher Education. It has become necessary to activate the role of students in the learning process to obtain better outcomes (Murray, 2018). Engagement may increase student's participation in their learning and increase their cognitive abilities and learning skills (Zepke, 2018). Additionally, engagement has shifted the role of students in the learning process and this is evident in several forms, including an attempt to break away from traditional learning patterns and pedagogies (Groccia, 2018). Educational institutions may need to create innovative solutions to promote student engagement by preparing the appropriate environment for learning, contributing to the diversity of classrooms or extra-curricular activities, and promoting student engagement in developing capabilities, increasing belonging, and retaining students (Burke, 2019).

Activating the role of students in the learning process through engagement may lead to a wide range of benefits. For example, increasing students' ability to be creative and innovative may mean they are not bound by traditional patterns and routines which might lead them to feel bored and demotivated. Also, engagement may lead students to be autonomous learners by exploring information and striving to understand and assimilate it (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Engagement can also encourage relations between students and strengthen peer, student-teacher and student-institution relationships by allowing learners to interact positively to accomplish learning tasks (Xerri, Radford & Shacklock, 2018). Furthermore, it can contribute to raising awareness among students and help them with experiences and skills to succeed in their lives and to become lifelong learners. As a result, engagement may increase students' self-confidence and may help them succeed on personal and social levels.

From the language learning perspective, student engagement represents the quality and quantity shown in students' active involvement and commitment to their language learning

(Hiver et al, 2021). Mercer (2019) describes student engagement as the key to success in language learning, as it aligns with the objectives of language learning motivation and second language acquisition. Relatedly, Svalberg (2017) states that engagement is an important factor in language learning, which can occur in any language learning setting, including formal and informal language learning.

In addition, the widespread of using English worldwide has promoted the idea of using English as a global language in various fields, including the academic domain. Galloway, Kriukow and Numajiri (2017) report that there is a global growth in the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in Higher Education institutes in countries in which English is not the first language as a part of the internationalisation policies of universities worldwide. They stress that the expansion of using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education institutions can have challenges and implications for English language learners, including issues related to English language proficiency and the impact on the first language as well as cultural issues with the dominance of the target language culture. Also, social issues are represented in the inequality between those who master the English language and those who do not, along with the high costs in organization, management and resources. Combining all of these aforementioned points, was my initial motivation for conducting this study.

This Chapter will outline the focus of the study and provide information about the research context. Also, it will explain the issues motivating this study and state its research objectives and questions. Finally, it will briefly summarise the research design and methods and provide an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 The study focus

The essential components of the learning process may differ from one society to another depending on what that society needs and what they need to improve student success. Most educational systems focus on measuring the students' performance as an essential element in the learning process (Axelson & Flick 2010). However, students need to understand how the learning process works and the value of student engagement that could be useful for their learning and success (Kahu & Nelson 2018). Since student engagement in Higher Education has been correlated with education improvements need to ensure that students are taught effectively and that students use their cognitive skills to make education a good and efficient

process (Kuh, 2009). Learning does not occur only through the regular transfer of information and content of textbooks from teacher to student, but the means to do so is crucial. For example, student engagement can maintain student interaction with educational materials and ensure learners make a great deal of effort to acquire knowledge and learning (Zepke, 2013). Engagement will also require the development of teaching practices in Higher Education to adapt to student needs and goals and learning backgrounds.

There has been considerable attention to research on student engagement in Higher Education over the last decades (Bryson, 2016; Kahu, 2013; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Trowler, 2010; Zepke, 2015) Higher Education and different countries around the globe have developed different systems to encourage student engagement in the Higher Education sector (Trowler, 2010). For instance, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was introduced and conducted by the American education bodies in 1999 (NSSE, 2001). The purpose of this instrument is to evaluate the extent to which students participate in a good teaching and learning experience at the university level (Axelson & Flick, 2010). It also measures students' behaviours associated with the desired learning outcomes and personal development. A similar development is taking place in Australia and New Zealand through the Australasian Survey of Students Engagement (AUSSE), which was introduced in Australasian institutions for the first time in 2007 (Coates, 2007). It aims to develop and promote students' engagement in university education through collecting data on students' perceptions to measure their learning experience and satisfaction with university services (Coates, 2007). This glimpse from the above-mentioned previous studies is relevant to my own PhD which focuses on first year students in a Higher Education context. Also, it informs my study to investigates first year university student views on student engagement but in a different context.

The Saudi government. through the Ministry of Education (MoE), has paid great attention to Higher Education by providing free education for male and female students. Each year the MoE grants budgets to the universities which they spend on delivering all that is in the interests of education and facilitating teaching and learning, including any required teaching materials, computers, printers, and training sessions and workshops for teachers. The context of student engagement has become important to Saudi Higher Education, especially now with the Saudi Vision 2030, a new comprehensive developmental plan launched by the Government of Saudi Arabia and I explain this later in this Chapter. I will next explain my motivation for this study.

1.3 The motivation for this study

I was motivated to carry out this study for various reasons. I sought to investigate stakeholders' perspectives about student engagement in language learning and teaching processes at the university level, particularly the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP). The PYP can be defined as a year of preparation for first year university students through a number of PYP courses that include the English language and the rest of the materials that the student needs to start their undergraduate studies (explained further in section 1.4.1).

As a practitioner interested in language learning in Higher Education, I found that the PYP is a global educational pattern in various Higher Education worldwide comes in different forms and is not a novelty in Saudi Higher Education. Some studies conducted by some researchers on the PYP in Saudi Higher Education conclude that the PYP, in general, is a positive addition to the education system at the university, with the importance of developing it and improving the university outcomes.

Despite some positive aspects of the PYP experience, such as enhancing students' cognitive and behavioural capabilities, I faced realistic experiences that led me, as an English teacher worked in the PYP, to many questions about the preparatory year. These questions were related to student learning, engagement, and adopting autonomous learning practices. Among the most important questions: Are students prepared enough before joining the university? What is the ultimate goal of the PYP? Why is there much focus on the English language in PYP despite students' low proficiency in English? What are the real issues that students and staff face in the PYP? And how to overcome these issues? And What next?

All these previous questions led me to understand that the development aspect is important and inevitable for any learning process. The PYP is a part of the learning process, which may take many years to measure its effectiveness and impact and address the shortcomings practically.

Through my practice of working as an English language teacher in the PYP, I felt the change in the level of students after joining the PYP and moving to university. I noticed that the student is characterised by a higher level of commitment and seriousness and has confidence in themselves and their abilities. However, students need to reinforce and encourage several skills required in university and post-university life. For example, expressing their opinions,

discussing and accepting the others, believing in co-operative work, being an active learner, and many positive aspects may encourage students to be more engaged in their learning. It is hoped that would develop their personal and psychosocial aspects.

Regarding the remarkable growth of student engagement in the Higher Education literature, and due to the extreme absence of studies within the Saudi context on student engagement, I decided to study the value of applying student engagement in the Saudi context. Owing to my career in teaching and learning the English language, I adopted to study student engagement to enhance the learning of English in the PYP in Saudi universities.

I was motivated to explore whether the concept of student engagement and teaching practices could help or hinder learners from learning English at the university level. Second, I hoped to explore the reasons that might appear to prevent learners from learning English inside the classroom and in informal situations outside.

Also, I wished to discover student and academic staff perceptions of the challenges and difficulties they face and what would represent, for them, good learning and teaching practices in the PYP. I expected that the findings of this research would open the roads to cope with obstacles to student engagement, and I hoped this would contribute to a better model for teaching and learning across English language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, through my research, I will reflect on behaviours by students and institutions associated with the desired outcomes of the university including, self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being. Also, I will assess various aspects of the learning experience in which Higher Education institutions perform and different aspects of the undergraduate experience that could be improved, including active learning, student and staff interactions, academic challenge, a supportive learning environment, and work-integrated learning as all play a part in student engagement as I will explain in Chapter two. I next provide some background information the context of the study.

1.4 The study's contextual background

This section will provide background information about the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) and English learning in Saudi Higher Education and will give an overview of the Higher Education settings and English language learning in Saudi Arabia.

1.4.1 The Preparatory Year in Saudi Universities

The 1960s was the start of the PYP when one of the Saudi universities, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, adopted the PYP and became the first Saudi university to actively prepare students for their academic studies. At the beginning of the 21st century, many universities and educational institutions in Saudi followed that university in transferring the experience of PYP to their academic programmes. Between 2005 and 2007, the preparatory year was introduced into Higher Education programmes in Saudi Arabia and all universities decided to include it as the first year of their academic programmes.

The primary aim of the PYP is to give students the opportunity to adapt to the university environment and prepare them socially and academically for university study before joining their chosen courses. Also, the PYP is intended to bridge the gap between general and Higher Education. English has an important role in these PYPs as most of the courses are taught in English, as this is the Medium of Instruction used in University scientific disciplines. These PYPs are supervised by a particular department at the University (for example, the English Language Centre and the Deanship of Educational Services).

In addition, there are other goals that the PYP seeks to achieve. For example, it aims to increase student retention and graduation by reducing educational waste resulting from student failure and frequent transfer between major subjects studied. The PYP also seeks to simplify admissions through the appropriate orientation of students into their preferred college according to their skills and abilities. It also aims to improve English language and academic skills, to promote students' research and communication skills, and to prepare them to participate in university life with respect to social, academic, and research aspects of the university. If the PYP meets its aims, it is a very significant contributor to enabling student engagement.

Despite all the positives and benefits related to joining the PYP, the student is exposed to some negatives and side effects when joining it (see Alblowi, 2016; Alghamdi, 2015; Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Hussain, Albasher & Salam, 2016; Shamim, Abdelhalim & Hamid, 2016). For example, the PYP extends the study time for the student as it consumes a year of the student's academic life. Students may also be distributed unfairly, forcing them to study courses they do not want. In addition, some students have low motivation and a low level of English. Also, the curriculum is challenging for students as it uses English as the Medium of Instruction.

As stated above, the PYP is the first year of study in the academic life of the university student, and it differs from one university to another. In some Saudi universities, before joining a university and submitting university applications, students are given the option to enrol, usually in three tracks/paths in the PYP. Based on their secondary school grades and PYP track preferences, in some universities students are admitted into the Health Science track, the Science track, or the Humanities track, However, in the university in which my study is located and in some other universities, students are enrolled in one track/path. After successfully passing the PYP, those students are distributed to the university's Colleges based on their preferences and grades in the PYP to start their academic studies.

Students could join their disciplines immediately after finishing secondary school in the past. However, after the PYP has been introduced to Saudi universities, students must pass the PYP first before joining the desired academic disciplines. The student's admission is determined by whether they fulfil the requirements of the desired disciplines. For example, in most universities, the College of Medicine requires the high grades in passing the PYP, bearing in mind that admission to the College of Medicine also depends on the volume of competition for available places.

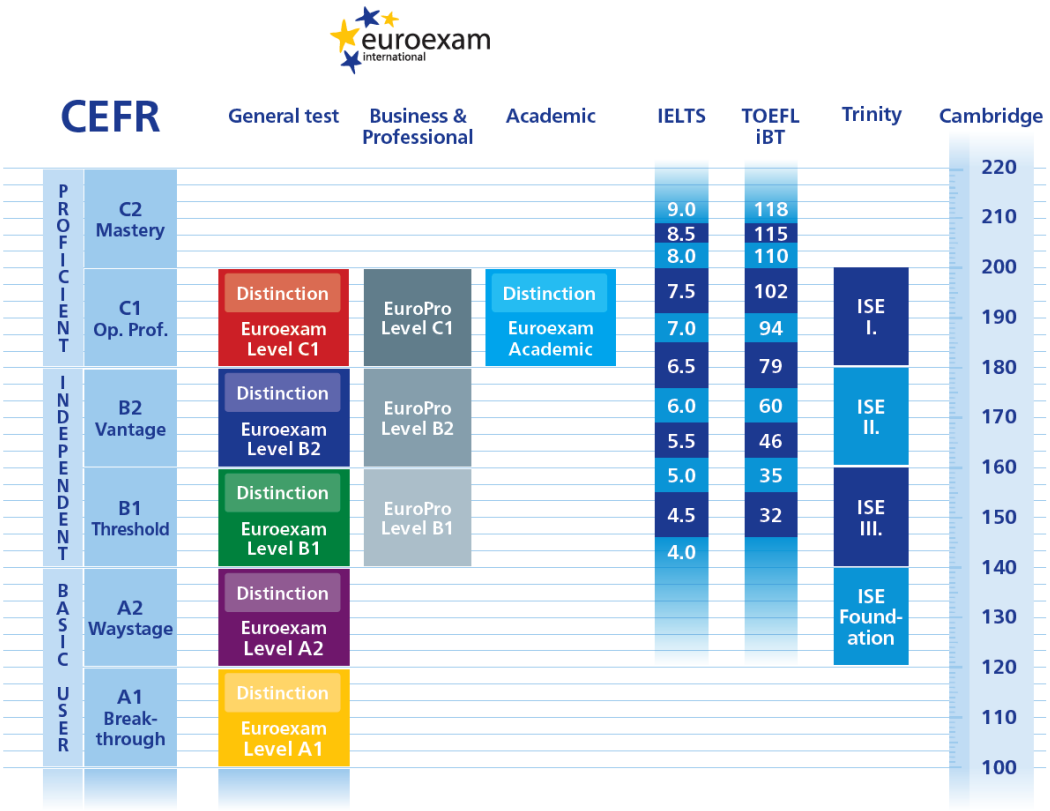
In the university in which my study is located all students in the PYP study basic Science s such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology and an intensive English language course in general and academic English. Science subjects and English language subjects are the most important subjects in achieving admission requirements for the academic disciplines. The rest of the subjects vary between general skills such as communication skills, computer skills, physical education, Islamic education, and the Arabic Language. It should be noted that most of the subjects are taught in the English language except for Physical Education, the Arabic Language and Islamic subjects. Students who attend the PYP

are mainly students who have successfully finished secondary school and they tend to come from a similar educational background. Some students will have studied at English medium private schools, while others will have learned English at state schools. The following sections will set the scene in detail about the PYP based on the PYP guide book in the university used for this study.

At the site of this research, the English Language Centre (ELC) is linked to the Deanery of Academic Services (DAS) which supervises the Unified Scientific Track, a new name for the Preparatory Year Programme (ELC, 2018). The ELC is responsible for the English Language Programme which is compulsory for first year undergraduate students who wish to enrol in their scientific undergraduate studies (for example, Medicine, Engineering, Science s) (ELC, 2018). The programme is, however, still known as the PYP.

According to the ELC (2018) student handbook, the ELC aims to educate nearly 5000 students who attend the PYP at the headquarters and branches of the investigated University (as the University has different campuses in different regional cities) to achieve the level of B1 (independent learner) in English, in accordance with the Common European Reference Framework (CEFR) see figure 1 below. The **Council of Europe** (2001) states that this framework is an international standard which was developed by the Council of Europe for describing learners' language ability on a scale of six points, starting from A1 for beginners and reaching C2 at the top for proficient learners who have mastered the language. the comparison between a number of well-known English language exams based on the CEFR can be seen at https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions.

Figure 1: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)



(source: Euroexam 2018, https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/level-descriptions)

The level of B1 is thought to be suitable for students to start their university studies in the colleges associated with the ELC which, as noted above, are the Colleges of Medicine, Applied Science s, Computer Science and Engineering, and Science (ELC, 2018). Regarding the ELC (2018), the curriculum in the PYP studied in this research consists of two semesters with ten courses, including English Language Skills 1 and 2, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer, University Life Skills, Arabic Language, and Islamic Studies with, as noted, English as the Medium of Instruction. Students must pass all the courses in this programme before they are able to move to their second year to study in their subject areas.

According to The ELC (2018), most students pass the PYP, and only a few do not (for example, 3 of 30 students in one class might not pass). Failure to pass the PYP has two consequences. First, if a student fails to pass the English Language skills 1 course in semester one, s/he will be asked to enrol in this course for semester two. Similarly, if a student fails to pass English Language skills 2 in semester two s/he will be asked to re-take it in the summer. Second, if students do not pass the other courses, for example, Maths or Physics in

semester one, in that case, s/he will directly be enrolled in the courses of semester two based on a suggested plan by the administration of the PYP for the students and they will be enrolled in the summer for the courses they failed.

The ELC (2018) conducts a placement test to identify the English level of new students during the induction week at the beginning of the academic year and before they start their studies. This diagnostic test allows the ELC specialists to rate the students' level according to the English language levels of CEFR. Students are then distributed according to their test score into two tracks. The first is the fast track, which is for students who score 80% and above in the test and this track comes with low contact hours (eight hours per week) for the English Language course. The other is the normal track, which is for students who score below 80% and it comes with the standard contact of 16 hours per week for the English Language course.

The overall aim of the ELC is to prepare students for their academic studies and to develop their English language skills as used as English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in the colleges/subject areas they join after completing the PYP. The ELC aims to enable students to pass English 1 and 2 courses successfully and achieving this goal needs a strategic plan to increase the quality assurance standards of learning and teaching devised by the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Evaluation (NCAAA). The NCAAA is responsible for issuing regulations and standards for all Higher Education institutions and programmes in Saudi Arabia (NCAAA, 2022).

Although Arabic is the first language in Saudi Arabia and is the Medium of Instruction in all schools up to secondary school, the Saudi Higher Education systems introduced English as the Medium of Instruction in all Higher Education institutions throughout the country but especially in scientific disciplines (Al-Kahtany, Faruk & Al Zumor, 2016). This unexpected shift in language created a huge gap between teaching, learning and gaining knowledge and a general understanding of topics (Ebad, 2014). Given the importance of this topic, this study will investigate the participants' views to see if this language switch was unexpected for students in the PYP and to explore whether English causes an obstacle to teaching, learning, and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in the subject areas.

According to the ELC (2018), they have conducted several studies and tests on the various curricula of different publishers to ensure the selection of appropriate curricula that will

improve the skills of students in the English language and achieve a high rate of success (ELC, 2018). According to the ELC (2018) handbook, the term curriculum refers to the materials taught in English 101 & English 102, and the Curriculum Unit is responsible for these materials (for example, textbooks, handouts, supplementary materials, and educational aids). The standards which students need to attain are internal and external. The internal standard means measuring student's proficiency level as an internal source within the University, and this includes:

1. The needs of the client colleges: EAP skills and Language proficiency required level.

2. The students' ability to deal with the English 103 course which is taught in some of the Colleges/Departments that the students join upon successful completion of the PYP.

The external means measuring student proficiency level includes:

1. CEFR = B1
2. TOEFL iBT= 57-86
3. Paper Based TOEFL: 450-566
4. IELTS 4 - 5.5.

Based on the ELC (2018) handbook, formal assessment has been identified as part and parcel of every educational setting. The ELC Testing Unit is aware of the importance of developing and maintaining a valid, reliable and practical assessment system. It is based on measuring students' progress throughout the Programme by using regular tests and classroom quizzes along with assessing the contents of the students' writing portfolio in order toto see some progress in their language skills, such as writing and reading by the end of the course. Table 1 shows the assessment plan used by the ELC for the English course in the investigated PYP.

Table 1: the assessment plan for Semester 1

Assessment	Weight
Mid-Term Test	35%
End-of-Term Test	35%
Quiz 1 – MCQ & Writing	10%
Quiz 2 – MCQ & Writing	10%
Quiz 3 – Speaking	10%

(source: ELC Student Handbook, 2018)

There are two tests in each semester on listening, reading, vocabulary, grammar and writing, and Mid-Term Test and an End-of-Term Test.

The content of all achievement tests is based on material students' study in the classroom. All exam dates and times are included in the syllabus plan issued at the beginning of each semester, so students are fully aware of the exact exams dates in order that they can manage their progress. These tests consist of questions on listening, reading, vocabulary and grammar in Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) format. Classroom quizzes are also included as part of the assessment procedures and what I have noticed from my teaching experience is that these tests allow students to continually improve their work and deal with any issues that may arise. In the writing component of the test, students are normally asked to respond to a writing prompt similar to a task they will have encountered in the course book (for example, Q: Skills for Success). Other possible writing activities might include punctuation, error analysis, fill in the gaps and any activities similar to those students have practised during the semester and so, for example, they will have had the opportunity to write a simple academic essay.

Regarding the contact hours, the PYP is known for its long duration which may cause a kind of stress for students. According to the ELC (2018) handbook, the PYP day begins at eight in the morning and ends at five in the evening. For the PYP English teachers, there are either morning or afternoon working shifts. The morning shift is from 8am to 3pm while the afternoon shift is from 10am to 5pm. During these hours, teachers are generally teaching for four hours in addition to 2 office hours. Teachers' availability during the office hours is mandatory as this is a time when students are able to visit their teachers for any extra support that they may need. I will explore the contact hours and the tests in the PYP later in my study. Next, I will review Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Higher Education.

1.4.2 Saudi's Vision 2030 and Higher Education

This section summarises the Saudi Vision 2030 and its endeavour to improve Saudi Higher Education. The education and training sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is undergoing crucial developmental stages, and my own research supports these developmental plans. On April 25, 2016, the KSA announced its reform project Vision 2030 as a comprehensive development plan. The Council of Economic Affairs, chaired by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince, developed this plan and then introduced it to the Council of Ministers headed by King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud for approval. This Vision aims to accomplish three goals - a vibrant society, a strong and prosperous economy, and an ambitious country (Vision 2030, 2019).

On June 7, 2016, The Saudi Council of Ministers approved the National Transformation Programme 2020 (NTP) as one of the Vision 2030 programmes. The primary purpose of this programme is to measure the performance of the government agencies, foremost of which is education (KSA-Government, 2016). The year 2020 was the date set to measure the performance of the implementation of plans and programmes that officials have proposed in the Government of Saudi Arabia. For Higher Education, and as a part of the NTP, The Saudi Ministry of Education has paid great attention to addressing the difficulties and challenges facing Saudi Higher Education. According to the Ministry of Education (2019), these challenges include the lack of educational services and programmes for some student groups and the absence of an effective learning environment which limits creativity and innovation in learning and teaching. The deficiency of interpersonal and critical thinking skills also seems to be a problem that needs to be solved in the Saudi Higher Education System (Ministry of Education, 2019). Another issue is the negative stereotyping of the profession of teaching. Additionally, and relatedly there are many issues associated with a low quality of teaching approaches, a reliance on traditional teaching methods, poor assessment skills and, finally, the weakness of education and training outcomes in relation to the needs of the labour market (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The mission of Saudi Vision for Higher Education in the future and until the year 2030 comprises many of the objectives that the KSA seeks to achieve during this period, including providing equal education opportunities for all in an suitable learning environment under the educational policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2019). Additional goals are to raise the quality of Higher Education outcomes, increase the efficacy of research, encourage innovative productivity, develop public education and direct students towards appropriate career and professional choices (Ministry of Education, 2019). My study will attempt to produce and support evidence-based research that could contribute to tackling these issues by investigating student engagement to enhance Saudi Higher Education.

The Saudi government, represented by the Ministry of Education, has made sure that education is an important pillar in the development process of society and related fields (Ministry of Education, 2019). Through the direct impact of education on the advancement of societies, the Saudi Ministry of Education has encouraged a focus on individual development and investment in knowledge-producing minds. Thus, the Ministry of Education emphasises the need for the student to acquire knowledge, learn it, use it in its right place, and use it optimally in various life contexts. Because of this focus, it was

necessary to reformulate the current education provision to meet the needs of the global transformation in building an integrated knowledge society and to make education more creative and effective (Ministry of Education, 2022).

From this perspective, the Saudi Ministry of Education has sought to develop English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia, where it is now considered one of the areas of social development (Ministry of Education, 2018). Accordingly, the efforts of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia are intended to encourage and train students and teachers to learn English to lead to the development of individuals and societies to learn the language used by a large number of people worldwide to communicate with each other. Because of the importance of enabling students in general, and English language learners in particular, to use the basic skills of English for successful communication, it is anticipated that they might need to develop their skills in effective communication, criticism, analysis, and problem-solving (Ministry of Education, 2018). Also, they may need to develop their knowledge abilities to use these skills effectively to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and labour market needs. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has launched a new strategy for a national programme to study abroad as one of the ways to fill this gap. This is called the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Scholarship Programme and it aims to enhance the future of human capital development by raising efficiency as one of the most important measures of success in Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2022). The new strategy of this programme took into account many aspects that focus on covering the needs of the global labour market. It seeks to send students to the best educational institutions in various fields and countries worldwide according to the international classifications and accreditation standards within the Saudi Vision 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2022). My study will seek to contribute to achieving these goals by investigating student engagement in Saudi Higher Education in order to encourage engaged, effective, and independent learners.

Enabling national human capital is a primary objective of the Human Capability Development Programme (Vision 2030, 2022). Its objectives are to enhance lifelong learning opportunities, facilitate equal access to education, encourage essential learning outcomes, and improve the ranking of educational institutions (Vision 2030, 2022). This was followed by several development decisions in the last three years to develop Saudi Higher Education. The launch of the new sponsored studying abroad strategy came to complement this development so that Saudi Higher Education qualifications might become

compatible with the highest international standards. How my study fits these aims is summarised in the next section with respect to my motivation for this study which was explained above in section 1.3

1.5 Identifying the issue

In the language learning context, motivation and engagement may be considered as key components that affect learners' learning. Researchers might think of the need for a useful pedagogy that can stimulate the motivation to engage students in their learning practices in the PYP at a Saudi University. Learning English is essential as many university programmes are taught with English as the Medium of Instruction in different colleges/departments in many universities and institutions around the world including Saudi universities (Dearden, 2014). Failure to motivate and to engage students may impose severe constraints on the learning process and hamper it. Drawing on the literature on student engagement prior to this study, I felt concerned that many learners in PYPs in Saudi Higher Education institutions, including my own, were not adequately engaged in their study of the English language and this could have a negative impact on students' performance.

Although I focus on student engagement and related theoretical issues in Chapter Two, I draw on my professional experience as outlined above, to summaries some of the key concerns which motivated this study. I had perceived a gap in the learning environment between secondary school and university level and was aware that teaching practices, the learner's voice, and learners' perceptions can influence student engagement. The problem of lacking motivation and engagement had been seen in my practice in daily occurrences such as students not bringing the required textbooks to classes, not participating in classroom activities, poor attendance, arriving late and an over- reliance on other students to complete homework or class activities. But I was also aware that another reason behind the lack of engagement I had observed might have been accumulations of inadequate teaching approaches and learning styles in earlier education stages in schools.

Additionally, while obtaining high quality educational standards is a driver in Saudi education, there are challenges and obstacles facing Saudi universities. Alnassar and Dow (2013) listed several issues related to Saudi Higher Education including, for example, the rapid growth of the Saudi Higher Education which has resulted in a challenge to the commitment of Higher Education quality. Also, they believe that the adequacy level of

students' preparation for university in secondary education is another issue affecting learning and teaching in Saudi Higher Education. They argue that the teaching methods used in Saudi Higher Education need change and reform. These challenges require Saudi universities to have a greater commitment to encouraging a higher level of student engagement. This could take the form, for example, of a greater focus on student's attitudes and interactions with their learning, more positive and better shared relationships between teachers and students, and curriculum development to promote critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

According to Alhawsawi (2014), Al-Johani (2009) and Rajab (2013, in Alrashidi and Phan, 2015), although Saudi students study English in state schools for nine years, starting from grade 4 in elementary school, their English proficiency level entering the university is unsatisfactory and below the Ministry of Education expectations. Due to the intensive exposure to the English language of students in the PYP, many show a gradual but significant improvement in their English competence and this might lead us to think of the gap in teaching methods between schools and Higher Education institutions. In most state schools and universities, the pedagogies are more teacher-centered than student-centered. If a more student-centered pedagogy is important for student engagement, then this will need consideration. However, students might find it challenging to encounter different methods in the university if they are not used to such pedagogies.

Following the literature, which as noted I develop in the next Chapter, it is my contention that increasing student engagement may help create a stronger learning desire, stronger motivation, among students to learn a second language. Many questions have arisen thinking of this issue. For instance, does a high level of student engagement affect student learning? Can the students in the PYP be engaged more than they were in their schools? There might be different types of engagement that the students can adopt at the university level, which may lead them to increase their engagement and improve their English language level. This study will attempt to investigate in-depth different dimensions of student engagement (for example, autonomy, competence and relatedness) to enhance the language learning of the PYP students. I will, next, outline the purpose of my study.

1.6 Purpose of study

This study aims to explore participants' views about student engagement in the English language course in the PYP in a Saudi university context. I am interested in examining the learning and teaching practices that might develop learners' engagement in the English Programme. The research also aims to explore the study participants' (students and academic staff) perceptions of the approaches used in the classroom and how student engagement can affect the learning and teaching outcomes in the PYP, in which students are learning English for academic purposes. This research also focuses on various enhancements which might occur on the English Programme, including curriculum and involvement at the institutional level to support students to feel engaged during, on and at the end of their Preparatory Year.

Since student engagement is the focus of this research, my study seeks to provide suggestions to improve/enhance English learning and teaching and provide different approaches to facilitate student engagement in that English Language course in the PYP. The research also aims to identify desirable and undesirable practice, issues and difficulties that may arise in the language classroom, which may support or constrain student engagement. Language teaching and learning aspects associated with student engagement will be explored, including feedback, self-regulated learning, interactive motivational activities and the materials used in the PYP English Language classrooms and I turn now to the research questions of this study.

1.7 Research questions

The study's ultimate question is 'How can learning and teaching be enhanced through student engagement in the year one Preparatory English Language course at a Saudi University?' However, in order to start to answer that question, I thought it was necessary to gain an understanding of the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the preparatory year and how that might be improved. This study's research questions are as follows:

RQ 1. What are the expectations and realities of English learning in the PYP?

a. What were the students' expectations of English learning before they joined the PYP?

b. What did the students discover about the reality of English learning after they joined the PYP?

c. How do students feel about their English learning after the PYP and during their second university year when they start studying in their subject areas?

RQ 2. What are the students' and staff views about the way in which the English Language component in the PYP Programme of the university could be improved?

a. What are the views about the curriculum in the PYP?

b. What are the views about the content of the English and the other subjects that are taught in English in the PYP?

c. What are the views about the learning and teaching practices in the PYP?

RQ 3. What are the perceptions of the teaching staff in the English Language Centre and the subject areas about English language learning in the PYP?

RQ 4. How do students and staff view engagement in the learning process in the PYP with particular respect to: a) autonomy, b) competence, c) a sense of belonging to the university, d) a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline?

To answer these research questions, this study adopted a qualitative approach via interviews to collect in-depth data to provide information about a complex issue of subjective experience and understanding of participants in a given context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013). This investigation uses interviews to explore the relationship between student engagement and learning dimensions in this research (autonomy, competence and relatedness) and to assess student engagement through learning English in the PYP. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data to seek student and academic staff perceptions about student engagement and English teaching and learning practices in the PYP with respect to enhancing engagement practices.

The participants in the study are as follows:

1) Students
(i) during their study at the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP students)
(ii) after the PYP and during their second university year when they are studying in their subject areas (PYP graduates)
2) Staff in
(i) the English Language Centre
(ii) the subject areas

The methodology and analysis process of the study will be presented and discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

A thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse and interpret the study data. Four main themes emerged from the analysis process: Expectations and Realities of the PYP, Learning and Pedagogy in the PYP, Challenges and Suggestions for Improvement. All the study's main themes will be presented and discuss in detail in Chapter 4 and on the following section I provide an outline of the overall thesis structure.

1.8 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five Chapters. This first Chapter has provided an introduction and background to the study, including the research motivation, purpose, objectives, research questions, study context, and contextual background. Chapter Two will review the relevant literature on engagement and theories related to engagement in language learning. In Chapter Three, the research design and the methodological approach, and its application in this study, are detailed, with all of the steps and procedures conducted for the analysis of data. Chapter Four comprises a discussion of the data including the main research findings and how these address the research questions with reference to the related literature of the study. Finally, Chapter Five will conclude the thesis by restating the aim of the study and synthesising the key findings and contributions of the study. Also, it will outline the current study's limitations and make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: The study's theoretical framework and relevant literature

2.1 Introduction

Student engagement has been studied by many researchers who consider it an essential factor for student success because of its extensive overlap with most concepts of the learning process and its leading role in students' achievement and continued learning. Trowler (2010) states that universities should invest their resources and efforts to enhance student engagement and improve the quality of learning outcomes. Leach and Zepke (2011) state that student engagement has recently received increasing research attention with Zepke (2016) describing student engagement as an important research topic linked to student success and the quality of learning and teaching in Higher Education. Kahu and Nelson (2018) state that student engagement has become well recognised when discussing student retention and success in Higher Education. They suggest that student engagement reflects the student's psychosocial state, which links their emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects to their learning. They argue that student engagement occurs within the framework of the educational interface as the student and the institution interact and they suggest that this interface consists of four important factors through which student engagement occurs: self-efficacy, emotion, sense of belonging, and well-being.

Recent evidence suggests that Student engagement is usually considered an indicator of academic success and satisfaction, providing a sense of belonging to the surrounding community (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Today, it is widely accepted in the language learning domain that involving students in the learning process is both necessary and beneficial in order to improve their abilities to participate and be a part of the learning process. According to Hiver et al. (2021), student engagement is important in language learning because it relates to different aspects of learners' active engagement in learning, such as behavioural, emotional, and cognitive. The role of student engagement in their learning is demonstrated, for example, by attempting to identify new thinking patterns and seeking creative solutions to improve the learning process (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Academic staff play a critical role in promoting student engagement in the learning process, including encouraging students to participate in activities and materials that help them develop their skills and abilities.

In this Chapter, I will discuss key points from the literature on student engagement. I will refer to previous work to review what has already been researched about different aspects of student engagement, for example, its meaning, forms, and conceptual frameworks, and its link to language learning. Also, I will outline the main concepts of two student engagement conceptual frameworks. First, the main theoretical framework of the study is Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework (that is, self-efficacy, emotion, sense of belonging and well-being). Secondly I will discuss, the concepts of Leach and Zepke's (2011, p.196) student engagement conceptual organizer (that is, motivation, engagement with teachers, engaging with each other, institutional support, active citizenship and non‐institutional support) as this will be used as a supportive framework for Kahu and Nelson's framework. These two frameworks will work together to support my analysis of students' emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement and its influence on language learning.

In addition, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) will be reviewed in this Chapter, along with their link to student engagement and language learning. This Chapter will also outline the concept of learner autonomy and its relationship to motivation in learning English and its influence on and from student engagement. Finally, the use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in non-English speaking societies and its impact on student engagement and language learning will be discussed.

2.2 Understanding student engagement

For years, the importance of the idea of student engagement in Higher Education research has been highlighted. Several studies, for example, those by Trowler (2010) and Axelson and Flick (2010), agree that Alexander Astin's (1984) work on student involvement in the 1980s can be considered the origin of what later became known as student engagement research. At its early stages, research on the subject was mostly restricted to limited writings about students with a focus, instead, on managers, decision makers, teachers and researchers with little, if any, attention to student voice in the literature and the research (Trowler, 2010). More recently, the notion of student engagement has been extended to refer to the desire to enhance student learning ability (Christenson, Reschly & Wylie, 2012) and the historic roots of interest in student engagement were concerned with student involvement and enjoyment (Trowler, 2010).

Today's body of research on student engagement suggests that there is no agreed definition due to its overlaps with other concepts and its complexity. Zepke (2021) points out that the concept of student engagement does not have a single agreed definition. He continues that realising student engagement can be a great challenge in the learning process, and this task is further complicated as student engagement can be measured in different ways. Similarly, Zhoc et al. (2019) describe student engagement as a complex and multidimensional concept. Also, Wilson et al. (2019) believe that there is no agreed definition of student engagement, due to its association with different individual aspects of students, for example, behaviour and their learning.

Although many studies suggest no consensus on defining student engagement, the literature has acknowledged several commonalities and concepts of student engagement. For example, in his research on understanding student engagement, Buckley (2014) outlines several concepts of student engagement in the literature, which he divides into two levels. The main level involves understanding student engagement as a set of methods that lead to active learning. It has also been understood as a process that leads to active learning, conducted individually by institutions, students, or both. At the second level, student engagement has been implemented in learning work, research engagement, and student interactions with peers and staff. Additionally, it has been interpreted as a sense of belonging to a particular academic setting or institution, through student representation, active citizenship, student engagement in curriculum design and student voice. My study will view student engagement as an influential factor in language learning due to its relatedness to the different aspects of key language learning concepts, for example, behavioural, emotional and cognitive. In addition, student engagement can support self-efficacy, emotion, a sense of belonging and well-being, and learner autonomy as important triggers for language learning (Hiver et al., 2021).

In his review, Zepke (2021) synthesised the literature on student engagement to examine how it could be improved in Higher Education. He conducted a systematic study and suggested three key issues associated with student engagement. These issues include no consistent definition of student engagement, no agreed integrated theory of student engagement, and no consistent integrative map denoting the concepts of student engagement. However, Zepke (2021) views this inconsistency as due to the diversity of the different perspectives and aspects of student engagement including, for example, the behavioural, psychological, socio-cultural and holistic aspects of student participation.

Zepke (2021) believes that the diversity of different viewpoints led to the division of student engagement in the Higher Education domain into several levels, including, for example, the macro level, which focuses on supporting national policies. The meso level focuses on the policies of the institution. The micro-level focuses on enhancing student engagement for academic success by exploring students' lived experiences. The latter parallels my study, which aims to explore students' opinions and impressions about student engagement in promoting language learning. Zepke (2021) concludes that the research on student engagement usually focuses on what institutions, teaching staff, and students can do to promote engagement. He states there is a gap in theorizing what happens between disengagement and engagement and adds that the direct link between current theories and student engagement is still unexplored and needs further research. My study aims to investigate participants' perspectives on student engagement and will attempt to link its influence to their experience with language learning.

There are many studies in the learning and teaching literature identifying a large amount of research published in student engagement research. For example, in her work, Trowler (2010) found some 1000 research studies in this field. She claims that the term student engagement has been associated with student involvement concepts through National Surveys in North America and Australia and that authors frequently refer to it in the literature. However, student engagement in the UK literature has been concerned with notions such as student feedback, student representation and student styles of learning, and the term student engagement is only used in a small number of studies. Because of this, Trowler (2010, p.3) excluded most qualitative studies from UK literature which she describes as 'grey' and lacking solidity. She also claims that the literature does not address issues related to student voice and is mainly focused on examining students; actions for executives, policymakers, researchers, sponsors or teachers.

Another study by Zepke and Leach (2010) found 283 research studies in their synthesis of student engagement literature focused on both quantitative and qualitative studies. They identified four perspectives of student engagement research and developed what they called a 'conceptual organizer for student engagement' (Zepke & Leach, 2010, p.169) to explain the complexity of engagement. These perspectives include student motivation; transactions between teachers and students; institutional support, and engagement for active citizenship (see section 2.2.5).

Nelson et al.'s (2011) research review also covered almost 400 empirical and conceptual studies of programmes and practices in Australasian first year students' experiences in the decade from 2000-2010. They were interested in enhancing first year students' experiences in Higher Education with an emphasis on curriculum design principles, practice-based initiatives and pragmatic approaches in New Zealand and Australia. They argue that their review came as a continuation of what had been done in the American, British and European first year student research, and they support research with first year learners. They listed various examples of possible future research and investigations focusing on first year students that could be pursued. Some of their future research suggestions were aligned with some of the objectives of my study, including first exploring first year students' views about the difficulties they face in their transition to the university level with a view to promoting inclusive curriculum design for first year programmes through student engagement and to exploring students' opinions about their first year experience.

In their qualitative study, Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) discovered 2530 articles published in this area. They focused on synthesizing the literature to examine and present the concepts and topics found in the literature to understand student engagement and they concluded that there are many issues related to student engagement that decision-makers have neglected in higher education. Their study suggests that policies, practices and financial support bodies should be directed to enhance student engagement and the learning experience in Higher Education. For example, improvements need to be made to teaching practices, curriculum, and learning contexts to engage students in the learning process. A strong relationship between staff responses towards students and the feeling of unfairness and dissociation from friends or family by students, has been reported in their study which they called 'a sense of alienation' (Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013, p.323). The results of this study also indicate that there are issues related to student autonomy, identity shifts and transitions agency. For example, it suggests that students can be more engaged and able to learn something new when they find something of interest in the curriculum. This study is in line with my current study, which aims to investigate participants' perspectives about how engagement can be enhanced through factors such as curriculum design, teaching practices, relationships in the university community and learner autonomy.

Emphasising student engagement in Higher Education settings, Barnett (2017) supports the view that Higher Education is now influenced by different global and social activities, such as student engagement, and has become a global trend and knowledge field. Recently,

students may have been seen as consumers, not active partners, or members of the Higher Education community. Adopting the idea of student engagement may positively contribute to improving Higher Education outcomes. It has become necessary to re-examine Higher Education's purpose and its basic assumptions and consider concepts such as student engagement because they change and are used for different purposes (Westman & Bergmark, 2019). In the light of the literature about student engagement in Higher Education, previous studies suggested carrying out further studies in this field to reach a better understanding of how to enhance student engagement in Higher Education that could ultimately be used to enhance student learning. Carey (2013a) states that the concept of student engagement in Higher Education plays a key role in supporting the development of student learning, and it is one of the principal factors that may provide for the needs of the learners and the development of their learning.

In sum, student engagement may play an important role in addressing issues of student learning and might help to prepare students for and in their academic studies so leading to academic achievement (Lei, Cui, & Zhou, 2018). A growing body of literature recognises the current interest in student engagement in Higher Education as among the most used concepts in student learning and the future development of Higher Education (Carini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Burch et al., 2015). Similarly, Westman and Bergmark (2019) suggest that student engagement is an important factor in quality measurements of Higher Education and a focus on student learning achievements for future success. Involving students in the education process is an important aspect of education and personal development and it is likely a fundamental property of student engagement. However, in the context of tertiary education, the nature and meaning of engagement has, as noted earlier, often been overlooked from the student's point of view (Seale et al., 2015). Although several studies have investigated student engagement, the influence of student voice on student engagement has remained unclear in the literature. Kahu (2013) suggests that no single research project in the literature can study all aspects of these complex concepts of engagement. However, she proposes that further research is needed to develop a stronger conceptual base for student engagement, particularly in Higher Education, with involving students' views included in that research.

Historically the involvement of student voice in educational research can be traced back to the 1990s when demands started in school settings to hear the student voice included attention to student perceptions in the education process with respect to better understanding

different social aspects and learner beliefs (Bovill, 2013; Cook-Sather, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2006; Matthews et al., 2018). During this period, the term student voice emerged and was recognised in Higher Education in different parts of the globe but especially in Europe, North America and Australia. Beresford (2000) comments that this concern stemmed in part from Western society's growing interest in minors' rights, partly because of the emphasis on consumer rights and, in education, the rights of students and their parents. He suggests that this perception would occur more effectively when learner needs are met, and engaging learners by surveying their views is a part of meeting those needs. Levin (1994) from Canada emphasised that involving students in goal setting and the learning process may improve learning and teaching practises, including treating students as qualified individuals and drawing on their knowledge and interests. Likewise, in the UK, Cook-Sather (2006) highlight Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace's work (1996) in which they asked for the inclusion of students' views in dialogues on improving schools and they recognised that the voice of the student is not considered by officials and other influential decision-making parties.

Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) also believed that student voice and experience should be taken seriously in discussions about learning. In addition, Beresford (2000) stated that a growing body of literature in the UK and other countries recognised students' views on how institutions are managed and witnessed the value and validity of student voice in providing information on how improvements could be made.

Various studies have assessed the efficacy of student partnerships as an interactive process between the learner and the surrounding environment as a key aspect of enhancing engagement. Participation and interaction are among the most important learning success principles when seen as a shared responsibility. For example, Kahu, Picton and Nelson (2020) state that learners need to interact with their surrounding environment to accomplish a task or achieve a common learning goal, knowledge, skills and attitudes, and this may be acquired through teamwork with the institution's community. Similarly, Trowler (2010) suggests that effective engagement requires interacting effectively in all of learning, not just participating in a task. Relatedly, Quaye et al. (2019) point out that engagement is more than participation or interaction; it requires feelings and sensemaking as part of any activity. It is necessary for students to be engaged in their learning experience and this can be seen in any content area according to Sinatra, Heddy and Lombardi (2015). The goal of pedagogical practices and teaching procedures should be accompanied by supportive interactive

relationships between students and teachers and directed towards helping learners to draw on their own learning skills to obtain better learning, acquire skills and create values and trends, according to Bergmark and Westman (2018).

Zepke et al. (2010) conducted mixed methods research to investigate how learning environments affect student engagement with learning and student success in nine diverse Higher Education institutions in Aotearoa, New Zealand. They collected data by distributing a questionnaire to 1246 first year students and interviewing eight students. Also, a quantitative survey was used to seek teachers' views about the learning environments and their link to enhancing student engagement. Zepke et al. (2010) found that student engagement is viewed as a shared responsibility by academic staff, students, institutions and external influences to enhance that engagement. They found that engaged students are intrinsically motivated and feel they can work autonomously. Their data revealed that several complex constructs are important to enhance student engagement. However, only those which relate to my study are outlined below as my study investigates the role of learning motivation and autonomy in promoting student engagement.

Additionally, Zepke et al. (2010) found that engaged students use their social skills to engage with teachers and peers, and this helped them to overcome academic challenges. Their data also revealed that students' motivation and perceptions of competence, self-efficacy and sense of belonging are important factors for student engagement. So; following this research, my own study aims to explore participants' perceptions of the influence of students as partners and their self-beliefs in enhancing student engagement. The nature of the study sample and the data collection tool in Zepke et al.'s (2010) study is similar to my study with respect to how they conducted interviews with first year students.

However, Zepke (2015) argues that it is very limiting to recognise engagement as a general sign of the quality status of teaching and successful student outcomes in Higher Education, and we need a more holistic perception. He believes that student engagement needs to be liberated from being related to student practices and institutions to give a more comprehensive view related to the socio-cultural environment of the concept of student engagement. He points out that the concept of student engagement should move to connecting with what happens in the classroom, the student's background, and the surrounding community. To become more inclusive for future research, Zepke (2015) concludes that student engagement needs to be liberated from general, specific, and

categorised practices and not be restricted to specific contexts or concepts. However, my study will explore student engagement in a specific context to understand it better.

It is widely agreed that student engagement in the Higher Education context depends on effective student learning and interaction with activities within the institution (Tight, 2020). Higher Education institutions are also responsible for supporting this interaction to obtain high-quality outcomes from student engagement (Quaye et al., 2019). Although the responsibility for learning rests with the student, educational institutions have a large share of that responsibility to create creating and provide conditions and resources to help achieve high-quality engagement (Thomas et al., 2019). Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie (2009) argue that student engagement responsibility has two sides. The first is how much effort is made by students towards their learning. The second is how much work the Higher Education institutions do to enable student engagement. Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie (2009, p. 412–413)

> .., the concept of student engagement represents two key components. The first is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success. The second is how institutions of Higher Education allocate the stakeholders and other resources and organize learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities.

Additionally, Payne (2019, p. 642) views student engagement as ‘a concept which has evolved as individuals, and the academic community, have developed their understanding’. In sum, learning is a two-way process between learners and teachers that allows them to exchange experiences and knowledge (Scarino, 2014). Some research indicates that promoting good communication and partnership between the students and teachers could improve student engagement. Yunus, Othman, and Ishaq (2011) argue that a positive teacher and student relationship leads to an ideal learning environment, both of which they need to succeed in their task. Dunleavy and Milton (2009) suggest that forming accessible and realistic bonds between students and teachers is essential to creating and promoting social interaction for student engagement. They suggest that it should be part of the plans for new educational programmes attached to the behavioural engagement. The literature points to finding common links between behavioural and cognitive engagement. Students may associate and learn continually enabled by the communications and relationships in their

environment if they wish to achieve successful learning. More explanation of these terms will follow in the coming sections of this Chapter.

Windham (2005) proposes that learners should have the chance to connect with teachers and specialists outside the bounds of educational programmes and classrooms in order to create significant engagement with them. In their work to investigate a deeper understanding of student engagement in learning in Canadian institutions, (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009) asked students about the ideal learning environment for them regarding the concept of student engagement. Students revealed that they need three factors to create an ideal environment for their engagement. They, first, indicated their need to learn from each other. Secondly, they referred to facilitating communication with teachers and building sensible relations with them. Thirdly, they pointed out their need to communicate with the surrounding community. Dunleavy and Milton (2009) suggest that with the availability of these factors, students may increase their learning abilities, learning awareness, autonomy, knowledge and the ability to identify themselves as learners. Although the previous study was conducted in school settings, similar research can be applied at the Higher Education level to explore variables in tertiary education. Thomas et al. (2019) believe there is a huge difference in conceptualising student engagement in the school and Higher Education contexts but student engagement has been viewed as a multidimensional concept in both sectors and can be applied to both sectors.

Because student engagement is important for better learning achievement, numerous educational experts have focused on making the student experience more engaging (Bryson, 2016). One element of these attempts is encouraging student co-operation and consolidating good relations between students and teachers. This can allow students to interact positively, reinforcing the concept of effective engagement (Carey, 2013b). In support of this idea, Felten, Cook-Sather and Bovill (2014) claim that respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibilities should occur in the relationship between students and teachers in terms of making teaching and learning more engaging and effective for both parties. Regarding the increasing number of studies on student engagement, the concept of student partnership has emerged as a topic related to enhancing student engagement. Terms such as change agents and students as partners have started to emerge in the literature to describe student voice and partnership (see, for example, Dunne & Owen, 2013; Nygaard et al., 2013; Bryson, 2014).

Regarding the role of academic staff in promoting student engagement, they may need to encourage students to play a part in the institution's activities. Trowler (2010) suggest that it should be effective contributions by the staff in the student engagement process, in various ways, which may help increase student success and tackle failure. One of the issues here is that staff building strong bonds with students could improve student engagement and success. The existing literature on student engagement is extensive and focuses on the important role of student-academic staff relationships (Thomas et al., 2019). For example, Kuh et al. (2006) found that the interactive relationship between students and faculty members reflects positively on students' academic performance. Such a relationship should be based on mutual respect and common beliefs to achieve students' engagement in a good manner.

Learners, in return, need to harness all of their energies to benefit from the teacher's experiences, knowledge and guidance. McCune (2009) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews to examine what university students in the UK think would influence their engagement to enhance their learning. The researcher gave an example that a Biology class student should practise laboratory work as a professional biologist. In that way, they may discover and develop the strengths in their personality and even acquire the qualities that help them build their character as engaged learners. McCune's (2009) study concluded that, to encourage students' ability to engage, they need to live authentic learning experiences. My study explores such an experience by asking for participants' views about promoting lived experiences to enhance student engagement within the language learning context. It could be, for example, an opportunity for learners to be socially engaged, develop their research skills, creative writing skills, or even to practise leadership skills.

Although, as I have already noted, there is no consensus in the literature on the types and definitions of student engagement, the literature has revealed some studies which do recognise types of engagement. For example, Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) identify three forms of student engagement. The first is the behavioural engagement, where students usually follow positive behavioural actions, such as attendance and participation. The second type is emotional engagement, which represents emotionally engaged students who may experience positive emotional responses such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging. The third type is cognitive engagement and is required of learners who cognitively engage and care about their learning, who seek to meet the requirements and

enjoy challenges. Each of these forms can have both a positive and a negative effect and cover a form of engagement (Trowler, 2010).

Gilbert (2007) points out that a growing body of literature recognises the importance of student engagement in Higher Education and links aimed at enhancing students' learning abilities or becoming lifelong learners. Taylor and Parsons (2011) believe that most studies of student engagement focus on student specific factors such as increasing achievement, positive behaviours, and a sense of belonging. Trowler and Trowler (2010) refer to three forms of student engagement: student engagement in learning, planning and preparation, and student engagement in identifying identity.

Leach and Zepke (2011, p.196) recognise four forms of student engagement 'motivation and agency, transactional engagement, institutional support and active citizenship'. Likewise, Kahu (2013, p.758) refers to four types of student engagement 'behavioural, psychological, sociocultural and holistic'. Additional types of student engagement are widely recognised in the literature, such as academic, cognitive, behavioural, intellectual, emotional, institutional, social, and psychological.

Regarding the novelty of student engagement research in the Arab region, which shares norms and cultural values with Saudi Arabia where my research fieldwork takes place, it seems hard to trace a student engagement history and so consider its implications on educational practices and attitudes. The quality of Higher Education in the Arab region relies largely on the society's identity and culture, which appears in turn as it is planned in the curriculum (see, for example, Ashencaen Crabtree, 2010; Anderson, 2012). Although Higher Education in the Arab region benefits from the rapid development of industry and social infrastructure at the local level, as well as the rapid growth of societies, I believe that there are some factors (for example, political and economic reasons) that negatively affect the outcomes of Higher Education institutions in the Arab region. These include the constraints on academic freedom in institutions which may, in turn, have decreased the quality of student engagement in these institutions.

Anderson (2012, p.3) describes the situation of student engagement in Egypt, suggesting that

> '… what had been a lively and quite politicised student movement in the 1970s was crushed in a crackdown late in the decade, the presidential decree authorising student government elections were cancelled in 1979—

> and for the last three decades, political expression, even about mundane campus issues, was tightly controlled'

This may give us a window into the educational situation in much of the Arab region. At the same time, Western universities have continued to lead and utilise developments of different aspects in Higher Education in terms of enhancing better learning experiences (Mayan, Sheard & Carbone, 2014), especially in the sense of giving liberties to students to adapt their learning methods to include their effective engagement throughout the education process. However, in the Arab region, this notion seems to be very different from what students may understand. For example, most teaching practices in the Arab region tend to use teacher-centred instead of student-centred models of learning and teaching (Mahrous & Ahmed, 2010; Mayan, Sheard & Carbone, 2014). Notwithstanding the scarcity of research evidence about student engagement in the region, a growing body of research has started to focus on learning and student engagement outcomes. Anderson (2012) states it is noteworthy that, in the Arab region, teaching staff and students have the ability and motivation to benefit each other, and this could have a great effect because people have already matured for change and have the appetite for more knowledge and more skills, which is almost limitless in this part of the world.

Over the past years, Saudi Arabia has acknowledged international criticism about the quality of its educational system and started to pay greater attention to its curricula content and pedagogy's educational nature (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). In Saudi Arabia, the education system is based on four basic pillars: its reliance on the teachings of Islam, as is the case in all the affairs of the state; central control of the system and educational support; state funding, and a gender separation policy (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Within this context, there is increasing interest in student engagement from various Saudi Higher Education bodies, such as Higher Education institutions and curriculum designers, as a reaction to the growing research evidence on policy initiatives, technical and educational support for teachers, and the implementation of existing regulations on student learning (Aljaloud et al., 2018). It is possible to recognise that the dominant pedagogical methods in most Higher Education institutions are still based on traditional teacher-centred approaches, in which the teacher is still seen as the knowledge provider who delivers information. But there does seem to be a growing desire to d convert from traditional teacher-centred approaches to student-centred and learning outcome-based models in Saudi Higher Education policy (Alnassar & Dow, 2013).

In the case of student engagement and language learning, some recent studies have explored the relationships between student engagement and language learning. For instance, Hiver et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of over 20 years of research on language learning and engagement. They examined different aspects of the literature regarding engagement in language learning and investigated the different concepts and ways to enhance student engagement. In addition, they reviewed 112 studies on second language acquisition and applied linguistics that fitted their research criteria on student engagement and its links to language learning. Their study revealed that few aspects of language learning research were implicated, particularly language learning motivation. They concluded that many studies on student engagement had been conducted to measure learners' self-reports without addressing practices that measure the different learning aspects of engagement in language learning through contextual studies.

Hiver et al. (2021) indicate that there are still areas to be explored in future research, including further long-term investigations that examine individual factors and test the nature of student engagement in language learning. They also suggest further research to measure the directed interactions of both engaged and non-engaged learners. My own study aims to explore the views of the study's participants about learning English with a view to enhancing student engagement in learning in the PYP. Also, it seeks to explore ways to enhance student engagement by understanding the views of the study's participants about the effect of motivation and learner autonomy, linguistic competence, a sense of belonging and well-being in enhancing student engagement and its link to learning English.

Svalberg (2017) conducted a study to examine how engagement is viewed in a language learning setting. She argues that the factors of the three types of engagement, emotional, social, and cognitive, correspond and can influence each other. She points out that these factors are combined and linked to interact with each other to achieve the goal of the language learning experience. Svalberg (2017) claims that motivation describes emotional engagement and peer interaction. While building friendships represents social engagement, focusing on tasks and activities is considered cognitive engagement. She argues that recognizing these factors depends on understanding the interdependence and interaction of many other factors in different contexts.

Student engagement in many studies tries to see if students are actively engaged in learning. Most of these studies investigate levels of achievement outcomes, such as high scores and/or

full attendance for the year, rather than levels of student engagement in learning, for instance, student's preferences, time spent on tasks and enjoyment. Windham (2005) states that engaging learners in learning, curriculum and activity must include several categories such as interaction, exploration, relevancy, multimedia, instruction, and authentic assessment. These can be used to support further research.

Bryson (2014) conducted research for over five years to gather evidence from literature and participants, students and teaching staff, in several UK Universities to evaluate the understanding of student engagement. He (2014, p.8) lists (see below) several factors that could impact student engagement based on students' perspectives as identified by students. He describes how his research journey in student engagement was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on academic engagement, and the second focused on engagement and students' social experience in the classroom. Also, he indicates that teaching staff responses focus on the behavioural engagement whereas student responses focus on emotional engagement and the following.

1- Their aspirations: why they choose to come to university and their goals.
2- Student expectations and perceptions about university, being a student and about their subject and degree: as they arrived and as these change during their degree.
3- Balances between challenge and appropriate workload.
4- Degrees of choice, autonomy, risk, and opportunities for growth and enjoyment.
5- Trust relationships between the student and staff, and student and peers.
6- Communication and discourse between student and others.
7- A sense of belonging and community.
8- The existence of supportive social networks.
9- Opportunities for, and participation in, activities and roles which empowered the student and gave them a sense of ownership, self-assurance and self-efficacy.

Bryson's list above of student engagement influences informed my own study to investigate participants' perspectives on what engages them during their language learning experience.

Taylor and Parsons (2011, p.5) raise interesting questions about whether a learner must experience all areas of engagement in order to have a successful learning experience or if 'learners must have a sense of belonging belong in terms to be academically successful', or if 'they must simply behave'. They continue: 'are high-achieving students who work but do not participate in extracurricular school events considered as disengaged learners? What might our educational programmes do to help students engage successfully?'. These types

of questions can help in linking to a conceptual framework that can add more knowledge in terms of having a better understanding of student engagement.

In light of the complexity of understanding student engagement, several researchers have attempted to explain the concept of student engagement by suggesting a number of models and frameworks to better understand it. My study will mainly draw on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework as a conceptual basis to answer one of the research questions of my study and to include attention to the complexity of student engagement and its effects on the learning process. Additionally, Leach and Zepke's (2011) conceptual organiser will serve as a supportive framework to conceptualise student engagement in this study. In this organiser, Leach and Zepke tried to simplify the complex understanding of student engagement through six perspectives and their indicators (see Table 3). They describe it as an endeavour to understand student engagement and it should not be seen as a holistic solution to comprehend student engagement. However, Bryson (2014) describes it as a genuine attempt to cover the concept of student engagement.

Table 3: Leach and Zepke's student engagement conceptual organiser.

Perspectives on engagement	**Chosen indicators**
Motivation and agency (engaged students are intrinsically motivated and want to exercise their agency)	**A student feels able to work autonomously. A student feels they have relationships with others. A student feels competent to achieve success.**
Transactional engagement (students engage with teachers)	**Students experience academic challenge. Learning is active and collaborative inside and outside the classroom. Students and teachers interact constructively. Students have enriching educational experiences.**
Transactional engagement (students engage with each other)	**Learning is active and collaborative inside and outside the classroom. Students have positive, constructive peer relationships. Students use social skills to engage with others.**

Institutional support (institutions provide an environment conducive to learning)	**There is a strong focus on student success. There are high expectations of students. There is investment in a variety of support services. Diversity is valued. Institutions continuously improve.**
Active citizenship (students and institutions work together to enable challenges to social beliefs and practices)	**Students are able to make legitimate knowledge claims. Students can engage effectively with others including the 'other'. Students are able to live successfully in the world. Students have a firm sense of themselves. Learning is participatory, dialogic, active and critical.**
Non-institutional support (students are supported by family and friends to engage in learning)	**Students' family and friends understand the demands of study. Students' family and friends assist with, for example childcare, time management. Students' family and friends create space for study commitments.**

Adapted from: Leach, L. & Zepke, N. (2011) Engaging students in learning: a review of a conceptual organiser, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 30:2, 193-204

The conceptual organizer proposed by Leach and Zepke (2011) identifies six perspectives for student participation. It includes motivation, students' interaction with teachers and interaction with each other, institutional support for learning and non-institutional support for learning such as from friends and family, and active citizenship, which is the co-operation of students and teachers to solve problems related to social practices. Kahu (2013) suggests that this organizer brings together many influences on student engagement from multiple perspectives. For example, institutional support and interaction with teachers come from the behavioural perspective; active learning and academic challenge come from the cognitive and psychological perspective, and the impact of external conditions come from the social and cultural perspective.

Also, Leach and Zepke's (2011) conceptual organizer introduces student motivation and expresses it through the three needs proposed by self-determination theory: autonomy, competence, and relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The organizer reviewed the strengths of these perspectives and compared them and their influence on learning. For example, the organizer defines teachers as having a greater impact than either student motivation or external factors, while competence needs are more important than interdependence or agency.

However, Kahu (2013) points out that Leach and Zepke's (2011) conceptual organizer focuses mainly on issues of definition and classification, and it lacks a clear definition of engagement. She argues that there is some lack of clarity between what happens before engagement and what happens after it occurs. She points out that a conceptual organizer excludes important aspects such as personality, academic skills, expectations, and the impact of social and political culture on a student's learning experience. She suggests the need for clear definitions to clarify what influences engagement without limiting individual factors only to the needs suggested by the Self-Determination Theory.

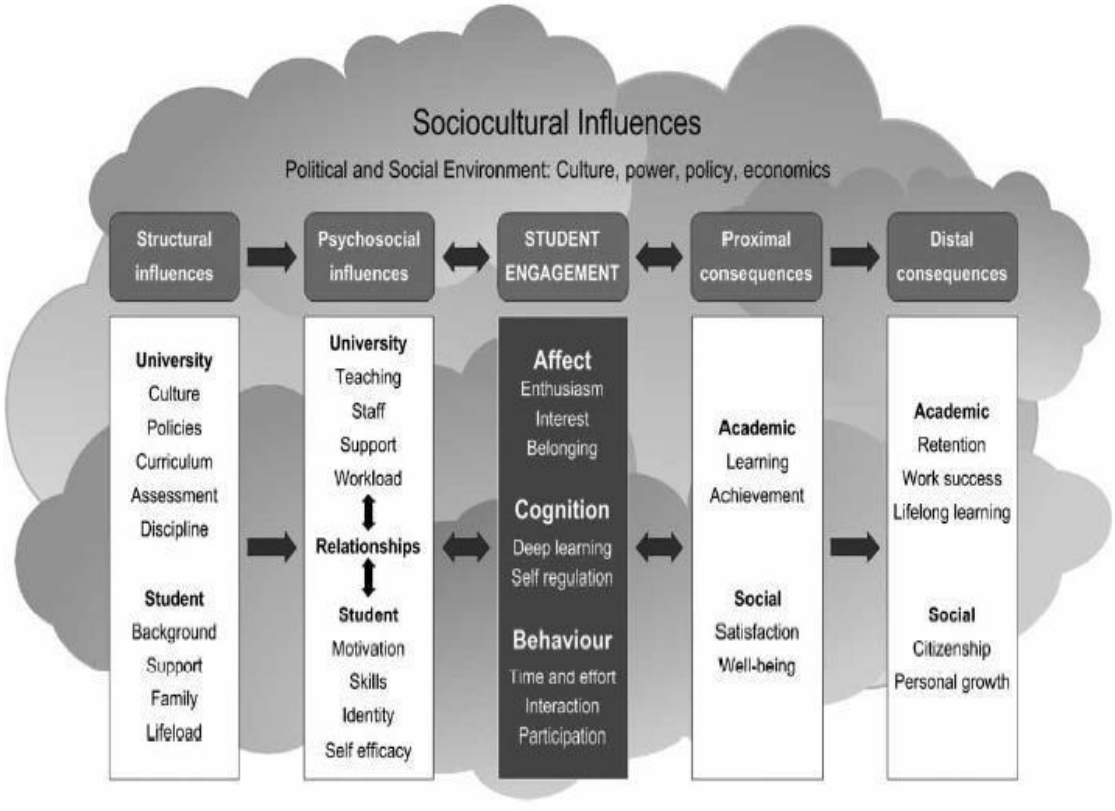
In another attempt to understand the complexity of student engagement structure, Kahu (2013) develops a conceptual framework to identify the factors that influence students' engagement with an emphasis on the socio-cultural context and how it would interact with the individual's learning experience in the institution. Kahu (2013) argues that the most significant problems with student engagement include no clear definitions, the lack of recognising which type of engagement associates with the factors that affect student engagement and its short and long-term outcomes.

Before presenting her framework on student engagement, Kahu (2013) discussed the four commonly used perspectives in the student engagement literature. The first is the behavioural perspective which, according to Kahu, is the most widely recognised viewpoint in the student engagement literature. According to Kahu (2013), the behavioural perspective is restricted to factors including students' behaviour and institutional practices and policy and focuses on how these factors influence student engagement. These factors include student achievement, effort and time spent on a task, and social and academic interaction within the learning environment.

The second is the psychological perspective which, according to Kahu (2013), It recognises engagement as the individual internal psychological and social factor that evolves and separates engagement and its prior and following results. As for the perspective mentioned above, the psychological perspective's main issue is the lack of definition and distinction between engagement and its aspects (for example, motivation, learning and teaching practices).The socio-cultural is the third perspective which, according to (Kahu, 2013), focuses on the impact of the social and cultural aspects on the student's academic experience. Kahu (2013) suggest that the socio-cultural perspective provides insights into why students are engaged or disengaged. Also, it suggests that institutions need to offer more support for students to adjust to the society and culture of the university. The last one is the holistic perspective which views student engagement as an active and constant process in different learning environments such as the classroom, activity and university (Kahu, 2013). Also, it consists of a holistic view of student engagement that includes students' perceptions, expectations, and experiences of engagement. Kahu (2031) states that engagement needs to be examined by conducting in-depth qualitative research within this perspective.

Kahu (2013) states that engagement can be defined as the time and effort students allocate to meaningful learning activities or tasks within this perspective and that this framework can be used as a guide to increase student's engagement as shown in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Kahu's conceptual framework of student engagement



Scanned from: kahu, E. (2013) Framing student engagement in Higher Education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), pp. 758–773. (see appendix 5 for the copyright permission from the author)

This framework has six dimensions: the socio-cultural context, structural influences, psychological influences, student engagement, short-term and long-term impacts. The student is shown in the centre of this process, as s/he influences or is influenced by these elements. As motivated by my teaching experience, this is exactly what I hope to be transferred to Saudi Higher Education Institutions. Kahu (2013, p.766) suggests that the notion of student engagement has also been associated with the concepts of 'Affect, Cognition and Behaviour', where affect represents enthusiasm and the feeling of retention and belonging. She illustrates that this type of engagement can lead to academic achievement as a short-term effect, or it can lead to personal growth and success as a long-term impact.

Kahu's (2013) framework also shows that another factor which can impact student's engagement is cognition, which represents in-depth learning and self-regulated learning. The influences of institutional structure (for example, culture and policies) can influence the relationship between staff and students and such a relationship can reform institutional practices (for example, teaching practice and staff support) and student variables, for example, motivation and performance. Rather than showing the influences as an initial link in the process of student engagement, Kahu's framework provides a deeper understanding of the sociocultural influences on student engagement (Kahu, 2013).

In sum, Kahu's (2013) framework attempts to understand the influence of institutional and student factors on student engagement. The framework tries to understand the student engagement construct through the psycho-social process integrated with the social context and the socio-cultural perspective with the psychological and the behavioural perspective. Kahu (2013) confirms that there is a possible overlap across these perspectives in identifying what happens before the student is engaged and what would happen as outcomes after the student is engaged.

After this model, a conference paper was presented by Kahu, Picton and Nelson (2017, p.1), where they develop another four additional factors which influence, directly or indirectly, and positively or negatively, student engagement and success. These factors are 'self-efficacy, emotion, belonging, and wellbeing'. These psychosocial factors could influence

the interaction of student and institutional factors and influence student engagement. These new factors, compared with the Kahu (2013) conceptual framework of student engagement, would be more relevant if a broader range of consequences of student engagement had been explored.

Subsequently, a revised model of Kahu's (2013) conceptual framework of student engagement by Kahu and Nelson (2018) emerged. In this version, Kahu and Nelson (2018) see student engagement as a psychosocial condition of the student with inter-relating behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects of learning. Therefore, they see that the student's success is one factor affecting their retention and completion of their academic studies. Kahu and Nelson (2018) point out that what raises the concerns of Higher Education policy-makers most is the low success rates of students for two main reasons. First is the consequent economic effects, such as balancing the benefit of investment in education for individuals and institutions. Second is the social effects such as social and cultural inequality in the society. Kahu and Nelson (2018) claim that students identified a range of reasons for their low success rates and withdrawal from their studies, including psychosocial and well-being factors.

Kahu and Nelson (2018) argue that student engagement is one of the best ways of assuring student success. They point out that the literature has shown significant correlations between educational programmes and student achievement. However, these links lack explaining how these factors with the institution's procedures for promoting success. So while the literature suggests that student engagement can effectively enhance student success, there is a need to understand how best to explain the relationships between institutional and student characteristics on the one hand and student learning and success on the other (Kahu & Nelson 2018).

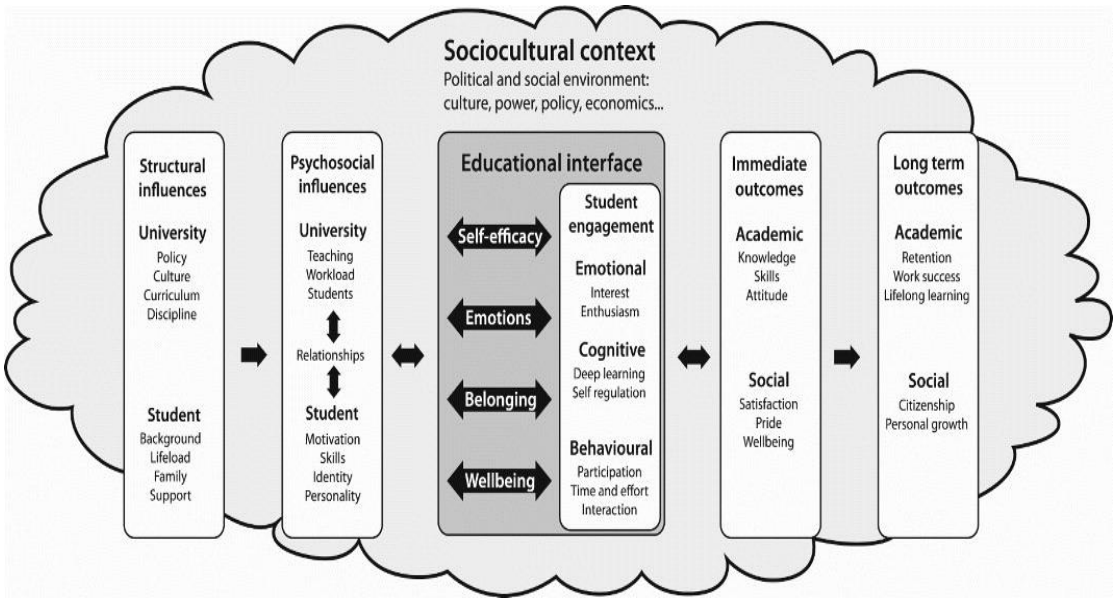
Although Kahu's framework (2013) focuses on the impact of both student and institutional factors on student engagement, it does not explain how these factors interact and influence the underlying psychological and social factors that influence student success (Kahu and Nelson,2018). Kahu's 2013 framework does not provide specific ways to understand how to develop curricula and implement co-curricular materials that can enhance student success and retention. Kahu and Nelson (2018) point out that transition theory emphasises that student-institution interaction is important for student success. Yet, they argue that transition should not be limited only to first year students. Kahu and Nelson (2018) claim that the term

transition is determined to identify differences between students and institutions as temporary and not permanent constructs. Therefore, they use the term cultural lens to illustrate the educational interface to express the individual psychological and social aspects in which institutional and student factors interact in students' engagement in learning.

Nakata (2007, p.199) as cited in Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.63) describes the educational interface 'as the space of a multi-layered, multi-dimensional use of cultural and social relations that reflects the student's lived realities'. It is a living experience of learning which views as an active and continuous process. They use the educational interface to describe the student experience and student engagement as an operational process within the learning environment. According to Kahu and Nelson (2018), the educational interface pictures the student as an engaged component in the learning process. The student builds a network of relationships across various learning environments within the educational interface, and their sense of self is effective, variable and varies depending on the circumstance.

This improved version presents the importance of student interaction with university life and the university environment. Kahu and Nelson claim that student engagement occurs when essential student factors (self-efficacy, emotion, belonging, and wellbeing) interact well with the institutional structures. So, the student would be more engaged if the curriculum is of interest or if they feel that their skills will fit with the university structural factors. For example, I assume students would be more engaged at the site of my study if some learning materials related to their academic study were introduced into their curriculum. Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.63), named this concept 'the educational interface'. They describe it as the place where student could experience and explore their learning. They argue that when this educational interface is positive for students, it positively affects student engagement and thus leads to their success. Figure 3 below presents the refined version of Kahu and Nelson's framework.

Figure 3: The refined version of Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement



Scanned from Kahu, E. & Nelson, K. (2018) Student engagement in the educational interface: understanding the mechanisms of student success, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37:1, (58-71), page 64 (see appendix 5 for the copyright permission from the authors)

Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.64) define the four psychosocial constructs of the educational interface as 'self-efficacy', which is the student's belief in their ability to accomplish a task and suggest this results from their personal and environmental factors. 'Emotion' involves students' responses to feelings for a particular situation, such as enjoyment, anxiety, and frustration. Then they describe 'Belonging' as students feeling part of their learning environment and connected to their community, such as institution, peers, teaching staff, and academic disciplines. Finally, 'Well-being' is when the students feel mentally, emotionally and physically healthy and have a sense of satisfaction and happiness about their learning experience. According to Kahu and Nelson (2018), these psychosocial constructs result from the interaction between student and institutional factors influencing student engagement. The framework suggests that considering the students psychosocial condition when developing instruction may help promote student engagement in behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects, positively affecting student learning and achievement.

Kahu and Nelson (2018) attach their framework to sociocultural settings and state that students and institutions are essential factors influencing student engagement. They view students as active learners influencing and influenced by the surrounding environment. Also,

the institution is viewed as a crucial influence that can affect and promote the student learning experience. They stress that the partnership and the experience of the student and institution should be maintained to encourage mutual learning and strengthen the bonds for both students and institutions. In the following sections I will draw on further literature to highlight some learning theories relevant to my study.

2.3 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Learning motivation is one of the essential components of language learning that has been studied over many years. Due to its importance and important role in studying human learning behaviour, many independent theories have been conducted to explain motivation and its significant role in the learning process. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985) is considered one of the most recognised theories in the literature. that have received great attention in work on learning motivation. This section will briefly outline these two theories and as ways of explaining learning motivation.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is one of the important theories within social psychology. The SDT appeared and developed from the work of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, who first put these ideas in 1985. It refers to the ability of individuals to make and control their choices. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), this ability is essential to individuals' psychology and well-being. According to the theory, self-determined behaviour enables individuals to feel they control their choices and enhance their motivation. Individuals may feel more motivated to take more serious steps toward their actions which could lead them to achieve their goals.

Ryan (2009) describes SDT as a holistic theory of individual motivation, personal growth, and well-being. He adds that SDT focuses on voluntary and subjective behaviour and the social and cultural factors underpinning it. The SDT sets three basic psychological needs for the individuals' personal growth, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The concept of self-determination has been applied to many situations, including education (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Many studies have shown that having a high degree of self-determination and autonomy can enhance individuals' success, engagement, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory emphasises motivation, which states that individuals tend to be guided by their need for growth and progression. Self-determination theory indicates that people are motivated to grow, and change based on these essential psychological needs. The theory suggests that people are able to decide their choices when their needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are met. According to SDT, intrinsic motivation plays a key role in Self-Determination Theory by promoting the idea of engaging in activities to be rewarded for a particular behaviour. My study looks to explore these concepts with respect to student engagement.

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), the SDT focuses on internal sources of motivation, such as autonomy. There are two basic views of the theory of self-determination. The first view sees individuals as they usually tend effectively towards growth and development. For example, controlling, overcoming challenges, and having new experiences are key to developing competence and relatedness. The second view finds extrinsic rewards as triggers which encourage people to do activities and work, such as money, rewards and recognition, which all are extrinsic motivations. The concepts in these two perspectives are related to student engagement, which my study aims to investigate within the language learning context.

According to SDT, individuals need to maintain the three main needs for psychological development. The first need is autonomy, which is their sense of control over their behaviour, choices, and goals. This feeling stimulates individuals' ability to take important and immediate steps which make sensible changes that help them feel capable of achieving their goals. The second is competence, in which individuals believe in their ability to complete tasks and learn new and different skills. Accordingly, they are more likely to achieve their goals when they feel they have the skills needed to succeed (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The third is relatedness, in which individuals feel connected to their community and others. Their social relationships and interactions with others affect this feeling. Thus, social support can enhance or hinder their well-being and self-development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). My study seeks to explore all these concepts in addition to Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework for student engagement to develop language learning practices by enhancing and understanding student engagement.

The SDT suggests that it is important to realise that psychological development does not occur naturally. It needs people's support for their growth and requires constant support and

enhancement. Ryan and Deci (2000) point out that individuals tend to be either active or passive, depending on the influence of the social conditions in which the individual lives, where social support is essential.

Ryan and Deci (2000) state that some factors can be enhanced or inhibited as extrinsic motivation can sometimes reduce individuals' activity. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), providing extrinsic rewards for behaviour driven by intrinsic motivation can undermine an individual's autonomy. They explain that when a behaviour follows the external rewards, the individual gradually begins to feel a loss of control over their behaviour, and their intrinsic motivation disappears. Positive feedback is also another factor that could enhance individuals' activity. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that emphasising encouragement and continuous positive feedback on individuals' performance in a task can increase individuals' efficiency and create motivation for success and personal growth.

Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that it is useful to view motivation as a key factor for self-determination and non-self-determination behaviours. Rather than believing that either internal or external factors guide it. Also, some self-determination behaviours tend to be motivated by internal factors, as individuals perform them for pleasure, interest, or satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, the individuals perform behaviours of inability to self-determination because they do not have another choice but must do it. Accordingly, individuals could lose control over their behaviours (Ryan et al., 2015).

With respect to the SDT, success allows individuals to feel self-efficacy and have the ability to learn important skills that would lead to satisfaction and well-being. A sense of self-control and intrinsic motivation may help create a greater sense of commitment, interest, and satisfaction with their learning. An enhanced sense of self-determination can also inspire individuals to succeed. Also, a sense of belonging plays a significant role in the individual's social relations and is essential to personal growth. Building close and friendly relationships with others can improve success, satisfaction, and well-being Deci and Ryan (2000).

Noels et al. (2019) point out that the SDT theory is linked to language learning, student engagement and student success. At the same time, the individual factors are related to motivational orientations and fulfilment of basic needs for autonomy and competence, including learning, academic achievement, non-linguistic outcomes such as contact with the target language community, and new identities.

These basic needs (that is, autonomy, competence, relatedness) used by Deci and Ryan (1985) and individual factors of engagement (that is, satisfaction and motivation), interactions in engagement (that is, teacher-student and institution relationships), and engagement outcomes (that is, retention, achievement, pride) used by Kahu And Nelson (2018) are closely aligned with the factors explored in my study to address the research questions and investigate the research participants views about student engagement in language teaching and learning settings. My study will attempt to illustrate how the basic needs as shown in the SDT theory are related to understanding Kahu and Nelson's conceptual framework of student engagement and see if there are different outcomes in the social and learning context. Accordingly, the above literature is used in my study to explore opinions about the effects of engagement on motivation (for example, desire, positive attitudes). Also, it is used to help to understand how engagement could enhance motivation through language proficiency, interaction, and relationships. SDT theory and engagement also contribute to my study at various points to explore opinions on language competence, autonomy, communicative competence, academic competence, and non-linguistic outcomes, such as success, a sense of belonging, and well-being. The following section will review the Social Learning Theory.

After reviewing these theories and the researcher's teaching experience, it appears that language learning often occurs in a social context based on relationships and the surrounding environment. It also shows that learners may be inclined to form joint views with their teachers about learning objectives and are active in dealing with their colleagues while working in groups. Additionally, they can be characterised by feeling a high sense of belonging to their colleagues and the educational institution. After all, this can result in stimulating motivation for language learning and enhance the manner of student engagement in the learning process. My study will draw on these two theories, Self-Determination Theory and Social Learning Theory, as theoretical support to help understand the views of the current research participants on student engagement concepts in the language learning context; particularly the dimensions in Self-Determination theory of psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The following section will review relevant literature linked to language learning and student engagement with regard to motivation, autonomy and using English as the Medium of Instruction.

2.4 Language learning and student engagement

2.4.1 Motivation and Autonomy

Autonomy has been recognised as an important aspect of language learning. Little, Dam and Legenhausen (2017) state that motivation and autonomy have become well-known in language learning literature with their valuable factors: focusing on language learners and supporting and encouraging individual learning and self-independence methods. This section reviews the literature on the idea of motivation associated with learner autonomy in language learning. After clarifying what motivation and learner autonomy mean, this section discusses the literature concerning motivation and autonomy in language learning. After that, it provides a brief review of different levels of autonomy involved in the language learning context. Then it covers key characteristics of autonomous learners. Finally, the section summarizes the most critical points being discussed.

Individual success plays an effective role in the growth of societies, as development and motivation are among the effective elements that must be considered when planning to reach any achievement. Researchers in language learning motivation (see Dörnyei 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) have identified some of the different elements of motivation and the way they affect language learning. Brown (2007) notes that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are the most common and measurable types of motivation. He points out that external factors emerge when learners want to achieve goals whose achievement is linked to external stimuli and not related to the task they are practising. For example, language learners may seek high grades, rewards, or recognition while completing a task (see Section 2.3).

Intrinsic motivation can be explained as internal factors that are not self-explanatory or tangible and related to the learners' performance in the learning tasks. Alizadeh (2016) indicates that learners may engage in a task because they believe it may be enjoyable or help them improve a particular skill or achieve a goal. Accordingly, extrinsically motivated learners may perform a task to reach a goal. In contrast, intrinsically motivated learners may perform a task because they are pushed from the inside to reach a goal.

Over the past decades, the concept of learner autonomy has been widely used in in language learning research and theories. Due to the complexity of understanding autonomy, there is a growing discussion in the literature concerning the definition of the concept. Although there are several definitions of learner autonomy, the most referred to is likely the definition of

Holec (1981), who explains the idea of the role of learners in the learning process. He defined learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec, 1981, P. 3). Holec's definition suggests that learners can adopt self-learning and interact in different learning situations and contexts, including making decisions and creating an appropriate learning environment.

Similarly, Dickinson (1995, P. 167) sees autonomy 'as an attitude towards learning in which the learner is prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for his own learning'. Dickinson's definition indicates that learners' capabilities would allow them to take responsibility for their learning and control their learning practices, which would help them accomplish learning tasks. Little (1991, p.4) defines autonomy as 'a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent acquisition'. This definition views learners as independent and self-learners and responsible for making decisions and choices related to their learning and reflects on their ability to implement these decisions. Also, Benson (2013, P. 2) defines autonomy as 'the capability to take control of one's own learning'. From the above definitions, it can be understood that autonomy is viewed in the literature as the learner being a partner in the learning process and not a passive receiver for imposed curriculum and learning activities.

In all the studies reviewed here, learner autonomy definitions share a general idea. These definitions refer to the concept that learners are responsible for their learning process. Through this independent learning, they can link their beliefs, ideas, and perspectives with activities inside and outside the classroom (Benson, 2013). In language learning context, autonomy means using the target language away from the classroom situation or their learning environment. Hsieh and Hsieh (2019) claim that autonomous learning can be one of the main factors in determining the quality of student language learning performance. Autonomy requires learners to be prepared to control their learning, which means that they organise their learning, prioritise and try to control the factors that affect their learning to be autonomous learners. Holec (1981) explained that autonomous learners could make decisions related to their learning, from defining their goals to determining the content choosing methods and monitoring and evaluating what they have learned. Little (1991) emphasised that Holec's aimed to encourage a type of autonomy concerned with learning and an autonomous approach that benefits society.

Little (1995) believes autonomous learners are mainly responsible for their learning, aware of their individual learning needs, and can define their learning purposes and goals. He emphasises that autonomy promotes all they receive in a formal classroom setting with all the progress they can bring in (Little, 1995). According to Little (2007), autonomous learners can determine what they have learnt and understand the curriculum objectives. Also, they can create their learning goals, implement their learning strategies, identify strategies that do not work for them and use different approaches to reach their learning goals. They are also able to self-assess and monitor their learning.

Although the literature suggests several definitions of learner autonomy, there is a lack of clarity about what autonomy is, particularly the confusion between the concept of autonomy and self-direction/self-learning within language learning. This disagreement has led Little (2007) to explain the characteristics that cannot be referred to as autonomy. He emphasised that autonomy is not equivalent to self-direction, which means that learner autonomy requires teachers to deliver learning materials to the learners and promote autonomy. Benson (2013, p.74) argues that learner autonomy in language learning does not naturally exist; however, he says the 'seeds of autonomy' can be activated when the teacher promotes independent behaviours in the classroom. They have a significant role in the learning process.

Autonomous learning does not mean establishing a learning experience that excludes the teacher's role. Benson (2008) suggests that the teacher has an essential role in increasing learner autonomy, which allows the learner to share their learning responsibility and make decisions. Benson (2013) asserts that autonomy is not a teaching method that can be adopted through a series of lesson plans. He explained that learner autonomy is not a behaviour or a stable condition that learners approach. Instead, it is how the learner is being taught and how learners transfer their learning to wider contexts (Benson, 2013). Helping students develop autonomous learning abilities can be addressed in several ways. Pawlak (2017) proposes that these autonomous methods can often involve raising awareness, strategy training, encouraging critical thinking, support and increasing social interaction.

Benson (2013) argues that autonomy may control the cognitive processes involved in effective self-instruction in learning. He adds that autonomous learning suggests the learner's freedom to determine learning content. According to Benson (2013), autonomous learning allows learners to control their learning choices by allowing them to identify the

content, goals, and purposes of their learning. Also, Benson (2013) argues that learner autonomy has a social dimension that may require taking control over learning situations and requests specific capabilities related to the learner's ability to interact with others in the learning process. He emphasises that when learners succeed in promoting autonomy within their learning, as well as, this may give them leverage to become better language learners and as well as be active members of their communities. Thus, they could change learning plans within a language learning context. Although these definitions view autonomy as individuals being responsible for their learning decisions and choices, they give them a high degree of freedom towards their learning as it meets their needs.

The literature on autonomy has highlighted several levels of autonomy in the language learning context. For example, Nunan (1997, p.195) introduced a model consisting of five autonomy levels that include 'learner awareness', 'involvement', 'intervention', 'creation', and 'transcendence'. Benson (2007) notes that Nunan's model could consider the steps of learner improvement within language learning materials, including learning style and content inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, Alrabai (2017) highlights the relevance of Nunan's model on the learning goals and curriculum in which language learners can link activities inside the classroom with real life.

Littlewood (1996, p.430) proposed a three-level autonomy model include 'autonomy as communicator', 'autonomy as learner' and 'autonomy as persons'. He claims that these levels help English learners develop and link their learning choices with the learning activities inside and outside the classroom settings. He argues that the language teacher's role here is to help students develop their motivation, confidence, knowledge, and skills to communicate and learn more independently and be more autonomous as individuals.
Similarly, Macaro (2008) suggests another model of autonomy level. This model consists of three stages: autonomy of language competence, choice, and language learning competence. Also, Benson (2013) indicates three levels of autonomy dimensions related to teaching and learning practices. These dimensions involve learning management, cognitive processing and the content of learning.

In her study on the impact of autonomy on one aspect of Language, Ningsih (2019) outlines some of the characteristics of autonomous learners, including being dedicated; highly motivated; flexible with the ability to bond and interact with people; persistent and

responsible; initiators and creative to their learning; self-sufficient, knowledge researchers, skilled, and critical thinkers. See table 2 for the summary.

Table 2: Characteristics of autonomous and non-autonomous learners

Autonomous learner	Non-autonomous learner
Self-dependent	Depends on the teacher
Able to make their decisions about their learning	Not involved in making decisions related to their learning, but rather are made by the teacher
Aware of their learning choices	Do not think about their learning choices
Able to link learning that occurs inside the classroom with the surrounding environment outside the classroom and benefit from learning during their daily life	Cannot link learning that occurs inside the classroom with the surrounding environment outside the classroom
Involve and assume responsibility for their learning and they are fully aware of and apply available strategies to achieve better learning	They believe that the teacher is responsible for their learning and that their role is to respond to the teacher's instructions
Identify clear goals and objectives that they seek to achieve	They do not plan for their learning, and therefore there are no clear goals or objectives they seek to achieve
Motivated to make academic progress	Their motivation is related to scores and exams
They think about their learning, the extent of their progress, the reasons that prevent them from reaching their goals, and how to overcome them	They do not consider why they learn or think about the reasons behind their learning

Adapted from Ningsih (2019)

To sum up, the literature on autonomy has revealed several characteristics of the autonomous learner. For early advocates of learner autonomy, such as Holec (1981) and Little (1991), it means learners can take their learning responsibility, define their learning goals, progress, content, materials and learning methods, and evaluate their learning outcomes. Then the concept of autonomy has been linked to recognising the value of assuming responsibility for individual learning (Oxford, 2015). According to Oxford, autonomy includes various

strategies learners can take to make their learning more accessible, enjoyable, productive, and transferable to different situations in and out of the classroom. In the language learning context, autonomy has been shifted from language learning to language use in a classroom setting and the environment outside the classroom (Macaro, 2008).

Learner autonomy promotes language learners' competence to take responsibility for their learning. It also allows them to make their own decisions about their desired learning. However, critics of learner autonomy argue that promoting autonomy for learners will reduce teachers' control of the class and learning process. This section has reviewed the concept of learner autonomy in the literature in the language learning context from various aspects. My study will emphasise learner autonomy as an important factor that increases motivation and student engagement within the language learning context. The next section will attempt to give insight into the use of English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education, particularly the PYP, as it is the context of the current study.

2.4.2 English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI)

This section will discuss the use of the English language in teaching, especially in non-English speaking societies. However, before that, it will give an overview to understand how this global interest in learning and teaching English in non-speaking societies arose. Then, this section will review the literature to learn how the use of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) has grown in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education institutions.

This section discusses the main reasons for using English as the Medium of Instruction EMI in Saudi Higher Education. Also, it will address the issue of the link and influence of colonialism on the local linguistic situation which later lead to the use of English as the Medium of Instruction worldwide. First, is the widespread use of English as a lingua franca on a global scale. The second is the expansion of the use of EMI in Saudi Higher Education, and the third is the internationalisation of education policies used by educational authorities in Saudi Arabia. Also, this section outlines the key challenges associated with using EMI at the government, institution, and classroom levels and explores issues concerned with language assessment and content outcomes. Finally, an overview of research conducted on using EMI in Saudi Arabia is provided, focusing on (1) EMI practices in different Saudi Arabia education policies; (2) issues affecting EMI students and instructors, and (3) first language use among learners in EMI contexts.

Linguistic colonization might be considered the most influential factor on communities. Pennycook (2017) argues that the colonialist invades the identity and culture of the colonial country, which puts the latter into a state of permanent loss and dependence. Colonialism is not only limited to economics and politics but extends to language. It results in the erosion of local identity and Ryan (2006) describes a national view of the world based on the unity of the nation and state, which may impose a strong link between language, culture, and nationality. He comments that this worldview may facilitate those ties and he calls for a reassessment of the relationship between the target language and that language society.

All processes of advancement, reform and change of reality begin through education, which remains the main pillar in which all cultural, economic and social processes meet (Ozturk, 2008). Educational institutions are the core that qualifies and prepares people to play their role as active members of the group to which they belong and interact (Kruss, et al. 2015). As the process of education is closely linked to language, this process can only take place in the presence of language. This has resulted in the term 'linguistic imperialism', which is simply a linguistic concept that involves the transfer of a dominant language to other people. Phillipson (2012) states that the importance of language changing the local language to the colonial process was valued from its beginning. It was expected to replace the local language with the language of the colonial state as a standard in the local education system and as a means of social control and facilitating the colonial mission. Phillipson (2012, p. 2) claims that the dominant language is seen as a sacred language and can be observed in

> (Sanskrit, Arabic in the Islamic world, Dutch in South Africa); the language of reason, logic, and human rights (French both before and after the French Revolution); the language of the superior ethnonational group (German in Nazi ideology); the language of progress, modernity, and national unity (English in much postcolonial discourse).

Since the 1990s, linguistic imperialism has drawn the attention of applied linguists. According to Phillipson's book (1992), 'language imperialism' has led to important debates about the advantages and disadvantages of linguistic imperialism theory. Phillipson (1992, p.47) describes the linguistic imperialism of English as 'the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages'. In his theory, Phillipson (1992) criticises the historical spread and dominance of English as a global language, especially in regions that emerged from 'post-colonial' colonialism, such as India.

Phillipson's theory focuses on the complex process of control that underscores the continuing superiority of English in use today. Another principle in Phillipson's work (1992, p. 111) is 'linguistic inheritance'. He describes it as a type of bias that leads to the end of endangered local languages or the loss of their local status due to the high importance of using English in various aspects worldwide. Phillipson (1992) discussed the basic principles of Applied English Language and the methodology of teaching English. For example, one of these principles is the idea that English should be taught only by the English-English method. He analysed the British Council's role in spreading English language learning in the post-colonial territories and other countries worldwide.

A key aspect of linguistic imperialism is teaching in English, especially in scientific colleges and departments such as Engineering, Medicine and Science. De Jong (2018) states that using English as a Medium of Instruction is one of the issues that has drawn the attention of many those interested in the development of Higher Education. English as the Medium of Instruction EMI is a term used in many educational settings, which refers to using English for learning and teaching practices other than the home or local language in that educational setting. Macaro et al. (2018, p.37) define EMI as 'the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English'. A growing body of literature recognises EMI as a global interest in all phases of education and particularly in Higher Education. This section will highlight the reasons behind this growth of EMI on a global scale.

Ryan (2006) argues that the dominance of English is viewed as a threat to local languages and conflicts with the values of these languages. He believes that protecting local languages is a priority and that local languages are considered in danger due to the global spread of the English language. That is, the spread of the English language forms a threat to the identity and culture of non-English speaking communities. Practices and Policies that encourage this spread over local languages and cultures, including EMI, may need to be prevented. Such policies may decrease learners' motivation to learn English, thus losing their agency, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging to their communities and culture.

Since the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21first century, many universities worldwide began to offer academic programmes taught in English (Dearden, 2014). These academic programmes are fully taught in English even though these universities are in non-

English-speaking countries. Many researchers attribute the spread of this practice in Higher Education to many reasons. One of these reasons is the internationalisation process, which many universities are adopting. Knight (2003, P.2) defines internationalisation as 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education'. Ryan (2006) believes that if the dominant language is an important part of global communication and learners feel connected to the world through this language, the alienation and threat factors will be excluded, which may significantly influence learners' identity with the language.

Macaro et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review study on the use of EMI globally. They conclude that there is an increasing interest in EMI in literature, and there are many attempts to discover how it develops in different countries. Similarly, Galloway et al. (2020) carried out a study on the growth of EMI in Higher Education worldwide, arguing that there has been a rapid growth in the use of EMI worldwide over the last two decades. Wächter and Maiworm (2014) observe a noticeable increase in EMI use in European Higher Education. In the Asian context, Rahman, Singh and Karim (2018) attribute the widespread use of the EMI to the competition in the increasing number of institutions and the reform of Higher Education in Asian countries. Similarly, in the Arab Gulf region which Saudi Arabia is part of it, the government's plan to reform education and improve the economy led to the implementation of the use of EMI (Graham & Eslami, 2019).

Similar trends in developing and reforming education in Saudi Arabia have led to an increase in the use of EMI at the Higher Education level. The Saudi government allocated huge budgets to develop education and increase annual spending on education (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The budget allocated to education occupies a quarter of the total state budget (Saudi Government, 2021). Since Arabic is the first and official language of Saudi Arabia, it has been used as the only Medium of Instruction in Saudi education. The Saudi government introduced teaching English as a compulsory subject in 1958, starting from the primary level to the university, to keep pace with the global economy and knowledge trends (Alqahtani, 2018). As a result, the use of EMI has rapidly spread in Saudi Higher Education (Galloway et al., 2020).

Besides the international recognition of the use of English worldwide, Galloway et al. (2020) outline several benefits of the use of EMI in Higher Education including improving English proficiency, offering access to a wide range of knowledge, increasing institutional rankings

and increasing individuals' multilingual capabilities. Similarly, a systemic review study done by Graham and Eslami (2019) investigated the perspectives toward using EMI in East Asia and the Arab/Persian Gulf regions, where Saudi Arabia is located. The study concludes that the participants in the synthesised studies confirmed a need for the use of EMI because of its widespread use in academic disciplines, especially the scientific ones, and the lack of translation of terms and necessary materials into Arabic for use in courses.

However, like many non-English-speaking communities, the expanded use of EMI in Saudi universities has encountered some issues and challenges. Louber and Troudi (2019) state that due to the rapid shift to EMI in Saudi Higher Education may lead to challenges in recruiting qualified and competent teaching staff and the impact of the students' low proficiency in English on their academic achievement and cultural identity. Graham and Eslami (2019) found that the Saudi university students who experienced using EMI had issues with not having the English language skills required for comprehension or communication due to their English proficiency. Also, they note that teaching staff face difficulties in delivering the content in English, so they often use the first language to facilitate the content for students.

Likewise, Gaffas (2019) carried out a mixed-method study using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions on investigating Saudi undergraduate students' views regarding using EMI in university academic programmes. The study reveals that owing to their low English competence; students are not ready yet to cope with the use of EMI in Higher Education institutions. Also, the study reports that English was not actively used in EMI classes, and teachers needed to use the first language (Arabic) or switch from Arabic to English. It points out that students asserted that they only use English to present certain terminology related to the concerned subject taught in English. Then, they switch back to the first language when involved in a class discussion. In light of the increasing growth in EMI use in Higher Education worldwide, the literature suggests that more research is needed to understand the use of EMI in Higher Education worldwide Graham and Eslami (2019).

Alhamami (2021) conducted a quantitative study investigating the impact of using EMI in an engineering course at a Saudi university. The researcher uses a questionnaire to collect data from students and teachers plus alumni GPA records of engineering students at that university. Also, the study aims to examine the impact of EMI on students' attitudes and self-efficacy and its relation to the student's overall achievement. The study found that EMI

negatively affects students' academic achievement because they lack English proficiency. Alhamami (2021) argue that there is a lack of literature investigating the relationship between the students' overall GPA and the EMI policy. It suggests that the EMI policy is a disadvantage in non-English speaking societies. The study recommends conducting more research to understand students' perspectives on using EMI in non-English speaking communities. One aim of my study is to explore students' points of view about using English in teaching in academic studies.

Similarly, Alhamami and Almelhi (2021) carried out quantitative research to investigate the influence of EMI in undergraduate science courses include, including Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Mathematics, in a Saudi university. They use surveys to collect quantitative data from students, teaching staff and GPA records of science alumni at that university. The study suggests that the analysis of graduates' records revealed that the success rates of the intensive English language programme in the first year predict the students' GPA once they complete the final year of their academic studies. This means that the results of students studying in the intensive English language programme in the first year impacted their English language level, which affected their performance in using EMI during their academic studies. The study recommends that further research is needed to examine the views of students and teaching staff about using EMI in science subjects, as it is one of the purposes of my study.

As the use of EMI is part of the curriculum and the institution's policy and based on the educational interface by Kahu and Nelson (2018), the curriculum and the institution's policy are among the factors that affect student engagement. By reviewing the previous studies in this section, it is clear that most of the studies were conducted to investigate the impact of EMI in non-English speaking societies. The literature review shows its negative impact on student's academic achievement and success. Also, it suggests the need to do more research to explore the opinions of students and teaching staff about the impact of EMI on student success. My study will examine the views of students and teaching staff about the impact of EMI on student engagement within the context of English learning.

According to the literature review in this section, the use of English in teaching is likely to affect students' self-efficacy in Kahu and Nelson's student engagement framework (2018). Competence in SDT theory is defined as students' belief in their ability to perform educational tasks. Based on these two theories, self-efficacy/competence are derived from

the cognitive and environmental factors of the student, including the curriculum and the institution's policy that affects student engagement. Hence, my study will investigate the participants' opinions about using EMI with respect to student engagement through self-efficacy.

It is also clear from the literature review in this section that the use of English in teaching can influence students' emotions, defined as students' responses to their personal experiences in educational situations such as enjoyment or frustration (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). My study will aim to examine students' emotions about the effect of EMI on student engagement. Finally, this section indicated that using EMI could influence students' sense of belonging in Kahu and Nelson's (2018) engagement framework and relatedness in the three psychological needs of SDT theory. My study will seek to explore the views on the impact of the use of English in teaching on student participation by influencing the sense of belonging and relatedness. The conclusion of this Chapter will be summarised in the following section.

2.5 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this Chapter provided an overview of the literature on understanding student engagement through language learning in Higher Education. This Chapter reviewed the literature on student engagement, related learning theories, learner motivation and autonomy, and using English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education. Also, the Chapter reviewed Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework as the theoretical framework of my study, along with Leach and Zepke's (2011) student engagement conceptual organiser as a supportive model to understand engagement. The literature describes student engagement as a multidimensional concept with no consensus on the conceptual foundation of student engagement definition and measure. Many studies in the literature have focused on different perspectives of student engagement, and student perspectives is not among them.

In addition, this Chapter has discussed what has been researched about engagement, EMI, motivation and autonomy in the literature in Saudi Arabia. Regarding this topic, the reviewed studies suggest that there are still several aspects of student engagement about which relatively little is known. The literature proposed that more research is needed to be done in order to understand the concept of student engagement and its shared responsibility among

students, academic staff, institutions and non-institutional factors in the Saudi Higher Education context. It has been suggested that future research needs to be carried out to establish the concept of student engagement from student perspectives, including exploring students' role in their language learning settings within the Saudi context. A greater focus on student engagement in the language learning context may produce interesting findings that account for a better understanding of student language learning through engagement within the Saudi context. In addition, the literature encourages further studies are needed to fully understand the implications of student engagement and the use of EMI in the learning process.

The literature suggests that further research is needed to explore these relationships between students and teachers in order to enhance our understanding of student engagement in Higher Education (see, for example, Kahu, 2013; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Trowler, 2010; Zepke, 2021). Kahu (2013) states that the clearer we as educators understand students engagement and its impact, the better we will be in meeting students' needs, enhancing their learning experience, and improving learning outcomes. Despite the importance of relationships and a deeper sense of belonging, there has been much emphasis on behaviour and cognition. Kahu (2013) concludes that, with little attention to students' emotional responses to their learning, a greater focus on the role of emotion, in particular, could produce interesting findings that account more for understanding student engagement in Higher Education. Many studies advocate that students' voice plays a key role in engaging students as students are the core of the learning process, and without them, the process would not continue. The literature suggests that more research is needed to support this concept. The following Chapter discusses in detail this study's methodology and analysis process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

From a holistic perspective, it is essential to understand what research means. The answer to this question can vary depending on the situation in which the question is asked. Generally, a deep understanding of the research concept can be seen as the use of a combination of means and tools to obtain information about a specific topic or thing (Walliman, 2017). It can be recognised as the process of arranging a set of data based on a particular division, arrangement, and distribution (Wadsworth, 2011). Scott and Usher (1996, p.9) described research as 'a social practice'.

Jonker and Pennink (2008) divide research projects into two categories. The first is scientific research, which contributes to the formation of knowledge represented in models, concepts and theories. The second type is applied research or practical research, which consists of collecting data and concepts based on views and insights. Naturally, the fundamental endeavour in the research process is to produce reliable knowledge which strives to find answers or solutions to a particular issue. My research study falls into the second category and this Chapter outlines the methodological approach to data collection and analysis used to conduct this study. Many research methodology studies discuss a variety of methods, means and tools of data collection.

Although adopting a particular research method is an essential aspect of the research process, the selection of these methods cannot be separated from the theoretical interests of the researchers or their perceptions during the process of conducting research (see Lune & Berg, 2016; 6 & Bellamy, 2012). Selecting the most appropriate methodological approach for data collection and analysis is crucial in terms of addressing the research problem and answering the research questions. This research used a qualitative approach to address and answer its questions and I will explain why below.

Following this introduction, this Chapter outlines the research questions and goals in section 3.2. In section 3.3 a discussion of the procedures and steps taken to provide validity and trustworthiness to my study is given. In section 3.4 a description of the study's paradigm is provided. The research design is explained in section 3.5. The study's source of data and the main tool used for data collection are described in section 3.6 and followed by a discussion on the ethical considerations of this research in section 3.7. A full explanation of the

fieldwork procedures used to collect data is presented in section 3.8. Finally, the procedures of the data analysis for this study are presented in section 3.9, and section 3.10 concludes this Chapter.

3.2 Research questions and goals

The data of this research was collected through interviews as a tool of qualitative research (see sections 3.7 and 3.9). The interview questions were designed and guided by themes based on the literature and intended to address my research questions. The goal and the research questions of my study were presented in Chapter One, however, I will restate them again here. The ultimate research goal is to improve/enhance learning and teaching practices through student engagement in the year one preparatory English Language course at a Saudi University. In order to reach that goal, I wanted to understand students' and teaching staff views about the current provision and how that might be improved. The study research questions were as follows.

RQ 1. What are the expectations and realities of English learning in the PYP?

a. What were the students' expectations of English learning before they joined the PYP?

b. What did the students discover about the reality of English learning after they joined the PYP?

c. How do students feel about their English learning after the PYP and during their second university year when they start studying in their subject areas?

RQ 2. What are the students' and staff views about the way in which the English Language component in the PYP Programme of the university could be improved?

a. What are the views about the curriculum in the PYP?

b. What are the views about the content of the English and the other subjects that are taught in English in the PYP?

c. What are the views about the learning and teaching practices in the PYP?

RQ 3. What are the perceptions of the teaching staff in the English Language Centre and the subject areas about English language learning in the PYP?

RQ 4. How do students and staff view engagement in the learning process in the PYP with particular respect to: a) autonomy, b) competence, c) a sense of belonging to the university, d) a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline?

The following section describes an overview of the trustworthiness measures provided in the current investigation.

3.3 Validity and trustworthiness

It is a complex process to examine the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Howitt, 2016). In order to provide validity and trustworthiness, my study follows Morrow's (2005) guidelines of quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research. She proposes a range of criteria to provide trustworthiness in qualitative research. For example, she recommends that the study's paradigm should be compatible with the research questions and clearly explained and identified (see section 3.4). For the research design, Morrow (2005) suggests that the type of qualitative research that the study follows and the research design standards and any differences in the design should be clearly explained (see section 3.5). For researcher positionality, she suggests that researchers need to describe their rationale, experience, subjectivity, assumptions and expectations about the topic and population of their study (see section 1.3). For the interview questions, she proposes that these should be inclusive, not too long and provide in-depth data (see appendices 4.7 – 4.9). Also, she advises giving a detailed description of how interview questions were derived by indicating the range and length of the interviews and how data were recorded and transcribed (see sections 3.6 - 3.9). She also explains that the methods used to manage biases that might be present during data collection and field work of the study should be clarified (see sections 3.7 and 3.8). Morrow (2005) also advises that data management and analysis steps should be explained in detail, along with introducing the approach used for data management and analysis (see section 3.9).

3.4 Research paradigm

Researching in the field of Social Sciences requires an adequate and comprehensive knowledge of research methods and research design. Basit (2010) points out that research paradigms are models, perspectives or conceptual frameworks that help researchers organise their ideas, opinions, and beliefs into a comprehensive and logical framework which would lead to a structured research design. Alongside the researcher's beliefs, research questions and objectives in the Social Science studies can determine the design of the research. Blaikie

and Priest (2019) state that the research paradigm is naturally influenced by the researcher's assumptions, beliefs, and rational choices. Given the nature of this research and because I sought to obtain a better in-depth understanding of students' and staff perspectives about the PYP, the interpretive paradigm will be adopted in this research and this section will explain the rationale for using this.

Many research paradigms can be applicable according to the researcher's beliefs and the nature of the research questions. Interpretive research aims to interpret how a phenomenon occurs by looking for reasons for it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). It also measures the trustworthiness of a developed phenomena as an explanation of human experiences, which is, in the current research investigating participants' views on student engagement within the English language learning context.

In this research, an interpretivist perspective and a subjective epistemological stance were chosen in order to examine learner and staff views related to engagement. According to Thanh and Thanh (2015), the interpretive paradigm allows researchers to use gathered data to discover the answers to the study questions through participants' views, perceptions, and experiences. The interpretive paradigm is supported by the belief that acquiring knowledge is subjective and self-constructed (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). They also emphasise that most human actions are meaningful and can be interpreted through social practices, where there is comprehensive knowledge to attribute that. Thus, the role of the researcher here is to understand and interpret these practices and pass that to contribute to the human experience (Alase, 2017). This research is concerned with and analyses, interprets and reports the perceptions and views of the students and the academic staff in the preparatory year programme in a Saudi university with a focus on learning English to support and enhance the process of language learning and teaching.

I believe that using the interpretivist paradigm in this study reflects my understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it can be obtained needed to answer my research questions. In this case, social construction and subjective knowledge are gained from individuals reflecting on their awareness, views and learning in their PYP environment, and I followed certain behaviour to develop this knowledge (Marton & Booth, 2013). In my research, it was necessary to obtain access to the academic staff, students, and their learning context to build knowledge about their reality (for example, learning and teaching experiences) from teaching staff and students perspective in that context. From an interpretivist perspective, I

decided this would help me to examine and recognise students' learning experiences in connection with staff teaching practices and attitudes towards learning English and engagement in the classroom. Also, it would support me in absorbing the reality of the learning and teaching experiences with respect to some of the engagement factors included in the fourth research question. For example, the first factor is autonomy and the capacity to learn independently, the second is competence, the third is a sense of belonging to the university, and the fourth is a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline (see section 2.4).

Adopting an interpretivist paradigm was intended to increase my understanding of the research problem in relation to the existing theories and literature in the field of language learning in the Higher Education context. Bryman (2016) outlines two concepts of interpreting knowledge within interpretivism. The first is what individuals perceive about their responses, and the second is how the researcher evaluates and views individuals' responses and connects that with the existing literature. Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out that in the interpretive approach knowledge is cumulative and can be formulated across and from the beliefs of individuals. These understandings may vary as the beliefs of the concerned individuals change. Guba and Lincoln (1994) also state that the epistemological perspective of the paradigm is subjective, and the relationship between the researcher and the research should be interactive in order to produce valuable results. In this investigation, the interpretivist paradigm allows me to bring together the different perceptions and views of the academic staff and students about student engagement based on their learning and teaching experiences and then to allocating these to broader research discussions and theories. It also assists in viewing reality in context and recognises how students perceive student engagement within English learning settings in the PYP in Higher Education. A more detailed account of aspects of this study's research design will be given in the following section.

3.5 Research design

The methodology is the approach or the way which should be followed by a researcher in order to answer his or her research questions. It can also be used to develop and use information and theories to study them. Jonker and Pennink (2008, p.17) define methodology as 'the way in which the researcher chooses to deal with a particular question'. A research methodology is a systematic technique that researchers use for gathering

evidence which Sahu (2013) describes as a systematic process that is structured coherently and logically to help the researcher to solve the research problem and, in my case, to answer the research questions. It serves as guidance to direct researchers in the development of the research plan. It guides them during implementation, from the formulation of the questions through the analysis phase and ends with the final report of the research (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2010). Research methodology can vary in terms of classification. It can be classified as basic research, theoretical or practical research. My research is a combination of two types. First is the basic research, which explores student engagement in the PYP based on students and staff perspectives. The second is theoretical research, as it is informed by Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement framework and the SDT by Deci and Ryan (1985) (see sections 2.2 & 2.3). This section will explain the research design and the rationale behind using qualitative research in my study and its advantages and disadvantages.

As the focus of my study is on the learning and teaching practices of English at the PYP in a Saudi Arabia Higher Education setting then following the above description, and in consideration of the research questions and aims, this investigation adopts a qualitative method. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary tool to critically investigate the perceptions of students and teachers about student engagement in the PYP as they learn and teach English for Academic Purposes in a Saudi Higher Education institution

Social Sciences investigators may argue that most methods of gathering valuable data in qualitative research follow one or some of the possible data collecting tools, including listening to participants through interviews (Tracy, 2019) as in my study. Using the interview as a qualitative method to gain in-depth information from the research participants sample is common in Social Science research in which, according to Preissle (2012) and Hesse-Biber (2010), a qualitative approach is associated with the traditions of social research, in which social phenomena can express reality through individuals' experiences in society. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative researchers often use one or more research methods, for example and as in this study, the in-depth interview method, in order to gain a rich and deep understanding of the investigated settings.

In this investigation, qualitative data obtained through interviews was selected to explore the relationship between student engagement and learning aspects, including autonomy, competence and a sense of belonging to learn about student engagement through learning English in the PYP. Qualitative research is a systematic method to understand better a

specific problem or an issue, here student engagement, in its natural setting using perspectives on the culture, values, opinions, or behaviours (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Qualitative research can be useful for identifying and characterising the nature of different meanings of an issue in the research context (Leavy, 2014). These meanings are explored in my research context in which student and staff perceptions about engagement are required for me to answer my research questions and to better understand student engagement in the PYP. I am aware that reality's nature is subjective, especially as I interpret it inn this study. The qualitative approach is also useful in this research because student engagement and the related learning aspects, mentioned above, might be different due to students' different learning and backgrounds, and so it is necessary to understand their views, perceptions, and experience.

This fits with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) suggestion that one of the primary benefits of qualitative research is that it can consider in-depth the research issue by exploring participants' views. Qualitative research allows researchers to give participants the freedom to express themselves and describe their views, feelings and experiences in the examined context (Choy, 2014). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2012), qualitative research focuses on understanding participants' behaviours of values, attributes, beliefs and assumptions that may not have been tested or measured empirically in quantitative terms. This was exactly what I was aiming for in my interviews with participants – I wanted to know the values, attributes, beliefs and assumptions of my participants with respect to engagement and which that may not have been or could not yet be tested or measured empirically by quantitative measures.

Also, qualitative research allows investigators to identify the reality of social life and the relationship between the researcher and the research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that the main features of qualitative research are to create, discover, explore and produce theories or hypotheses in which the researcher serves as the primary tool for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research emphasises the value of the investigation and its objective in answering the questions that highlight how to create or give meaning to the reality of social experience.

There are many advantages of qualitative research but there are certain drawbacks. One of the main issues in conducting qualitative research is the small sample size, which may cause

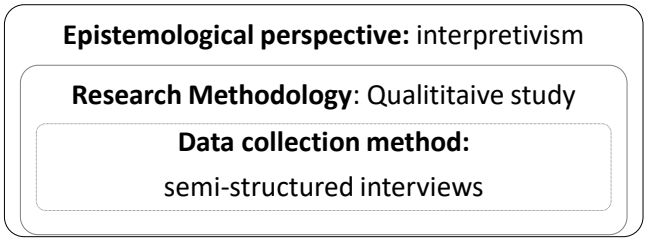
difficulties in generalising findings to the study society and accurately interpreting theories (Mohajan, 2018). Another disadvantage of using qualitative data is that it is subjectively treated and concerned with opinion, feelings and experiences. Therefore, the results might be influenced by many factors, including the researcher and participant personal beliefs. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) listed several qualitative approach weaknesses. For example, it takes time and effort to collect and analyse data, researchers' knowledge and experience can impact research interpretations and conclusions and it may be difficult to predict qualitative findings. In my study, I followed Morrow's (2005) suggested criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research for my study (see section 3.3).

Focusing in a specific community to investigate is a common approach used in Social Science research (Yin, 1981). It has been differently described as an approach and research design (Bassey, 1999; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2004). It helps the researcher to collect in-depth information and obtain more data for the community under investigation, especially in the educational field where a phenomenon is addressed within a particular context (Stake, 2005). It is also a means of evaluating the problems that individuals face in their reality and interpret that into a hypothetical or realistic phenomenon. Yin (2014) describes studying a specific community as an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon studied in its context, and it focuses on answering what, how and why questions with little control from the investigator over the real-life events. Investigating a specific educational community may provide a written description of an educational phenomenon faced by an individual, group, or educational institution. It is one of the practical ways that reflects the rationale of the case and how it started and evolved into a final problem that requires appropriate treatment. I did not use a specific case study method as my approach but there are similarities with this with respect to the study of a particular community.

In sum, the interpretivist paradigm focuses on finding in-depth meanings and interpretations of the reality of social life under view (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007). Due to the aim of this investigation and relying on the interpretivist paradigm, this study focuses on understanding the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in English Language course in the Preparatory Year in the Saudi Higher Education. Also, this research aims to examine the relationship between students' attitudes towards learning English and their engagement in the learning process.

This research design allowed me, the investigator, to collect detailed and in-depth information about the issue under investigation (Merriam, 1998) and to provide a logical description of students' learning experiences and thinking through investigating their views about engagement through autonomy, competence, their sense of belonging to the university and by then linking that to their current or future studies. The following section of this Chapter describes in greater detail the methodology used in this research. Figure 4 below summarises the design of this research.

Figure 4: Research Design



Overall, and as noted above, this investigation follows qualitative research in gathering research data. A qualitative method was used to gain the benefits of collecting in-depth information about participants' perspectives towards language learning, which enabled me as the researcher to follow the narrative of an answer and probe for more information about the research problem as necessary. It was hoped that the adopted research design for my study would provide detailed insights into and analysis of the subject matter, student engagement, which was under investigation. The next section will discuss the interview tool used to collect the study's data.

3.6 Interviews as the source of the study's data

Interviews are one of the most used tools for collecting qualitative data in Social Science research (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2018). Interviews can be defined as a direct meeting that brings together the researcher and participants of the research to obtain in-depth information related to the research topic (Roulston & Choi, 2018) and they are one of the most reliable tools for studying a social issue and obtaining a deep understanding from individuals (Gill et al., 2008). An interview can contribute to a profound and detailed investigation of the experiences, beliefs, perceptions and opinions of the individuals involved in a specific matter, here student engagement, under study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

This research followed Kvale's and Brinkmann's (2009) proposed steps that the interviewer needs to consider before and during interviews. First, I defined the research problem, its purpose and the reasons for using the interview. Secondly, I identified the general goal and related problem and constructed a series of aims, themes, and specific areas as a framework to form interview questions. Thirdly, I drafted the questions to be used in conducting and guiding the interviews. The design of this guide should enable the interviewer to obtain data, achieve goals and covers specific topics that reflect the research objective and answer its questions. It also should allow the interviewer to reach a deeper discussion and access more information during the interview. Besides, it would be essential to consider creating a friendly atmosphere during the interview, which could my participants to answer and maintains the interaction between me and them and which provides opportunities for checking and probing the responses given in the interview.

In this investigation, a face to face semi-structured interviews was used as the primary tool to collect data. Each interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. This method was thought to be particularly useful in studying student and academic staff perceptions about English teaching and learning practices in the PYP with particular respect to ultimately enhancing this programme. The semi-structured approach was chosen because it allowed me to use a non-standard set of open-ended questions to seek more in-depth views by following up on participants' responses (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2018). In the interview, I also was looking for in-depth information about how and if the three dimensions identified from the literature (autonomy, competence and sense of belonging) have an impact on student engagement. I aimed to see how learners and academic staff views were similar or different regarding their perspectives.

In order to increase the benefit of interviews and as noted above, each interviewee should feel as comfortable as possible. The interviewer should build a good relationship with the respondent based on mutual respect, appreciation and concern (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of this method. One of these was that it was time-consuming in preparation before and after conducting the interviews (Howitt, 2016). Another problem is that there was less consistency in data collection because the interview questions may have small changes due to using semi-structured interviews, and the conversation progressed through (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Also, some difficulties occurred in recording interviews, such as lack of clarity of voice and sometimes background noise which may cause unclarity of some responses (Roulston & Choi, 2018). In order to

overcome some of interviewing difficulties and to ensure the effectiveness of obtaining accurate information and data and detailed results, it was important to take into account several steps for the interviews. The following section explains these steps.

Several points were taken into account when conducting the interviews to mitigate some disadvantages. For example, I began by having brief conversations with the participants in which I tried to engage them (that is, a small conversation related to some common social and culture events happened at that time) and progressed step by step towards clarifying the purpose of the interview. I also tried to show friendliness and respect towards the participants so they could feel safe and reassured, encouraging them to answer the interview questions. Also, consideration was given to discussing neutral topics that did not carry any emotional or personal meanings for the participants, then to gradually gradual transition from the development of a friendly relationship towards the topics and questions related to the interview questions. Some interview questions have been clarified and simplified for the participants while giving participants enough time to answer the interview questions.

In this investigation, the interview questions (see appendices 4.7- 4.9) were formulated based on addressing the research questions (see section 1.7 for the research questions). In order to assess the trustworthiness of the interviews, I took several steps. Firstly, the questions were presented to the supervisory team of this research to seek their views and comments about the questions (see section 3.5.1). After considering some changes and revising to the questions and before conducting the interviews, I started to translate them from English into Arabic as the interviews were conducted in the participants' first language (Arabic).

All students' interviews were conducted individually in Arabic because I believed that interviewees would feel more confident and give better answers and valuable information when speaking in their first language (Arabic). On the other hand, academic staff were given the choice to select their preferred language for the interviews, so some chose the Arabic Language, and some chose the English Language. All gained qualitative data was transformed and transcribed from the audio conversations into a soft copy written form.

It was difficult to ask participants to speak in English, so the interviews would have been felt as an assessment of their language proficiency and not the conversation in which I sought to know their experiences and ideas; thus, it would lose its value and goal. This was especially important because speaking to students about their experiences and taking their

views into the educational process is a different experience in the Saudi educational community, especially for students. Moreover, I was hoping that using the Arabic language would provide valuable and in-depth information that might not have been obtained using the English language. Participants might not be able to show their perspectives due to the difficulties of finding the appropriate vocabulary that might appropriately reflect their views and experiences.

I decided that participants use their first language to search for reflective responses without feeling anxious about their language mistakes and their feeling that I might evaluate them or even form a negative sense about their English. I did not want the participants to focus on the linguistic accuracy of the information they attempted to deliver or worry about making linguistic mistakes.

The following step was to present the translated version of the interview questions to different native Arabic speakers in order to ensure that the translation was accurate and served my research purpose. A copy was given to the internal adviser of the fieldwork on the research fieldwork site. Another copy was given to a friend who is a teacher and Masters graduate in the Education field. A third version was given to an undergraduate student who had passed the Preparatory Year Programme to determine any misconceptions or anything not easily understandable in the interview questions. These steps were successful in minimizing and overcome issues in the interview questions and their translation. The next section will outline the ethical consideration of this investigation.

3.7 Ethical considerations

When undertaking a research project involving human participants, ethical considerations become paramount. Vanderstoep and Johnson (2008) state that before commencing research and collecting data from people, the researcher must obtain permission to collect data from the ethical authority at the institution supervising the investigation. In this case, ethical approval for this study was granted from the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow.

In order to ensure good research practice and attention to ethical issues, this study considers all the ethical issues associated with research, following several ethical guidelines including Research Ethics Guidance by the Social Research Association (SRA, 2003); the Framework

for Research Ethics by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2015); the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2019) as well as the guidance provided by the University of Glasgow. All ethical issues were considered in this study, including the safety and wellbeing of research participants, the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, recruiting participants, overseas data collection issues, consent forms (see appendices 4.5-4.6), and research information for participants (see appendices 4.1-4.4).

Following the University of Glasgow Research Risk Guidance 2019, this study was low risk, as all participants involved in this research were students and academic staff over 18 years of age. This investigation focuses only on learning and teaching English in the Saudi Higher Education context, excluding any focus on matters relating to culture or topics that may be deemed controversial in in this particular educational context.

As an experienced teacher interested in the language learning field in Higher Education, I am now aware that the PYP is a worldwide educational structure that appears in many forms across the world: it is not unique to Saudi Higher Education. Various studies on the PYP in Saudi Arabia indicate that the PYP, in general, is a constructive addition to the education system at the university, with the importance of strengthening it and promoting positive university outcomes.

I have noticed a difference in learners' proficiency after entering the PYP and advancing to their main studies in the university through my experience as an English language instructor in the PYP. I have observed that the students are more committed, serious, and confident in themselves and their abilities. On the other hand, students still need to reinforce and foster various capacities and skills necessary for university and post-university life. These include being able to express their thinking, debating and embracing the perspectives of others, believing in and being able to participate in co-operative work, being an active learner, and a variety of other positive elements may inspire students to be more engaged in their learning. I believe that this would help them build their personal, academic and positive affective capabilities.

All student interviews were performed in Arabic because I believed interviewees would feel more confident and provide more relevant information if they spoke in their first language. This seemed particularly important because I was asking the students to talk about their experiences and to share their perspectives would almost certainly be a new experience for

them in the Saudi education community. Furthermore, I hoped that utilising Arabic would provide in-depth information that could not have been gained using English. Participants may have been unable to express their opinions owing to difficulties with relevant vocabulary that would have accurately reflected their beliefs and experiences. I also determined that participants would be better able and willing to talk with me in their first language if they were not concerned about grammatical accuracy or the fear that I might judge or even dismiss their English.

However, academic staff were allowed to choose which language they used for the interviews with some preferring Arabic, while others chose English. I chose not to ask participants to engage in English, as the interviews may have been perceived as a measure of their language competence rather than as a dialogue in which I was trying to learn about their experiences and opinions. In total, twelve academic staff were interviewed and, of these, eight were native speakers of the Arabic language, three were neither Arabic native speakers nor English native speakers, but used English as a second language, and only one was a native speaker of the English language. During the interview process, seven interviews were conducted in Arabic, with those participants all Arabic native speakers. Five interviews were conducted in English and, of these, three participants were using English as a second language, one was an Arabic speaker who chose to use English for his interview, and one was an English native speaker.

In this regard, formulating questions about the English Language Programme took another orientation, where participants (staff and students) were asked about future enhancements (see appendices 4.7- 4.9) rather than being asked to comment negatively – this was to avoid asking questions that might reflect difficult topics (Roulston and Choi, 2018). The students and academic staff involved in the study met with the researcher for research interviews in a naturalistic setting, a common available room in the investigated site, which was designed to cause no stress or harm for participants.

For my ethical obligation as a researcher, I was committed to the research participants' safety and well-being and for participant anonymity. I was aware of and respected the confidentiality of the research participants and ensured that no identifiable data was reported. I was also aware to avoid any possible ethical issues in the research, for example, not taking participants' consent and not explaining to participants why they had been selected or the purpose of the study. To keep in mind ethical considerations in recruiting research

participants, the participants were assured that they should only enter the study freely and willingly and be aware of and understand what they agreed to when they participated. Also, the participants were told they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The research participants had no relationship with me and the decision to take part or not to take part in the project would in no way affect the individual's relationship with the researcher or the standing of the student or staff participant in the institution and I ensured that this was the case.

For confidentiality and data handling, this research secured a degree of anonymity for the samples, whereby a code replaced identifiers from the original data, to which only I, as the researcher, have access, and have retained them in a secure location. All participants' personal information was anonymised and coded before data analysis, as described in section 3.9 of the ethical guidelines. It was explained to participants that they would be referred to by a pseudonym in any publication arising from the research, although they were made aware that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee, for example, in the event of exposure to harm or danger to participants or others which, fortunately, did not occur.

For the data storage security and following the University of Glasgow Data Protection Impact Assessment 2019, data were kept secure in a locked location. For example, paper data (for example consent forms) were kept secure in a locked drawer and room at the researcher's desk at the research site. Electronic data (for example interview audio recordings) were stored on a password-protected and encrypted drive and kept safe from the risk of being damaged or lost with files backed up on the University of Glasgow password-protected cloud with access to computer files available by encrypted password only. Also, participants were made aware that access to data and the purpose of retaining the data is for academic research purposes only, and no one has access to the data except me, as the researcher in the first place and, where applicable, supervisors and examiners. The following section will detail this study's fieldwork and data collection procedures.

3.8 Fieldwork and data collection procedures

As previously stated, the focus of this study is to explore students' engagement through an English Language Programme in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) in the Saudi Higher Education context. Interviews were used to collect data in order to pursue this goal.

When Saudi students move to university, they encounter challenges, including the use of English language in teaching, particularly in the PYPs and the subject areas. High school graduates' attitude and study style are often incompatible with higher education requirements (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). They may prefer a more teacher-centred environment which is familiar to them because that was likely the approach in their school classrooms. Saudi students at all levels are used to being given knowledge rather than having to seek it out themselves according to Khoshaim (2017). As a result, students often lack the creativity and critical thinking abilities required to complete university activities. Instead of challenging themselves, they adhere to the teacher's directions and follow the necessary processes to gain the correct answer without much consideration about what that answer may be. In addition, when dealing with a cognitively demanding activity, English teachers may want to assist students and offer support as soon as they see any uncertainty, discomfort, or difficulty. This is because many teachers try to promote a relaxed, stress-free atmosphere and so avoid challenging students or encouraging student to think for themselves.

There have been some attempts to improve some aspects of education in Saudi Arabia in response to these challenges (Ministry of Education, 2023). At the school and university levels, policymakers have established several strategies to ease transitioning from school to Higher Education. For instance, the English language textbook content in schools has been consistently developed to address language barriers. Also, to better prepare independent thinking graduates, a new learning system has been introduced in some high schools with an improved teaching and learning methodology aimed at enabling learners to cope with the level and critical thinking tasks needed at the university. Also, the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) has been introduced to help all students become academically ready for university studies.

The data collection took place at one University located in Saudi Arabia. Initial contact with the administration of the Preparatory Year Programme at the University was made for further arrangements upon collecting data. All participants (students and academic staff) are based at the study site in Saudi Arabia and had been invited in person to ask if they are interested in taking part as volunteers in face-to-face interviews for the study. All the participants were competent to give consent to be interviewed. The interviews with the students were in their first language (Arabic). However, some interviews with academic staff were in Arabic, and some were in English. As summarised in figure 5, the data collection process took place in

the academic year 2019/2020 and lasted for three months, from October 2019 to January 2020. Figure 5 below shows the timeline of the data collection process.

Figure 5: Data collection process timeline

In the institution for this study, the study was conducted in different colleges: College of Engineering, College of Dentistry, College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Science and the Preparatory Year, which gave six research sites in total. The study site appointed me an internal coordinator to offer me support and guidance, and to act as a link between me and the University during my data collection journey. I met my internal coordinator and provided him with full details of my study. I asked my internal coordinator to help me to contact the Deans and Heads of the Colleges in order to make further arrangements to invite participants for the interviews. The research sample is discussed in the following section.

Regarding the research sample, a purposive random sampling method was used to recruit 30 participants because I was looking for several participants systematically chosen from the research population and because I had already defined the age group and estimated number of participants (King, Horrocks & Brooks, 2018). As noted above, this investigation included collecting data through interviews. Thirty to thirty-five participants (students and academic staff) were expected to take part in the interviews. A random sample of PYP students, PYP graduates and academic staff from the English Language Centre in the PYP, and academic staff from different Colleges in the University who had taught PYP graduates in these Colleges were asked whether they were willing to take part in this investigation. All the participants were given the Plain Language Statement (PLS), which contains detailed information about the research and their participating position in the interviews. Participants who agreed received a paper copy of the consent form before the interviews. After all, only eighteen students and twelve academic staff were interviewed, with thirty participants in total.

However, there were some difficulties with the interviews. For example, some participants agreed in the first place to participate in the study, then decided to withdraw. Accordingly, they were replaced by other participants. Another issue was that some of the interview meeting times changed several times, which resulted in time lost and the need to postpone other interviews. Table 3 below summarises information about the participant groups and numbers.

Table 3: Participant numbers.

Participant groups / Colleges	Students	Academic Staff	Total number
College of Engineering	**2** PYP graduates (PYPG)	**2**	**4**
College of Dentistry	**3** PYP graduates (PYPG)	**2**	**5**
College of Medicine	**2** PYP graduates (PYPG)	**2**	**4**
College of Pharmacy	**2** PYP graduates (PYPG)	**2**	**4**
College of Science	**3** PYP graduates (PYPG)	**2**	**5**
Preparatory Year	**6** PYP students	**2**	**8**
Total	**18 Students**	**12 Academic staff**	**30 Participants**

Regarding the interview procedures for the PYP participants, I contacted the Office of the English Language Centre (ELC) at the study site and provided full details of my study. At the beginning of each academic year, the English Language Center conducts a placement test to identify the English level of new students based on the English language levels of the CEFR. Students are distributed according to their test scores into two tracks. The fast track is for students who score 80% and above on the test, and this track comes with relatively low contact hours (eight hours per week). The other is known as the regular track, which is for students who score below 80%, and this comes with the standard contact of 16 hours per week for the English Language course. I aimed to select students from both tracks. In order

to seek a variety of students, I asked the ELC Office to grant me permission to access some English classes and to recruit potential participants. I entered those selected classes and asked students to participate in the study after explaining the purpose of my research. I aimed to have a selection from across both levels, as noted in section 1.4.1. My research interviews were conducted two months after the start of the academic year. This was because I thought that students at this stage should have enough study experience as they started their academic year by studying the English course in the Preparatory Year. After that, the Office of ELC was asked to contact via email a number of the English language instructors who teach both fast and regular tracks to be involved in the interviews for the PYP academic staff.

I contacted the potential academic staff and explained my research purpose. Then I met the English instructors who agreed to participate in the research and provided them with the PLS and my research details with further explanation about their participation. I asked them to sign the consent form before we started the interviews. There were a total of 25 interviews in Arabic (18 students and 7 teaching staff). There were five interviews in English only for the teaching staff who chose to use English because, for four of them Arabic was not their first language and only one was a native Arabic speaker who chose to use English for his interview. For the College Participants, I contacted each Dean of the College and supplied them with a PLS. They were asked to provide me with information about the timetables of second-year classes and the academic staff who teach those classes.

The reason for choosing the second year was because students at that level should have a good experience as they have studied and successfully passed the English course in the Preparatory Year. I entered several classes, explained to students the purpose of my research, and asked them if they wanted to be part of the study. Then I met the students who agreed to participate in the research and provided them with the PLS. I also explained what would happen if they agreed to take part, that their participation in this research would be completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time without any reason. I asked students who agreed to participate to sign the research consent form before the interviews started.

Also, I asked the Deans of Colleges to nominate two academic staff from each college who teach second-year classes to be involved in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. King, Horrocks and Brooks (2018, p.59) would describe these Deans as ‘gatekeepers’ who have the authority to give or deny permission to access the potential research participants. I

contacted the nominated academic staff and explained my research purpose. I provided the PLS and my research details to the teachers who agreed to take part with further explanation about what would happen if they accepted the invitation and that their participation in this research was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time without any reason. Before the interviews started, I asked the teachers to sign the consent form to ensure that they understood their ethical rights and agreed to take part in the study. There was no risk, potential disruption, or negative consequences to the participants that were obvious and no questions I thought might cause any emotional, social or economic distress. I was aware of and prepared for any potential risk that would lead to any disruption to the interview and I ensured that all good research practice guidelines were followed before conducting any research data collection and analysis. I will, next, explain the data analysis process of this study.

3.9 Data analysis

The data analysis process is an essential part of any research, and the researcher is required to discuss it. Qualitative researchers use many frameworks to clarify qualitative data analyses (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and ensure the data are explicit, shared and without reduce bias (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). This section will discuss the method used to analyse the collected data for this research. Also, it will describe the initial steps of data analysis, which are the transcription and translation process of the collected data. Then, it will explain in detail the procedures and steps that were followed during the data analysis and the data coding process. A separate Chapter will follow to discuss the key findings and themes of this research generated from the data.

In this investigation, the thematic analysis method was used to analyse the qualitative data, with thematic analysis aiming to search for themes (Bryman, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) define thematic analysis as a common method for analysing various qualitative data types to answer different research questions. As noted earlier, interviews were conducted as the primary instrument to obtain data from students and the academic staff and the thematic analysis was designed to enable a deep exploration of interviewee statements and to match these with the academic staff statements under an assigned theme or sub-theme.

The initial step in analysing the interviews was to keep notes on responses along with the audio recording during the interview. After conducting all the interviews, all the identifiable personal data, such as participants' names and subject areas from the original data, were anonymised and coded. For example, PYP students who were studying at the PYP during the data collection process were coded as PYP_student_1 and PYP_student_2 and so on. The PYP graduates who successfully passed the PYP and started their first year in their subject area and second year of their university life were coded, for example, Dent student for students who studied Dentistry; students who studied Medicine were coded as Med students, and students who studied Pharmacy were coded as Pharma student. Science students were coded as Sci students, and Engineering students were coded as Eng_student. The same coding actions were applied to the teaching staff data. For example, members of English language staff who teach PYP students in the PYP were coded as ELC_staff; staff from Engineering College who teach PYP graduates in the College of Engineering were coded as Eng_staff; staff from Science College who teach PYP graduates in the College of Science were coded as Sci_staff; staff from Medicine College who teach PYP graduates in the College of Medicine were coded as Med_staff; staff from Dentistry College who teach PYP graduates in the College of Dentistry were coded as Dent_staff, and staff from the Pharmacy College who teach PYP graduates in the College of Pharmacy were coded as Pharma_staff.

Transcription then followed and although it was a time consuming and very boring process, it allowed me as a researcher to become enthusiastic and eager to discover the research data. Following the guidelines suggested by Bryman (2016) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), each spoken word by the participant or by me was transcribed. However, the length of pauses or non-verbal expressions were not transcribed as they were not relevant to the interview design and were not required to conduct thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). To ensure that the interview was transcribed correctly and appropriately, each transcription was read and re-read again while listening to the original audio recording after the original transcriptions were written to validate the transcriptions and familiarise myself with the data. The natural state of verbal expressions has been considered by adding punctuation marks into the written version (for example, using commas and semicolon to separate or link sentences and phrases) to give strength to interpret meanings in the transcribed content, which helps analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). As an additional measure taken during the transcription process, I translated the

interviews from the local Arabic dialect into standard Arabic. This will be explained in more detail in the following section.

Translating the collected data is essential, as many researchers need to use more than one language in their research (Holmes et al., 2013). As I mentioned earlier, most of the research interviews were conducted in Arabic, as it is the participants' first language. However, some of the interviews were conducted in English as it is the second language for some participants, especially some of the teaching staff. In this regard, I corrected the English language only to make it comprehensible and easy to follow. For data collection, I translated all the interview questions from English to the Arabic language. I also translated a version of the Plain Language Statement (PLS) and an Arabic-translated version of the consent form. At this stage, I tried to ensure that all the translated texts were accurate and correct by applying several methods.

The first step was, after translating the PLS and the consent forms into Arabic, giving these to two colleagues, who are native Arabic speakers and studying PhDs in Education in the UK, to verify the translation accuracy, and their suggestions were implemented. In the second step, and after translating the interviews, two Arabic speakers who are teachers and involved in the educational research field were asked to check the Arabic version concerning the Arabic grammar and linguistic structure. The third step aimed to test the translated version's clarity and accuracy with an undergraduate student who studied in the PYP to avoid any misunderstanding of any concepts. The last step was to ensure that all comments and reviews were implemented.

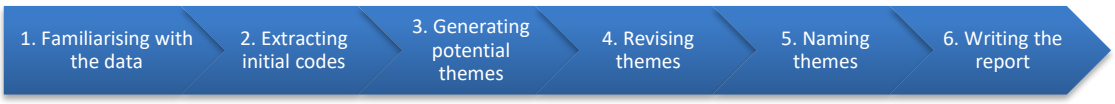
Although I knew that it would take longer to translate each interview from Arabic into English, as noted above this decision was made to make sure that the participants were comfortable expressing their opinions and speaking freely about their experiences with learning English in the PYP. I tried several ways during my journey in transcribing and translating research data but decided that although, as Halai (2007) notes, it can take extra time and effort to translate the interviews from one language to another, I translated the interview data twice. First, from the local Saudi dialect into standard Arabic and then I translated again into English. This step was applied to avoid any slang or informal language that would affect the semantic meaning in the translation process. From what I experienced, this was a good tactical decision to minimize the time spent translating. In order to ensure that my translations were accessible to the readers, I attempted to interpret the participants'

responses so they could understand what the participants meant. Van Nes et al. (2010) indicate that the translator should attempt not only to translate but also to interpret the meanings of the target language.

Regarding the data analysis steps of this study, qualitative data analysis is a vital part of all qualitative research. Each research begins with a set of qualitative information, also known as data. Then the information gathered is organised and analysed to extract the research results or findings. Several methods for analysing qualitative data, including the thematic analysis method, were used to analyse the data for this study. Braun and Clarke (2021) describe thematic analysis as the commonly used analytic qualitative research method. In this study Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) thematic analysis approach was applied to organise the data. It was adopted as an analytical approach to this research to provide a systemic and in-depth explanation, interpretation, and analysis to answer the research questions. Although it relies heavily on the researcher and the study context, Braun and Clarke (2021) argue that it should be considered an analytic method and not only a tool used for data analysis. For the coding process, I followed Saldaña's (2021) coding methods to help extract and identify codes from the data and classify them into specific codes, sub-themes and themes, which will be outlined later in this section.

The data was carefully examined to identify codes of meanings, themes, and ideas that follow similar patterns and help to answer the research questions. following the six thematic analysis phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) and as shown in figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Analysis steps



Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

Braun and Clarke (2019) emphasise that when following the proposed analysis phases, it is important to know that the analysis process is an iterative rather than a linear process, where

the researcher can move back and forth between the phases according to the analysis needed. These different steps were applied to this study as follows.

The first step was familiarising myself with the data. In this step, I was engaged in the analysis process when I collected the data myself, as the data was collected in interactive ways. For example, I conducted face-to-face interviews, which allowed me to start the analysis with prior knowledge of the data and initial analytic notes and thoughts. Translating the data and active reading and listening to the data many times helped me identify possible patterns. Although researchers have indicated that transcribing is an important data analysis stage, especially with the qualitative interpretive methodology and, as noted above, transcribing verbal data into a written transcript was time consuming and sometimes frustrating and boring, it was essential to the analysis process (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005).

I also realised that the time I spent transcribing interviews was not wasted. On the contrary, it reflected my understanding of the early stages of the analysis and enabled me to have a more in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the data. While I was transcribing, I took initial notes for potentially important data, for example, themes, topics, or concepts that emerged and were repeated multiple transcripts (see appendix 1) and this helped me to obtain the necessary skills in interpreting and analysing the data (Davidson, 2009).

Before moving to the second phase and initiating the initial coding of the participants' responses, I divided the participant data into four groups. Table 4 shows the divided participant groups.

Table 4: The study's participant groups

Group name	**Participant numbers**
PYP students	**6**
PYP graduates (PYPG) who successfully passed the PYP (1st year students of Science and Engineering)	**5**
PYPG (1st year students of Health Science Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry)	**7**
ELC staff (English teaching staff)	**2**
Colleges staff	**10**

(Colleges of Science , Engineering, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry)	
Total	**30**

The second step is extracting initial codes. In this research, I used both inductive and deductive analysis methods to extract codes from the data to answer my research questions. I started with the inductive approach as I sought to learn from the data and to look for any patterns to draw preliminary ideas. Then the extracted codes were informed deductively to add more understanding of the data based, especially, on the key concepts from Kahu and Nelson's (2018) engagement framework. In the second step, initial codes were generated after I actively read the interview transcripts and the data became more familiar and I was able to build a preliminary list of ideas/notes about the data and what was interesting in it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). Gibson and Brown (2009, p.5) define coding as 'creating a category used to describe a general feature of the data; a category described to a group of data examples'. Saldaña (2021, p.5) defines coding as 'a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data'.

Additionally, Gibson and Brown (2009) suggest that coding can be encouraging in fulfilling the aims of thematic analysis, including examining commonalities within a dataset as well as differences and relationships. Regarding the number of codes to be extracted from the data, Gibson and Brown (2009) emphasise that there is no consensus on the exact number of codes or themes, but the process depends on the data and the researcher's theoretical and conceptual reflection.

There are different ways to code the data, however, for this study coding process, as mentioned earlier, I followed the two coding cycles method proposed by Saldaña (2021) to extract codes, sub-themes and themes from my data. Saldaña's coding cycles require using various coding methods (for example, exploratory methods, explained in the following paragraph) to extract a wide range of codes from the data and often to refine the codes extracted from the first cycle. Additionally, the second coding cycle requires much code refining in order to draw an initial themes map and then work towards the final themes of the data. The coding process was conducted as follows. First, I found initial codes from the data by gathering memos and notes that I had previously recorded across multiple interview transcripts while conducting the interviews and before transcribing the interviews following

advice from Saldaña (2021) and as seen in table 5 below. For the coding, I used a combination of macro 'Lumper' coding and micro 'Splitter' coding. The macro 'Lumper' coding means applying large excerpts to codes, and the micro 'Splitter' coding splits codes into a series of several small excerpts (Saldaña, 2021, p.34) to give codes thick descriptions and systematically identify, select, and apply codes based on data interpretation (see appendix 1). To identify overlaps across the dataset, I looked for patterns to build explanations and comparisons and categorise differences in codes across participant groups (for example, current PYP students and PYP graduates; PYP graduates attending different colleges; teaching staff in different colleges).

Table 5: Examples of initial codes from notes and memos

interview Question	Responses	Coded for
Do you think they have the support and the needs or the things that they need, to support them to go to faculties?	*'I think support has to be done in a way it's not only you know, money and nice buildings and so on. It has to be the programme has to be supportive in the way it structured'*	Students need more support
what do you think of the course you are currently teaching? In terms of students' performance who came from the preparatory year?	*'Students in the PYP learn general English but this is for us is not enough because we in School of Medicine depend on medical terminology'*	including ESP in the PYP

After that, I started the first coding cycle as suggested by Saldaña (2021), using two coding cycles and involving different coding methods to create a codebook (see Table 7). When I

started coding, I aimed to learn about the patterns from the data (data-driven), so I employed various coding methods in the first coding cycle. These included exploratory methods that apply preliminary codes to the data that involve a generic/holistic coding across the dataset. I applied a single code to each large data unit to capture the idea of the overall contents and potential categories that may shape and develop a list of codes which helped to give an idea about what is in the data. Then, an initial coding list of codes was generated from the data based on what the preliminary investigation indicated from the data prior (see appendix 2).

I used many ways to generate and record codes from the dataset, and one of them used computer software (Mackey & Gass, 2011). During this stage of the coding process, I used more than one piece of software for coding and organising. First, I used NVivo to facilitate data management and analysis. This strategy was followed to code as many potential patterns as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006,2013). It is noteworthy, at this stage, that most of the initial codes were inductive as they were based on discoveries from the data. Next , these codes needed to be applied to #serve the purpose of my study and answer the research questions.

However, it was unclear at this stage whether re the data would allow me to build a good story to answer the research questions. Therefore, in the second step and part of this phase, all the extracted codes were refined several times using two means, Microsoft Word and the manual approach, to discover any overlap across the codes. In terms of refining the codes and finding relevant themes, I developed a codebook that helped organise the codes and to build a thematic map and then set out the main themes of my study. The following section presents the third phase of the thematic analysis and shows examples from the codebook used to develop and find this study's themes.

The third step is generating potential themes. In this stage, I initiated the second coding cycle and developed a codebook to provide a guideline for consistent coding across the entire dataset. A codebook was formed by collecting common patterns of meaning from codes previously extracted from the data to generate initial themes that can be used to produce and discuss the study results report (see Table 6). The codebook was used as a guidebook of all codes from the dataset

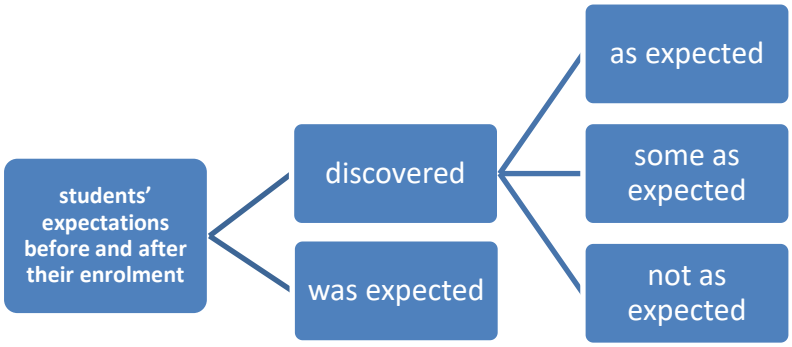
Table 6: The codebook of the dataset

Code	Description	Example from data
Expectations	What participants expect in/from the PYP and if it was as expected, some as expected or not as was expected.	*'I expected the Science content will be as same as secondary school, and it was, but it is taught in English in the PYP'* *'PYP wasn't as I was expected'*
Content relevance	explaining how the English content is related to students' future studies/meeting their needs	*'I think it would be better for students if medical terms were included in the preparatory year curriculum'*
University activities	Measures/activities that increase students' sense of belonging	*'Student clubs and services and courses for students and society also offer something wonderful and enhance the sense of belonging to the university'*
challenges of using EMI	What makes EMI as a challenge or an obstacle for student learning and success	*'Certainly, using EMI is a challenge for those who are below the average level in the English language'*

In addition, I used Microsoft Excel software to place the extracted codes in arrays to analyse and organise them to find themes. In other words, the codebook informed these codes and I applied them to Microsoft Excel software to be revised, classified and analysed according to

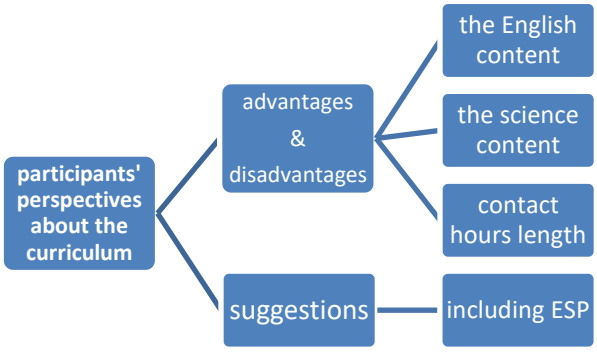
the research purpose and to answer the research questions (see appendix 3). The process resulted in obtaining primary codes for sub-themes and themes aligned with the study objective and creating a coherent picture of similar patterns. The initial codes to themes were placed together, creating an initial theme map to clarify the themes resulting from the data (see Diagram 1). The initial themes map was revised again to develop more themes that served the study purpose.

Diagram 1: the first generated theme and sub-themes



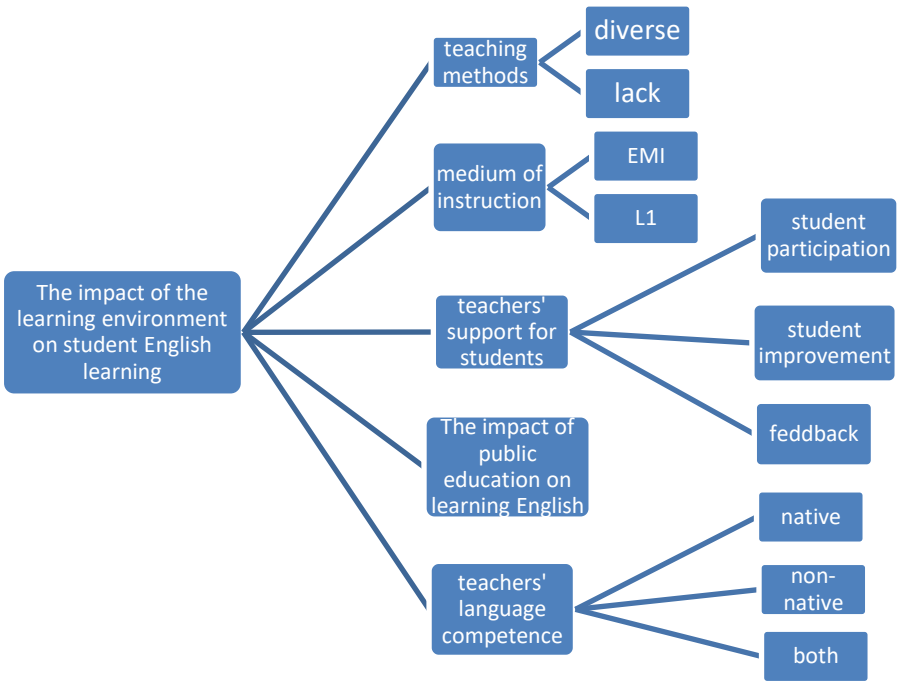
In the above example, are relevant responses to answering the first research question about students' expectations, perceptions, and learning outcomes before, during and after their enrolment in the PYP. Then, codes were generated and named the first potential theme as Students' Expectations About the PYP Before and After their Enrolment. In this potential theme, participants expressed what they expected about the PYP before their enrolment and what they discovered after their enrolment. For example, some of the PYP participants found that the PYP was not as they expected *'Preparatory Year wasn't as I expected'* (PYP_student_1), and some of them found the PYP as they expected *'I expected the Science content will be as same as secondary school, and it was'* (PYP_student_3). The same method was followed to create more themes as shown in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2: example of codes to potential themes



The above diagram presents the second potential theme to answer the research questions. In this theme, participants share their perspectives on the PYP curriculum. The codes focus on three main points: the English content, the Science content, and the length of the contact hours. Opinions have differed between the teaching staff in the subject area and the PYP graduates about the Science content in the PYP, for example, *'Yes, of course, the Science content was useful'* (Sci_student_1). In determining the curriculum's advantages and disadvantages, the positive and negative responses about the content were highlighted for further differentiation and discussion. For example, one of the participants states, *'There are many topics that I studied in the preparatory year that are the same as I am studying now, except that some have become a little more extensive'* (Eng_student_1). Other codes were collated for the suggestions that participants provided to improve the curriculum from different aspects of the PYP and produced as a theme. The initial themes map was revised in preparation for the next stage, which is a holistic codes and theme refinement process to decide and name the final and/or main themes (see diagram 3 below).

Diagram 3: presents more potential themes

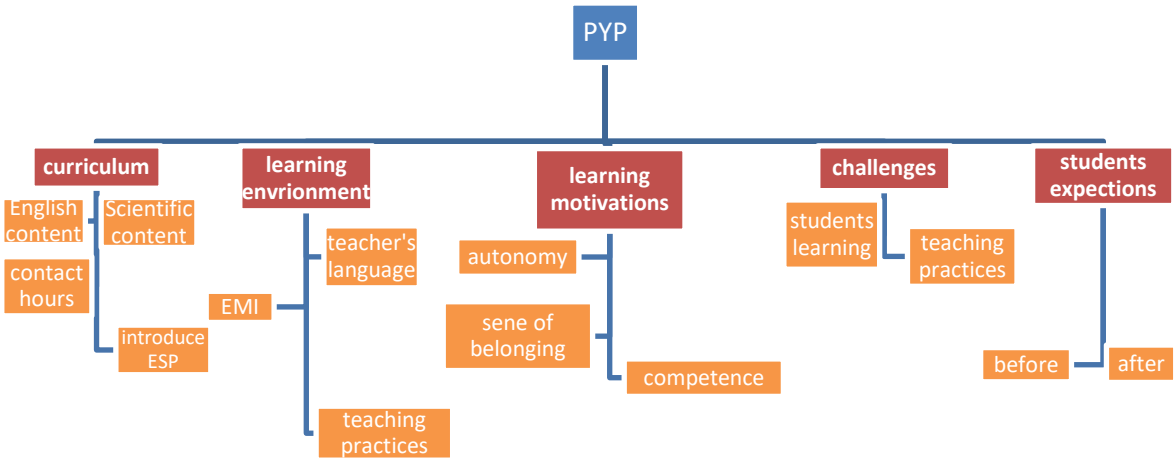


The above diagram shows another potential theme that appeared during the revising process. The analysis revealed the learning environment as a theme with sub-themes affecting students' learning processes and likely their engagement. The sub-themes were identified in participants' responses as the teaching methods used in PYP, the teacher's language, the Medium of Instruction, teachers' support for students and the impact of public education on learning English. For example, some students believe that the teacher's language (ass a

native or non-native speaker) impacts their English learning. A health studies student felt that a native English speaker teacher is useful for practising the language, 'a *native speaker may benefit me more in the context of linguistic speech than a non-native speaker'* (Med_student_2). In contrast, others highlighted a lack of communication with a native English-speaking teacher, *'the communication was very difficult with the teacher'* (dent_student_2).

As the refining process continued, more relevant themes emerged to give a clearer idea of the data with more potential themes identified from different aspects of the data and, by combining and separating themes, I was able to develop a broader theme map, as shown in diagram 4.

Diagram 4: broader code to themes map



The diagram above shows a group of issues coded from data (in red boxes) that may affect students' engagement and learning in the PYP. These codes were collected and linked to other codes to form the study's initial themes and sub-themes (in orange boxes). The codes were reviewed again to overcome overlaps and create more consistent themes to prepare for the next phase, which aims to name the final themes and sub-themes. For example, challenges faced by participants affecting students' learning and teaching practices in the PYP can be related to the use of EMI for the learning environment and the PYP curriculum, represented by the content. Also, coding to learning motivations may include aspects related to student expectations and the learning environment, promoting students' need for autonomy, competence, and a sense of belonging to enhance student engagement.

The next phase sorts and integrates the key codes and phrases into a more logical form. Themes and codes were revisited to define what is interesting about each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).The fourth step is revising themes. This stage focuses on examining the extracted data and determining whether they are aligned with the themes generated in the initial thematic map for analysis. The themes were reviewed and refined several times at this stage. Some themes were merged, separated or excluded to ascertain that every set of shared meaning patterns follow a logical notion. I aimed to comprehensively integrate codes and themes to create a narrative form of the thematic map. I started to collect the key codes, sub-themes, themes, and concepts of my analysis into a few phrases to explore how the items might link, show causality, indicate a process, or work logically to create broader and more consistent themes. I scanned for evidence in the data that supported my summary statements or suggested a revision to show the overlaps across my statements.

The following tables 7 - 13 outline the main themes and sub-themes after reviewing the data extracted from participant groups of students and teaching staff. The first five themes represent the penultimate stage of naming the final themes and sub-themes of the students' group.

Table 7: The 1st potential theme

Students views of the PYP		
Sub-themes	**Expectations prior the PYP**	**What students discovered (Discoveries post the PYP)**
Code	The PYP is a challenge Different tracks/paths Using EMI Source of these information	Workload pressure The PYP isn't a challenge Using EMI is a challenge No different tracks/paths Repetitive Science content from school Some Science subjects are unbeneficial Intense/heavy Science content

Table 8: The 2nd potential theme

Learning in the PYP		
Sub-themes	**Science curriculum**	**English curriculum**

Code	repetitive Science content from school EMI is a challenge (disadvantage) Teaching methods • lecture form (disadvantage) • affects atmosphere in class(disadvantage)	English content • simple &clear content • different textbook levels • No ESP (disadvantage Long contact hours (disadvantage) Teacher qualities and effectiveness • variety of teaching methods/styles • positive feedback • good atmosphere in class • teacher's L1 ○ native/non-native speaker • focus on/support low level students (disadvantage) • incompetence teaching of some staff(disadvantage) no different tracks/paths (disadvantage) assessment method (disadvantage)

Table 9: The 3rd potential theme

Students' learning experience		
Sub-themes	**purpose of English learning for students**	**Learner responsibility**
Code	Study purposes Personal desire	Using self-learning/self-determination The desire to continue learning English The desire to improve their English The desire to obtain high marks A sense of making progress in English learning A sense of obtaining high marks in English

Table 10: The 4th potential theme

Challenges of engagement and English learning in the PYP			
Sub-themes	**Prior English learning experience**	**Lack of linguistic competence**	**Lack of student partnership**
Code	Transfer knowledge • English learning years • the effect of previous experience (English learning in school)	Lack of confidence • lack of English proficiency • fear of making mistakes when speak • Not participating in the classroom	Limited engagement in decision making (only class evaluation) Disengaged for their learning Their voice not being heard

Table 11: The 5th potential theme

Suggestions for enhancing engagement and English learning in the PYP		
Sub-themes	**Student's retention**	**Students' needs for their future studies**
Code	Listening to students' voice Develop extracurricular activities English club	Develop English curriculum Develop English curriculum • introduce ESP Introduce different learning paths/tracks Introduce subject areas to students in the PYP Academic skills Research skills

The last two themes represent the penultimate stage of naming the final themes and sub-themes of the teaching staff group.

Table 12: The 6th potential theme

Teaching staff views about the PYP		
Sub-themes	**Opinions about the PYP graduates**	**opinions about curriculum and pedagogy in the PYP**

Code	Low level of English Lack of English skills (writing) Lack of communication skills Lack of academic kills/university life	No ESP in the English content Intensive/heave content of Science subject Some Science subjects are unbeneficial No different learning path/tracks

Table 13: The 7th potential theme

Challenges of Engagement and Learning from teaching staff perspective			
Sub-themes	**Challenges students face in the PYP**	**Challenges students face in the subject area**	**Challenges teaching staff face in the PYP/subject area**
Code	Using EMI The effect of previous learning experience No entry and exit points in the English course No different learning tracks/paths Long contact hours and workload Not enough time to learn English Lack of control on learning Student disengagement for their learning	using EMI Essay exams questions • low level of writing skills	Large class size (PYP) Short of staff numbers (PYP) • issues in teachers' retention and recruitment Using EMI (subject area) • low students' English level • using L1 in teaching Low level of students' academic knowledge (subject area)

	• listening to students' voice Incompetence teaching of some staff Lack of teaching methods/styles No tutorials in Science subjects for students Assessment doesn't reflect students' real level		

This phase focused on classifying and organizing the extracted data to present a sequential arrangement of the codes, sub-themes and themes to facilitate the next stage. The following phase consisted of revising and merging the codes to the themes list in order to create the final themes list and produce the final report, here this thesis.

The final step is naming themes. This stage aims to narrow down the number of themes to develop themes from the themes list by integrating similar themes to create a logical narrative for the study's themes. This phase involves a comprehensive and detailed data analysis that defines and names each main theme and sub-theme (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). Sub-themes are important elements as they break down the complexity of a broad theme and maintain the overall meaning of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). After carefully analysing each theme and the collected data extracts, this phase produces an organised and coherent themes list representing different aspects in a consistent and logical scope.

The following is the list of the main themes that emerged from the previous phase:

1. **Students' views of the PYP**
2. **The learning environment in the PYP**
3. **Students' learning experience (learning motivation)**
4. **Challenges of engagement and English learning in the PYP**

5. **Suggestions for enhancing engagement and English learning in the PYP**
6. **Teaching staff views about the PYP**
7. **Challenges of Engagement and Learning from the teaching staff perspective**

The above list outlines seven main themes revealed after refining codes and themes in the previous phase. In the current phase, a final focused refining process was conducted to tackle the overlap in the list and create the final themes list. The refinement and merging process was as follows. First, themes No. 1 (**Students' views of the PYP**) and No. 7 (**Teaching staff views about the PYP**) were merged because they focus on one notion, the participants' views of the PYP. Thus, the new theme's name was changed to become (**The expectations and realities of the PYP**) which explains the results of what students expected before the PYP and what they discovered in the PYP. Through the discussion of the data, a summary is provided about expectations and realities to explain how these may affect engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework.

The second theme was constructed by merging themes from the previous list No. 2 (**The learning environment in the PYP**) and No. 3 (**Students' learning experience**) because they revolve around one point - the practices of learning and teaching in the PYP. Hence, the second theme is (**Learning and pedagogy in the PYP**), and the sub-themes include: **(a.) Motivation** - what makes students desire to learn in the PYP, **(b.) Curriculum** which illustrates participants' views and opinions about the environment and curriculum in the PYP, and **(c.) Pedagogy** which includes data on participants' perspectives about the pedagogy and learning and teaching practices used in the PYP. The discussion of theme two explains how pedagogy may affect engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework alongside the points of the first theme, namely, Engagement, expectations and reality.

The third theme appeared by merging themes No. 2 (**The learning environment in the PYP**) and No. 3 (**Students' learning experience**) from the previous list because they revealed data about the challenges participants faced in the PYP. The name of the third theme is (**Challenges**), and the sub-themes include **(a.) Learning environment** which illustrates the learning environment and engagement challenges that participants identified or faced in the PYP, **(b.) The Medium of Instruction** which illustrates the use of English for teaching, which is identified as a challenge for participants in the PYP/subject area, and **(c.) Competence which pro**vides participants' beliefs drawn from their perceptions of their cognitive and personal capacity to learn English in the PYP. The discussion of this theme

also explains how challenges may affect engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework,

The fourth theme was evident in the data focussed on suggestions and recommendations made by the participants to enhance the current learning and engagement in the PYP. The name of the fourth theme is (**Suggestions for improvement**), and the sub-themes include: **(a.) Recommendations from the Data for engagement** outlines suggestions made by participants to enhance engagement in the PYP, **(b.) Recommendations from the Data for curriculum** outlines, participants' suggestions to enhance the curriculum in the PYP, and **(c.) Recommendations from the Data for pedagogy offers** suggestions to enhance pedagogy in the PYP. The discussion of this theme explains how these suggestions may affect engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework.

The refining process resulted in merging and changing some themes' names. The number of the final main themes was narrowed to four which are as follows:

1. **The expectations and realities of the PYP**
2. **Learning and pedagogy in the PYP**
   - **(a.) Motivation**
   - **(b.) Curriculum**
   - **(c.) Pedagogy**
3. **Challenges**
   - **(a.) Learning environment**
   - **(b.) Medium of Instruction**
   - **(c.) Competence**
4. **Suggestions for improvement**
   - **(a.) Recommendations from the Data for engagement**
   - **(b.) Recommendations from the Data for learning**
   - **(c.) Recommendations from the Data for pedagogy**

Overall, this process involved a comprehensive and detailed data analysis using various methods and means that to move from codes to name each main theme and sub-theme to serve the research purpose and to answer my research questions. The following section will summarise the main points explained in this Chapter.

3.10 Chapter conclusion

This Chapter outlined the research methodology used to conduct this study with attention to interpretivism, the qualitative research design, ethical considerations, data collection and participant details, the thematic analysis method, along with an explanation of the transcribing and translating process followed and, finally, the analytical procedures of extracting the codes and naming the themes. The next Chapter will present and discuss the data and findings.

Chapter 4: Data discussion

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents and discusses data gathered through my semi-structured interviews with 30 participants, students and teaching staff, divided into five groups (see Table 14). As explained in the methodology Chapter, the interviews focused on exploring participants' views and experiences related to my four research questions outlined above (see section 3.2).

For two reasons, my interviews aimed to encourage the participants to share their perspectives regarding student engagement and their experiences in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) in a regional Saudi Higher Education institution. First, I wanted to explore to what extent students are engaged in their learning when studying English courses. Second, I sought to understand the challenges that might hinder student engagement.

Table 14: Participant groups

Group name	Participant numbers
PYP students	**6**
PYP graduates: who had successfully passed the PYP and enrolled in the Colleges of Science and Engineering	**5**
PYP graduates: who enrolled in the Health Science Colleges (Students of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry)	**7**
ELC staff (English Language Centre teaching staff)	**2**
College staff (Colleges of Science , Engineering, Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry)	**10**
Total	**30**

The collected data were analysed using the thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (200, 2013) as explained in sections 3.9. As explained in the previous Chapter, I identified four main themes with sub-themes as in Table 15 below.

Table 15: the study's main themes and sub-themes

Themes	**1. Expectations and realities of the PYP**	**2. Learning and pedagogy in the PYP**	**3. Challenges**	**4. Suggestions for Improvement**
Sub-themes		**(d.) motivation** **(e.) curriculum** **(f.) pedagogy**	**(a.) learning environment** **(b.) Medium of Instruction** **(c.) competence**	**(d.) for engagement** **(e.) for curriculum** **(f.) for pedagogy**

Through the discussion of the data in this Chapter, I will explain how the main themes of the study were categorized based on data from each participant group. In each of the four themes, I will attend to data from the students' group (PYP students and PYP graduates who had successfully finished the PYP) perspectives and the teaching staff group (English language and subject area) perspectives in order to address the research questions.

The first theme - The expectations and realities of the PYP addresses the first research question - What are the expectations and realities about English learning in the PYP? This theme discusses data from the study participants about what they expected to encounter and gain from the PYP and the reality they found. The discussion offers a summary of possible connections between the PYP expectations, realities and student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement.

The second theme: Learning and pedagogy in the PYP, addresses the three sub-questions of the second research question - a. What are the views about the curriculum in the PYP? b. What are the views about the content of English and the other subjects taught in English in the PYP? c. What are the views about the learning and teaching practices in the PYP? This consists of three sub-themes. The first sub-theme, Motivation, discusses data on what influences students' enthusiasm to continue and to be engaged in learning in the PYP. The second sub-theme, Curriculum, provides data on different perspectives about the PYP curriculum. The third sub-theme, Pedagogy, includes data on the learning and teaching

practices followed in the PYP. Additionally, the discussion provides a summary of possible connections between the PYP learning motivation, curriculum, pedagogy and student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement.

The third theme: Challenges in the PYP, addresses the third research question - How do students and teaching staff view engagement and learning in the PYP based on Efficacy, Emotions, A sense of belonging to the University, and A sense of well-being? This theme focuses on challenges, which may hinder students from learning and engaging in the PYP and consists of three sub-themes. The first sub-theme, learning environment, discuss issues identified by the participants and related to the teaching and learning environment in the PYP. The second sub-theme, Medium of Instruction, provides data on the participants' views about the Medium of Instruction used in the PYP. The last sub-theme provides data on students' linguistic competence as one of the issues students encounter and talk about in the PYP. Additionally it offers data on the challenges expressed by teaching staff on what prevents them from implementing good teaching practices and ensuring engagement in the PYP. Again, the discussion here includes a summary of possible connections between the PYP challenges and student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement.

The fourth theme: Suggestions for Improvement, will address the second research question - What are the participants' views about how engagement and English learning in the PYP could be improved? It consists of three sub-themes. The first sub-theme, Suggestions for Engagement, provides data on suggestions and recommendations disclosed by participants that they think might improve student engagement in the PYP. The second sub-theme, Suggestions for curriculum, focuses on data on suggestions and recommendations offered by participants to improve the curriculum in the PYP. The third sub-theme, Suggestion for pedagogy, outlines suggestions to improve teaching and learning practices in the PYP. As for all themes, I will also summarise possible connections between suggestions for enhancement and student engagement in the PYP based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement.

Before presenting and discussing the study findings, I will briefly return to the study's theoretical framework, as engagement is the primary focus of this investigation, which is fully explained in section 2.2. The study's theoretical framework draws on Kahu and

Nelson's (2018) conceptual student engagement framework and, as explained in Chapter 2, Kahu and Nelson view student engagement as the student's individual psychosocial associated with their learning experience.

Kahu and Nelson (2018) suggest it is often necessary to understand the association with engagement through student behaviour (that is, behavioural engagement), student feelings (that is, emotional engagement), and student thinking (that is, cognitive engagement). According to studies by Kahu and Nelson (2018), the student role in the learning process is centred around the notion that students may invest behaviour and/or emotions in a particular experience and they argue that engagement occurs through elements of the educational interface, an active space seen as a meeting point for the interaction between the student and educational institution.

Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.64) came to these four 'psychosocial constructs' for student engagement after conducting a study which they interviewed 19 first year university students at an Australian university. Students were asked to express their views about their experiences before the start of the year and during the semesters. My study followed a procedure similar to Kahu and Nelson's but in a different context. As noted in section 3.8, my study's interviews were conducted with first year students, second-year students and two groups of the teaching staff at a Saudi university to better understand their experiences with engagement and learning in general, and learning English in particular, before starting their first year at the university, during that year, and after they started studying in their academic disciplines. In this Chapter, Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement framework and 'psychosocial constructs' will be referred to as relevant to the data and with respect to the study's main themes and sub-themes. I will, next, present and discuss the study's first main theme.

4.2 Theme one: Expectations and Realities of the PYP

This theme discusses the students' views about the PYP before joining it and what they discovered afterwards. In this theme, the data analysis aimed to understand the participants' (students) expectations about the PYP before joining the PYP, emphasising what was expected and the realities regarding the PYP with a focus on engagement. Data obtained on teaching staff expectations about the PYP will be presented and discussed in a different

section of this Chapter to overcome data confusion. Illustrative examples from my data will be provided to support and add meaning to the analysis.

In the interview, students were asked to share their views about their prior knowledge and expectations of the PYP before joining the programme. The data revealed that some students felt overwhelmed when they realised that studying in the PYP would be challenging because everything would be English. A common view held by half of the total of 18 students interviewed in both groups, the PYP students and the PYP graduates, was that they thought the PYP would be challenging. One of the participants said, *'I was expecting the PYP would be very difficult* (Eng_student_1). Almost half of the students (7 of 18) expected English to be used as a Medium of Instruction. One participant commented: *'I expected that everything in the preparatory year would be in English*' (PYP_student_4). The PYP students thought passing the PYP would require an advanced level of English proficiency. For example, one interviewee said: *'I had the idea that a student would never withstand the PYP if they do not speak English very well'* (Dent_student_2).

Regarding the data, it is possible to understand that some students had different ideas about studying in the PYP, which included a perception that the PYP would be challenging because English would be used as the Medium of Instruction. Participants attributed the source of such information to some friends and former students who described the situation in the PYP. For example, one of the PYP graduates said: *'I have met many students who made us feel concerned about studying in the PYP by telling us it is challenging because of the English'* (Sci_student_2). Another PYP graduate states, *'I expected most scientific materials to be in Arabic, but I was surprised that they were in English. I was having difficulties studying it'* (Dent_student_1).

In contrast to the above results, some opinions were different with regard to expectations about the PYP. For example, one of the participants reported, *'I had a relative studying medicine, and he advised me to continue studying in the PYP, and it would not be challenging because of the English'* (Dent_student_3). This example shows that the student built his knowledge and expectation about the learning situation in the PYP based on an information source who had lived the experience, which gave him a favourable and, for him, a motivating idea of studying in the PYP.

According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018, p.62), the term 'cultural lens' is used in the educational interface to express the 'psychosocial space' of the student in which the student's engagement in learning occurs through an encouraging lived experience of learning as one of the effective engagement concepts. The previous example indicates that the student had prior knowledge of what he would find in the PYP before joining it because of the information he obtained from a previous student who told him about the PYP and gave him a good and motivating impression about it. This fitted Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework with respect to the idea that meeting students' expectations based on a lived experience may encourage effective student engagement.

Regarding the reality of the PYP, students were asked to talk about whether it was as they expected or not. Most participants of both groups, the PYP students and graduates (14 of 18), agreed that they discovered the opposite of what they had expected before joining the PYP. One of the students stated, *'I had heard that the PYP would be stressful because of the English, plus the teaching staff there are not supportive. But what I found is totally the opposite'* (PYP_student_1). Almost half, 8 of 18 students of both groups, found the study in the PYP was not as challenging as expected. For example, one of the PYP graduates said, '*I found the PYP not challenging after I joined it'* (Sci_student_2) and another commented, *'these worries disappeared with the first week. Because the curriculum was very clear, and also the courses were not challenging'* (Med_student_2).

Another related issue is the PYP's role in meeting students' expectations. For example, students expected the institution to provide information about their future academic studies. Many students thought that, in the PYP, there was no information provided about their future academic studies after it and the PYP was not an adequate information provider for their future studies. One of the PYP graduate interviewees reported, '*certainly, yes I would prefer that, at the very least, to be provided with information on the different disciplines in each field'* (Eng_student_1). Likewise, another participant confirmed, *'certainly yes, I would like to see a group of the current university students come and give us an overview of the study system there'* (Eng_student_2). Also, one of the PYP students pointed out:

> *So far, I have not received any information about studying in the subject area. The university was supposed to provide us with such information or arrange some exhibitions or meetings to provide information about the disciplines'* (PYP_student_4).

The lack of necessary information on the academic disciplines leads almost half of newly enrolled students (8 of 18) to form an unclear picture of the academic life at the university. As shown in the data, some students believed that the university did not provide them with the necessary information about the various disciplines at the university that could have been of benefit and might have encouraged them in their future academic studies after the PYP. Instead, students stated that information was obtained from former and current students in the field or from their own searching. This lack of information about future academic studies could make students feel alienated in terms of belonging to future academic disciplines, which may negatively affect their engagement, according to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018, p.66).

Although some students mentioned the induction week in the first week of the PYP, many thought it was not valuable for obtaining information on the disciplines/subject areas as it only focused on the PYP. For example, one participant reported that *'the induction week was not helpful because it was only about the PYP, and there was no information about academic disciplines'* (PYP_student_3).

Based on the data above and Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), students' prior English learning experience likely affects positive or negative transition and engagement opportunities. Students' experiences in their transition to Higher Education appear in the framework when Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.6) discuss transition theory. They replace the transition term with 'cultural lens', pointing out that 'cultural lens' indicates a more comprehensive concept of the student's lived experience than transition with respect to student engagement. Kahu and Nelson (2018) argue that, although Higher Education can provide opportunities for positive transformation, moving to university can be a challenging experience for new students. The framework identifies the transition experience to be a complex and multi-level process influenced by environmental aspects that depend on individual interaction to change and the ability to adapt. Accordingly, Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.6) use the term 'cultural lens' to refer to student transition to Higher Education as an active engagement process linked with student interaction and institutional factors.

Alfehaid's (2017) study on the expectations of students in the PYP in Saudi Arabia reported similar findings to my study. That mixed-method study used a questionnaire directed to 1955 students and interviews with 245 students to explore PYP students' expectations and experiences at a Saudi University. Similar to my study results, Alfehaid's (2017) findings

revealed significant inconsistencies and differences between students' expectations and the reality of the PYP. For example, the participants in Alfehaid's study found the PYP more difficult than expected. Alfehaid's participants confirmed that they encountered difficulties in the English course, besides the issue of using English in teaching, which received many students' comments. Alfehaid's suggestions for improvement are noted in section 5.6.

Regarding the findings discussed above and following Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), the four psychological and social structures, namely, self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being (see section 2.2) will likely influence student engagement. According to the framework, these structures are derived from the interaction between institutional and student factors and articulated important student experience interface elements. One of these structures is academic success and its relationship to self-efficacy, which suggests it is necessary to understand the link between students' expectations and real-life experiences. As stated in the framework, there is a direct relationship between academic success, self-efficacy, emotions and engagement, as self-efficacy and emotions might increase student emotional and cognitive engagement and success. Thus, engagement and success might increase self-efficacy. As the data revealed, some students of both groups, the PYP students and graduates (6 of 18), did not expect to find that studying in the PYP would be challenging, likely affecting their emotional engagement by enabling their enthusiasm and enjoyment for study and success.

My data has shown a noticeable issue with meeting students' expectations, as half of the participants (9 of 18) experienced the opposite of what they had expected in the PYP. These data reflect those of Alghamdi (2015), who conducted a quantitative study using a questionnaire to collect data from 350 PYP students at a Saudi university. Alghamdi's study aimed to examine the level of satisfaction among PYP students and to investigate what measures had been taken by the institution to meet students' expectations. Alghamdi (2015) states that Students' dissatisfaction with their expectations is likely to reduce their interest in joining the university and their engagement. He argues that the level of students' expectations is related to their level of satisfaction, which affects the quality of their engagement. The recommendations of Alghamdi's (2015) study for improvements will be used in section 5.6.

Regarding Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), this data may explain the effect of psychosocial factors and expectations on student engagement and success. It can be argued

that students' expectations may form the basis of the relationships students have with the institution and other peers. Linking students' expectations with emotion and a sense of belonging factors, such as recognising the learning and teaching styles and being aware of the reality at university, may be considered significant factors in emotional and behavioural engagement in the PYP. Also, the data suggests that moving from the school to the university level is not just a simple development in a student's life. One of the PYP graduates believes that *'it is considered a great radical transfer from secondary school to a university'* (Sci_student_1). Meehan and Howells (2018) point out that university life includes many significant changes and new challenges in students' lives. Students' new experience begins with new expectations on the first day and continues until the last day. Meeting these expectations with the reality of university life from the beginning could help students adapt to the university environment, overcome challenges, and build social relations. Moving to the university level is a significant transformation in students' life, starting with different learning and teaching environment and ending with evaluating the relationship between the students, peers and the teaching staff. (Khalil, 2010).

As noted above, some students felt disappointed when they moved to the PYP and university due to their high expectations about the university and the university community. A possible explanation for this might be that disappointed expectations are one of the most prominent negatives of university life and may result in students' withdrawal from Higher Education institutions (Turner et al., 2017). Also, the student may have false expectations about the nature of the study style or problems related to understanding the lesson materials (Khoshaim, 2017). As a result, many students may face academic issues that affect their university life and reduce their emotional and behavioural engagement. In order to tackle this issue, several courses of action for preparing students for university life are outlined in section 5.6.

According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), the above findings indicate that considering students' transition to Higher Education is an important factor affecting their engagement. Kahu and Nelson refer to why Higher Education challenges first year students. They aim to understand how the new learning experience affects student engagement and success and suggest that the Higher Education experience reshapes first year students' thinking, identities and experiences. It is essential to focus on students' needs and expectations at this 'emotional time' of their academic life (Kahu & Nelson, 2018, p.65). According to the framework, the gap between students' experiences and expectations may result in negative impacts such as anxiety and stress. These impacts may influence students'

motivation, and they may lose interest in learning and interacting, thus leading to disengagement, failure and withdrawal. Additionally, Kahu and Nelson (2018, p.64) suggest that the 'structural influences, for example, student background', impact student relationships with the institution. Some students in my study expected the PYP could develop their personalities in a societal, intellectual, and interactive context. Not meeting these expectations may reduce students' enthusiasm as part of their emotional engagement, resulting in unsatisfied performance and restricted personal growth.

Overall, as part of students' psychosocial factors influencing engagement, this section has focused on discussing the impact of students' expectations and experience on engagement. The failure of the university to meet students' expectations when they enter the university may make it difficult for them to know what to expect and this could affect their engagement and adaptation. More suggestions will be outlined in the final Chapter. The following section will address the second broad theme, learning and pedagogy in the PYP.

4.3 Theme two: Learning and Pedagogy in the PYP

Theme two illustrates and discusses data on the perceptions of practices of English learning and teaching in the PYP and how this process may influence and is influenced by the students' psychosocial factors to enhance engagement. This theme consists of three sub-themes: **a) Motivation**, which will address factors that motivate students and increase their engagement in learning English in the PYP. The second sub-theme: **b) Curriculum** will discuss data on participants' views about the curriculum in the PYP and its role in learning and engagement. It includes discussion about the authenticity, usefulness, relevance, quality, depth and difficulty of the curriculum in the PYP. The third sub-theme of this theme is **c) Pedagogy**. This sub-theme focuses on presenting and discussing data obtained from the participants about their views on teaching and learning practices used in the PYP and its influence on learning and engagement. As indicated in the previous theme, a link to student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's student engagement framework (2018) for each sub-theme will be given where possible. Also, the discussion will refer to Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT individual needs where possible. The following section describes and discusses data on learning motivation in greater detail.

4.3.1 Motivation

Motivation is an important factor associated with language learning highlighted in the data and, of course, in the literature and Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework. It can be viewed as a set of internal and external desires that drive learners to achieve their educational goals and satisfy their needs and desires for language learning (Gardner, 2010). Several factors can lead to a lack of learning motivation. For example, loss of desire or lack of learning goals could be the most noticeable of these factors (see, for example, Dörnyei, 2018). This section identifies different motivation orientations, including intrinsic, extrinsic orientations, that PYP students said they experienced while learning the English language. I also explore autonomy and competence factors to understand how these factors could influence students' engagement, which may allow them to gain control over their learning.

According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), student motivation is viewed as one of the psychosocial factors represented in the relationships and interactions between students and institutions. The framework illustrates these interactions and relationships as direct influences on cognitive engagement, along with the SDT individual needs for student autonomy and competence, through the 'educational interface structures' (Kahu and Nelson, p.64), including self-efficacy, emotions and well-being. Concerning the framework and the SDT individual needs, cognitive engagement, autonomy and competence may promote different forms of deep learning, for example, purposeful and self-regulated learning. Also, they may help achieve both short-term and long-term outcomes, including student retention, academic success and personal growth.

My data revealed that most students reported strong internal and external motivations for their English learning. Twelve students described external motivations as their ultimate goals for fulfilling study purposes. For example, one of the PYP graduates confirmed, *'my goal was to pass the exam and also to use it in the subject area'* (Dent_student_2). Similarly, another PYP graduate commented, *'my goal was to obtain high grades so that I could join the academic studies that I wanted, and also my goal to learn English was because I need it in the subject area'* (Eng_student_1). These responses suggest that those students have intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; they desire to learn English to reach perceptible goals, such as high marks (Daif-Allah & Aljumah, 2020). Some students indicated that they strive to learn English, either pursuing high marks or taking advantage of it in their life. For example, one PYP interviewee says, '*my main goal is to get high scores'* (PYP_student_2). The same participant continued with a set of goals, *'the second goal is to take advantage of*

the opportunity to learn from the preparatory year. The third goal is that English has become a culture now, and it is used everywhere in the world'. Students felt the significance of learning English in their current academic life and future careers.

Most students asserted that the English language has become an important requirement for gaining the best work opportunities, especially for Health Science and Engineering students. One of the PYP graduates stated, *'yes, my English must be developed and improved because I need it a lot in my specialty to attend conferences and to use it in similar situations'* (Med_student_1). The above data aligns with Alrabai (2018), who concluded that students' focus on achieving high marks is well recognised among Saudi English learners. Also, these findings are consistent with Daif-Allah and Aljumah's (2020) findings, who carried out a study aimed to investigate the differences in the motivation of Saudi University students to learn English. These researchers analysed and identified various motivations for learning English for 247 Saudi University Students. Their findings revealed that students who desire to learn English are 'integrative and instrumental' motivated by setting different learning goals, including obtaining good work opportunities and academic achievements.

A variety of perspectives on learning goals were expressed amongst my interviewees. My data revealed that 15 of 18 students identified their internal goals as interested in learning English for personal purposes. One of the PYP students points out that English is the most widespread language worldwide. It opens their horizons, as he comments, *'now English is the universal language used everywhere, even for jobs and education, we need English'* (PYP_student_6). Students state that they can use English in different situations and travel as an example, reducing the need for translation assistance. Another PYP student said:

> *my goal from learning English was to have the ability to speak and avoid my need for help with translation or speaking. Also, the English language is used widely in the world, so there is a need to learn it to keep pace with the world and to speak its language* (PYP_student_4).

Additionally, some participants reported that learning English would enable them to interact with foreigners who visit the country or work in essential places like hospitals and some leisure places such as restaurants in their home country. One of the PYP graduates stated:

> *We live in a city with a great position in Islam, where people come to visit it from every place in the world, as they used to ask me in English about a*

> *specific place or something. I had to speak to them in English, which was an incentive for me to learn English and get a great opportunity to communicate with all people from different places* (Eng_student_2).

The responses above may illustrate that students expressed interest in learning English to interact socially and culturally with the community of the target language.

The findings mentioned above demonstrate that students adopted both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn the English language with no significant leaning towards one over the other. These results match those observed in earlier studies (for example, Al-Malki, 2018; Ali-Oliemat, 2019; Al-Daher & Al-Haq, 2020; Daif-Allah & Aljumah, 2020). Even though there are different orientations of students' motivations for learning a language, these orientations may change when a learning goal changes. Saud Albahlal (2019) conducted a study to examine the potential influences on Saudi students' motivation and beliefs during their English learning in Saudi Higher Education settings. . Saud Albahlal's results revealed how their motivations and perspectives about learning English changed from the beginning of their studies at the university compared to the end after they had spent some time at the university. Students stated that they started learning English with no interest in the language or enthusiasm to learn more about English and the new culture but, after, their motivation for learning the language changed to their desire to pursue their studies and obtain high marks.

Although the English Language is a core course for all the students in the PYP, there is no evidence from the data that students have no desire to learn English or that they are not keen to continue learning English. On the contrary, the data revealed that almost all students (17 of 18) expressed their desire to continue learning English after finishing the PYP. For example, one of the students asserted that *'yes, of course, I will continue to learn English even after I graduate from university'* (Dent_student_1). Similarly, another student commented, '*I am still committed to learning it through the courses in my academic studies; I still have the desire to learn more about the English language'* (Pharma_student_1).

According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), motivation is a psychosocial influence that impacts student emotional engagement. The conceptual framework indicates that motivation affects student emotional engagement, which may increase or decrease their interest and enthusiasm for learning, which touches on emotions as one of the educational interfaces. It may also affect the improvement of educational interfaces, such as the sense of

belonging through student interaction with the learning environment and well-being through student satisfaction with the learning process. Accordingly, all these interactions and influences may lead to short-term outcomes such as knowledge and skills improving from an academic perspective, and satisfaction and well-being from a social perspective. Long-term outcomes such as student retention and lifelong learning are also more likely to occur as personal growth in social terms.

Autonomy is another important factor linked to motivation highlighted in the data. As stated previously in the literature Chapter (see sections 2.3.1; 2.4.1), autonomy is an important factor of Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT individual needs which can be defined as the ability of students to make choices about their learning. The data indicates that students used autonomy to control their learning choices. Drawing on Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), autonomy falls under students' psychosocial influences that define their learning identities and personalities. The framework indicates that independent learners can set their own goals based on what has been taught and their understanding of the learning objectives. Also, autonomy enables students to implement different learning strategies, determine strategies that do not work in their favour and use alternative strategies as necessary (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The framework also shows that autonomy affects students' self-evaluation and monitoring of their learning. Thus, through autonomy, cognitive and behavioural engagement can occur, which could lead to a sense of belonging and well-being, which results in obtaining positive outcomes at the academic level, such as academic success and student retention and, on a personal level, persistence, satisfaction and pride.

My data identified several ways students said they were autonomous in their learning, using self-learning to achieve their learning goals. For example, one of the students asserted that:

> *my English is good, I watch movies a lo, and, from that, I learned English, and while watching movies I like to focus on the dialogues more than on translation because it distracts me while watching* (Eng_student_2).

Some of them enrolled in special schools and courses to learn English. As one of the PYP participants stated, *'I learned English from watching movies, and I studied at a private English school'* (PYP_student_3). Others reported using technology and social networking sites to communicate with native English speakers to improve their English proficiency. For example, an interviewed graduate stated, *'I have groups of native English speakers on social*

media websites for learning English' (Sci_student_1). In these previous examples, students may have been motivated to learn English because they chose how they wanted to learn it. However, all these practices were taking place outside the walls of the educational institution and institutions may need to consider promoting student autonomy through their academic programmes. The data showed a limited practice of learner autonomy within the investigated PYP site, except for some of the teaching staff efforts, mostly represented in teaching methods. For instance, a participant reported:

> *the English teacher asked for our opinion on the teaching methods, and he constantly asked us if there was a certain method that would be useful for us* (Dent_student_2).

This type of engagement may lead students to think of different learning strategies and self-regulated learning that makes them more engaged. However, a lack of learner autonomy may occur because the educational institution is committed to a specific curriculum concerning the contact hours and the content of the textbooks. Also, the teaching staff are obliged to conform to limited time to complete the textbook in compliance with the study plan. One English teacher said:

> *The PYP asked the textbook designers to reduce the number of units in a book from 10 units to 8 units in order to be fitted with the timetable and plan set for students to study in one semester* (ELC_staff_1).

Therefore, this issue may limit learners' independence in choosing their learning methods and it may limit teachers' encouragement of autonomy and leave no space to choose lessons from the textbook or topics for activities and assignments.

In addition, the data revealed that students do not have the choice to control their study plan to register or drop courses. When students join the PYP, they are provided with the course schedule. Accordingly, students cannot decide to register for the courses they want to study or even to study at the time that suits them. Rather, the cohort is divided into two groups and each group has a set timetable and study plan that applies to all students in that group. The student cannot change their timetable but must adhere to it throughout their studies in the PYP.

Relatedly, a teacher from the College of Engineering, appointed as a student academic advisor, noted that students suffer from a significant problem in registering and dropping courses in the College, which results in an increasing number of students withdrawing. He

attributed this to the fact that students do not have previous experience controlling their study plan and what they want to obtain from their education, negatively affecting their performance and attendance at the university. He commented:

> *In the preparatory year, the courses are already in the student schedule, and they cannot do anything about the existing courses. Students are obliged to study them …Therefore, you find that when students come to college, they choose many courses and add many hours because they are forced to complete the required hours to finish their studies.* (Eng_staff_1)

Alrabai (2017) surveyed 630 Saudi students to examine learner autonomy and conducted achievement tests to assess its relationship to academic achievement in English learning. Alrabai's findings revealed a significant lack of the concept of learner autonomy which led to a low level of language achievement among Saudi English learners. Alrabai's study suggests that learner autonomy practices need to be promoted for both learners and teachers to improve English learning and teaching practices in Saudi settings. Similarly, Asiri and Shukri (2020) conducted a questionnaire to collect the perspectives and views of 150 PYP students about learner autonomy in the Saudi English learning settings. Their main focus was to examine students' awareness of learner autonomy. Their study findings revealed that students lacked an understanding of learner autonomy and they suggest that students' awareness of autonomous language learning needs to be promoted, and their role as responsible learners needs to be developed.

However, the abovementioned findings contradict a quantitative study by Ghobain (2020), who sought to explore learner autonomy levels associated with language learning in Saudi Arabia. That study found that the levels detected show a satisfactory level of autonomy. Ghobain's findings revealed progress in the autonomy level of the learners with students adopting an independent learning style in their learning. Despite this growth in learners' level of autonomy, the study suggests that the findings could not conclusively determine the degrees of autonomy revealed in its context due to the moderate levels of non-autonomous learning. The study concludes that students still need support from teachers and institutions to increase their level of learner autonomy.

Although my data indicated that students did utilize some levels of autonomy in their learning, they are unaware they are using it. One English teacher believes:

> *They need simple guidance, and through my experience with students, I found many of them .... interested in engagement and choosing their learning style. I found a spirit of perseverance and diligence in them, and the more you support and encourage them, the more you get from them* (ELC_staff_1).

Similarly, one teacher from the College of Science feels *'the student is a treasure, and it may be a buried treasure or a visible one. Just give the student the opportunity, and you will see a lot from them, provided they have the desire'* (Sci_staff_2). This data accords with Javed (2018), who investigated Saudi English language teachers' perceptions of encouraging learner autonomy. Javed's findings revealed that the participants held very positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and showed encouraging trends about implementing this construct in the classroom. The same study also confirmed that English language teachers' role is essential in promoting autonomous learning. Likewise, Alrabai (2017) examined Saudi English teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and concluded the learner, the institution, and the teacher were common obstacles to autonomy.

In summary, this section showed that students were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. One of the interesting findings is that students solved the issues they faced positively, away from anxiety, tension, and confusion, using thoughtful and effective strategies. In addition, they talked of choosing the simple and easiest methods possible and avoided difficult and unclear ways. Another important finding was that students were accustomed to taking responsibility for their failure or success. The most interesting finding in this part was that they used autonomy to enhance their learning practices and achieve goals. They succeeded in organizing and paying attention to their academic and personal life. Finally, these findings are important to understand student motivation as this could lead learners to use deep learning strategies, for example, autonomy, to enhance their learning, control their learning choices, and promote engagement. The following sub-theme will present and discuss data on the PYP curriculum.

4.3.2 Curriculum

In this sub-theme, the data focus on different dimensions of the curriculum and pedagogy in the PYP. These aspects include the content of the English course, the content of the Science

courses taught in English, the contact hours, and the teaching practices used in the PYP. Before presenting and discussing data on the usefulness, authenticity, relevance, quality and deepness of the PYP curriculum, I will first draw on how Kahu and Nelson (2018) discuss curriculum in their Student Engagement Framework.

Kahu and Nelson (2018) identify the curriculum in their student engagement Framework as one of the main influences on engagement which can be linked to the structural factors of the institution. They point out that the curriculum influences students and teaching staff as a psychosocial influence linked to student and institution relationships. Kahu and Nelson (2018) show that institutions need to encourage student interaction with institutions to increase student engagement through the curriculum. They also emphasise that student engagement can happen when the institution and student factors are linked. Accordingly, students may become emotionally engaged when the curriculum is linked to their interests, experiences, and future, which increases their emotional engagement. According to the framework, cognitive engagement also appears when students feel that their skills align with the curriculum's goals, which enhances engagement. The following section will provide data about the English Language Curriculum in the PYP.

The focus of the PYP is on English learning, and the data revealed different responses to the content and materials of the English course. The data indicate that 14 of 18 students of both groups, the PYP students and graduates, found the English content simple, accessible, and appropriate. The data offer some positive comments from participants who expressed their satisfaction with the content of the English course, as they thought it matched their level and was useful. One of the PYP graduates said *that 'the content of the English course was easy and not difficult'* (Eng_student_1). Similarly, a PYP student pointed out that:

> *The English content is easy and fun simultaneously because it has easy topics in which we did not face any difficulty, and it is fun because it is very attractive and attracts you to interact and participate* (PYP_student_1).

One English teacher explained how the English content and materials have evolved in the PYP.

> *The English curriculum was developed several times to fit the schedule and plan set for students to study in one semester. So that the student starts at the A1 level and passes through the A2 level, then completes the preparatory year at the B1 level, based on the European Framework for*

> *Assessing the English Language Level. As a result, we found that the curriculum became appropriate to the level of students and that they became more interactive with the curriculum* (ELC_staff_1).

As stated earlier (Chapter 1), the levels indicated in the comment above refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) developed to describe learners' level of foreign languages, including English. It was designed as a reference for educational and employment purposes across Europe and is now widely used in many other countries worldwide. It was intended to provide a means of learning, teaching, and assessing the learners' proficiency level. The reference includes six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), with level A1 for beginners and level C2 for advanced level.

According to CEFR levels, the entry and exit levels at the study site seem very low for academic studies. As indicated in the data, the A1 entry level means, according to CEFR, the learner can understand very simple sentences, words and names. However, a learner at such a level cannot understand the main points of a short complex sentence, speech or topics in common situations, such as academic study discourse. To understand such topics and sentences, any learner should be at least at the B1 level (for example, equivalent to 4.0 - 5.0 in IELTS) which is the minimum entry level required for academic study in many institutions worldwide. Accordingly, level C1 should. I believe, be the exit level, meaning learners can understand long and complex speech, texts and articles. More data will be discussed regarding the PYP entry and exit points for the English Language and different levels of study in section 4.4.1

The same participant above continues to explain the English language curriculum developments in the PYP since 2009.

> *… The English curriculum evolved five times, starting from a simple beginning in textbooks, as there was only one book for all skills, to sitting with the curriculum and textbooks designers to meet students' needs from the English curriculum* (ELC_staff_1).
>
> *… Students and teaching staff complained about the textbooks and changes, which reduced and combined the contact hours, and some textbooks were dropped from the curriculum* (ELC_staff_1).

He confirmed that *'all these procedures were taken to ensure better English learning and teaching practices at the PYP'* (ELC_staff_1).

Although there were positive opinions about the English curriculum, many participants criticised the curriculum and the content of the English course. Compared to the above responses, two students expressed their resentment of the textbooks for the English course, as several textbooks can be used. One of the PYP graduates stated *'the textbooks in the English language course were 6 books and this caused a lot of pressure for us'* (Med_student_1). Similarly, another PYP graduate argues that:

> *The quantity of the curriculum in the PYP should be reduced in all courses, including the English language, and I would suggest replacing that with tutorials which will benefit students in acquiring new skills to benefit from in their academic studies* (Sci_staff_2).

The findings revealed that students need to learn terminology in the PYP before starting their academic studies but some participants expressed a lack of English content in teaching specific terminology. especially scientific and medical terminology, or English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP),. For example, one participant stated, *'I was hoping for a medical terminology course to be included in the preparatory year curriculum'* (Pharma_student_2). Likewise, another interviewee asserted that:

> *The English course in the preparatory year was general, while mathematics requires specialized English to teach the scientific terminology we need in the discipline of mathematics* (Sci_student_2).

In addition, the teaching staff agree with the students that the terminology should be taught to students within the curriculum of the English language course in the PYP. For example, a teacher believes that *'it would be better for students if medical terms were included in the preparatory year curriculum'* (Med_staff_1). Similarly, another teacher argues that:

> *Teaching and learning English should be assigned considerable attention starting from the elementary and pre-university stages in general education so that there is less emphasis on teaching general English at the university level and making teaching English dedicated to teaching students the scientific terminology related to each field, such as medical terminology and others* (Sci_staff_1).

It is clear from the above responses that there is a perceived need to introduce ESAP materials into the English curriculum at the PYP, and I will return to this point in section 5.6 with suggestions for improvement.

However, several teaching staff members had different opinions about introducing ESAP in PYP. One teacher argues:

> *Not in PYP, not needed. Because for technical terms we have the responsibility, okay? Even if I say okay, the preparatory year English teacher will teach technical terms, and students will be misled. He/she will tell or explain a term in the English language which will be out of context (Dent_staff_2).*

Another staff member believes that '*I think students need more time, maybe more effort and equipping them and preparing especially in the language area'* (Eng_staff_2). He suggested *'the that language part should continue as a parallel course or so I mean, maybe we don't need a course but let's keep it on going side by side'* (Eng_staff_2).

Nazim and Hazarika (2017) investigated the efficacy of ESAP in the PYP at a Saudi university. They argue that teaching ESAP in the PYP is essential for building a solid English proficiency level required for academic studies after the PYP. They believe students can learn ESAP, but its application level at PYPs in Saudi universities is still below expectations. Nazim and Hazarika offered several suggestions to build an engaging ESAP environment. They suggest a review of the English curriculum, introducing ESAP materials within it, and involving students in ESAP-related activities to ensure learners' exposure to ESAP reality. Also, they suggested enhancing ESAP orientations through students' soft skills, that is, communication skills and critical thinking, and conducting various ESAP teaching practices in the classroom.

Based on the findings above, most of the students in the PYP agreed that the English content is valuable and compatible with their English level. However, there is a persistent need to develop the English content to the level required for various students' needs, especially introducing ESAP materials to the English curriculum. The following section will discuss data on the content of the Science curriculum and pedagogy in the PYP.

The content of the Science courses in the PYP is another issue revealed in the data. The results show that the participants reported issues associated with the content of the Science courses taught in English in the PYP. Although many participants agreed on the simplicity of the Science course content, they said it often repeats the Science content from the secondary school content, many participants indicated that teaching the content in the

English language was an issue for them with difficulty following and understanding the content. They explained that the simplicity of the content centred on repeating information from the pre-university educational stage. The only difference is that the content is taught in English in the PYP. For example, one of the PYP students asserted that *'the content of the Science courses is very easy and very close to what we learned in secondary school, but the only difference is that it is taught in English'* (PYP_student_1). Also, a PYP graduate confirmed that *'the content of the scientific courses was easy, and the problem was in teaching Science subjects in English and not in the content'* (Dent_student_1).

The data revealed some issues with the extent to which the content of the PYP courses is relevant to students' interests or academic studies. The data show that some of the PYP graduates, who successfully passed the PYP and enrolled in different colleges, reported that some of the Science courses in the PYP were irrelevant to their subject area in the colleges. For example, those who joined the College of Engineering pointed out that they did not benefit from the biology course they studied in the PYP in their academic studies. One of the PYP graduates affirmed that *'the biology course, I do not need it in my specialized academic studies, and it was a reason for my low my GPA and I had to study it so that I can pass the preparatory year'* (Eng_student_2). Also, this applied to students who joined the Colleges of Health Sciences, where they indicated that the mathematics and physics courses they studied in the PYP were irrelevant to their subject area. One of the PYP graduates who enrolled in the College of Medicine after the PYP pointed out that *'the physics course was less useful than biology for us as health Science students'* (Med_student_2). The responses above confirm the need to consider including ESAP materials within the PYP curriculum.

A study by Alamoudi et al. (2021) aimed to investigate the relationship between the PYP and students' academic performance based on the content of the basic Science subjects in a Saudi university. The results showed no significant correlation but the study indicated that students' satisfaction with the PYP and the content of the Science courses was less than expected. It warns that failure to meet students' expectations about the curriculum and achieve the PYP goals could negatively impact students' academic performance in the PYP and the following years of their academic studies. The Alamoudi et al. (2021) study suggests that one of the solutions may lie in finding different paths and programmes with suitable curricula in the PYP in the Saudi universities, which could meet the needs of different colleges instead of having a general Programme for all Science colleges.

In the previous sections, data on the content of the English and Science courses were presented and discussed. It was suggested that measures be considered regarding the relevance of these contents to students' future academic studies, including ESAP materials in the PYP curriculum, outlined in section 5.6. The next section will discuss the contact hours as one of the issues highlighted in the data and associated with the curriculum.

The data showed that the extent of the contact hours for English language is one of the reported issues. Students talked about the long contact hours causing several s problems, such as stress, exhaustion and boredom. The length of the contact hours was a common view amongst students, as most (12 of 18) found the contact hours of the English course very long and tedious in general. For example, one of the PYP participants said that:

> *The number of daily contact hours for the English class is very long. It is about 3 hours and a half every day. I can focus from two hours to two and a half hours, but then I start to feel bored* (PYP_student_4).

One of the PYP graduates reported how the English classes affected the other classes.

> *The English language classes started from the beginning of the day and continued until noon. And we had other classes in the afternoon, like chemistry and math, where we could not concentrate* (Pharma_student_2).

Also, the teaching staff realised that the students were suffering from long contact hours. One PYP English teacher observed that:

> *Students began to complain about the length of the contact hours. We, as teaching staff, accepted their opinions and passed them to the officials in the preparatory year to discuss and take action in this regard* (ELC_staff_1).

Another teacher from the Science College suggests that:

> *In my opinion, limiting English language learning to one year does not significantly affect students' English learning, even if the number of contact hours is large. The best is to divide the time into the pre-university stages* (Sci_staff_1).

Correspondingly, the remainder of the participants considered the contact hours suitable for low-level students but not beneficial for high-level students, and only two of eighteen students did not respond to this point. For example, one PYP student felt that '*the English contact hours are suitable for those at the low levels, and boring for high*

levels' (PYP_student_2). Also, a PYP graduate affirmed that *'the number of the contact hours of the English language course was very long and boring, and students do not benefit from all of this time'* (Dent_student_3). However, another graduate interviewee believes the length of contact hours in the English course is important and in students' favour to learn and develop English. He asserted that:

> *The length of contact hours in the English course is very important for developing skills because, in my opinion, it is difficult to learn such skills in a short time. It was necessary to have enough time to practise English skills* (Med_student_2).

Stress was highlighted in the data and associated with the long contact hours. For instance, one participant who successfully passed the PYP stated, *'there was stress and fatigue from the length of the university day. So, I could not give the English language much attention'* (Eng_student_1). Another student asserted that:

> *The number of contact hours was a lot and put pressure on the student. The problem was that students did not have enough time to study and go through the other lessons and prepare for the new ones* (Sci_student_2).

The data mentioned above is consistent with the study by Alsulami et al. (2018), a comparative qualitative study to investigate first year students' stress factors in two Saudi universities when starting their study. They found that first year students are at higher risk of stress and stress-related complications than students in the later years due to the new academic life changes, including academic load, to which they need to adapt when they start university studies. They argue that first year students' experience may have additional risk factors, including personal development issues, language barriers and competition.

Moreover, the data discussed in this section corroborate Alfehaid's (2017) research, which seeks to pinpoint PYP students' experiences and expectations at a Saudi university. Alfehaid (2017) explored students' concerns about the PYP and found several common academic and non-academic issues, including the length of the English contact hours, which is in line with my data. Alfehaid's findings revealed that students did not expect long contact hours and were surprised by those as well as the difficulty level of the courses. This issue led them to feel bored and stressed due to the workload. The study also revealed students' demands to reduce the time allocated to the preparatory year courses. Following the data, the study's

participants pointed out assessment methods as another issue in the PYP curriculum and I discuss this below.

How students are assessed in the PYP is another point highlighted by participants and related to the curriculum. Several participants criticised the assessment policies followed in the PYP reporting several issues, including marking style, the number of short exams, a lack of variety in assessment methods, question types and technical issues. The teaching staff also strongly criticised how students are evaluated and given grades in the PYP. Also, they expressed their dissatisfaction with relying completely on multiple-choice questions and neglecting essay questions.

One teacher pointed out that:

> *One of the problems in the PYP is that all test questions are multiple-choice, and when they come to College, the situation for students changes because most of the questions are essays to answer. This change confuses students because they are used to that kind of question, and they are surprised when they come to College as the exam questions are essays and need to be written - that requires an amount of English proficiency* (Sci_staff_1).

Likewise, another teacher stated that:

> *Unfortunately, the student who comes to us from the PYP only knows how to deal with multiple-choice questions, fill in the blanks or match words, and when he sees essay questions, he is surprised and panicked and does not know how to deal with them* (Pharma_staff_1).

In addition, the data suggests that the grades given to students are inaccurate and do not reflect their academic performance. Students' skills and performance may not be developed as assessment is perceived to be undermining teaching and learning goals. For example, one teacher stressed that *'The students' level is very poor in English as a language and in chemistry as a discipline'* (Sci_staff_2). He attributed that to:

> *Students are being given grades they do not deserve. Some students in the PYP get high marks, such as 90 and 95, which does not reflect their real academic performance, whether in the English language or the discipline. The grades awarded to students in the PYP should be reviewed* (Sci_staff_2).

Likewise, another teacher confirmed, '*I had previously seen the English language test questions in the PYP and unfortunately it did not test the student on the skills he/she needed for academic study'* (Pharma_staff_1). He recommended that:

> *PYP officials need to meet with College officials and recognise all the needs in all courses and skills so that the student is properly prepared in the PYP and, accordingly, curricula and tests are accurately developed that teach and measure these skills among students* (Pharma_staff_1).

Also, one PYP English teacher believes that the problem is not with the tests themselves but rather in the PYP policies and their assessment implementation. He explained '*the fact that the amount that is expected of them to study and so on - maybe too much. For example, now we have these exams every Tuesday. They have an exam every week for every subject'* and *'what's happening in these small exams, students are gathering enough marks, so they go into the final or the midterm with almost like 50%'* (ELC_staff_2). He continued:

> *And then they try to get whatever the gap, and maybe they will get the other 50. But it is like why it was the point they never benefit in terms of the objective of learning English? No, they never really benefit. They just found a way of trying to gather marks here and there* (ELC_staff_2).

The data suggests that technical issues due to using computers for exams in the PYP are another issue associated with student assessments. For instance, another PYP English teacher stated, '*There are some technical problems that constantly occur during the exams, which may frustrate the student in not being able to take the test on time because all the tests are run on computers'* (ELC_staff_1). Similarly, one of the PYP students experienced the same issue. He pointed out, '*I hope that the test system will switch to the paper-based test, due to the many malfunctions that occur to computers during the tests'* (PYP_student_2). He added, *'Also, there are many leaks in almost all courses, which can be solved by transferring the exams from electronic-based to paper-based'* (PYP_student_2).

However, the data mentioned above are contrary to what Amer (2020) found in his study of the effect of electronic exams on students at Saudi universities from the students' point of view. Amer's data revealed that electronic tests have an influential role in evaluating students in Saudi universities and he concluded that electronic tests have many benefits, including saving teachers time and effort and preventing students from cheating. They also enable teachers to follow student progress and enable students to answer questions faster and

effectively. Additionally, electronic tests can improve a student's ability to manage time while taking the test and can increase focus. Computer-based tests also use an objective assessment method that Amer (2020) suggests can effectively assess students' knowledge. Nevertheless, that study indicates that electronic tests do not reduce anxiety and fear of evaluation.

In contrast to the previous study, Al-Qdah and Ababneh (2017) conducted an experimental study on the effects of computer-based exams on student achievement and students' perceptions to compare computer-based and paper exams. The experimental tests, which included different types of questions, including (multiple choice, true/false, short answers, matching tasks, essays, numerical, and descriptive tasks) were taken by male and female students in a Saudi university. Student performance on tests was measured with different question types. The results revealed similarities between paper-based and computer-based exams in multiple choice and true/false questions and numerical types of questions. The results indicated that the students preferred to answer on paper rather than writing on the computer screen for the essay questions. It also indicated that students were satisfied with certain aspects of computer-based tests, including instant scores and feedback.

One of the PYP students believes that students were being evaluated unfairly. He pointed out that:

> *There is a method that most universities call filtration in which students are filtered so that they do not get high marks in the final exams, which helps placement of students in the subjects area after they finish the PYP. The fact that this method works here at this University is unfair.*
> *…The level of lessons in the mathematics course is much lower than the level of the mathematics test, which is not logical at all. At the same time, we find the tests of the other courses are very easy. So, out of fairness, all tests should be difficult or easy* (PYP_student_2).

Additionally, other comments suggested reconsidering some of the evaluation policies followed in the PYP, including, for example, reviewing the students' reasons for retaking them. One student says:

> *I hope that the PYP administration considers retaking the test on the same day for those with a logical and convincing excuse to finish the test before the specified time because I had previously encountered the same problem and was not allowed to re-test* (PYP_student_5).

To sum up, the data in the previous sections have shown and discussed the sub-theme associated with the PYP curriculum that likely influences student engagement. The data in these sections have stressed that the curriculum is a key factor that could impact student engagement in the PYP. Factors such as relevance, quality, ESAP, contact hours and assessment might influence learning and engagement in the PYP. The following sections will introduce and discuss data about the pedagogy in the PYP as the final sub-theme of the second main theme, as this is revealed in the data and may influence student engagement in the PYP.

4.3.3 Pedagogy

This sub-theme presents and discusses the participants' views about the teaching and learning practices in the PYP. The sub-theme discusses data on the relationship and interactions between students, teachers and curriculum. It also looks at how these factors may impact student engagement. The interviewees expressed their opinions on several issues related to teaching staff, including teaching experience, teaching skills, teaching methods, content knowledge, feedback and support. It is important to know that I did not invite evaluations of particular teaching staff.

Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018) classify the teacher as one of the main engagement influences in the institution's structural factors. The framework emphasises that maintain good relationships between the teacher and the student affects engagement through the social and psychological influences associated with forming positive relationships between the student and the institution's policy and culture. It shows that different types of student engagement occur through interactions between students and the teacher. For example, these interactions can promote an emotional engagement when the teacher is keen to increase the student's interest and enthusiasm in the classroom. The framework also indicates that the student and teacher relationship can enhance cognitive engagement by encouraging students to use deep learning and self-regulation strategies. Also, it points out that behavioural engagement can occur when the teacher inspires students to participate and interact in the classroom.

The data revealed that most teachers believe they act as facilitators of learning for students. One teacher pointed out, *'I have to ask students, are you feeling comfortable while I teach you in English? Or do you need a translator or any support like that?'* (Dent_staff_2).

Students often provided positive responses, suggesting the teaching staff are making every effort to assist them in absorbing the materials of the PYP courses. One of the PYP graduates said, '*Yes of course they help us a lot, we even went to them during office hours, and they helped as much as they could'* (Dent_student_1). The data also indicated that some teaching staff link English course materials with real-life situations to facilitate students' recollection of lesson information. One student confirmed that *'there were some parts that the English instructors were trying to connect us with in real life, like using pictures to connect pronouns and irregular verbs in English'* (Pharma_student_2).

Teaching experience is one of the issues raised in the data as an important factor influencing students' learning. Although I did not ask them to talk about individual teachers in any negative way, several participants expressed resentment towards some teaching staff and how they treat students. One of the students said:

> *I had a bad experience at the beginning of my language learning in the PYP, where I encountered an English language teacher who was difficult to deal with and very strict. Perhaps because he was new to the university and its systems and policies and did not have enough experience dealing with students or teaching, I do not know*. (Dent_student_2)

Similarly, one of the teachers in the English Language Centre in the PYP noted a problem with new and inexperienced teachers. He stated, *'there is a difference in levels among teaching members. We find that the new teaching staff, especially those not directly hired by the university, face many challenges'* (ELC_staff_1). Also, he complained about the repeated training sessions every year, as he indicated, *'every year we undergo training sessions because new members joined us, sometimes we have up to 20 new members'* (ELC_staff_1). He explained:

> *Some of them lack experience in teaching and dealing with students. They have never taught in universities, have never done scientific research, and do not have many skills in leading the class or how to deal with students.* (ELC_staff_1)

Furthermore, the teaching method is another issue revealed in the data related to the pedagogy in the PYP, especially within the Science courses. The data indicated that teaching methods were based on the traditional lecturing style, which means no variety in the teaching methods, and students said they felt bored in these classes. One participant described one of

the Science classes: *'there was a kind of boredom, and the teacher was very strict'* (Pharma_student_1) and he also said '*the class time is short*'. He suggested, *'I think diversity in teaching methods, such as conducting experiments in laboratories, for example, as is the case now in the academic study, will improve the atmosphere in the Science classroom'* (Pharma_student_1).

In line with students' views, some teaching staff also agree that teaching methods in the Science courses require some improvement. For example, one teacher claimed that *'our teaching methods and teaching strategies are catastrophic'* (Pharma_staff_1). He stressed that *'the teaching practices such as we are doing now are not recommended'* (Pharma_staff_1). Another teacher agreed with this opinion: *'curricula and teaching methods must be reconsidered in the preparatory year*' (Sci_staff_2). However, one of the students had a different opinion, saying, *'there was a diversity in teaching methods, and even in scientific subjects, we were discussing some topics'*. (Dent_student_1)

A study by Hazaea (2019) aimed to explore an effective way of teaching English in the PYP of a Saudi University. The study's data was obtained through a mixed-method approach by sending a questionnaire to 32 English teachers. Hazaea (2019) noted the importance of teaching years in enhancing the professional teaching practice of the English language teaching staff in Saudi universities. He noted that more experienced faculty members should engage in professional development activities and it is important to provide professional training and workshops from experienced teaching staff with senior teaching staff advising the less experienced teachers on ways of improving their teaching skills. Also, it may help inexperienced staff apply their teaching practices creatively in the classroom, motivating them to achieve better learning practices.

Relatedly, Ashraf (2018) conducted a study to examine the issues associated with English teaching at an intensive English course for first year university students at a Saudi University. The study's data were collected from 133 students and 23 English teachers through a mixed-method approach using various tools such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, discussions, and classroom observations. Ashraf (2018) argues that English teachers at various educational levels need to ensure that the teaching process and atmosphere are enjoyable. He also indicates that teachers need to set teaching purposes according to learners' needs before starting any course. He emphasises that teachers need to be familiar with effective teaching strategies and the study concludes that learning is a continuous process

that must be shaped according to the learners' anticipations, demands, and benefits, and teachers should encourage a positive teacher-student relationship.

The language competence of the teaching staff was another point highlighted in the data. Following the university policy and regulations for teaching practices, all the teaching staff who participated in the study used English as a Medium of Instruction, whether to teach English or the other subjects in the PYP and the Colleges (see section 4.4.2 for more information on Medium of Instruction). For example, one teacher reported, *'Yes, I use English in teaching and all courses here are taught in English'* (Eng_staff_1). All except one of the teaching staff interviewed were non-native English speakers.

During the interviews, students who participated in the study were asked to explain if their English teachers at the PYP were native or non-native English speakers, which they prefer and why. The data revealed that 12 of 18 students had native and non-native English-speaking teachers. For example, one of the PYP graduates confirmed that *'one teacher was a native English speaker and the other was not a native English speaker but was speaking English all the time'* (Dent_student_1). While 4 of 18 students pointed out their English teachers were non-native English speakers, one PYP student stated, *'No, he was not a native English speaker'* (PYP_student_2). Also, 2 of 18 students had the opportunity only to learn with native English-speaking teachers. One of them reported, *'in the first semester my teacher was a native English speaker'.* (Eng_student_1)

Half of the participants (9 of 18) said they preferred native English-speaking teachers. For instance, one student asserted, *'for me, I prefer native English speakers in order to practise the language better, which has improved my English'* (Pharma_student_2). For the same purpose, one of the students affirmed that *'I prefer the native English speaker because it makes me practise the language better, which helps me develop my English'* (PYP_student_5). Similarly, one student confirmed, *'I prefer a native English speaker, so I can learn the language correctly'* (Sci_student_2). However, seven students said they preferred non-native speakers. For instance, one student reported, *'I prefer having a non-native English speaker who speaks Arabic for easy communication with him'* (Dent_student_1). Another student *'I prefer to a non-native English speaker because I had a bad experience at the beginning of my language learning in the preparatory year was with a native English speaker, and it was difficult to deal with him and he was very*

strict' (Dent_student_2). Only one, a PYP student, preferred having both native and non-native speakers.

> *I have two teachers, one of whom is a native English speaker and, the other is a non-native English speaker. I prefer both in order to facilitate communication with those who speak Arabic if I have any problem with the native English speaker.* (PYP_student_1)

Another PYP student who is only concerned about the teaching method practised in the class argues:

> *I have no problem with the teacher's first language being English or another language because, in the end, they will have the same information. What is important to me is that he/she uses proper teaching methods.* (PYP_student_3)

Likewise, a staff member stresses that using various teaching methods and focusing on teaching practices is more important than being a native speaker. He argues:

> *For me, I see that speaking the language is not a basis for education, but rather the teacher's skill in communicating information to students is the basis of education in terms of the teacher's stance in the classroom, the teacher's movement in the classroom, the tone of voice, the use of the board, the diversity of methods in the classroom. Delivering and facilitating information to the student is the core task.* (Sci_staff_2)

There are some similarities between the attitudes expressed by the participants in my study and those described by Alghofaili and Elyas (2017) who investigated the effectiveness of learning the English language with native speaker teachers of PYP students at a Saudi university. The data was collected from 18 PYP students using an open-ended questionnaire. Their data reported no significant impact on the Saudi English learners learning English from native speakers. On the contrary, the study indicated that learning English with non-native speakers or teachers who speak the students' first language positively affects students learning, especially when using the first language as a communication aid in the classroom. Also, the study results showed that the interaction between the English teacher and learners has a more significant impact on students' learning than the teachers' first language or background.

Teaching a language requires a good knowledge of other aspects, such as teaching methods, theories of second language learning, and many factors and issues related to learning the language. The study mentioned above may argue that a misconception prevails in English learning in non-English speaking communities, which prefers a first language English speaker to teach it. Advocates of this view may have neglected to consider that proficiency in teaching languages goes beyond pronunciation and fluency . The following section will provide data on some of the English teaching practices in the PYP.

The above discussion focused on teaching staff qualities (for example, prior knowledge, teaching skills, content knowledge and English teachers' types). However, this section, informed by the above-discussed parts (see the section on Teaching Staff), will address teaching practices and how these could affect student engagement. The data highlighted teaching practices as an important factor affecting students' learning and engagement. Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018) emphasises that teaching practices are essential mechanisms of the university's psychosocial influences that could improve learning and facilitate engagement. Kahu and Nelson (2018) argue that using various teaching methods can enhance engagement and the student experience if, for example, it aligns with students' preferences and interests. Also, providing students with feedback on their tasks could influence student engagement and increase self-efficacy. The framework indicates that supporting students' learning could help build strong relationships between students and teaching staff and that such relationships might then enhance students' sense of belonging and facilitate engagement in the classroom.

The data show that different teaching methods were used in the PYP (for example, collaborative learning, role-playing, class discussions, grouping and student support), especially in the English classes. For instance, one of the PYP students asserted that *'we have been put into groups and asked to do exercises and participate in discussions. There is a variety of teaching methods in the classroom'* (PYP_student_1). A PYP graduate reported:

> *My English teacher had a wide variety of teaching methods, as each time he came up with something new and distinctive in the teaching method from discussions between students, groups, games, challenges and others. His lessons were very special.* (Dent_student_2)

Another participant asserted that *'yes, there was diversity in teaching methods, such as putting students in groups, co-operative teaching, discussing questions with the teacher,*

creating a game appropriate for the lesson, and so on' (Eng_student_1). Likewise, one student reported that using various teaching methods stops boredom in the classroom, draws students' attention to learning, and increases student focus in the classroom. He pointed out that *'the diversity in teaching methods was beneficial because it takes us away from routine and boredom, attracts us to the lesson, and increases our focus'* (Sci_student_1). One of the participants compares English teaching methods in the PYP and general education. He stated that:

> *The English language teacher here uses various teaching methods, which are very useful and facilitate the learning process. As for teaching methods in state education, I have not benefited from anything, and they were traditional methods that were not useful at all.* (PYP_student_2)

The data also showed that students stressed the support they receive from their teachers, especially English language teachers. For example, one of the students asserted, *'yes, my English teachers supported us continuously and were very co-operative in supporting and motivating us'* (Dent_student_3). Another student said, *'yes of course, there was support, for example in reading and in writing'* (Eng_student_1). Similarly, one of the PYP participants commented, *'Yes, continuously, encouraging us to read and participate in the classroom, even if the answer is wrong'* (PYP_student_3). Likewise, one PYP graduate participant affirmed, *'Yes, this was very clear. The writing was a big problem for me, and I found all the support and help I need from them'* (Eng_student_2).

The responses of the teaching staff confirmed what the students said in terms of supporting students learning and facilitating content and lessons. For example, one of the teachers pointed out that:

> *At some point, the teacher needs to facilitate the materials for the students, do some exercises, encourage students' participation in these exercises, and promote the discussion in the classroom. The student's achievement level can be easily improved according to the teaching method.* (Sci_staff_2)

A PYP English teacher confirmed that:

> *The more you support and encourage the students, the more you get from them. Also, the more you teach them using modern methods, the more you will find in return. While teaching them in traditional ways creates*

> *boredom and loss of interest…we have here in the PYP a unit to support students with low academic levels.* (ELC_staff_1)

However, some students reported that learning support was not satisfactory from some English teachers. For example, one of the PYP students indicated:

> *As for learning support, I have noticed that most teachers always focus on students of the lowest level, some of whom are below good, so they try to raise the level of these students.* (PYP_student_1)
>
> *…High-level students do not always ask to participate, and I am one of those students. Therefore, I did not feel there was interest and support from the teacher. This likely is because the teacher this way tries to increase the performance of the low-level students, which makes the high-level students get bored in the classroom.* (PYP_student_1)

Another student shared a similar opinion. He pointed out that *'yes, there was support for the student learning, but it was mostly focused on low-level students to support and motivate them to participate and speak more English'* (PYP_student_4). He added, *'I think it is good to focus on low-level students, but the problem is if this focus continues there will be neglect for the rest of the students, then we have another problem'* (PYP_student_4). Also, a PYP graduate reported that *'teachers did not encourage students to cooperate and work with classmates'* (Dent_student_3). He added that:

> *Although there was no great diversity in teaching methods, sometimes there were some games and students were placed into groups to form two teams to compete. In general, however, there was no great diversity, and I would have preferred a diversity in teaching methods.* (Dent_student_3)

The data also highlighted feedback as another form of student support and an encouraging factor that supports students learning. For example, one of the PYP students reported, *'comments and feedback are motivating and encouraging to learn from my mistakes and correct my mistakes'* (PYP_student_3). Another student comments on feedback received on writing tasks, saying , *'We are constantly evaluated in writing assignments and all comments we receive are encouraging and motivating'* (PYP_student_6). A PYP graduate explains the teacher's approach to providing them with feedback.

> *Feedback was motivating and encouraging, especially in comments, as I used to get nice words and comments at first, and then I found comments on my mistakes, which was very useful to me.* (Med_student_2)

One of the students described teachers' comments in the PYP by saying that *'it was very motivating and was not very disruptive even if your level was weak, especially from English teachers and they always support us to improve our level'* (Eng_student_2). Moreover, he compared it with the comments in the College in which he continued his academic studies, where he affirmed:

> *Unlike some teaching staff here in the college, sometimes we do not dare to answer a question because we find many frustrating and discouraging comments from them when answering questions.* (Eng_student_2)

He stressed that he does not *'need to hear such comments, as I answer according to my cognitive abilities and comprehension. I came to the university to learn'*. (Eng_student_2)

Furthermore, and related to the comments above, the student-teacher relationship is another factor associated with good teaching practices in Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018) where they argue that student-teacher partnership is one of the key influences on student engagement. The framework indicates that recognising students as partners in the learning process may enhance the sense of belonging to the institution and increase engagement in their learning. According to the framework, engaging students may promote their self-efficacy and thus increase engagement and achievement. The framework also emphasises the idea of a partnership between the student and the academic institution, including teachers, to ensure they work together in a productive and supportive relationship that promotes learning and engagement. As was previously discussed, the data revealed some participants' opinions about the student's involvement in the learning process (see section 4.3.2).

Al-Shehri (2017) conducted a study investigating issues related to English teaching and learning practices at the PYP at a Saudi university. The study used an open-ended questionnaire to collect data from 48 PYP English teachers. Al-Shehri (2017) identified challenges and obstacles encountered in teaching and learning and argued that PYP teachers should follow good teaching practices and appropriate strategies to promote authentic learning. That study concludes that besides effective teaching methods, teachers need to contextualise their teaching experiences in the PYP to enhance learning standards and work on students' competencies.

To sum up, this section showed and discussed data on pedagogy in the PYP. The participants shared their views about the teaching and learning practices in the PYP. This sub-theme discussed issues related to the PYP pedagogy, including teaching staff qualities, teaching methods, teaching skills and student support and feedback and how the interaction between student, teacher and curriculum may affect student engagement was discussed. The following section will present and discuss the study's third main theme, namely, the challenges in the PYP.

4.4 Theme three: Challenges

This theme will illustrate and discuss data on learning and teaching challenges teachers and students face in the PYP. It will discuss, for example, issues related to the learning environment, curriculum, pedagogy and students' linguistic competence. Also, the discussion will explain how these challenges and issues may affect student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework.

4.4.1 Learning environment

The learning environment can be referred to as the educational style and cultural context in which all types of teaching, learning, and activities occur within the institutions. Various factors are associated with the learning environment influencing student engagement in learning English. Students' learning choice is one of the issues that emerged from the data and is associated with the learning environment, which may also impact engagement and learning experience.

Following Kahu and Nelson's engagement framework (2018), the learning environment is considered an essential factor for engagement and is where learning and engagement occur. According to the framework, the learning environment is seen within the educational interface, reflecting different types of engagement associated with student and institution interaction. This interaction may impact students' self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being. The framework demonstrates that focusing on improving the learning environment could create a shared understanding of the purpose, value, the meaning of learning, and role of engagement between institutions and students, which will, in turn, influence students' emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement. It stresses that enhancing engagement throughout the learning environment could open communication

with members at all levels, including students, staff, and institutions, to encourage students to form their learning strategies and increase opportunities for their engagement.

Concerning the framework, enhancing the learning environment could support and promote engagement to increase students' self-efficacy and emotions, improve belonging, and promote well-being. As a result, this interaction may lead to academic success and student retention and provide opportunities for promoting lifelong learning and support for continuing self-development and personal growth. The current data highlighted different issues associated with the learning environment which may influence student engagement and the following section will discuss multi-levels/paths as one of these issues.

The data show that the participants stressed the issue of different English learning levels (streams/tracks) applied in the PYP, which may affect students' English competence level, intellectual abilities, and academic preferences. One of the English teachers reported, *'there are two I would say, main obstacles, though. One of them is that students are expected to all enter and exit at one level'* (ELC_staff_2). He believes *'this is a big problem. I do not think there should be, how you say, a one size fits all policy. Okay, you know, there should be different entry points and exit points so they can benefit the most*. This may explain the absence of multi-level streams/tracks for students, or the absence of entry and exit points may reduce learner autonomy in supporting their learning.

On the other hand, half of those interviewed, both students and teaching staff, requested implementing such multi-entry and exit points. Eight of 18 of both groups, the PYP students and graduates, asked for multiple levels or tracks in the PYP. One of the graduates suggested *that 'students need to be divided into different tracks so that each track is taught to students interested in studying a specific field'* (Dent_student_3). Similarly, another participant asserted:

> *there should be multiple paths that the student enrols in based on his academic field of interest, and in which the student delves deeper into the language and vocabulary of the field.* (Eng_student_1)

Likewise, six responses from the teaching staff are consistent with the students, expressing their desire for students to join different learning levels or tracks. For example, one teacher emphasised *'at least they have to separate between the engineering and biomedical*

tracks' (Med_staff_2). In the same way, another teacher suggested that *'there should be multiple tracks divided according to academic fields and disciplines'* (Eng_staff_1).

These results support evidence from a previous study conducted in the PYP at Al-Jouf University (2017) in Saudi Arabia. The data-driven study aimed to provide an inclusive database of the PYPs in all Saudi state universities. The study investigated several topics concerning the PYPs in Saudi Arabia, including the study system for the English language programme and the number of academic levels in it. The study found that 25 Saudi state universities out of 28 apply the multi-level learning system in the PYP. There are only three universities, including the university in my study, not applying the multi-level system. However, one of the English teachers confirmed that the multiple levels in the PYP existed in the past by saying:

> *yes, the idea of multiple levels succeeded in the past, but not anymore now. We found that the students in one class vary in their level of English, and it is not easy to separate them.* (ELC_staff_1)

Participants suggest that creating multiple tracks might promote the English learning environment in the PYP. These multiple tracks may enhance the relationship between learner, teacher, and content, including interaction with peers and teachers and authentic tasks of learning English. These relationships may play an essential role in maintaining students' well-being, sense of belonging, engagement, and success. Also, it is important to recognise that these factors may impact how a student can become actively involved in university life, promote engagement, and support individual psychosocial influences. These include a student's self-confidence, skills, motivation, self-efficacy, self-regulation, subject/discipline interest, well-being, and prior English learning experience, as negative feelings about learning English could lead to disengagement. These findings will lead the discussion in the following section to address using English as the Medium of Instruction as this was an issue that appeared in the data and is linked to the PYP curriculum.

4.4.2 Medium of Instruction

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) can be defined as using the English language to teach and learn academic content in communities where English is not the first language of these communities (Dearden, 2014). Using English for teaching and learning may be considered an interesting and sometimes a contested issue in a non-English speaking

educational institution. Regarding this study's context, and as noted, English is used as the Medium of Instruction to deliver learning materials in the PYP. The data show that only four of 18 students expected English to be used as the Medium of Instruction in the PYP before their enrolment and participants discovered that English is the Medium of Instruction in the PYP after joining the programme as reported by eight students. One participant stated, *'No, it was not as I expected, the courses were in English, and there is a great emphasis on English'* (PYP_student_3). Students' responses demonstrate that they did not have any information telling them the Medium of Instruction in the PYP is English.

The data revealed that half of the interviewed students (9 of 18) were surprised when they realised the Science courses were taught in English. One participant indicated that:

> *When the students come to the PYP, they are shocked by its reality and that the Science subjects are taught in English, so most students lose marks because of the English language.* (PYP_student_4)

In addition, the data show that 6 of 18 students found English a barrier to following the lessons in Science courses. One student asserted, *'Yes, of course, the English language was a hindrance for us to understand the scientific courses'* (Dent_student_1). He suggested, *'It would be easier for students to understand if it was taught in Arabic'* (Dent_student_1). Also, students confirmed that the teaching staff assisted them in translating language and terms to absorb the lessons in Science classes. One participant pointed out that *'lesson delivery was in English, but if we did not understand we asked the teacher to make it in Arabic'* (Dent_student_2). He added that '*the course teacher used to tell us, if you do not understand the explanation in English, I can repeat it in Arabic'* (Dent_student_2).

Using English as a Medium of Instruction influences students' learning at the PYP. The data showed that all teaching staff participants from Colleges reported that their first language is not English. However, the university regulations mandated them to use EMI to teach Science subjects. Most of the teaching staff participants (7 of 10) believe that students have low English proficiency. They also view English as an obstacle for students to understand college courses and lessons. One of the staff who acts as a student academic advisor noticed that:

> *One of the problems is that students withdraw from scientific courses such as chemistry because the instructor does not speak the Arabic language in the class at all.* (Eng_staff_1)

Another teacher reported:

> *students have a language problems. The main problem in mathematics courses with students is not understanding and comprehension of the English language. Sometimes most of the students do not understand a simple question.* (Sci_staff_1)

The remainder of the participants shared similar views. For example, one of the staff pointed out that he spent seven years teaching newcomers from the PYP and *'in the past students proficiency level was very low'* (Dent_staff_2). While his colleague stated that *'25% - 30% of students - their English is low'* (Dent_staff_1). Additionally, one teacher described the educational situation in the classroom when English is used as the language of instruction. He stated that:

> *When I use English in the classroom, I find that most students do not understand anything, and a very small group of students understand the lecture, and they are those whose English language is good. I can say that of 30 students, and you find only one or two who understand the lecture.* (Sci_staff_2)

Also, the data showed that several teaching staff assert that they often need to use the first language in the classroom to help translate and simplify lessons for students so they can easily follow and understand. One of the participants affirmed that:

> *Many points need to be explained in Arabic in part of the lecture to ensure that the information is delivered correctly to the student. At first, I tried to have all the explanations in English, but it did not work, and I found it difficult for the students, who sometimes asked me to explain part of the lecture in Arabic. I found the students more interactive, asking and answering questions.* (Pharma_staff_2)

Another teacher member explained the status of using English as a Medium of Instruction in non-English speaking communities. He stated that:

> *I think that the situation in the PYP, like other colleges, is written that the study will be in English, but in fact, only the presentation slides and tests are in English, and teaching is in Arabic unless the course professor is not an Arabic speaker.* (Pharma_staff_1)

Contrary to some student and teaching staff opinions, half of the participating students did not feel that using English as a Medium of Instruction was an obstacle to understanding

Science courses. One student said, *'No, English was not a hindrance to understanding scientific courses' ,,, the level of language the course teachers used to explain was easy and there were no complicated terms'* (Eng_student_2). Likewise, one teacher asserts that the problem was not in using English for teaching. He reported *'saying that the student's problem is in the sudden shift of using English in teaching is incorrect'* (Pharma_staff_1). He explained that the reason for this.

> *The student begins to learn English at an early age in the general education stages, approximately from the fourth grade of primary school. If the student does not benefit during all these years from learning the English language, we know that there is a big problem, I do not know, perhaps in the education system, teaching methods and many factors.* (Pharma_staff_1)

Another teacher shares a similar view, *'the problem is that they started learning the useful English language in the preparatory year when they had to start learning it from the primary stage'* (Sci_staff_1).

For these reasons, part of the interview sought to discover students' views about their prior English learning experience in school before they joined the PYP. The purpose of these questions was to determine if the students thought they had benefited from their previous experiences with learning English which, in turn, gave me an idea about how their English learning in the school was before they started the PYP. In this way, I hoped to be able to discover if their previous learning experience was compatible with their expectations about the PYP and the PYP itself. If students' expectations were not met and the PYP was very different from their expectations, this might affect their engagement.

Initially, students were asked to indicate how long they had been learning English before joining the PYP. Most students (14 of 18) confirmed they had spent more than seven years learning English in state schools. They all stated that their learning of English started in state schools at the beginning of middle school and continued to the end of secondary school from 13 to 18 years old. Although students noted that they had spent many years learning English in school, they all asserted that this was not enough to improve their English proficiency. Every participant felt that all these years of learning were unbeneficial and did not contribute adequately to their English proficiency, as shown in the data extracts below. One of the participants commented:

> *I started learning English in middle school, almost seven years old. But in middle school, learning was not good. The teachers are not interested in teaching English, and I have not benefited much from it.* (PYP_student_1).

This view was echoed by some of the teaching staff, stating: *'the problem is that students started the actual English learning in the PYP when they should have started learning it from the primary stage'* (Sci_staff_1). When asked to express his opinion on students' English learning, another teacher commented, *'The weakness that students have is cumulative from pre-university educational stages'* (Sci_staff_2). It can thus be suggested that the perceptions of the student participants were that their school education had not helped them develop their English level. Most students felt they had started learning English at a beginner level in the PYP.

The results mentioned above align with Al Zumor's (2019) findings, who conducted a quantitative study to explore the consequences Saudi university students face using EMI to study Science subjects. The study found that EMI significantly and negatively impacts students' academic comprehension and achievement. Also, the study revealed that using EMI causes other problems for students related to communication, interaction, understanding, success, and well-being. It argues that the English students learn in the PYPs does not improve their linguistic competence and does not qualify them to study Science courses in English. The study also indicates that using EMI will weaken students' opportunities to learn and benefit from Science courses and it suggests that finding an effective bilingual education system may tackle the issue of EMI in Saudi Higher Education Institutions.

In addition, Shamim, Abdelhalim and Hamid (2016) conducted case study research to examine EMI use in the same PYP as that investigated in my study. They referred to previous literature and the experiences of other universities in mentioning many benefits of using EMI, for example, improving students' English level and expanding their employment opportunities. That study also identified many consequences of using English as a language of instruction, for example, students' poor English proficiency and ability to understand lessons and lectures delivered in English.

Interestingly, Shamim, Abdelhalim and Hamid's (2016) findings revealed that almost all participating teaching staff and high-level students agree on using EMI for Science subjects, arguing that this is the language globally used for Science. Only one participant from each group did not agree on using English as the medium of structure for Science courses. However, the findings showed that the challenges encountered using EMI within the Science subjects' classes made it imperative to use a bilingual style in explaining concepts and asking and answering questions between students and teachers. The study suggests that offering ESAP materials in the PYP curriculum may overcome this issue. Also, the study refers to the use of creative and different pedagogical methods that might contribute to tackling this problem and it recommends that academic advisors in the PYP actively listen to stakeholders and meet their needs.

Additionally, Sahan et, al. (2021) conducted a research report to determine the success and challenges of using English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education. The report points out that success in using English as a language of teaching and learning in a non-English speaking community depends on the English language proficiency of students and teaching staff. Emotional dimensions such as students' perception of themselves and their beliefs in their level of English proficiency also play an influential role in the success of using EMI for learning academic content. Success and self-confidence also play a role. The report stresses that the teaching staff and students face the same situations and challenges due to the use of English in teaching and learning. It indicates that English language proficiency is often the most challenging for students and teaching staff, who simplify content or use the first language to further support content delivery to students.

Although some positive comments have appeared among teachers' and learners' responses about using EMI, its effectiveness in promoting the required students' English proficiency is not clear. The mandatory implementation of EMI in a non-English speaking environment can be challenging in many aspects, including the required level of English proficiency, lack of needed resources and support, and qualified instructors to conduct EMI classes. Applying EMI in Saudi universities has led to several consequences, challenges, and even negative consequences for student learning. In addition, several standard variables can negatively affect the effectiveness of using EMI orientations in Saudi Higher Education, with most ignoring stakeholder views and meeting their needs. Following the discussion on the impact of using EMI in the PYP, the data pointed to student competence as another issue that affects student learning and engagement, and this is addressed in the next section.

4.4.3 Competence

SDT by Desi and Ryan (1985) define competence as individuals' belief in their ability to influence their interactions with the environment to seek new learning through overcoming obstacles and challenges that fit their abilities (see section 2.3.1). In this sub-theme, I refer to language competence, which can be viewed as the individual's ability to participate in the class by using the four English language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also includes reflecting on communication with others, and the ability to produce, perform, and understand various aspects of the English language and its skills. The data in this section were drawn from participants' impressions (students and teaching staff) on students' language competence, level of English proficiency and self-confidence when participating in the class, and their implications for engagement and English learning in the PYP.

Starting with positive responses from students regarding their English learning in the PYP, the data show that fifteen of the eighteen of both groups, the PYP students and graduates, reported that they felt they were making progress in their English learning which may reflect on and be part of their self-efficacy feelings. For example, one of the students stated, *'yes, it is true. I was making progress in my English'* (Eng_student_1). Another student described his experience learning English in the PYP as follows:

> *I benefited from the PYP in good practice in writing skills. I could not write in English in the general education stages because we did not have inadequate English learning or practising.* (Eng_student_2)

Also, a participant reported, *'I would say my English learning experience in the PYP was very useful, and I benefited a lot from it'* (Pharma_student_2).

In addition, the data showed that most participants expected to obtain high marks in the English language course as they made progress through their English learning journey in the PYP, as confirmed by 16 students. One of the PYP participants commented, *'yes, I think I will get high grades in the English course'* (PYP_student_4). Another student believes, *'I feel like I will have high marks in English'* (PYP_student_1). Although students who successfully passed the PYP reported similar responses, some students did not expect to obtain high marks from semester one. One of the graduate participants explained:

> *In semester one, no, as I faced difficulties, including my low English level, but I managed to achieve a full mark in the second semester as my English improved.* (Dent_student_1)

Another interviewee confirmed, *'I struggled the first time I studied in the PYP, but the second time was clear to me, and I did not suffer and got high marks'* (Sci_student_2).

Three students showed different responses. Two of them indicated that they did not make the same progress as their peers in the first semester, but they noticed an improvement in the second semester. For instance, one participant described, *'in the first semester, the answer is no, but in semester two, yes'* (Dent_student_1). The third student said he did not feel that he improved in the English language because his English level was advanced. He reported *'yes, but not in a satisfactory manner because I feel that my current level is better than the level of the textbook* (PYP_student_2). Also, three students stated that they did not expect to obtain high marks at the beginning. For example, A participant reported, *'yes, of course, in the beginning, I encountered some difficulties, and I did not expect that I would obtain good grades in the English course'* (Dent_student_2).

Regarding the benefit of learning English in the PYP, the teaching staff had a different opinion. The data showed that all the ten interviewed teaching staff from Colleges believed that the English proficiency of students, especially those who successfully passed the PYP, was below expectations and needed to be improved. They also indicated that students struggle with English language skills, especially writing and speaking. For example, one teacher commented:

> *Honestly, students' English level is very low. You may find this very clearly in their writing and their ability to write passages or deal with essay written questions.* (Pharma_staff_1)

Another teacher pointed out that *'during the activities in the classroom, we find some students spend a long time writing simple activities that they are supposed to know in advance'* (Med_staff_1). Also, another participant believes, *'I think there are 30% they will struggle. 30% of students and they do struggle in understanding English'* (Eng_staff_2). He affirmed *that 'they need more effort in the language particularly in the English language* (Eng_staff_2). Another interviewee commented *'that first year students' language level is low and does not aspire to the required level. The majority level is less than acceptable and is supposed to be higher than that* (Pharma_staff_1). Those teaching staff who stressed this issue were in contact with students and taught students in the subject areas who had successfully passed the PYP and entered their colleges.

Another interesting point emerged from the data when students were asked about their active participation in the English class. Students expressed their views differently regarding their participation and half of the students, 9 of 18, confirmed that they participated. For example, one interviewee asserted, '*Yes, I participate in the class and enjoy it'* (PYP_student_6). In contrast, the other half stated that they did not participate in the English classes. For instance, one of the participants emphasised, '*No, I did not participate in the class, and I did not like participating in long discussions'* (Pharma_student_1). Only one student justified his participation saying this was based on the general atmosphere in the classroom: *'sometimes I participate. For me it depends on the atmosphere in the class if it is encouraging or not'* (Eng_student_1).

The above data was characterised as follows: all six students who studied at the PYP during the interview stated they participated in the class. Only two of seven PYP graduates who successfully passed the PYP responded that they participated in the English classes and there was only one student of five PYP graduates who successfully passed the PYP who reported that he had actively participated in the English class.

These data show that the PYP students responded as if they always participated in the class. In comparison, students who finished the PYP indicated limited class participation. Some even expressed remorse for not participating in the class and wasting this valuable opportunity to practise and develop their English. For example, one participant reported, *'I did not like participating much, and I regretted it a lot because I should have improved my speaking skills'* (Dent_student_2).

Students who experienced limited participation attributed that to several reasons, perhaps the most prominent being their beginner English level at the start of their enrolment in the PYP. for example, one of the students commented:

> *No, I did not participate because my level of English was weak, and I did not have enough vocabulary to participate, unlike other students who had a high level of English language, where they participated a lot.* (Sci_student_2)

It may be understandable that advanced level students like to participate in the classroom, unlike beginner level student, who prefer not to participate due to their low proficiency level, which can be linked to their self-efficacy level.

Participants explained their limited class participation was the fear of making mistakes while participating, which can be linked to their proficiency level. This reason is closely associated with the fear of making mistakes, which may cause a lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence and hence a reluctance to participate in class. For instance, one participant reported that '*I was afraid and nervous that I would make a mistake when I speak in English'* (Sci_student_1) and some said this was to avoid the sarcastic comments some of their peers may have made on these mistakes: '*I was afraid of making mistakes when I speak English and students mock about it'* (Dent_student_3).

These results reflect those of Ali et al. (2019), who investigated the English-speaking skills of first year Saudi university students and concluded that many Saudi English learners still struggle to speak English. They note that speaking is one of the main challenges facing Saudi English learners in universities, especially first year students, which reduces their enthusiasm to learn English (Ali et al., 2019). That study attributed this to several reasons, including peer criticism. Also, feeling that the other students in the classroom are strangers is another reason highlighted in the data, making students feel uncomfortable while speaking. For example, one of the students confirmed that *'sometimes I do not feel confident and feel confused because there are people I do not know; I do not want to make a mistake while I speak'* (PYP_student_3).

This data may explain the relationship between students' lack of participation in the classroom and their lack of self-confidence. As an illustration, Zayed and Al-Ghamdi (2019) believe that Saudi English learners who lack self-confidence appear to be afraid or even unable to speak in class, which causes them to reduce their value of themselves and their competence in dealing with their learning, unlike those who believe in themselves and their ability to achieve their learning goals. These data are consistent with those of Alenezi (2020), who investigated the factors affecting Saudi undergraduate students' participation in class in English. Alenezi's findings indicated that lack of confidence is the main factor reported by the participants affecting their English class participation and that it was evident that students who do not feel confident do not have the desire to participate in the class. This issue may be addressed by encouraging students to conduct more conversations in English in the classroom and to encourage them to see mistakes as a part of learning.

It may be understood that, due to the time when the interviews were conducted, the PYP students responded differently to the questions related to class participation, as did their

peers who successfully passed the PYP. The interviews were conducted in the middle of the first semester, which meant students in the PYP had only been studying for a short time. In contrast, students who had completed the PYP spent more time in the PYP, which made their responses differ, contradictory to the PYP students who were still in the middle of the PYP academic year.

In comparison with the literature, there are similarities between these findings revealed here and those found by Tanielian (2017), who investigated foreign language anxiety concerning self-efficacy in first year undergraduate Saudi students. Tanielian's results showed a decrease in anxiety levels associated with the length of time students spent in the PYP. It was also found that teaching members at a Saudi university noticed that their students' perspectives and learning responsibilities developed between semesters. The same study results confirmed a positive relationship between the length of time students spend in the PYP and the quality of students' learning practices. Completing the PYP may likely increase the student's motivation to learn English. Hence more time in the PYP could increase self-efficacy and self-confidence, resulting in academic success and engagement.

On the other hand, the level of language exposure has been identified in the data as an issue associated with the students' linguistic competence. The data show that many students positively respond to practising the English language in the PYP. For example, one of the participants affirmed that *'There were a lot of language practice activities inside the English classes, which helped us greatly in improving our English level'* (Dent_student_1). Also, another participant stated, *'my English improved a lot because I was spending more time practising the language'* (Dent_student_2). One of the students reported that teachers encourage them to practise English; he says*, 'the English teachers were urging us to speak and participate in English in the classroom'* (Dent_student_3). However, this exposure may diminish slowly and when it becomes restricted to a few lessons within the classroom. In that case, the English learning situation based on the PYP may be viewed negatively and as an inadequate environment for learning English. The PYP students are not exposed enough to the English language outside the classroom; as was reported by one of the teachers who commented on students' English proficiency levels, *'we need more communicative language skills for students. We find that students can think but cannot speak'* (Med_staff_1). He added:

> *we have some sessions that depend on speaking skills a lot. We have some dialogues and discussion activities occur within these sessions where the*

> *student is required to participate effectively, while we find the students lack engagement in these sessions.* (Med_staff_1)

In addition, one teacher noted that first year students in the disciplines suffer from low English levels more than their peers in the final years. He reported, *'First year students have low English level, or we can say that it is above weak, but it does not aspire to the required level'* (Eng_staff_1). He added, *'On the other hand, we find that students in their final years have higher abilities than other students in other years. Even their English was better than their peers in other years'*. Following this answer, the students' English proficiency level may improve by spending more time and increasing their exposure to the target language.

The above data is consistent with work by Nazim and Hazarika (2017). They interviewed several PYP teachers at a Saudi university to assess students' language proficiency levels required in different disciplines at the university. Their findings revealed that students suffer from low English levels, including lack of motivation or interest, poor speaking and writing skills, and lack of comprehension. They suggest that students should spend more time practising and being exposed to English to increase their proficiency level to cope with their academic studies.

Based on the responses mentioned above, it is evident that English learning in the PYP is limited to a specific number of teaching sessions in the classroom. Therefore, exposure to the target language environment may increase or decrease according to the opportunities available to the learner in terms of using that language in studying other subjects and practising the target language outside the classroom. According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), various factors influence student engagement. The level of students' exposure to English is an issue that affects their proficiency level, which may also impact their level of confidence, motivation, and identity as learners. Enhancing the language learning environment may be necessary to ensure student emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement occurs by encouraging self-direct and student agencies towards their learning. This may result in enhancing students' sense of belonging and well-being, leading to academic success.

To conclude, this section presents data on how PYP students perceive their competence in learning the English language within a Saudi university context. The data revealed contradictory responses among the students regarding their awareness of their competence

in learning English in the PYP. The results showed that students felt they were progressing in their English in the PYP. The results also indicated that students expected during their studies in the PYP to obtain high marks in the English course. However, the main issue affecting students' competence reported in the data was the lack of participation in English language classes linked to speaking proficiency. The lack of student participation was affected by four main factors: lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, peer ridicule, and the student learning experience. The data also indicate that the student's English level affects their participation in the class and this might lead to thinking about the link between students' English language level and classroom participation. The following section will present and discuss data on the fourth theme, namely, suggestions for improvement.

4.5 Theme four: Suggestions for Improvement

This theme summarises data on the participants' key recommendations and suggestions to enhance engagement and learning in the PYP. The data highlighted participants' suggestions for better engagement practices, curriculum and pedagogy in the PYP. These suggestions will be presented in three sub-themes: for engagement, for curriculum and for pedagogy although all sections overlap and relate to engagement.

4.5.1 Recommendations from the Data for Engagement

In this sub-theme, participants provided various suggestions to explicitly enhance students' engagement. The data show that participants suggest improving student expectations through various activities, for example, induction meetings, student clubs, student councils and university activities.

Participants suggest that institutions might need to design strategies to facilitate student transition from school to Higher Education, for example, by providing information on the university and subject areas. One of the students asserts that:

> *at the beginning of the year, some students in the subject areas came and provided us with some information about the PYP and subject area, and this information was comprehensive and valuable. We were motivated from the beginning* (Dent_student_1).

Another student reports:

> *I did not have any information about the various fields in the College of Engineering, and I only knew about it after I joined the College of Engineering, as information was provided to us in the College of Engineering, and it was supposed to be provided in the PYP* (Eng_student_2).

When students form certain expectations that are not fulfilled, they may be disappointed when facing reality, resulting in an unpleasant and negative learning experience.

Providing students with information about the PYP and future studies may enhance engagement factors, including enthusiasm, desire and feeling part of the university community (Briggs, Clark and Hall, 2012). According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), these elements are included in the student's psychological influences, enhancing motivation and enthusiasm. Hence, these factors might allow emotional engagement to occur, leading to higher satisfaction and well-being.

Also, one of the suggestions is to unify efforts between state schools and Higher Education institutions to fill the worrying gap in English learning. One of the students states:

> *English was an obstacle for most of the students, including myself. I blame teaching English in the general education stages because it was inappropriate, and when we came to the PYP we faced difficulty in the English language. We made much effort to understand the English language by translating vocabulary and terms to understand these courses. I would have liked it if more useful teaching methods were applied in the general education stages.* (Sci_student_2)

It may also be that one of the effective methods of adapting to university life is feeling welcomed, as this could make students feel that they belong to the university environment. For example, organising a campus orientation tour for potential students to discover the campus may support students and make them feel welcomed, more motivated to learn, and feel safe, important, and valued. Commenting on providing a welcoming environment as an influencing factor in student engagement, one of the participants who successfully passed the PYP asserted:

> *The college administration opens its doors to everyone, encouraging them to do this, and the invite always comes from them, and they ask for our opinions and suggestions. This reflected positively on our educational*

> *attainment, self-confidence, and sense of belonging to the college community.* (Pharma_student_2)

In line with the above-presented data, Meehan and Howells (2018) have demonstrated the realities of first year university students' experiences from the first term until they finish their studies at a British university. They argue that failing to meet students' expectations leads to a decrease in their engagement. The study concludes with valuable ideas concerning students' experience, including having information about their academic studies and feeling they belong to the learning community.

In line with my findings on expecting institutions to provide information about the study system, Alfehaid's (2017) study points out that unfavourable expectations may impact students' performance and learning outcomes. To understand students' expectations and their effects on student engagement, Alnassar and Dow (2013) argue that the PYP in Saudi universities aims to achieve goals related to raising the quality of university education, supporting students' abilities and improving their prior knowledge before entering the university. They assert that it is good to introduce students to the nature of university life before starting their studies and to allow them to improve their English. Similarly, several studies indicate that the PYP in Saudi Arabia is designed to prepare new students for university life and enhance their success chances (see for example, Kaliyadan et al., 2015; Alfehaid, 2017; Al-Shehri, 2017; Tanielian, 2017; Alghamdi & Deraney, 2018). In order to achieve this goal, PYPs in the Saudi context need to work to provide adequate academic information to their potential students before their enrolment. However, ignoring students' expectations would not encourage students to make continuous learning efforts if they lack information about their academic programmes and activities.

Another point suggested in the data was organising induction meetings for students before their enrolment to provide adequate information. One participant proposes, *'I think it was supposed to provide information about the disciplines through induction meetings in the PYP'* (Eng_student_2). Moreover, students' sense of belonging is a critical factor that can enhance students' learning and engagement. This section aims to identify the reality of the sense of belonging for students on the PYP, to identify their views on enhancing and developing this, and to emphasise the importance of enhancing the values and principles of belonging in PYP student university life. The results revealed three main issues: identifying the concept and importance of belonging to the university, obstacles to belonging to the

university, and ways to enhance it. This part will discuss these issues as they were coded and analysed into three dimensions that might enhance the sense of belonging. These dimensions include university activities, student clubs, and student voice.

Concerning engagement influences, Kahu and Nelson (2018) argue that a sense of belonging affects engagement. The framework associates a sense of belonging with an ability to integrate students' needs and a desire to interact within and succeed in the learning process, allowing for a higher level of engagement. They claim that this factor emerges from 'psychosocial' factors represented in institutional policies and curriculum, which influence student-institution interactions. According to the framework, when students are viewed as partners and given a voice in decision-making, it may promote a sense of belonging and increase engagement and success. According to the framework, increasing students' cognitive, behavioural, and emotional engagement is also beneficial to engagement. It also includes psychosocial influences on students' learning, such as motivation, identity, and personality, which influence how students engage in their learning. Furthermore, the data highlight a number of factors that may improve students' knowledge and skills, thereby increasing belonging and engagement, such as extracurricular activities, learning communities, and student voice.

In this regard, the data showed that extra-curricular activities may be a key factor that promotes students' sense of belonging. One of the students asserts that the university provided activities for students, increasing their sense of belonging to the university. He claimed:

> *Student activities greatly enhance the feeling of belonging to the University. We heard many students say what the University's role is in student activities, and those are the ones who do not participate in the first place in the University's activities.* (Eng_student_2)

However, it appears that many students disagree with this view. The data revealed that four students did not participate in the University activities at all and they did not know about these activities. For example, one participant confirmed, *'Frankly speaking, I did not hear of any activities, nor did I see any advertisements in this regard'* (PYP_student_1). Likewise, another participant reports, *'No, unfortunately, I am trying to participate, but I do not have enough information and do not know where these activities are taking*

place' (PYP_student_3). Another student commented, *'No, I have never participated in activities and activities are below my expectations here'* (PYP_student_2).
Meanwhile, two students stated they had heard of the university activities but did not seek to engage in them. One of the students explained, '*Yes, I knew about these activities, but I did not have enough time to participate in university activities, and I did not want to participate'* (Sci_student_1). It is evident from the responses that the University's activities were not given enough attention by those responsible for the PYP.

The above data is consistent with Al-Hariri and Al-Hattami's (2018) findings, which investigate university students' views on extracurricular activities at a Saudi university. The study showed that participation in extracurricular activities among university students was minimal. The study indicated that the most common barrier is that activities clash with classroom times. Participants also encountered several obstacles, including no reward. The teaching staff did not support students' participation in extracurricular activities, there was no guidance for the activities or explicit goals, and most activities were not encouraging. The study concluded that university student affairs officials need to address obstacles to improve participation in extracurricular activities.

Nevertheless, the abovementioned study was contrary to the study by Almalki et al. (2017). They aimed to evaluate stress levels and workloads among university students and determine the effect of extracurricular activities on stress in Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Institutions. The study of Almalki et al. (2017) concluded that although high levels of academic pressure have been reported among Saudi university students, stress is not closely related to the frequency of participation in extracurricular activities. However, managing and organising extracurricular activities may lead to lower stress levels. It recommended that improving students' leadership skills be considered in curriculum preparation as well as indicating the quality of extracurricular activities.

One of the PYP students describes the activities at the concerned University as discouraging compared to another PYP university's activities in which he had studied before joining the current PYP. He emphasised, *'There were many and varied activities. These activities are one reason that makes the student feel belonging to the University and that he is part of it. I miss this thing here'* (PYP_student_2).He believes the reason behind this is that:

> *Certain people arranged and organised these activities at the University where I studied. Those people specialised in these activities, as there were*

> *sporting, cultural, and many other activities. There were advertisements for these activities spread around the campus, and we also received advertisements via e-mail, social media websites, and student groups. While here at this University, I miss all this, and even though I went by myself and asked about the activities, I found nothing about them.* (PYP_student_2)

This answer illustrates the value of extra-curricular activities in enhancing the sense of belonging. Participants requested that the university consider offering more activities to students that may benefit them. One participant commented, *'I hope that the university pays attention to the activities and to give more information and clarification about these activities and when and where they are held'* (PYP_student_3). Likewise, one teacher called for more attention to students' activities, stressing their positive effects on increasing students' sense of belonging and learning. He asserted that:

> *Students need to be involved in activities in different competitiveness in the English language and other sports and extra-curricular activities, as we used to do in the past. In fact, we noticed that these activities strengthened the students' sense of belonging and their real value in the University. Now, these activities have decreased and are no longer the same, despite the presence of buildings and equipment.* (ELC_staff_1)

Student participation in extracurricular activities may help expand their social networking by opening the way to meet new people. Aljumaah's (2018) findings conclude that activities beyond the class improve Saudi university students' social networking. In addition, activities can help them to explore their unique abilities in new environments and develop their skills in leadership, helping others, and sharing ideas. University activities can enhance their social skills by guiding them to work together as a team to achieve a common goal, which is an important skill for co-operative education. Bodolica, Spraggon and Badi's (2021) evidence suggests that educational institutions play a significant role in offering effective policies for prompting students' social networking and leadership skills and that universities' extracurricular activities can serve to support fulfilling future goals.

Most of those who commented on university activities are current PYP students. In contrast, many PYP graduates, who successfully passed the PYP, did not comment on this issue. Because PYP students are newcomers to Higher Education, they bring expectations and

hopes in their attempt to adapt to the university climate. Most extracurricular activities are designed to reach and achieve a goal, helping students work towards these goals and enjoy their time simultaneously (Guilmette et al., 2019). Accordingly, these activities serve as an exit from the academic workloads and can develop their skills to reach their goals. Students can also develop new skills, self-confidence, and a sense of learning through university activities (Bodolica, Spraggon & Badi, 2021). Additionally, it might teach them the time-management skills and values that these activities generally promote. Teachers may need to be cautious to avoid forcing students to participate in extracurricular activities. Instead, it is important to encourage the students to select the activity they wish to complete. Also, over-participation in activities may consume their energy and attention, impacting their academic performance and learning.

According to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018), these features of university activities may promote different engagement types, such as cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement. As a result, this may lead to positive outcomes like academic success, student retention, and lifelong learning. Students may become emotionally and cognitively engaged when the institutional policies and activities match their interests, experiences, and future, according to Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018). Based on the framework, building positive relationships with students may increase their sense of belonging to the institution and result in more effective engagement in their learning. It suggests that this can be accomplished by encouraging extracurricular and curricular activities where students' interactions with institutions improve their learning experience. The following section will discuss student clubs as another point highlighted in the data and associated with the learning environment and engagement.

Student clubs are another form of student activity that may be considered learning communities that can promote a positive learning environment in the PYP. Many Saudi Universities operate student clubs, seeking to improve students' skills in various fields. This activity allows students to learn new knowledge, acquire professional skills, and form outlooks for future careers and university applications.

Referring to Kahu and Nelson's Framework (2018), student clubs at a university can enhance engagement through students' psychosocial factors. The framework outlines university activities, such as student communities that support the bonds between students and each other, students and teachers, and students and the institution. These can enhance students'

experiences, improve their cognitive abilities, promote creative thinking, help them gain new knowledge and skills, and increase their motivation, desire to study, and sense of self-efficacy. The framework also highlights how student communities can help students learn new information and improve their skills, enhancing their engagement, motivation, and desire for learning. Additionally, it suggests that student communities could improve students' cognitive engagement. They become more emotionally engaged in their learning, which increases their ability to form friendships, teamwork, and collaborative learning.

The data showed that five students realised student clubs were operating at the university and in the PYP. Among those five, two PYP students knew about them but did not receive detailed information about the activities in these clubs. One participant stated, '*I heard about student clubs, but we do not have any information about their activities and no one as a representative of these clubs came to us to give us information about them'* (PYP_student_6). However, a Health Sciences student confirmed that the student club in the College is very active and useful. He indicated that *'in college, we have a distinguished student club that listens to students' needs and delivers them to college officials'* (Dent_student_2).

The study data also suggests that extra-curricular activities can achieve student engagement. For instance, one teacher recommended that:

> *Students need to be involved in activities in different competitive English activities and other extra-curricular sports activities. We noticed that these activities reinforced the sense of belonging among the students and have a real value in the university*. (ELC_staff_1)

Since the study focuses on teaching the English language and its applications, the English Language club could be an important element of student activities in the PYP and it might encourage improving students' English language communication skills and general social discourse skills to develop linguistic diversity at the university. Therefore, the club's activities may need to aim to create opportunities for the more effective development of club members.

Elnadeef and Abdala (2019) examined the English club's importance in enhancing speaking in Saudi Arabia aiming to determine the features of operating the English club to enhance speaking and raise the awareness of English language teachers at the university of the

importance of using it. It claims that Saudi university students are interested in learning English.

According to the findings, the English club provides Saudi universities with a free, voluntary speaking activity that helps them reduce anxiety and practise English in a friendly environment. The study concluded that the English club helps Saudi students lessen their language anxiety, helps them enjoy speaking English and enhances critical thinking skills. Also, the same study recommends that the English club be scheduled as a crucial part of the English course activity.

Because the student is the main focus of the English club, all activities need to be interactive and centred on them. On the other hand, activities can be organised under the supervision of English language teachers, and club reports can be submitted to the administration regularly for their review. Rehmana, Madhu and Charyulu (2020) examined Saudi Universities' best learning strategies for teaching English and their results indicated that, for example, Saudi English learners adopt various vocabulary learning strategies in the English language club activities.

Consistent with the literature, this research found that the English club is a good extracurricular activity for PYP students. It provides a great opportunity for students to improve their communication skills and encourage a more communicative approach between students and teachers. Furthermore, the English club can regularly provide diverse cultural and social events based on language learning objectives, which may assist students in practising their English in a friendly, inclusive, and encouraging environment. Having discussed how to construct an encouraging learning environment for student engagement in the PYP, the final section addresses ways to open boundaries and dismantle barriers between students and Higher Education institutions.

The Student Council is another suggestion associated with promoting the learning environment in the PYP through listening to student voice, opening boundaries and strengthening the relations between students and institutions. According to Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework, treating students as partners would encourage them to participate in the university community by allowing them to organise students' elections, vote, and count votes. It also allows them to contribute to important decisions in their academic studies. Universities may need to encourage students to participate in student

council decisions about the university and their academic studies. Moreover, this facet can be considered a gateway to teaching PYP students the foundations of leadership and self-development. It fosters students' problem-solving skills in various ways to improve their university learning environment, especially in language learning.

Despite all these features of the student council, the results indicated that several PYP students declared that the student council is inactive in the PYP. For example, one of the students asserted, '*Yes, there was a student advisory council, but it was not as effective as it should be, and we did not benefit from it'* (Pharma_student_1). In comparison, other students stated they did not have the opportunity to participate and express opinions about their learning and academic studies. One of the participants was asked if the university allowed him to express his opinion about the course, changing the times of lectures, exams, or the evaluation method. He stated, *'Never, because the response would have come that this thing is mandatory from the university administration and the professor cannot do anything about it'* (Sci_student_1). Another participant confirmed that the *'student's opinion must be taken because it is the meaning of this educational process and the study'* (Sci_student_2). Many participants considered that giving them the opportunity to hear their voices positively impacted them and enhanced their sense of belonging. One student described, *'hearing our voice makes us feel that we belong to the university and that we are part of it'* (PYP_student_2).

Another student said that he heard the university was recruiting new students to be representatives on the Student Council. He pointed out, '*I remember that at the beginning of the semester there was an announcement about the advisory board and that there were about ten students who went to participate in it'* (Med_student_1). The data showed different opinions about hearing the student voice and activating student councils. However, opinions tended to indicate that the PYP did not exert enough effort to activate the student's role as a partner in the university community, thus reducing the student's opportunity to engage in the university. The data confirmed that the students did not know how the student council operated, as stated by one of the students who said, *'No, I never heard about the council before, and I did not know how it works until after I finished the PYP and joined in the college'* (Dent_student_1).

One of the participants has experienced studying in the PYP at two different Saudi universities. He compared the two universities in terms of listening to the student voice. He

asserted, *'Not at all, I did not find this thing here. The current university did not give me the opportunity to participate and express my opinion on the study plan, scientific courses, or activities'* (PYP_student_2). He added:

> *Yes, of course. In the previous university, it only needed a letter that included all students' names, and our voice would be heard. I remember that we set the dates of the final exams when we saw that the dates were not suitable for us. We asked the university administration to change the dates, and the matter was done.* (PYP_student_2)

He explained:

> *We had a student advisor who was always on the students' side, listening to our voices, and he was the link between the university administration and us. He always informs us about our rights and our duties as students.* (PYP_student_2)

He affirmed that *'this matter was reflected positively on us, and that hearing our voice makes us feel that we belong to the university, and we are part of its community'* (PYP_student_2).

Many studies have noted the importance of listening to the student's voice. For example, Alotaibi (2020) compared Saudi and British universities to make recommendations on improving student affairs administration in Saudi universities. The study suggests that universities need to set goals and plans to establish a student council or union, allowing students to express their opinion, inform students of their rights and duties, support student activities, and promote the principle of cooperation.

Thus far, the previous sections have shown and discussed data on one of the three factors associated with institutions. The results in these sections have argued that the learning environment is a key factor that could impact student engagement in the PYP. It has been shown that factors like students' learning choice, level of students' language exposure, sense of belonging, learning communities, and listening to students' voice might enhance the learning environment and engagement in the PYP. The following sections will present and discuss suggestions from the data for curriculum enhancement in the PYP.

4.5.2 Recommendations from the Data for Curriculum

This sub-theme summarises and discusses participants' suggestions to enhance the PYP curriculum. It presents data on including materials for English for Specific Academic Purposes, introducing multi-learning levels, and improving assessment in the PYP.

Many participants suggest including English for Specific Academic Purposes materials within the PYP curriculum. For example, one of the students said:

> *I suggest adding units to the PYP curriculum for health specialities or at least one unit. For example, this unit talks about hospitals and contains vocabulary and medical terms that we benefit from in our academic studies.* (Dent_student_1)

Another student urged that:

> *I recommend adding terminology materials to the PYP curriculum, a more in-depth study of medical topics, and courses that introduce various disciplines to benefit better from the PYP* (PYP_student_5).

One interviewee said:

> *'Yes, certainly. I recommend at the very least that we learn about terminology in different fields so that we have at least a background on the terminology of the field I want to study before joining it'* (Eng_student_2).

As noted earlier, the teaching staff also shared similar opinions about adding English for specific purposes to the PYP curriculum. One teacher recommends, '*I think it would be better for students if medical terminology was included in the PYP year syllabus'* (Med_staff_1). Another teacher affirms that:

> *For example, if we kept only five contact hours for learning English in the PYP, we could make the rest of the contact hours dedicated to teaching students the special terms in each field, such as medical and other terms*. (Sci_staff_1)

Including multi-learning levels (streams) in the PYP is another point suggested by the participants. For example, one PYP student suggests that *'it would be better if it was a PYP for each academic field so that the student would study in it what they need in their academic studies'* (PYP_student_1). A PYP graduate asserts that *'having multiple tracks is a wonderful thing, and many universities implement the multi-track system, and I believe it is a great thing for the students to determine their orientations from the beginning'* (Med_student_2). Also, teaching staff agree with the notion of multiple tracks. One teacher suggested that *'there should be multiple tracks divided according to academic*

fields and specialisations' (Eng_staff_1). Another teacher said, *'the PYP needs to separate students into different tracks because, for example, if I'm in the biomedical health track, why do I learn engineering requirements? So, it's better to put students in different tracks'* (Med_staff_2).

According to the data, one English teacher emphasised the issue of different English learning levels (streams/tracks) used in the PYP, which may affect students' English learning, intellectual abilities, and academic preferences. He states '*One problem with the PYP is that students are expected to all enter and exit at one level for the English Language'* (ELC_staff_2) He added:

> *This is a big problem. I do not think there should be, how you say, a one size fits all policy, there should be different entry points and exit points so they can benefit the most.*

The next sub-theme will outline suggestions and recommendations created by participants to improve pedagogy in the PYP.

4.5.3 Recommendations from the Data for Pedagogy

In this sub-theme, participants provide suggestions to enhance learning and teaching practices in the PYP including improving autonomy and student competences. The data suggest that promoting students' motivation and autonomy enhances engagement. For example, one of the teachers recommends that:

> *University students need to learn about attitude, self-dependence, how to make a decision and critical thinking all these skills there are new trends in education known as educational psychology.* (Med_staff_2)

Another teacher believes that:

> *There should be a strong reconsideration of the subject of student classification so that it is based on students' self-reliance and their responsibility for their learning, and there should be independence for the learner.* (Pharma_staff_1)

Another response to this recommendation was that:

> *A student needs to have the motivation and self-desire to raise their level of performance, and the university can stimulate this desire and self-learning, so this should be strengthened among students to show their true level of achievement.* (Sci_staff_2)

It was recommended that students be encouraged to set learning goals for their learning and share and discuss these goals with their teachers in a way that fosters autonomy and engagement. For example, one of the teachers asserted:

> *Curricula and teaching methods must be reviewed in the PYP, and students should be involved in the learning process, take responsibility for their learning, urge them to self-learning, reduce the teacher's current role in the classroom, and give the student some control and freedom.* (Sci_staff_2)

Moreover, the participants recommended several measures to make students' linguistic competence and learning practices accessible in the PYP. For instance, to minimize in-class speaking anxiety, one of the students recommended, *'I suggest conducting a test in speaking skills at the end of every week. The test should be very simple and does not have to be complicated to benefit everyone'* (Dent_student_2). Encouraging student participation would help, as one student asserts, *'I found that my teacher's support and encouragement to participate boosts my self-confidence when speaking English'* (PYP_student_4). Using a variety of teaching practices would also be useful suggests one student, *'certainly, the use of various methods of teaching by the teacher is very useful and facilitates the learning process'* (PYP_student_2).

Therefore, he suggested *that 'we need to look at the experience first, and the contracts should be made for the long term, for example, every five years, renewed or cancelled'* (ELC_staff_1). He also recommended:

> *There should be consistency in the contracts of these teachers, and the contract is made directly by the university with the teachers so that the teaching staff is stable and has enough experience to deal with students.* (ELC_staff_1)

The next section will synthesise the suggestions outlined in this Chapter

4.6 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this study sought to explore the views of the students and the teaching staff about student engagement associated with the learning and teaching practices in the PYP at the investigated site. The study's data revealed four broad themes: Expectations and realities of the PYP, Learning and Pedagogy in the PYP, and Challenges and Suggestions for Improvement. This Chapter has provided data and a discussion on the study's themes.

The Chapter discussed data on different aspects of the teaching and learning practices in the PYP. For example, learning environment issues, curriculum issues and pedagogy issues. The structure of the discussion of each theme explained the possible effect, of the PYP issues on student engagement based on Kahu and Nelson's engagement framework (2018). Finally, participants' suggestions and recommendations were reviewed during the discussion of the study's data and outlined at the end of this Chapter. The following Chapter is the final Chapter of this thesis and will outline the conclusions and recommendations of this research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will summarise the main points of my study and conclude this thesis. First, I will provide an overview of my research by restating the aim and summarising the key findings and discussing their potential effects on various stakeholders (that is, Higher Education institutions, teaching staff and students) and future researchers using my or similar research questions. Next, I will review the potential importance of my research in promoting student engagement for Higher Education institutions, teaching staff and second/foreign English language students and researchers. I will also discuss the limitations of the study, and offer some suggestions for teaching and learning English in the PYPs bearing in mind how my study might be improved and expanded for further research work. Finally, this chapter will provide my personal reflections on my research journey and how this journey has refined, developed, and changed my research and professional skills and practices.

5.2 Summarising the aim of the study

In general, during my review of the literature at the beginning of my PhD studies, I became aware of a dearth of studies during the exploration/discussion of the research on promoting student engagement in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) in the Saudi Higher Education context. Consequently, my study aimed to explore student engagement in the English language course of the PYP in a Saudi university. The ultimate question of the study was, 'How to improve/enhance learning and teaching through student engagement in the year one Preparatory English Language course at a Saudi University?' To answer this question, I thought it was important to understand the views of students and academic staff about the current situation of the PYP and how this could be improved. The main research questions of this study were as follows:

RQ 1. What are the expectations and realities of English learning in the PYP?

a. What were the students' expectations of English learning before they joined the PYP?

b. What did the students discover about the reality of English learning after they joined the PYP?

c. How do students feel about their English learning after the PYP and during their second university year when they start studying in their subject areas?

RQ 2. What are the students' and staff views about the way in which the English Language component in the PYP Programme of the university could be improved?

a. What are the views about the curriculum in the PYP?

b. What are the views about the content of the English and the other subjects that are taught in English in the PYP?

c. What are the views about the learning and teaching practices in the PYP?

RQ 3. What are the perceptions of the teaching staff in the English Language Centre and the subject areas about English language learning in the PYP?

RQ 4. How do students and staff view engagement in the learning process in the PYP with particular respect to: a) autonomy, b) competence, c) a sense of belonging to the university, d) a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline?

In my study, I was interested in investigating learning and teaching practices that may develop learners' engagement in an English language programme. Also, I aimed to explore participants' perceptions (students and academic staff) about the methods used in the classroom and how they thought student engagement might affect learning and teaching outcomes in the PYP, in which students have to learn English for their future academic studies. Further, this investigation focused on various features of that English language programme, including the learning environment, teachers, and the curriculum, because I argued that it is necessary to conduct research at university level to encourage students to feel engaged at the end of the PYP by understanding their views and experiences on that programme.

Since student engagement is the focus of this research, my study sought, ultimately, to provide suggestions for improving/enhancing English language learning and teaching and to offer approaches to facilitate student engagement in that English language course. Moreover, I aimed to identify desirable and undesirable aspects and challenges that may arise in the language classroom, which may hinder student engagement. Based on the participants' views, the data discussed aspects of language teaching and learning in the PYP related to student engagement, including feedback received, self-structured learning, interaction, stimulating activities, and materials used for learning.

From this data, this study offers suggestions to promote engagement by proposing a conceptual model to facilitate student engagement in the PYP in the Saudi university in which my study was based, but perhaps more broadly across PYPs in Saudi Higher Education. The next section will summarise the key findings in my study drawing on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) engagement framework.

5.3 Synthesis of the key findings

This section summarises the key findings of the study but I will, initially, briefly summarise how the findings answered the research question. The first theme: The PYP's Expectations and Reality addressed the first research question - What are the expectations and realities about English learning in the PYP? This theme explored information gathered from study participants on what they anticipated they would learn and acquire from the PYP and what they actually experienced. Based on Kahu and Nelson's (2018) conceptual framework of student engagement, the discussion of this theme summarised potential linkages between the PYP expectations, reality, and student engagement. My data showed that half of the participants' expectations of what to expect before joining the PYP were not met. The data also revealed that some students expected that the PYP would assist them in shaping their identities as learners in a social, academic, and engaging setting. I suggest that a failure to meet these expectations may limit students' interest, part of their emotional engagement, leading to an unsatisfactory performance and limited personal progress. Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement framework suggests that there might be negative effects, such as feeling stressed or anxious, if there is a disconnect between students' expectations and realities. These consequences may affect students' motivation, causing them to lose interest in engaging in conversation and learning, resulting in disengagement, failure, and even their withdrawal from academic study.

The second main theme: Learning and pedagogy in the PYP, addressed the three sub-questions of the second research question including:

a. What are the views about the curriculum in the PYP?

b. What are the views about the content of the English and the other subjects that are taught in English in the PYP?

c. What are the views about the learning and teaching practices in the PYP?

This second theme has three sub-themes. The first sub-theme, Motivation, examined data on what motivates students to persist and be involved in their PYP learning. The data indicated that students were motivated and autonomous learners with respect to achieving their goals. It also indicated that they took responsibility for their learning, and felt they were able to tackle any learning issues faced during their English learning in the PYP. It was also found that students said they used autonomy to improve their learning practices and attain their goals and thought they were successful in arranging and prioritising their academic and personal activities. These findings are significant for understanding student motivation because they may lead learners to use deep learning strategies to improve their learning, regulate their learning choices, and promote engagement. According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), autonomy allows students to apply diverse learning methods, identify strategies that do not work for them, and use other strategies as needed. Similarly, Kahu and Nelson's framework (2018) indicates that autonomy influences students' self-evaluation and learning. Thus, autonomy may promote cognitive and behavioural engagement, which can improve a sense of belonging and well-being, resulting in positive academic outcomes such as academic achievement and student retention, as well as positive personal outcomes such as tenacity, satisfaction, and confidence.

Curriculum is the second sub-theme which offered data on various viewpoints on the PYP. For instance, the data indicated that curriculum relevance, quality, and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) materials might be relevant factors in student engagement. Additionally, entry and exit points, learning levels, contact hours, and student assessment, may also have an impact on PYP learning. Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework highlights the curriculum as one of the main influences on student engagement. The framework suggests that students' emotional engagement may increase when the curriculum is related to their interests, experiences, and future learning. Furthermore, cognitive engagement occurs when students believe their abilities are aligned with curriculum goals.

Pedagogy is the third sub-theme which provides data on the PYP's methods of teaching and learning. For example, the participants discussed their perspectives on PYP teaching and learning practices. They addressed topics of PYP pedagogy, such as teaching staff characteristics, teaching methods, teaching skills, and student assistance and feedback, and talked about how these factors could affect learning. Most teachers felt they were facilitating learning for their students. Also, students often responded positively, indicating that the teaching staff are making every effort to support them in understanding the PYP course

materials. For example, some teachers connect English course topics to a real situation to help students remember what they learned. In addition, however, several participants reported that they encountered some issues with some new and inexperienced teachers.

The data also suggested that teaching methods were based on the traditional lecturing approach, which implies there was little variation in the teaching methods and students reported feeling bored in these classes. Also, several teachers believe that teaching practices in some classrooms should be improved. According to Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework, the teacher is one of the key engagement factors in the institution's structural components. The framework emphasises the importance of maintaining positive links between the teacher and the student for the social and psychological impacts connected with building positive interactions between the student and the institution's policy and culture. These relationships can enhance emotional engagement when the teacher seeks to improve the student's interest in the classroom (Kahu and Nelson, 2018). The framework proposes that student-teacher interaction can improve cognitive engagement by encouraging students to apply deep learning and self-regulation skills. It also indicates that behavioural engagement may develop when the teacher encourages students to participate and interact in the classroom.

Challenges in the PYP is the third main theme which addressed the third research question - What are the perceptions of the teaching staff in the English Language Centre and the subject areas about English Language learning in the PYP? That theme also helped answer the fourth research question - How do students and staff view engagement in the learning process?. This theme, which has three sub-themes, is concerned with obstacles that can prevent students from learning and participating in the PYP. The first sub-theme, learning environment, provided data on participants' concerns about the PYP teaching and learning environment, in which I refer here to the educational style and cultural context in which all types of teaching, learning, and activities occur within the institution. For example, in the data the participants stressed the issue of the different English learning levels (streams/tracks) applied in the PYP, which may affect students' English competence level, intellectual abilities, and academic preferences. Both students and teaching staff requested the implementation of multi-entry and exit points within the PYP learning system.

The second sub-theme, Medium of Instruction, included data on the participants' perspectives on using English as the Medium of Instruction in the PYP. The data suggests that using English as a Medium of Instruction, which some students thought was a challenge, could prevent them from making the most of their learning at the PYP. The participants believed this would greatly impact student learning and engagement by influencing students' communication skills, comprehension, success, self-confidence, and well-being. At the same time, some data indicated that using English as a Medium of Instruction was not a challenge and was thought by the participants to be necessary for their future learning and success. Although there were some positive responses, the data stressed that using English as a Medium of Instruction was a challenge for students and this influenced their learning and engagement in the PYP. The data revealed several factors that made using English as a Medium of Instruction challenging including, for example, low linguistic competence, the lack of supporting learning resources and materials, and a non-English speaking environment.

As one of the topics the participants confronted and discussed in the PYP, the last sub-theme offered data on students' linguistic competence. In this sub-theme, I refer to language competence, which can be identified as the individual's ability to participate in the class by using English language skills in communicating with others, and the ability to produce, perform, and understand various aspects of the English language. The data in this sub-theme were based on participants' views (students and teaching staff) of students' language competence, level of English proficiency and self-confidence when participating in the class, and I considered their implications for engagement and English learning in the PYP. The data showed that most of the students, the PYP students and graduates, reported that they felt they were making progress in their English learning which may reflect on and be part of their self-efficacy feelings. Also, they expected to obtain high marks in the English language course as they made progress through their English learning journey in the PYP.

However, the teaching staff had a different opinion. The data showed that most of the teaching staff believed that students' English competence, particularly those who completed the PYP, was below expectations and needed to be improved. They also indicated that students struggle with English language skills, especially in writing and speaking. Another interesting point emerged from the data when students were asked about their active participation in the English class. Half of the students confirmed that they participated in English class. However, the other half stated they did not participate or had limited

participation in these classes. They attributed this to several reasons, including their low level of English and their fear of making mistakes. In addition, the level of language exposure is another point identified in the data associated with the students' linguistic competence. The data showed that many students positively responded that they had the opportunity to practise the English language in the PYP but some of the academic staff believed that the PYP students are not exposed enough to the English language outside the classroom.

The fourth main theme - Suggestions for Improvement - addressed the second research question. What are the students' and staff views about the way in which Engagement and English Language learning in the PYP Programme of the university could be improved? This theme consists of three sub-themes. Suggestions for Engagement is the first sub-theme that used data on suggestions and advice from participants that they believe could enhance PYP student engagement. Participants suggested improving student learning and engagement through various activities, for example, induction meetings, student clubs, student councils and university activities. They suggested that institutions might need to design strategies to better facilitate student transition from school to Higher Education and provide students with a welcoming environment, including information on the university and subject areas, and induction meetings. Moreover, the data indicated that the participants emphasised the importance of promoting a sense of belonging to the PYP and the university. For example, the data revealed that extra-curricular activities might be a key factor in promoting students' sense of belonging. Participants suggested that the university could consider offering more activities for them that may benefit them, asserting their positive effects on increasing a sense of belonging and learning. Kahu and Nelson (2018) state that developing various university activities could facilitate student engagement and enhancing engagement through such activities would improve academic outputs such as increasing motivation, improving skills and knowledge, and the social outcomes of a sense of belonging and competence.

The second sub-theme is suggestions and recommendations made by participants to enhance the PYP curriculum. For example, many participants suggest including materials for English for Specific Academic Purposes, introducing multi-learning levels, and improving assessment within the PYP curriculum. The third sub-theme is suggestions for pedagogy which offered procedures suggested by the participants to improve The PYP's teaching and learning practices. The data identified suggestions including improving autonomy and student linguistic competences. It was recommended that students be encouraged to set

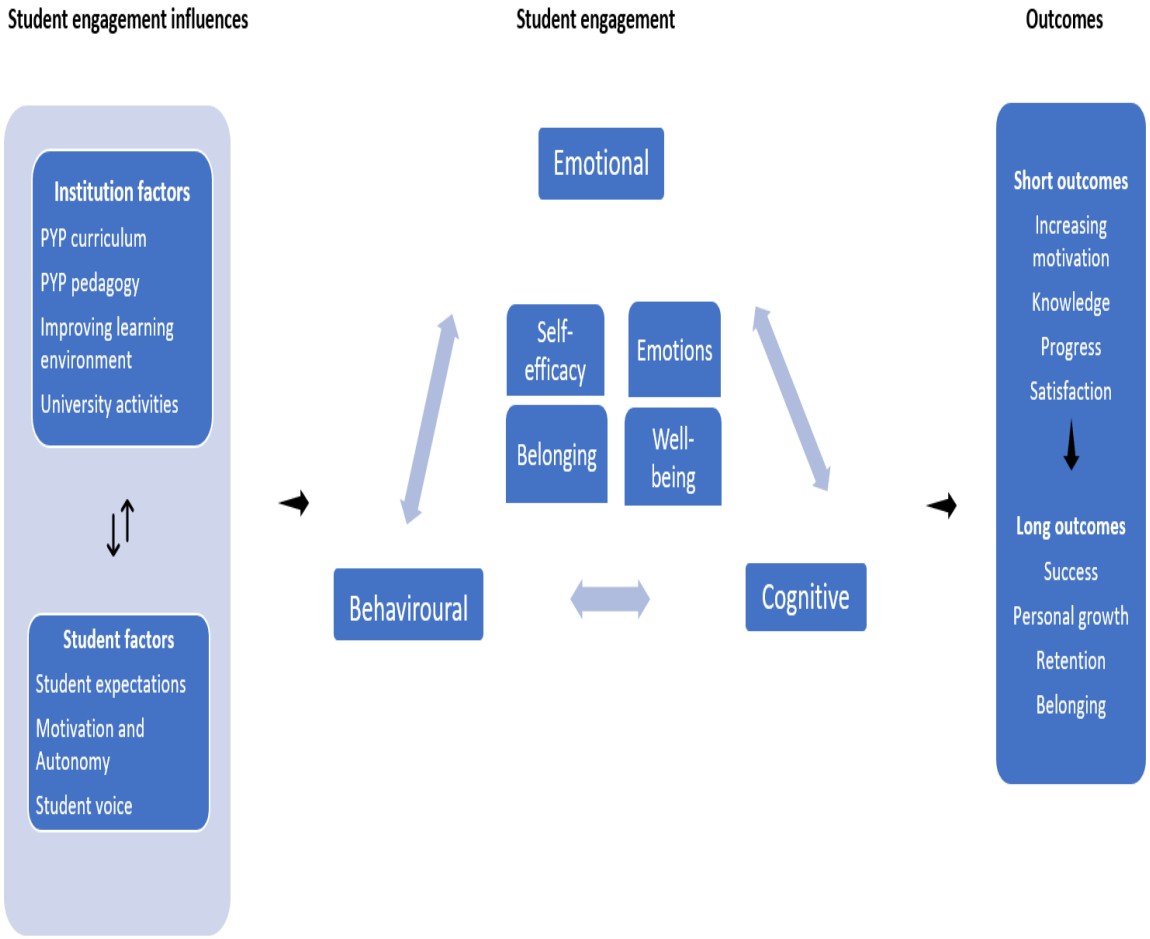
learning goals for their learning and share and discuss these goals with their teachers in a way that fosters autonomy and engagement. In addition, the participants recommended some measures to make students' linguistic competence and learning practices more accessible in the PYP by, for example, encouraging students in class participation, using various teaching practices. Having summarised ways in which my data helped answer the research questions, I will next summarise the contribution of the study.

5.4 Contribution of the study

This study is unique from other studies cited in this thesis. My study explores participants' views on student engagement in an English learning course at a Saudi University based on Kahu and Neslon's (2018) student engagement framework. The findings of my study contribute to starting to fill the gap in research on student engagement in the context of Saudi Higher Education, especially in the field of language learning and teaching. Additionally, I offer a model of student engagement in the field of English learning in Higher Education.

Based on the findings of my study and the concepts from Kahu and Nelson's engagement framework (2018), I have adapted, in figure 7 below, some elements of Kahu and Nelson's conceptual framework (2018), to show the role of the interplay between student and institutional factors in enhancing student engagement in an English learning environment, with a focus on facilitating successful English learning and teaching practices.

Figure 7: The study's model of facilitating student engagement in English learning courses in the PYP



This proposed model was initially informed by some concepts from Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement framework, for example, student engagement types and psychological structure and some of the long and short term outcomes. Then, it was built based on my study's data, and aims to add insights to facilitate student engagement in the particular context of English learning in the PYP and similar preparatory programmes. Engagement in this context is influenced by a set of factors guided by the student and the institution (for example, student engagement influences factors and some of the long and short term outcomes). The model suggests that the interaction between student and institutional factors is the main factor influencing engagement. Based on the data, the proposed model indicates that the more students are involved and engaged in their learning, the more likely engagement would occur and lead to different outcomes and enhanced behavioural and institutional factors.

The block on the left side of the proposed model suggests that, engagement influence factors, are divided into two: influences related to the institution and those related to student factors. Institutional factors consist of four influences. The first is the learning environment, which is concerned with creating an encouraging environment to support engagement. This may be achieved by providing support to students, listening to students, opening discussion with students, and by encouraging student communities and councils. Such practices may enhance the sense of belonging for students and thereby might increase student motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

The curriculum is the second influential element of the institution, which is concerned with providing a curriculum that suits the needs of students and develops their learning. The participants emphasise introducing supportive tools and materials to the English content, suggesting, for example, that English for Specific Academic Purposes could help improve their learning and so, I suggest, their self-efficacy and emotions and thus enhance their engagement. Also, the data indicated that developing and improving the curriculum, for example, improving course content, Medium of Instruction, contact hours and assessments, was important to the students. This, I argue, could increase students' academic efficacy too, as well as, a sense of belonging and well-being, thus increasing students' motivation, and interest in learning.

The next institutional factor is pedagogy. The participants suggest that teaching staff qualities (for example, English teachers' first language) might have an impact on enhancing student engagement. The data showed that supporting students, positive feedback, the experience in dealing with students, and knowledge of content were important to participants and all could serve to enhance students' confidence, emotions, and well-being and thus promote student engagement.

The student is the second component factor influencing engagement. As shown in the data, the model proposes that the student component consists of several influences that affect the student's participation. The data showed that participants suggest that students' expectations, motivation, language competence, and autonomy would help facilitate student engagement. With respect to Kahu and Nelson's (2018) student engagement framework, the proposed model suggests implications from the data that interaction between the institution and student factors would enhance student engagement. The model proposed that allowing

students to make decisions and plans for their learning may enhance engagement, and thus may increase students' academic efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being.

The second block of the proposed model comprises structures that would build and influence the three types of engagement. These engagement types and structures were informed by Kahu and Nelson's (2018) framework and consist of four structures: self-efficacy, emotions, a sense of belonging, and well-being, and three types of engagement: emotional, cognitive and behavioural. The model proposed that these three types of student engagement may occur due to the interaction between the institution and the student. For example, emotional engagement occurs by targeting factors related to positive emotions such as enthusiasm, satisfaction, and a sense of belonging. Cognitive engagement occurs when learning-related factors such as self-learning, autonomy and deep learning are encouraged. Behavioural engagement happens when factors related to enhancing attention, encouraging efforts to do a task, participation and interaction are facilitated. The model suggests, that the structures outlined above are reinforced by the interaction between institutional and student factors. For example, treating students as partners in creating content relevant to their learning interests, could enhance positive student emotions, a sense of belonging and well-being. Also, promoting students' motivation and autonomy could influence students' self-efficacy.

The last block shows the outcomes of the student engagement process. The results are divided in terms of time into direct effects, which follow the occurrence of engagement. The second type may have long-term effects and these types could also be divided in terms of form into academic and social outcomes. Direct academic outcomes are related to events that happen to the student during their learning, such as acquiring knowledge, skills, and motivation. Direct social outcomes are related to events that happen to the student's personality, perceptions and feelings through being affected by the internal environment, such as interaction, satisfaction and well-being. The long-term academic outcomes could be related to all the learning that happens to the student in a cumulative manner and as a result of direct outcomes such as success, retention and continuous learning. Long-term social outcomes could be related to all interactions with the student's surrounding environment, due to direct social outcomes such as personal growth, engagement, and continuous learning. The model suggests that the student-institution relationship needs to be encouraged to promote the culture of engagement within the institution and that it is enhanced through actions and behaviours at all levels of the institution. The model also proposes extending the engagement culture in English learning environments in Higher Education institutions by

defining institutional approaches and priorities in a clear and accessible manner and providing specific tools to ensure constant encouragement.

Finally, this model suggests the need to create an encouraging environment to improve English language learning by promoting student engagement supported by student and institutional factors, learning behaviours and practices in the PYPs. It is hoped that this model will help reinforce the role of students in developing English learning and teaching practices and promoting similar implementations and policies within institutions. Thus, this could encourage greater adoption of student engagement as a key feature of the PYPs and similar programmes in the Higher Education sector. It is also hoped that the data demonstrates some of the implications, as stated in section 4.5, to fit the proposed model with respect to what needs improving to facilitate student engagement for language learning within the PYPs and similar programmes in the Higher Education sector. The next section will summarise the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

5.5 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

Although every effort was made to make this study follow good research practice, as with any study it is acknowledged that it had some limitations. Even though I have worked in the field of learning and teaching English in the PYP in Saudi Higher Education, I attempted to conduct reasonably objective research and it was expected that the purpose of the study would help reduce any potential personal subjectivity, as the study heavily depended on exploring the opinions and perspectives of the study participants through the data collection and analysis.

As mentioned above, the focus of this study was limited in terms of studying a relatively small number of students' and teaching staff perceptions about the current provision of student engagement and English learning in the PYP. My study was not focussed on taking the opinions of the study's participants to assess the current situation of the PYP, and the extent to which its outputs are compatible with the objectives of Saudi Higher Education. My study suggests that PYP decision-makers do not directly address the challenges revealed here, and faced by students in the PYP. Although I feel that my study findings could be valuable to those interested in enhancing the current PYP in Saudi Arabia, it would be both

necessary and useful to conduct more studies that explore the challenges of the PYP and evaluate its effectiveness on students' outputs for their academic study.

This study was limited to the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020 as this was the only time when I could be in Saudi with permission to access the study site for my data collection. It would be useful for future research to be conducted over several years due to the frequent changes in the decisions and components regarding the PYP. Owing to limited time and space, this study was conducted only on the PYP main site of the institution. There are other sites of the PYP in other cities, which may differ with regard to some components and elements of the PYP. It would be useful to conduct studies to explore student engagement within those particular language learning contexts.. A further limitation of this study, is that it was limited to a small sample of PYP students and teaching staff, and within just one Saudi university. While I am not, here, suggesting I have generalisable results, it would be useful to collect data from more students and teaching staff in the PYP and colleges in different universities to explore their perspectives about the PYP and its implications. Also, collecting data from the PYP and university officials would add more sources of knowledge and understanding for future studies.

Due to cultural norms and constraints in Saudi Arabia at the time of the study, it was not possible to include a female sample. The sample was restricted to males only in exploring their perspectives about the PYP because of (at that point) Saudi society's conservative customs and traditions. Single-sex education is still applied in many regions worldwide, including Saudi Arabia, in compliance with traditions and religion. Single-sex education is operationalised through separate classes for both males and females, and separate buildings or schools, in all stages of Saudi education. Therefore, at the time of data collection, it would have taken significant time and effort to be able to access female participants and while this would have been desirable I would have needed the support of a female colleague. This is a possibility to explore in future research. However, with the rapid changes and increasing openness in Saudi society nowadays, it might become possible to include a female sample for future studies and explore perspectives from both genders, males and females, to assess their impressions of the PYP inclusively. Future immediate work could also potentially occur alongside a female colleague, who could work with female students.

Since this study is a qualitative study conducted on students in a specific context and during a certain period, it is possible to evaluate the findings of the current study on the issues that affected the experience of student engagement and its relationship to learning English in the PYP. As in many Social Science studies, this study was based on interviews as a single data source. However, Morrow (2005, p.255) recommends using multiple data sources to gain 'adequate variety in kinds of evidence'. So, it would be possible to conduct future research to investigate student engagement in Saudi Higher Education using various data sources such as observations, focus groups and field notes to achieve in-depth and rich data. This might help produce more rich data that can enhance our understanding of student engagement and its relevance to language learning, by studying them for longer periods or comparing different policies in different institutions or contexts. Additionally, I would want to focus on trying to establish more clear relationships between the issues and themes I explored, and learning outcomes and behaviours, in order to test my proposed model.

Regarding the scarcity of research on student engagement within the Saudi context, this study is the first step in exploring student engagement dimensions within Kauh and Nelson's (2018) framework. I hope this study encourages other researchers to investigate the complexity of student engagement in Saudi Higher Education. The research may need to be focused on improving student engagement by providing resources, enhancing teaching methods, and focusing on students' identities. There is also a need to conduct further research to develop the PYP curriculum in Saudi universities. The following section will outline the study's suggestion and recommendations to improve PYP learning and teaching practices.

5.6 Suggestions for the PYP improvement

Based on this study's findings and some of the measures proposed by the study participants outlined in section 4.5, I outline here some suggestions which might help stakeholders (for example, schools, university policy makers and administration) to facilitate student engagement and English learning and teaching in Saudi PYPs.

The PYP plays a significant role in guiding new students in their academic studies and their future careers and newly enrolled students view the university as a sign of optimism and the solution to a successful future (Khoshaim, 2017). In order to fulfil these goals and expectations and identify the best ways to give students a satisfying transition experience

that considers their academic, social, and future needs, Alfehaid (2017), recommends that much more attention needs to be given to meeting students' academic and social expectations and needs to ensure quality and long-term learning.

Unfulfilled expectations can create responses that negatively influence students' emotions and sense of belonging, which represents here the connection between the student and the institution, and may cause student retention issues with feelings of isolation and alienation. In such situations, dissatisfaction may result if expectations are not met in the learning situation. Accordingly, for effective engagement, students need to be made fully aware of the programme of study before joining the PYP including the outcomes required, the possible challenges they might expect, and the requirements for success in the PYP. These were the most frequently reported issues in my data that may hinder the students' four psychosocial factors from engagement.

Student expectations may help build positive relationships with the institution (Hassel and Ridout, 2018). However, the gap between students' expectations and the reality of university life is usually neglected at this critical stage of student's academic life (Alfehaid, 2017). Accordingly, recognising students' expectations and raising the students' awareness of learning and teaching practices, and the reality of university life may be crucial factors in the first year. Failure to meet those expectations can create emotional reactions that may negatively affect the student and the institution's relationship and contribute to student failure (Hassel & Ridout, 2018). Therefore, before they enter Higher Education life, students may need to be fully aware of the academic programmes, the university reality, the challenges, and the success requirements.

Alghamdi (2015) suggests several measures and recommendations to meet students' expectations and satisfaction in the PYP. These actions include supporting student academic advising services, performing an annual review of the PYP based on students' perspectives, including student satisfaction, and creating and delivering essential academic and non-academic student services. A study by Alhojailan (2020), used critical discourse analysis to analyse 'About Us' sections of seven Saudi universities' websites to examine the language and information used for marketing purposes. Alhojailan's (2020) findings, showed that universities need to use more logical strategies for marketing. He recommends the importance of having an interactive dialogue that clarifies the university's attempts to enhance a good partnership with potential students. Also, he suggests that universities need

to pay attention to the impact of their presence on the Internet through their websites. Based on Alhojailan's (2020) study, it can be suggested that making more efforts to improve the university web page may include a great opportunity to provide more information about the university, the PYP and the academic disciplines. Focusing on the university's history, the most distinguished alumni, important events at the university, and its activities there could also be important information about the PYP and future academic studies, which may improve new students' expectations and thus their engagement.

For student engagement, it may be suggested that staff in the PYPs should encourage students to use self-learning and autonomous learning strategies to promote student engagement. Javed (2018) suggests that learners should be allowed to reflect on their learning process, evaluate their progress, and make their own decisions regarding learning. Javed's study also pointed out that encouraging cooperation and interaction between students and their peers and strengthening relations between students and teachers may increase belonging and student engagement. Students should be encouraged to interact and work with each other to accomplish specific tasks, which is important for improving their learning and engagement. Moreover, Javed's findings indicated that enhancing learner autonomy would raise awareness among students and help them to acquire experiences and skills that could help them succeed in their academic and social lives.

I also suggest that, based on participants' perspectives, promoting engagement could help increase students' self-confidence which, in turn, might help them on the PYP but, also, later in various aspects of their lives. Also, the participants felt that enhancing student engagement might lead to several short and long-term academic and social outcomes. For example, academic outcomes include increasing motivation, improving learning strategies and increasing a sense of belonging and wellbeing. For social outcomes, maintaining student retention, developing lifelong learning and improving personal growth.

For English learning and teaching, the study participants suggest that the PYPs might need to improve the curriculum by introducing materials for English for Specific Academic Purposes . Also, they recommended adding multiple learning levels and different learning paths based on students' learning preferences which would help in achieving the learning purposes of the PYP. Developing assessment methods in the PYP is another demanding point raised by the participants. In addition, to develop the Science content in the PYP,

Othman (2021) makes several recommendations, including first evaluating low-quality courses to determine the reasons for their low quality. Second, is the necessity of taking students' and teaching staff assessments of the course content to determine the aspects students most need. Finally, is to develop a plan to engage students and teaching staff to work together with decision-makers in designing and evaluating the content of the courses in the PYP. Some of my study's participants asked for the same above-mentioned suggestions to improve the Science content in the PYP.

Some measures suggested are directed at the PYP administration. I recommend that the PYP administration review the contact hours of English language classes and work towards more appropriate and so reduced weekly contact hours. Some of the study participants believe that the long contact hours of the English classes, negatively affect the other subjects, and participants felt that the PYP administration might need to re-consider teacher retention and recruitment and to employ better qualified professionals. Reducing large class size is a further measure suggested by participants that might need to be considered in the PYP. Improving the current learning and teaching settings in Saudi Arabia may need specific measures to be considered, including promoting student engagement, encouraging various more communicative less teacher-centred teaching methodologies, and listening to students' voices. In the final section of this thesis I will briefly summarise my personal reflection on my PhD journey.

5.7 Personal reflection

I will conclude my thesis with a reflection on my PhD journey. From the beginning, I aimed to maintain my research plan and stick to it. This provided a time-frame that helped me structure my thesis, meet essential research requirements, and maintain good research practice. Also, I was always discussing my progress plan with my supervisors to determine my goals for my research project. They always showed their full support and encouraged me to meet my research needs and requirements. This helped me keep my research on track.

Starting my PhD was a huge step for me as it is very different from studying for a Master's degree, which entails intensive study through a series of taught lectures and a final dissertation research assignment that typically takes three to four months to complete. By contrast, a PhD is a three year plus commitment to independent research to produce

significant written work that contributes new knowledge to a specific research area. I spent the first six months of my PhD journey outlining the background of the research context and figuring out where and how I could start my research. I call this time the disorientation period. I worked hard on readings to analyse and critique previous studies on student engagement and student voice in Higher Education, especially in language learning contexts. I also read about motivation and some motivation theories, especially, Self-Determination Theory and Social Learning Theory. I was able to follow the literature to develop my research questions. Although my initial difficulty was searching the literature, I was able to read, analyse and critique different academic articles and studies on student engagement in Higher Education, which I used as the main focus of my research. I was able to find and formulate a theoretical framework and a preliminary contextual framework based on the theories mentioned above.

Since I started my PhD journey, I have gained various benefits, including research skills, personal growth experiences, academic knowledge and problem-solving, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Although with all the difficulties we all faced during the time of the pandemic, I strongly believed that my research would continue to go smoothly. With all the advice and support I always receive from my supervisory team, I was confident that I would complete it on time. However, due to these unprecedented pandemic times, and like many people, I had some difficulties focusing on my studies. I also suffered from low productivity, and there are many reasons for that. Firstly, I had a medical condition, and it took me up to two months to fully recover. The second was a family issue, as we were student parents with children. We were struggling to take care of our children and take care of our studies simultaneously during the lockdown. Third, as an international student studying abroad, I returned to, and from my home country, to my study site within six months, and this was preceded by preparing to travel and obtaining permission from local authorities to travel abroad due to travel restrictions.

After arriving at my study site, we were placed in quarantine for 14 days. We aimed to prepare the children to settle down and go back to school after a very long time in lockdown and away from school. As I was preparing to resume my studies, school closure and lockdown was back again as the local Government announced the new restrictions. The closure of schools and online learning from home has made it even worse for us as parents and postgraduate students. All these events with my parental responsibilities led to a great change in my lifestyle and being more flexible about the hours and location of my study.

Clearly, I had to find what was the best fit for my everyday research and writing to remain productive, and ultimately meet my deadlines. All this could not have happened without the support and encouragement of equally flexible and open-minded supervisors.

My PhD has been a comprehensive journey. The different challenges and experiences I had, encouraged me to think about my PhD differently from when I started. I learned that it is possible to be anxious about failure and success. I also learned that completing a PhD is not an impossible task, but it takes a lot of effort and patience at all levels. Yet, I have learned that as a beginner researcher, I am not expected to know everything and be able to do everything. The PhD is about allowing and teaching us to become researchers.

Studying the PhD allowed me to be open to highs and lows, responding to challenges, seeking support, helping others, reading, thinking critically and writing, all part of my learning journey. I have learned a very important lesson: when all of this works well, I will still not be a fully informed researcher. However, I hope that the experience means that I am better prepared to move on and proceed with my learning, navigate the challenges, and take opportunities ahead, and contribute to the service of knowledge and the world but, especially, to helping my student become more engaged in their learning and studies.

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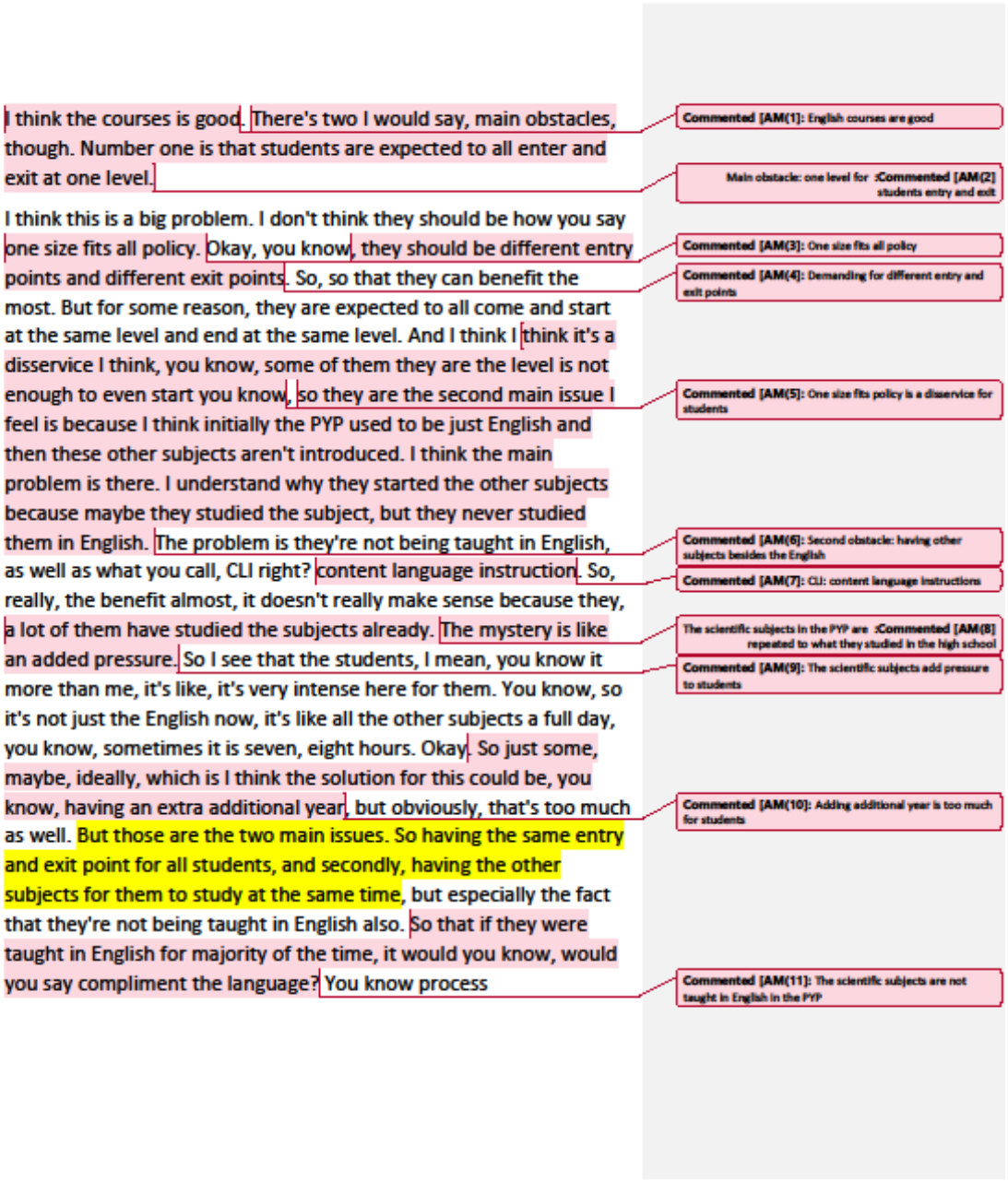
Appendices

Appendix 1: The coding process



Appendix 2: Examples of the study's codebook							
Code groups	**Prior expectations**	**What students discovered**	**English curriculum and pedagogy**	**Science subject's curriculum and pedagogy**	**Prior English learning experience**	**Teacher quality/character in class**	**Learning purpose**
Description	Related to students' knowledge and expectations about the PYP before they joined it	Related to what students realised about the PYP after they joined it	Related to English curriculum in terms of usefulness, authenticity, relevance, quality, depth and challenging for their future studies	Related to Science subject's curriculum in terms of usefulness, authenticity, relevance, quality, depth and challenging for their future studies	Related to students' previous English learning experience before the PYP	Related students' view about teaching staff in the class and during class time	Related to students' English learning purposes, where participants state their reason for learning English in the PYP

Codes	• Challenging • using EMI • source of information/knowledge • multitrack (streams)	• PYP isn't challenging • same Sci content as secondary school • Using EMI • using EMI is challenging • heavy content w/ no benefit • workload pressure	• different textbook • simple and clear content • no entry and exit points • No ESP • English contact hours • Teaching methods in English class • atmosphere in E class	• repetitive content from school • level of difficulty • Using EMI is challenging • No ESP • variety/no variety in teaching methods • Delivery in lecture form • atmosphere in Sci class	• English learning years • Differences in teaching methods between school and the PYP	• mentor/not mentor • interactive • supportive • variety of teaching style • bias to support low level students • provides positive feedback • encourages students participation • encourages collaborative learning	• personal desire • study purposes

			• English teacher interaction in class • English teacher's L1 • student preference about teacher's L1 • assessment				

Appendix 3: Using Microsoft Excel in the coding process

		what do ypu know about the PYP	years of learning E	
PYP students	no	was expected	total	actual
PYP_student_1		challenging staff not supportive	seven	four
PYP_student_2		using EMI a bridge to futuer studies	8	two
PYP_student_3		same school Sci content	fourteen	
PYP_student_4		using EMI	7	4
PYP_student_5		using EMI=challenging	7	
PYP_student_6		uni opens all day	7	
		3 Ss= using EMI 1 Ss=PYP is challenging	4 Ss= 7 years 2 Ss= more 7	

Appendix 4: The ethical approval for this study

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

14 October 2019

Dear Abduleelah Mohammed

Project Title: Investigating Students' Attitudes, Experiences and Engagement on an English Language Programme in the Preparatory Year at a Saudi University.

Application No: 400190012

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Project end date: _ 30/09/2022
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_227599_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used: http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

Muir Houston, Senior Lecturer
College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer
Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education Research
University of Glasgow
School of Education, St Andrew's Building, 11 Eldon Street
Glasgow G3 6NH
0044+141-330-4699
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Appendix 4.1: Plain language statement for the PYP students

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Abduleelah Mohammed and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. For my PhD studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of this project is:

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

This research is supervised by Prof Nicki Hedge at the University of Glasgow (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid of the University of Glasgow (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation

I would like invite you to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate, you it is important you understand why this research is being conducted and what it will entail. Please read the following information carefully and, if desired, discuss it with me. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about anything. Please contact me if you require any additional information. Please take your time deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the year one preparatory English Language course at the University being investigated to provide suggestions to improve/enhance learning and teaching on that English Language course.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are a student in the Preparatory Year Programme at the University being investigated.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part as participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

With your permission, I would like to interview you for approximately 20-40 minutes and make an audio recording of the interview. This will be done with your permission. The interview will be conducted in person face to face at a mutually suitable time during the experimental period, or by phone or Skype if this is not possible. The interview will be conducted in Arabic. This interview's data will be used in my PhD thesis, as well as any publications that result from it. When the research is completed, you will be able to read my thesis.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The data will be gathered, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. I will also keep your consent and the recording of the interview itself for 10 years following the completion of the study, as required by the University of Glasgow guidelines. All data will be stored as digital files on a password-protected and encrypted drive, with secure cloud backup using the University of Glasgow's storage system. Removal will be through a secure data removal programme.

Please note that confidentiality guarantees will be strictly followed unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is discovered. The University may be required to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies in such cases.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data from this interview will be used in my doctoral thesis and may be used in any publications arising from it. You will be able to read my thesis when the research is completed.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted for my doctoral thesis through the University of Glasgow and my study is funded by Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, London, UK.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been considered and approved by the Social Sciences/School of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, UK.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or for further information about this study, please contact me Mr Abduleelah Mohammed (a.mohammed.2@research.gla.ac.uk) or my supervisors Prof Nicki Hedge (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 4.2: Plain language statement for colleges students

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Abduleelah Mohammed and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. For my PhD studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of this project is:

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

This research is supervised by Prof Nicki Hedge at the University of Glasgow (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid of the University of Glasgow (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation

I would like invite you to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate, you it is important you understand why this research is being conducted and what it will entail. Please read the following information carefully and, if desired, discuss it with me. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about anything. Please contact me if you require any additional information. Please take your time deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the year one preparatory English Language course at the University being investigated to provide suggestions to improve/enhance learning and teaching on that English Language course.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are successfully completed the Preparatory Year Programme at the University being investigated.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part as participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

With your permission, I would like to interview you for approximately 20-40 minutes and make an audio recording of the interview. This will be done with your permission. The interview will be conducted in person face to face at a mutually suitable time during the experimental period, or by phone or Skype if this is not possible. The interview will be conducted in Arabic. This interview's data will be used in my PhD thesis, as well as any publications that result from it. When the research is completed, you will be able to read my thesis.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The data will be gathered, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. I will also keep your consent and the recording of the interview itself for 10 years following the completion of the study, as required by the University of Glasgow guidelines. All data will be stored as digital files on a password-protected and encrypted drive, with secure cloud backup using the University of Glasgow's storage system. Removal will be through a secure data removal programme.

Please note that confidentiality guarantees will be strictly followed unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is discovered. The University may be required to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies in such cases.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data from this interview will be used in my doctoral thesis and may be used in any publications arising from it. You will be able to read my thesis when the research is completed.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted for my doctoral thesis through the University of Glasgow and my study is funded by Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, London, UK

10. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been considered and approved by the Social Sciences/School of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, UK.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or for further information about this study, please contact me Mr Abduleelah Mohammed (a.mohammed.2@research.gla.ac.uk) or my supervisors Prof Nicki Hedge (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 4.3: Plain language statement for the ELC teaching staff

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Abduleelah Mohammed and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. For my PhD studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of this project is:

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

This research is supervised by Prof Nicki Hedge, University of Glasgow (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid, University of Glasgow (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation

I would like invite you to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate, you it is important you understand why this research is being conducted and what it will entail. Please read the following information carefully and, if desired, discuss it with me. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about anything. Please contact me if you require any additional information. Please take your time deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the year one preparatory English Language course at the University being

investigated to provide suggestions to improve/enhance learning and teaching on that English Language course.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are an instructor in the English Language Centre at the University being investigated.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part as participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

With your permission, I would like to interview you for approximately 20-40 minutes and make an audio recording of the interview. This will be done with your permission. The interview will be conducted in person face to face at a mutually suitable time during the experimental period, or by phone or Skype if this is not possible. The interview will be in Arabic or English upon your choice. This interview's data will be used in my PhD thesis, as well as any publications that result from it. When my research is completed, you will be able to read my thesis.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The data will be gathered, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. I will also keep your consent and the recording of the interview itself for 10 years following the completion of the study, as required by the University of Glasgow guidelines. All data will be stored as digital files on a password-protected and encrypted drive, with secure cloud backup using the University of Glasgow's storage system. Removal will be through a secure data removal programme.

Please note that confidentiality guarantees will be strictly followed unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is discovered. The University may be required to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies in such cases.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data from this interview will be used in my doctoral thesis and may be used in any publications arising from it. You will be able to read my thesis when the research is completed.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted for my doctoral thesis through the University of Glasgow and my study is funded by Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, London, UK

10. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been considered and approved by the Social Sciences/School of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, UK.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or for further information about this study, please contact me Mr Abduleelah Mohammed (a.mohammed.2@research.gla.ac.uk) or my supervisors Prof Nicki Hedge (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 4.4: Plain language statement for colleges teaching staff

Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

My name is Abduleelah Mohammed and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. For my PhD studies I am carrying out a research project. The title of this project is:

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

This research is supervised by Prof Nicki Hedge, University of Glasgow (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid, University of Glasgow (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2. Invitation

I would like invite you to participate in this research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate, you it is important you understand why this research is being conducted and what it will entail. Please read the following information carefully and, if desired, discuss it with me. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about anything. Please contact me if you require any additional information. Please take your time deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the year one preparatory English Language course at the University being

investigated to provide suggestions to improve/enhance learning and teaching on that English Language course.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are an instructor in the subject area at the University being investigated.

5. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part as participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

With your permission, I would like to interview you for approximately 20-40 minutes and make an audio recording of the interview. This will be done with your permission. The interview will be conducted in person face to face at a mutually suitable time during the experimental period, or by phone or Skype if this is not possible. The interview will be in Arabic or English upon your choice. This interview's data will be used in my PhD thesis, as well as any publications that result from it. When my research is completed, you will be able to read my thesis.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

The data will be gathered, and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. I will also keep your consent and the recording of the interview itself for 10 years following the completion of the study, as required by the University of Glasgow guidelines. All data will be stored as digital files on a password-protected and encrypted drive, with secure cloud backup using the University of Glasgow's storage system. Removal will be through a secure data removal programme.

Please note that confidentiality guarantees will be strictly followed unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is discovered. The University may be required to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies in such cases.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The data from this interview will be used in my doctoral thesis and may be used in any publications arising from it. You will be able to read my thesis when the research is completed.

9. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted for my doctoral thesis through the University of Glasgow and my study is funded by Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, London, UK

10. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been considered and approved by the Social Sciences/School of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, UK.

11. Contact for Further Information

If you have any questions or for further information about this study, please contact me Mr Abduleelah Mohammed (a.mohammed.2@research.gla.ac.uk) or my supervisors Prof Nicki Hedge (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and Dr Carole MacDiarmid (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk).

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix 4.5: The consent form for students

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Student Consent Form

Title of Project

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

Name of Researcher: Abduleelah Mohammed

Please read the information on this form and the plain language statement. You will have the chance to ask any questions and you will be asked to sign your consent and confirm that you have read these documents before the interview begins and to confirm that you are willing to volunteer for this study.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I hereby consent to the interview being audio-taped and that my verbal consent to participation will be recorded at the start of the interview.

4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Confidentiality/anonymity

I acknowledge that all participants will be referred to by a code, where only the researcher will know which names match which code.

Data usage and storage

- The material will always be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage.
- The material will be destroyed 10 years after the project is complete.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

CONSENT (given verbally before the interview commences)

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Appendix 4.6: The consent form for teaching staff

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Academic Staff Consent Form

Title of Project

Investigating Student Engagement through English Learning in a Saudi University Preparatory Year Programme

Name of Researcher: Abduleelah Mohammed

Please read the information on this form and the plain language statement. You will have the chance to ask any questions and you will be asked to sign your consent and confirm that you have read these documents before the interview begins and to confirm that you are willing to volunteer for this study.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I hereby consent to the interview being audio-taped and that my verbal consent to participation will be recorded at the start of the interview.

4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Confidentiality/anonymity

I acknowledge that all participants will be referred to by a code, where only the researcher will know which names match which code.

Data usage and storage

- The material will always be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage.
- The material will be destroyed 10 years after the project is complete.
- I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

CONSENT (given verbally before the interview commences)

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Appendix 4.7: Academic staff interviews

Demographic questions

1. How long you have been teaching your subject? 5-10 / 10-15 / over 15
2. Is English your first language?

Theme 3: Perceptions of the academic staff about learning English in the PYP

3.1 academic staff in the English Language Centre

1. What is your opinion of the English course in the PYP? Is it appropriate for the students' level?
   →Tell me about the English course- how do the students find it?
2. How are the students placed- what do you think of that system?
3. What do you think about the content in the English course? Should it be should be content of English for specific purposes?
4. How do feel about the PYP students? Are they equipped with the necessary skills for their academic studies?

3.2 academic staff in the Colleges

1. What subject do you teach?
2. What is your opinion of your subject that is taught in the PYP in terms of students' performance in your classes?
3. What do you think about your subject being taught in English in the PYP? Is it appropriate for the students?
4. What do you think about the content in the English course? Should it be a related subject content?
5. How do feel about the PYP students? Are they equipped with the necessary skills for their academic studies?

What suggestions/recommendations would you make or add?

End of the interview

Appendix 4.8: The PYP student interviews

Demographic questions

How old are you?

How long have you been studying English? ……years

What is your preferred/current university discipline?

Theme 1: Expectations and perceptions about learning English in the PYP

Why are you learning English?

What did you know about the programme before studying at the PYP?

What did you think about it?

Tell me about the PYP

How would you describe your English learning experience so far in the PYP? /How do you feel about the programme?

Do you have anything to add before we move to the next point?

Them 2: How learning and teaching English for academic purposes in the PYP could be improved? /Find out about their learning experiences. From students' perspective

2.1 the content of the English course

Tell me about the programme/course/ a typical week/day/lesson

What do you do/sorts of things do you study?

How would you describe the content of the English course?

Tell me about your future studies? What will that involve/what do you know about them?

Do you think the English course will be useful to your future academic studies? → In what ways is PYP connected to your future studies/ what do you learn (this is useful for your future studies?)

How would you describe your English class? How do the lessons make you feel – what words would you use to describe them (Interesting? Boring?) Why?

How Do you find that English class helped you to understand the other subjects that taught in English? Why?

What topics/subjects do you study in the English class? (have you any suggestions about the content?)

What would you change, if anything from the PYP? Did you wish that you were able to study English in the PYP with specific topics related to your current academic studies? Do/did you prefer that subject related tracks?

2.2 the content of the other subjects that taught in English

How would you describe the content of the other subjects that taught in English in the PYP?

Would you describe the content of the other subjects as it was useful for your current academic studies?

How would you describe the other subjects' classes? Interesting? Boring? Why?

2.3 English teaching practices in the PYP

Do/did you have a native or non-native English instructor?

How do/did you find your English instructor in terms of supporting you in improving your English skills? Please explain?

Tell me about your lessons/what activities do you do? Who speaks/who do you speak to? What helps? (or not) Does your English instructor encourage you to interact, cooperate and share information and thoughts with your colleagues?

Tell me about the ways your teacher teachers…..Does/did your English instructor use different teaching methods? (for example, co-operative learning, role play, discussion …)

When do you get feedback- what sort of feedback to you get; what do you find helpful?

Tell me about the content of other subjects- (easy/difficult to follow?) Are/Were you able to understand the content of the other subjects that taught in English? Can you explain?

Theme 4: The relationship between students' attitudes towards learning English and their engagement in the classroom

4.1 autonomy and the capacity to learn independently

What is your goal of learning English?

Tell me about why you are you studying English at the PYP? Is it only because it is important to pass English exams and graduate from the PYP?

Tell me about your feeling as you are learning English in the PYP? Are enjoying learning English in the PYP this semester?

Would you like to continue to learn English even after you successfully pass this PYP?

Would you learn English even if it is not required in the college/university?

4.2 competence

Do you feel you are making progress in English?

Do you believe you will receive good grades in English?

Do you feel you are participating enough in discussions that take place in the English class?

Do you feel confident when you speak in English in the English class?

Do you feel more tense and nervous in the English class than in any other classes the PYP?

4.3 a sense of belonging to the class/university

Does your instructor give you the opportunity to involve in classroom discussions?

Does your instructor give you the opportunity to suggest other class rules?

Do you feel your instructor in the class is a facilitator of learning rather than the controller of the class?

Does the university allow you to give ideas about your learning and to be involved in planning and delivering the courses?

4.4 a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline

Did you have the chance to have some information about your future discipline?

After successfully passing the PYP, do you think you will have enough academic skills for your future discipline?

What do you need to be well prepared for your future discipline?

What suggestions/recommendations would you make?

End of the interview

Appendix 4.9: The PYP graduates interviews

Demographic questions

1. How old are you?
2. How long have you been studying English? ……years
3. What is your preferred/current university discipline?

Theme 1: Expectations and perceptions about learning English in the PYP

1. What was your perception about the PYP before your enrollment?
2. Tell me about what you learned on the PYP?
3. How does it help you now?
4. How would you describe your English learning experience in the PYP?

Them 2: How learning and teaching English for academic purposes in the PYP could be improved? /Find out about their learning experiences. From students' perspective

2.1 the content of the English course

1. Tell me about the programme/course/ a typical week/day/lesson
2. What do you do/sorts of things do you study?
3. How would you describe the content of the English course?
4. Tell me about your current studies? What will that involve/what do you know about them?
5. Do you think the English course was useful to your current academic studies? → In what ways is PYP connected to your current studies/ what did you learn (this is useful for your current studies?)
6. How would you describe your English class? How did the lessons make you feel – what words would you use to describe them (Interesting? Boring?) Why?
7. How did you find that English class helped you to understand the other subjects that taught in English? Why?
8. What topics/subjects did you study in the English class? (have you any suggestions about the content?)
9. What would you change, if anything from the PYP? Did you wish that you were able to study English in the PYP with specific topics related to your current academic studies?
10. Do/did you prefer that subject related tracks?

2.2 the content of the other subjects that taught in English

1. How would you describe the content of the other subjects that taught in English in the PYP?
2. Would you describe the content of the other subjects as it was useful for your current academic studies?
3. How would you describe the other subjects' classes? Interesting? Boring? Why?

2.3 English teaching practices in the PYP

1. Did you have a native or non-native English instructor?
2. How did you find your English instructor in terms of supporting you in improving your English skills? Please explain?
3. Tell me about your lessons/what activities did you do? Who speaks/who did you speak to? What helps? (or not) Did your English instructor encourage you to interact, cooperate and share information and thoughts with your colleagues?
4. Tell me about the ways your teacher teachers…..Did your English instructor use different teaching methods? (for example, co-operative learning, role play, discussion …)
5. When did you get feedback- what sort of feedback to you get; what did you find helpful?
6. Tell me about the content of other subjects- (easy/difficult to follow?) Were you able to understand the content of the other subjects that taught in English? Can you explain?

Theme 4: The relationship between students' attitudes towards learning English and their engagement in the classroom

4.1 autonomy and the capacity to learn independently

1. What was your goal of learning English?
2. Tell me about why you were you studying English at the PYP? was it only because it was important to pass English exams and graduate from the PYP?
3. Tell me about your feeling as you were learning English in the PYP? Were you enjoying learning English in the PYP last year?
4. Would you like to continue to learn English even after you successfully passed the PYP?
5. Would you learn English even if it is not required in the college/university?

4.2 competence

1. Did you feel you were making progress in English?
2. Did you believe you will receive good grades in English?
3. Did you feel you were participating enough in discussions that take place in the English class?
4. Did you feel confident when you speak in English in the English class?
5. Did you feel more tense and nervous in the English class than in any other classes the PYP?

1.3 a sense of belonging to the class/university

1. Did your instructor give you the opportunity to involve in classroom discussions?
2. Did your instructor give you the opportunity to suggest other class rules?
3. Did you feel your instructor in the class is a facilitator of learning rather than the controller of the class?
4. Does the university allow you to give ideas about your learning and to be involved in planning and delivering the courses?

4.4 a sense of belonging to/identification with their future academic subject area/discipline

1. Did you have the chance to have some information about your future discipline?
2. After successfully passing the PYP, do you think you have enough academic skills for your current discipline?
3. What do you need to be well prepared for your current discipline?

What suggestions/recommendations would you make or add?

End of the interview

Appendix 5: Copyright permission to use Kahu and Nelson's (2018) Student Engagement diagram

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Copyright Permission Requesting Letter

21st July 2021

Dear Dr Kahu and Professor Nelson,

My name is Abduleelah Mohammed, and I am a PhD student at the School of Education, University of Glasgow, UK. For my doctoral studies, I am carrying out a research project entitled: ***"Investigating Students' Attitudes, Experiences and Engagement on an English Language Programme in the Preparatory year at a Saudi University"***.

This research is supervised by **Prof Nicki Hedge** (Nicki.Hedge@glasgow.ac.uk) and **Dr Carole MacDiarmid**, both of the University of Glasgow (Carole.MacDiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk). This study aims to investigate the views of students and academic staff about the current provision in the year one preparatory English Language course at a university-level to provide suggestions to improve/enhance learning and teaching on that English Language course. The main scope of the research is Student Engagement, and I am using the conceptual framework diagram on student engagement you developed as the main theoretical framework for my research.

I am writing to request permission to scan the diagram of the original and the refined version of Kahu's (2013) Conceptual Framework of Student Engagement. This appears in the article entitled ***"Student engagement in the educational interface: understanding the mechanisms of student success,"*** published in the Higher Education Research & Development journal on pages 58-71 in the Taylor and Francis Online 2018 issue.

As a researcher, I would like to include the diagram mentioned above in my PhD thesis, which will be submitted as a doctoral degree requirement. The University of Glasgow will post the thesis on their intranet webpage after the degree is granted. A full acknowledgement will be included in the thesis.

If you agree to provide me with permission, I would be very grateful if you would sign below.

Name: Ella Kahu

Signature:

Date: 22nd July 2021

I appreciate your consideration of my permission request.

Yours sincerely

Abduleelah Mohammed
Postgraduate Researcher
School of Education, Glasgow University, UK
a.mohammed.2@research.gla.ac.uk