Attitudes of Saudi Foundation Year Students towards Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Over recent decades, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), in view of the growing importance of English as a lingua franca within the globalised knowledge economy (Kirkpatrick and Barnawi, 2017), has invested heavily in EFL provision and reforms within the KSA educational settings to enable Saudi citizens to participate effectively in the global workplace and society (Mitchell and Alfurai, 2016). However, despite this investment on the part of the government, literature suggests that the reforms have not been as successful as envisioned, with a possible constraint being the attitudes of the Saudi EFL learners towards learning English (Alrabai, 2016). Against this backdrop, this study sought to examine the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners within a tertiary setting at a leading university in the KSA, with a view to understanding the role of student attitudes in the effectiveness of EFL learning. A phenomenological approach was adopted to inquire into the Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English, and data was collected over the course of an academic year through interviews, diaries and narratives from 30 students at a Saudi university. Some of the prominent findings in this study include support for the earlier research suggesting the instrumental nature of Arab EFL language learner motivation and the identification of a number of factors of influence ranging from family obligations and/or pressure, financial implications as well as higher education achievements and travel/study abroad upon EFL learning in the KSA context. The resulting insights are expected to assist policymakers, educational managers, teachers and students in understanding the centrality of language learner attitudes to effective EFL learning and to respectively serve as a point of reference for future policies, pedagogical decision-making, classroom practices and student learning processes in the KSA tertiary context.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

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Chapter 1.   Introduction

Over the decades, the learning of English as a second or foreign language has gained prominence as the means whereby countries that seek admittance to the comity of developed nations may achieve economic progress and modernisation, and Saudi Arabia has proved to be no exception to this trend. Indeed, the growing emphasis in policy and practice upon the study of English in the Middle East and North African regions (MENA), as in other international contexts, can be traced back to the fact that 'English [has come to represent] an essential element in the spread of political, social and educational norms [and] economic globalisation' (Kirkpatrick and Barnawi, 2017, p.2). According to Chowdhury and Phan, it is in this connection that:

> 'English has often been marketed as one of the most appealing elements and a must tick of the internationalisation of higher education that would earn a nation competitive advantage and modernisation as well as bring about jobs, status, knowledge, and access' (Chowdhury and Phan, 2014, p.8).

Consistent with other Arab countries within the Gulf region, the perceived benefits of learning English have compelled the government in Saudi Arabia to 'internationalise' its higher education sector by deploying 'English as the medium of instruction (EMI)', with the larger aim being the desire to empower Saudi citizens in developing the skills for effective participation in the international economy (Phan and Barnawi, 2015, p.2). Hence, as Hopkyns (2015, p.7) argues, the status of English has transformed from being just one language amongst many to being the means whereby technological advancement, a key characteristic and prerequisite for participation in the globalised world and workplace, may be attained. Having established the backdrop for understanding the value placed upon English in KSA, the next section looks at the theoretical framework adopted in the study reported in this thesis.

1.1   Statement of the problem or 'gap' in the research

In view of the impetus provided by globalisation and attendant recognition of proficiency in English, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has sought to implement economic reforms 'through a range of Saudisation initiatives to increase national participation in the private sector' and diversification of its petroleum-dominated economy (Mitchell and Alfuraih, 2014, p.317). Mitchell and Alfuraih also highlight that the transformation of the existing pedagogies including emphasis on science, technology and engineering subjects and

proficiency in the English language is at the core of the reforms undertaken by the KSA government, as it seeks to prepare Saudi citizens for participation in the world economy by training them to think creatively and critically. KSA has invested heavily in English language teaching and curricular reforms, according to Mitchell and Alfurai (2016, p.96), with this being particularly the case within 'higher education in order to produce communicatively competent users of English' (Alhawsawi, 2013, p.96). However, these initiatives have not always been met with success, and the learning of English remains characterised by low attainment amongst Saudi EFL learners at schools as well as universities (Al-Johani, 2009; Fareh, 2010; Khan, 2011; Alrasidi and Phan, 2015).

Given the importance of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning for Saudi learners and citizens, as illustrated in the discussion above, researchers have turned their attention to the possibility of a link between language learner attitude and effective EFL learning. For instance, in their analysis of research on attitude and second language learning, Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011, p.994) found that attitude provides not only the momentum for the initiation of learning a second language, but also the 'driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process'. They observe that if 'attitude' is overlooked, the learning of a second language is likely to be a process fraught with challenges for the L2 learner.

Considerable research has been carried out on Saudi student attitudes towards EFL. Examples include exploring language learner attitudes in connection to commitment towards EFL (Alkaabi, 2016) and student attitudes at tertiary institutions in the English for Specific Purposes (Al Makrami, 2010) context, motivation of Saudi female university students (Al Resheedi, 2014) as well as at Saudi EFL learner attitudes at vocational institutes (Altasan, 2016). A study with many parallels to this one was conducted by Alhawsawi (2013), examining, while making use of an interpretive approach, the experiences of Saudi EFL learners participating in an English preparatory programme at university. However, as the discussion to follow illustrates, the work of Alhawsawi differed in many significant aspects from my investigation.

In a way, this study extends the research undertaken in the area of Saudi EFL learner attitudes towards learning English. Where it breaks new ground is clearly identifiable with reference to an analysis of the varying foci of prominent studies conducted in this area. For instance, while Alkaabi (2016), Al Makrami (2010), Al Resheedi (2014) and Altasan (2016) all looked at Saudi EFL learner motivation and attitudes towards learning English, the researchers

focused respectively on learner commitment towards EFL, EFL learning in the ESP context, motivation of female Saudi EFL learners, and motivation and attitudes of Saudi EFL learners in vocational institutions. On the other hand, the current study sought a more comprehensive examination of Saudi EFL language learner attitudes towards English that inquired into the perceptions and experiences of male and female university learners enrolled in the foundation year English programme. This meant that broader conclusions about male and female Saudis could be drawn based on the findings of the study than from inquiring solely into the motivation of either male or female learners.

Further, given the focus of the KSA government on improving the EFL proficiency of the workforce in training to ensure a 'competitive advantage' (Chowdhury and Phan, 2014, p.8) in the globalised economy, a need was felt to gain not only a snapshot view of learner attitudes but also to see how these were transformed through the experience of studying EFL at university. Thus, the fact my study was longitudinal, taking into account university EFL learner attitudes at the beginning and then the close of the academic year, distinguished it from similar research conducted within the same context. For instance, the study by Altasan (2016) only collected data from students who had completed their foundation year programme, thereby failing to provide insights into whether attitude shifts had been experienced over the passage of the foundation year.

The study by Al Makrami (2010), while inquiring into Saudi EFL learner attitude and motivation at the outset and conclusion of the preparatory English programme for university students, differed from my research. First, it studied learners who were undertaking an English for specific purposes programme rather than the English for general purposes as in this study. Secondly, it made use of an experimental survey-based approach to studying learner attitudes, whereas the current study took an interpretive approach requiring data collection through interviews and other interpretive methods.

By adopting the phenomenological approach to an inquiry into Saudi EFL learner motivation and attitudes, this research made use of a range of methods such as diary studies, narratives, and interviews, whereas other studies were restricted to quantitative surveys (e.g. Al Makrami, 2010; Al Resheedi, 2014). Where the use of interviews was made as in the case of the work of Alkaabi (2016), the focus was on the attitudes of Saudi EFL students studying in American, thereby neglecting to establish a better understanding of the possibly variant influences on EFL learners living and studying English within KSA itself. Finally, the

research by Alhawsawi (2013), while being close to this study in using the phenomenological approach to studying Saudi EFL learner experiences in a preparatory programme in a context identical to the current research, focused on learner motivation only peripherally and was not conducted longitudinally.

1.2   Aims of the project

The aim of this study was to offer original insights into an area of research that has key implications for the teaching and learning of EFL in KSA and its ambitions to develop a workforce that can participate effectively in the globalised economy. It aspired to contribute to a better understanding of the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners towards learning English. It also sought to offer insights into the factors that influence the attitudes of the learners such as familial or peer encouragement or discouragement of EFL learners, the desire or need of the learners to learn English for understanding media and factors related to teachers and materials, as well as traveling and working. Further, it aimed to see how Saudi EFL learners perceived the relationship between their attitudes and academic achievement in the EFL class. These understandings are of relevance to policy makers, curriculum designers, and EFL teachers as well as the learners themselves, providing each of the stakeholder groups direction for developing or responding to EFL learning (as the need may be) that motivates and positively influences learner attitudes.

1.3   Methodology and theoretical framework

This study adopted a phenomenological research to studying the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners towards learning English. Key methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews, narratives and diaries, and data was collected from 30 male and female students at a leading Saudi university over the course of an academic year. This longitudinal research allowed the gaining of insights into the development of EFL learner attitudes in response to the challenges of studying in the Foundation year programme and the increasing difficulty of content through the course of semesters, rather than being restricted to a snapshot view of such attitudes at a single point in time. Although insights from Gardner's Socio-educational Model with its emphasis on the respective cultures of the language being learned and of the L2 learner informed the study, a grounded theory approach was adopted in this research. Theorisations about Saudi EFL learner attitudes were 'grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed' (Strauss and Corbin, 1994) through a variety of data collection methods as discussed above.

1.4 Research questions

In view of the above discussion, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the main self-reported attitudes of Saudi university foundation year students towards learning English as a foreign language?

2. What are the factors, according to foundation year students at a Saudi university, which shape their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language?

3. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and their well-being and participation in the classroom?

4. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes and academic performance in EFL classes?

The purpose of these questions was not only to establish the nature of the EFL learner attitudes towards studying EFL, but also to see how learners perceived their attitudes in terms of their well-being in the EFL classroom and academic achievement on the preparatory programme. These were important considerations as language learner attitudes are complex constructs at the intersection of multiple influencing variables.

1.5 Thesis organisation

Chapter One provides the background to the importance of EFL learning in the KSA context and its implications for educational reforms undertaken by the government with a view to preparing citizens for participation in the globalised economy. It also explains the significance of the research undertaken and discusses the research questions addressed in this study. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the research questions, including a discussion of the theoretical framework adopted in this investigation, language learner attitudes and motivation and the factors influencing language learners. It also contextualises the discussion by providing insights into the learning of English in the KSA. Chapter Three presents the details of the research methodology adopted in this research, including a discussion of the paradigmatic stance and the research approach adopted by the researcher as well as the data collection methods employed in the study and details of data analysis, research procedures and ethical considerations pertinent to the work. Chapter Four presents the results of the study drawn from data collected through diary studies, narratives, interviews and document analysis. Chapter Five discusses the key findings related to the research questions and links the discussion to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six

offers the conclusion to the study, summarising key findings, offering recommendations based on the study and pointing out research directions for the future.

Chapter 2. Literature review

English as a foreign language (EFL) learning is significantly more than the sum of simply acquiring a 'new code' (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p.32). Rather, it entails creating an understanding of the learners' own 'situatedness' in their own language and culture and the recognition of the same in others, in addition to comprehension of how 'this recognition influences the process of communication within their own language and culture' (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2009, p.33). At the heart of these understandings is the importance of culture, language and interaction to EFL learning. Hence, this chapter takes account of important theorisations underlying the influence of the socio-cultural context and affective factors upon learner attitudes towards EFL in catalysing a successful EFL experience.

Taking as its departure point a review of the philosophy of social constructivism, Chapter 2 first establishes the composition and determinants of learners' attitudes and the strong influence of socio-cultural factors in the construction of learners' knowledge and identities that can create dissonance with ideas and knowledge from dissimilar cultures. Then, through evaluation of the socio-cultural factors that influence EFL learners' attitudes towards language learning and the emotional and cultural aspects of these, Chapter 2 surveys Saudi Arabian culture with respect to EFL learning and perceptions of EFL within Islamic culture as an important component of Saudi culture. The review concludes with an appraisal of strategies for improving Saudi EFL student attitudes.

2.1 Social constructivism

Constructivism recognises the learner's active role in the personal creation of knowledge, and it holds that because of the interjection of the self, and hence the personal perspective, knowledge creation differs in its representation of reality. These four fundamental principles form the foundation for basic principles of the teaching, learning, and knowing process as described by constructivism (Garrison, 1998). In other words, constructivism is a theory of learning which contends that learners actively build knowledge and meaning from personal experiences (Fosnot, 1996; Steffe and Gale, 1995). According to this theory, only through personal experience can one know reality, and even if it does exist outside a person, the personal reality is the only real one for any individual. Beyond what is personally experienced, reality is merely subjective. Von Glasersfeld (1984; 1990) also suggests that knowledge is not passively acquired and that it is acquired when a person is thinking actively, also positing that behaviour is transformed through cognition so that individuals are able to

function irrespective of the environment they are located in. Thus, thought processes organise and give meaning to experiences (Garrison, 1998). As Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2012) contend, the constructivist approach is commonly acknowledged as a means of prodding comprehension levels in children and upholds the construct that such comprehension is not static or fixed. It can develop into high thinking levels. Following on from this, Kanselaar (2002, cited in Amineh and Davatgari, 2015, p.10) breaks down the constructivist approach into two specific pathways. These are the constructivist perspective and the socio-cultural perspective, also known as the socio-constructivist perspective.

Each of these pathways is rooted in the work of two significant theorists, respectively Piaget (1977) and Vygotsky (1986). Pioneering constructivism from a cognitive stance, Piaget proposed a stage component that reflects children's cognitive development, together with his development theory that explains the way children develop cognitively. Being a realist, he argues that, as learners, individuals react to situations that challenge thinking by trying to incorporate new material into their existing cumulative knowledge. Thus, the actual learning state could be said to be an individual's familiarisation with new, hitherto unknown material through their amendment of their earlier thinking. Meanwhile, Vygotsky, an anti-realist, contributes to the second part of constructivism through his ideas that language learning and thought are considerably influenced by other individuals and mediated by community and cultural values. It is Vygotsky's social-constructivism concepts that hold direct relevance to the issues addressed in this thesis, and these are further discussed below.

If constructivism maintains, as indicated above, that learning follows after cognitive development is in place, Vygotsky and social-constructivism purport that because 'the child's mind is inherently social in nature' it transpires that 'speech moves from communicative social to inner egocentric' (Amineh and Davatgari, 2015 p.10). As such, Vygotsky argues an important point that completely opposes Piaget's perspective; that an individual's thinking emerges not from him/herself but rather from the external influence of cultural society, historical society, and social interaction because speech development surfaces before thinking development. Later proponents of social-constructivism, for example Bailey and Pransky (2005), also recognise society's influence on thinking, but emphasise that culture is not peripheral, but that it plays a significant part in the knowledge process. Another theorist, Siek-Piskozub (2004, p.16), strongly advocates social-constructivism in foreign language learning, emphasising that:

'Our society is now well into the Information Age, and education has no choice but to follow suit. The goal of modern education is to teach learning skills on the verge of the unknown, how to solve problems, how to seek information' (Siek-Piskozub, 2004, p.16).

Yet key to the successful implementation of social constructivism ideology is the relationship of these processes to learning ability and learning success. This is discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1   Social constructivism and learning ability

In social constructivism, language is a crucial catalyst for learning ability (Amineh and Davatgari Asl, 2015). Given that socio-cultural practices are formed from social interactions, when these interactions, along with thoughts and feelings, become programmed through language, they become reality. Linguistics is a part of the social context through which members of a culture communicate and influence how those members interact with each other and with others outside the culture. In view of the above, we may think of socio-cultural practices as comprising the interactions between the externalisation of ideas, concepts, thoughts and feelings of the members of that culture.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), there are two types of social and cultural signs; epistemology, which is associated with the structure of meaning, and ontology, which is the expression of ideas. Structural epistemology is the progression of acquiring meanings and formulating those meanings into material and discernible forms, such as behaviour, language, visual and performing arts, whereas the ontological marker is the living entity of these meanings and it becomes a living entity.

Taking objects and giving meaning to them is known as structural hermeneutics. Externalisation of language and internalisation of objects together form reality-loops in culture, which are identifiable as the social construction of reality (St. Clair, 2006). Reality-loops establish a cognitive interface in the human environment. These reality-loops make ontological indicators through the projection of concepts and develop information structures in the process of taking them in. Thus, this process establishes a bond between the subjective sphere of epistemology and the objective area of ontology. Importantly, all of these social constructivism processes rest heavily on Vygotsky's (1978) work, underpinning the concept that learning as knowledge is formed by the learners within their immediate social context and afterwards it is inwardly utilised (Amineh and Davatgari, 2015). Indeed, it is the fact that

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individual experiences are shared, known as collaborative elaboration, that enables learners to build individual comprehension alongside other individuals, something which cannot be internalised (Greeno, 1997). Hence, learning strategies that involve collaborative learning include reciprocal questioning and challenging tasks (Woolfolk, 2010).

Moreover, from a scholarly viewpoint, social constructivism highlights learning as active and not passive, because learners must use their intuition and natural curiosity to explore ideas and factual information alone on the basis of their intuitive thinking (Amineh and Davatgari, 2015). Hence, unlike constructivism, reality is non-existent for these learners. Meanings are formed through social interaction with others and the surrounding environment. Successful formation of these meanings then arguably creates learning success. Significant too is the fact that, whilst Piaget (1977) contends that learning acquisition involves a distinct stage representing the development of higher thought, Vygotsky and social constructivism counter that learning is never static. Rather, it is a fluid movement from a lower level of understanding to a higher one that replicates the learner's real learning ability. Again, stemming from social interaction, this motion exists within Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) concept. Vygotsky defines ZPD as:

> 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86).

Therefore, in social constructivism, learning success or failure hinges on the quality of cognitive thinking originating from a particular social interaction.

2.1.2   View of the learner in social constructivism

Clearly then, social constructivism places learners at the centre of their learning. In doing so, it permits learners to develop their personal worldview that constantly evolves under the impact of a learner's history and culture. Thus, culture figures prominently in learning success. It dictates how members of that culture form their perception of social self. Self-personification in society represents a social construct, whereas an attempt to apply social ideas of self to those not within the same society is a cultural construct.

Culture is also one of the strongest influences on how people think, act, behave, and relate to others. Most often, our beliefs, ideas, concepts and theories are a result of the culture in which we have been raised. These traditions are passed down by our parents and shape our

perceptions of the world and of others. What may seem odd to Middle Easterners, such as women being able to hold professional positions over men, is quite natural in Western countries due to their cultural perspectives. Social constructivism, in its simplest form, is the theorisation that there is a purpose or principle that grounds each of us, which is controlled by social or cultural influencers.

There are differences between culture and social beliefs and practices, but these are very slight. No matter the culture to which one belongs, those within that culture have mind-sets of social reality that are used to interact within that culture and with other cultures. For individuals within a particular culture, their social practices are not cultural. Rather, they are just life; it is not until people are exposed to other cultures that differences between everyday life are noticed. Within each culture exists a known reality that is inherent. This is a social-reality that is constructed based on tradition. Learners are believed to be enculturated into their learning community and appropriate knowledge, based on their existent understanding, through their interaction with the immediate learning environment. Learning is thus considered to be a largely situation-specific and context-bound activity (Eggen and Kauchak, 1999; Woolfolk, 2001; McInerney and McInerney, 2002).

Having established the importance of social interaction and culture to learning within the social constructivist approach, the discussion will now move forward to a more specific consideration of learner attitudes and their influence on learning.

2.2   Learner attitudes to learning

2.2.1   Definitions

Many researchers (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Ushida, 2005; Yu and Watkins, 2011) have defined 'attitude' from a socio-cultural perspective. Research has led to the consensus that L2 achievement is influenced by attitudes, although this influence is mediated by motivation (Gardner, 2010 cited in Alrabai and Moskovsky, 2015, p.79). Early researchers such as Allport (1954, p.54) have defined attitudes as 'mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience', which influence how the individual responds towards related subjects in addition to situations. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) define attitudes as acquired tendencies to respond in terms of the desired behaviour. Although some researchers contend that attitudes may be biologically derived (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), others are of the view that these are learned and hence susceptible to modification (Simmons and Maushak, 2001). According to

Orey (2010, p.94), attitudes are systems or constructs, which are made up of 'affective responses, cognitions, behavioural intentions, and behaviours', varying in terms of positivity or negativity of direction, degree and intensity. Together, these early examples perhaps reflect a more cognitive strand to attitude definition. An exception to this is Chambers (1999, p.27), who acknowledges the contribution of socio-cultural influences on attitudes to language learning through defining attitudes as a 'set of values which a pupil brings to the FLL experience' that are shaped by anticipated psychological benefits and benefits of learning the target language. The values held by the learners may be manipulated by a range of factors, including the language learning experience, the community to which the language being learnt belongs, and the attitudes towards the target language demonstrated by parents and peers of the language learner.

2.2.2   Attitude models – historical perspectives

Developing a chronological overview of historical and current attitude models in the research literature helps to delineate the components of attitude. Five attitude models are presented below. The first model to be discussed is the Expectancy-Value Model (Rosenberg, 1956), which posits that attitudes can be viewed as a person's simple evaluation of an object or process. Along with early researchers such as Calder and Ross (1972) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Jain (2014) states that the model contains two parts. The first part equates a person's attitude with a person's belief, and comprises the likely expectations contained within each belief that constitute an overall attitude. The second part respects the value connected with each belief (Jain, 2014). Thus, since this model embraces the idea that a person can possess many beliefs regarding an attitude object or process (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), it is evident that a person's beliefs lie at the centre of attitude formation. It builds on Fishbein's work in 1963, which developed the idea of attitude as an affect measurement. In his Multi-attribute Measurement Model, Fishbein speaks of attitude as a means of measuring a person's opinion on the pros and cons of an attitude object or process. This is dependent on the power of a person's belief(s) in relation to the object or process and contains an evaluation element.

Another model, namely the Vector Model (Calder and Lutz (1972), is two dimensional, with the first dimension comprising affect, meaning liking or favour, and the second dimension forming the cognitive aspect, meaning likely or probable. Again, resting on the basis of belief as attitude, this model recognises that a person subsequently places worth or value on both

these dimensional domains within their cognitive functioning. The next model to be discussed, namely the Tripartite Model was proposed by Spooncer (1992, cited in Jain, 2014, p.4), and it added two more aspects to attitude. Whilst maintaining the approach of preceding models that attitude equated to beliefs, the Tripartite Model also advances a person's feelings and behaviour as necessary variables in attitude formation. Feeling is couched in a person's emotion that surfaces in verbal response to an attitude object or process, whereas belief underlies a person's cognitive verbal response, and behaviour is represented in a person's external environmental action response that suggests intended behaviour towards the attitude object or process.

A fourth model, the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; 1993), proposed how attitude models could be applied to a specific situation, in this case technology. This model emphasised that individuals' *intention* to adapt to a technology form depends on their attitude to it and their efficiency perceptions of it, with beliefs remaining fundamental to determining the outcome of these. Drawing upon Djamasbi, Fruhling and Loiacono (2009), Jain noted that in this model, 'the perception of usefulness is measured by the degree to which the technology can help to improve task performance' (Jain, 2014, p.5). Arguably then, this model predicts future research into applications of attitude to different situations.

The final model to be discussed herein is the Cognitive-Affective-Conative Model, which was developed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004). This model distinguishes three real components, as opposed to strands, of attitude. These are: (1) a cognitive component evidenced through beliefs; (2) an affective component evidenced through feelings; and (3) a conative component evidenced through behaviour. Each of these components contributes to the composition of an attitude. Overall, these attitude models portray the manner in which attitude is manifested within an individual. This leads to an account of the three attitude components that are cited in the academic research.

The Rosenberg (1956;1960) model of attitudes belongs to a general category of attitude models that draw upon cognitive psychology (Cohen, Fishbein and Ahtola, 1972). The Vector Model is also similarly premised. Theoretically, such models assume that behaviour 'is a function of the expectancies one has and the value of the goal toward which one is working' (Theorieënoverzicht TCW, 2015). The assumption is that, as individuals are goal-oriented, 'the behaviours they perform in response to their beliefs and values are undertaken to achieve some end' (Theorieënoverzicht TCW, 2015). The strength of an Expectancy-Value

Model is that it has explanatory power for understanding not only social behaviours, but also achievement motivation. An example of its application would be its relevance to understanding how a 'combination of beliefs and evaluations developed about a program[me], a program[me] genre, the content, or a specific medium [can] be either positive or negative' (Theorieënoverzicht TCW, 2015). This makes it a useful model for considering the application viability of the model to surveying student attitudes towards curricular innovation.

While a key strength of the expectancy-value models is that they take 'account of social influences through the subjective norm construct, [working] best for behaviours under the individual's volitional control', they do not accommodate considerations of emotional aspects of the same (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2015, p.216). This is where Spooncer's Tripartite Model improves upon its predecessors by including what Bizer (2004, p.246) describes as an 'affective component' referring to the 'feelings, moods and emotions relate[d] to the attitude subject'. Although, TAM evolved out of the Theory of Reasoned Action and was founded upon the concept of behavioural intent (BI) advanced by Expectancy Value Theory, it differed in it that it 'omits the SN element of TRA' (Bradley, 2012, p.20). SN, or subjective norm, represented the 'person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think that he or she should or should not perform that behaviour' (Chuttur, 2009, p.3), due to the fact that it was seen as 'the least understood aspect of TRA [with] uncertain theoretical status' (Chuttur, 2009, p.4). The Schiffman-Kanuk model builds on the strengths of its predecessors by considering three components rather than strands of attitude, reflected respectively in beliefs, emotions and behaviour.

The above attitude models give rise to three attitude components, namely affective components, behavioural components and cognitive components. The affective component refers to a person's emotional response, namely their liking or disliking of an attitude object or process (Jain, 2014). Since emotion works alongside belief identification, the emotional response affects the intensity of a person's beliefs about an attitude object or process (Jain, 2014). Hence, it can be argued that this directly impacts on positive or negative attitude formation. The behavioural component can manifest as a verbal or nonverbal indication of imminent behaviour and comprises particular actions or reactions that arise within a person due to the stimulus of an attitude object or process (Jain, 2014). Lastly, the cognitive component refers to a person's unique evaluation of the thought that makes up a person's

belief or disbelief about the attitude object or process, and as Jain (2014) points out, it represents a storage domain where a person can store their evaluation.

The next section introduces the key factors involved in how the attitudes of EFL learners are formed.

2.2.3 Key factors in learners' attitude formation

The instructional process in any educational setting is an issue of existing practices as well as traditions and exchange of information between educators and learners. These traditions are shaped by social standards inside that specific setting. As Tudor (2001, p.35) notes, the essential part of the social setting reflects the fact that the 'classroom is a socially characterised reality and is along these lines affected by the conviction frameworks and behavioural standards of the general public of which it is part'. With this in mind, several key factors of learners' attitude formation are identified and detailed below. The discussion will first consider learner beliefs and motivation, which are psychological in nature, subsequently progressing to a consideration of the cultural and then pedagogical factors involved in attitude formation of EFL learners

2.2.3.1 Psychological factors in EFL learner attitude formation

The academic literature on language learners' conceptions of learning is replete with second language acquisition studies (e.g. Barcelos, 2003; Barcelos and Kalaja, 2011), pointing out the significance of learners' beliefs as an affective variable on their individual discernments, actions, and learning success. Citing Benson and Lor (1999, p.459), Zheng et al. (2016) state that these authors refer to learners' language and language learning conceptions as a 'higher level category conditioning specific beliefs', implying that such beliefs represent learners' thoughts regarding their language learning, which might also be construed as reflecting their attitude to learning a language.

Reviewing up to date research in this area reveals that learners' beliefs research is broadly divided into two research directions. The first considers that beliefs are essentially socially constructed, echoing the social-constructivist approach, and as such premises that these are active and multifaceted variables. Examples of such research are studies conducted by Amuzie and Winkie (2009) and Zhong (2015). The second direction indicates that learners' beliefs possess an interceding function in relation to other learning variables, for example learning strategy adoption and learner independence. Examples of this are found in the

studies of Mercer (2011b) and Zhong, (2015). Thus, this study contends that in the EFL field, learners' perceptions of their foreign language learning hinges on their *beliefs* concerning the nature of foreign languages as a whole and the intricacies of learning that language. In turn, this comprises their *attitude* to foreign language learning. Such an assertion is also supported by Tsai (2009) who adds that learners' beliefs assist them in decoding their foreign language learning. In other words, learners' beliefs become what Ellis et al. (2008, p.268) term 'personal epistemologies' that direct them towards understanding what knowledge is and creating the ability to learn.

This thesis posits that, in the same way as that learner beliefs are congruent with attitude development, learner motivation forms the mechanism by which attitudes influence on foreign language learning success. It follows the overall consensus in the research that attitudes do indeed affect foreign language learning success (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994; 2005; Alrahaili, 2014) and motivation has a key role to play in this process (Gardner, 2010).

This position is supported by Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985). In line with this, Gardner views learners' attitudes to foreign language learning as comprising one part of their motivation to learn the language. In extension, research has found that positive learner attitudes towards foreign language learning and towards the learning context enhance learners' achievement of the targeted language (Gardner, 2001; 2010). Indeed, Gardner could easily be considered as the pioneer of motivation research in foreign language learning success.

Gardner's research began in the late 1950s and early 1960s, yet it was the Socio-Educational Model (1985) that seems to have been particularly influential. In it, motivation was viewed as being made up of three parts. These are: (1) the level of motivation intensity; (2) eagerness to learn the foreign language; and (3) learners' positive or negative attitudes to learning the foreign language. Notably, Alrabai and Moskovsky (2016, p.79) add a further strand, stating that the model also 'involves another separate attitudinal component − attitudes to the learning situation, which is treated not as a part of motivation, but as one of its antecedents'. This is important because it emphasises Gardner's view that learners' attitudes are a precursor to learners' motivation to learn a foreign language, a point endorsed by Alrabai and Moskovsky (2016).

Reviewing the literature indicates that whilst Gardner's Socio-Educational Model predominated up to the early 1990s, there followed a consistent move in direction to the study of motivation involving cognitive constructivism approaches as opposed to social-constructivism directions focusing on the actual learning process. At this point, the research field gleaned well-established motivation theories from psychology disciplines that embraced expectancy-value, attribution, self-efficacy and self-worth. Consequently, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self-System Theory (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009) attempted to rationalise learners' foreign language motivation via what was believed to be the interaction of the ideal self of learners' and their so-called ought-to self.

Alrabai and Moskovsky's (2016) study is also notable. These authors investigated the relationship between learners' affective variables, including the motivation variable during foreign language learning. They found in their initial participant sample of 274, reduced thereafter to 252 individuals, that motivation not only accounted for up to 67% of the variance in achievement but also that it had a critical role vis-a-vis achievement, which was reflected in the strong correlation between the two. In addition, motivation was the most consistent and durable of the five affective variables considered in the study (Alrabai and Moskovsky, 2016, p.91).

These are critical findings, not only because of the newness of the research undertaken, but also because they strongly indicate the significant role of motivation in learners' attitude formation and its correlation to foreign language learning achievement. However, these findings must also be interpreted with caution since, as the authors acknowledge, the influence of other non-affective variables was not studied as a comparison measure and the data they obtained was correlational, thereby pre-empting the creation of causal inferences.

Continuing with consideration of psychological factors in shaping the attitudes of EFL learners, this section examines literature on how anxiety and stress induced by cultural factors influence the psyche of the learners. It also looks at the notions of mindset and self-esteem in terms of the role they play in shaping learner attitudes.

Anxiety and stress induced by cultural factors can influence attitudes towards language learning. In an inquiry into the oral proficiency of English as Academic Purposes (EAP) learners aiming to join Australian universities, Woodrow (2006, p.308) found that English language learners from Confucian Heritage Cultures 'were more anxious language learners

than other ethnic groups'. Examining the use of silence by three Mainland Chinese students in the American academic context, Liu (2002) found that there were significant cultural differences in which the silence of the students was interpreted as being indicative of poor communicative competence. According to Liu, the silence of the study participants within the classroom setting was 'expected and encouraged as a sign of respect for their teachers and classmates in Chinese culture' whereas 'in American classrooms […] silence may be viewed as 'absence' or a lack of communication', leading thereby to 'misunderstandings in terms of classroom behaviour' (p.47). Another study conducted at the University of Glasgow (Tanveer, 2007) looking at the factors causing language anxiety for foreign language learners in terms of their oral proficiency in English found that the 'differences of cultures between that of the learners and target language appeared to be an important anxiety-producing factor' due to apprehension as to what was appropriate in the target culture or not as well as the prospect of losing face by saying the wrong things.

According to McCarthy (1994), emotions originating from cultural experiences have meaning within a structure of interactions that surface through cultural languages. Emotions are products of the social interactions and relationships that people engage in. Therefore, social constructs shape emotions and define them (Boiger and Mesquita, 2012). A study conducted by Hill (2005) found that emotional factors were a primary factor that negatively impacted students' capacity to understand and apply specific concepts on their own. In the case of female students, many found it more challenging to apply important concepts autonomously. This is because depression was found to have a direct effect on their attitudes and self-confidence. Hill determined this to be one of the key issues impacting learners' ability to comprehend and apply specific concepts. As a result, this is one of the biggest variables hindering students inside the classroom. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative to take a new approach. This means helping them develop a greater sense of empowerment, whilst in the case of Saudi students, at the same time demonstrating respect for Islamic culture and the way this enables them to accomplish larger objectives (Hill, 2005).

It is important to understand that emotions are constructed socially in the moment of an interaction and gain intensity depending on the prospect of the relationship and that they are not only shaped by the relationship in which they occur but in due course they too shape the course of this relationship (Blascovich and Mendes, 2000). In another study, El Anzi (2005) determined that those students who excelled academically were less likely to be depressed as

they had more self-confidence. Over the course of time, these positive attitudes shaped who they were and how they saw themselves. Depression is directly linked to the person's emotions, and positive or negative attitudes can have an effect if learners are able to understand and apply specific concepts on their own (El Anzi, 2005).

Anxiety has been shown to be a contributing factor in how effectively someone will learn English. This is because the perceived levels of difficulty can determine their attitudes and capacity to apply specific concepts on their own. For instance, Al-Zahrani (2008), Alseweed (2009), Al Quyadhi (2009) and Al-Asmari (2013) all determined that positive or negative emotions have an impact on whether someone is successful in learning key ideas. They found that the ability to relax can help them to think clearly and have an open mind when learning specific aspects of English. In the future, this enables them to build upon what was taught by experiencing greater amounts of confidence in the process. This can determine their underlying levels of motivation and beliefs about being successful in the longer term (Al-Zahrani, 2008; Alseweed, 2009; Al Quyadhi, 2009; Al-Asmari, 2013, Cirocki, 2016).

Early anxiety research such as that of Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) measured and investigated the effects of anxiety in correlation with the student's ability to learn a second language. These authors found that the individual naturally avoided situations which caused anxieties to rise. This study addressed a variety of situational factors which could trigger or cause learner stress levels to increase (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). In this case, they found that there are variables that can be correlated with each other involving the person naturally seeking to avoid anxiety-causing situations. Attempting to avoid a situation causes a rise in overall anxiety of the learners, which makes them reluctant to participate and learn new ideas in the process. This means focusing on the primary functions that the individual will experience when they are learning a new concept (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993).

Specifically, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) found that there are anxiety-related factors that can affect the learner's capacity to learn a second language. Those tested included attitudes, motivation and stress levels. However, the researchers also concluded that futures studies needed to concentrate on the functional relationship between precise variables. This was so that a more accurate measurement of the way they combined and improved the behaviour could be studied. Consequently, a focus on anxiety and these factors are important components for understanding how a person learns English and acquires a second language (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993). An Australian study conducted at the University of Sydney

by Bernat, Carter and Hall (2009) examined 262 ESL learners on various aspects of their personal, cultural and social attitudes on English learning. They discovered that the underlying levels of anxiety impacted on the speed of the learning and utilisation of English by the learners. Learners became more capable of realising how easy or difficult the content was for them (Bernat, Carter and Hall, 2009).

More recently, Horwitz (2010) has found that learner beliefs about the language have a direct effect on how effectively they understand key concepts. These findings were reached by specifically studying the effects of anxiety on performance in learning. According to Horwitz, anxiety is an emotion that is derived from attitudes, and it represents a basic reaction to learning new ideas and concepts. This reaction occurs because the students are unsure about their own abilities and they face challenges based upon these perceptions. As far as learning a language is concerned, this can prevent the student from learning and practising key concepts. These issues have an influence on their attitude and therefore on their ability to attend class. Horwitz further determined that a variety of outcomes would be directly linked to a learner's anxiety levels, proficiency in shorter written texts and effective learning comprehension.

Horwitz (2010) determined that results from previous studies were ineffective because they often examined different forms of anxiety in an attempt to understand what was taking place. The most notable include state, trait, achievement and facilitative-deliberative anxiety. Her study combined these concepts into a single platform known as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). This is a situation-specific anxiety that focuses on how studying a second language can increase the stress level for the individual. Those who are utilising these tools were more effective in isolating everything down to a single variable. This allowed them to objectively look at the way anxiety can hinder the student's performance in language learning. As a result, she concluded that FLA had a major impact in comprehending the student's ability to learn and acquire a second language (Horwitz, 2010).

Forms of anxiety experienced by learners can vary. For example, Gelban (2009) found that these issues can influence learners' capacity to understand key ideas, depending upon the various kinds of stressors, which include phobic anxiety, psychoticism, somatisation and anxiety. These factors can help to decrease the underlying levels of motivation with a prevalence of depression (13.9%), paranoid ideation (13.8%), interpersonal sensitivity (13.8%), hostility (12.8%) and obsessive-compulsive behaviour (12.3%). In the study carried

out by Gelban, these symptoms were found in 16.3% of the female participants, yet there is no statistical significance (Gelban, 2009).

The studies reviewed highlight in particular how the underlying levels of stress can have a direct influence on learners' capacity to apply specific concepts autonomously. This is because their attitudes will shape what they are telling themselves, and whether they are capable of achieving these objectives in the longer term. Those who have fewer anxieties experience fewer distractions and can easily focus on understanding concepts, which provides the foundation for future learning. This is when they will maintain these levels and realise an increase in their self-confidence. Emotions in particular can have an impact on students who are taking EFL classes, thereby suggesting that there is a direct link between these attitudes and behaviour. Those who utilise such ideas most effectively will be able to create positive associations and engender positive attitudes for the student.

In a number of cases, the levels of stress will play a direct role in determining how fast someone will learn new ideas. Early research conducted by Peacock (1999) and Rifkin (2000) found that the overall amounts of stress can have an effect on whether the student is embracing positive or negative attitudes. Peacock's (1999) observations evidence that negative beliefs were detrimental to language learning because of learners' negative feelings. In fact, it was found that these feelings led to students being dissatisfied and frustrated because they were unable to understand the rationale of the course. This illustrates how levels of anxiety are directly connected with capacity to learn and understand new ideas. Those who have negative views experience greater amounts of stress. This leads to poor performance and makes it more difficult for the individual to comprehend/apply these concepts (Rifkin, 2000).

Lastly, White (2008) found that the levels of stress are directly associated with what learners tell themselves. This influences how they learn specific tasks and their capacity to understand them. Over the course of time, this has an impact on their attitudes, beliefs and underlying levels of motivation. When studying complex subjects, these variables will determine how difficult or easy it is for learners to learn a language (White, 2008). The above discussion establishes the key role of anxiety induced by psychological factors stemming from culture in affecting the linguistic performance of EFL learners, and the next section will discuss the effect of mental attitudes on language learning.

Just as anxiety can negatively influence language learning, another factor of considerable importance to effective EFL learning is the mindset displayed by the learners. According to Mercer (2011), a mindset, or mental attitude, comprises the individual's 'perceived malleability of ability or intelligence [which] is known to strongly influence a person's other beliefs, behaviours, and motivation'. Mercer (2011) found that the mental attitude of the learner could influence learners' ability to understand and apply specific EFL concepts. A good example of this is noted in Mercer's explanation that a language learning attitude reflects the degree to which an individual accepts that language learning capacity is subject to some changeless, natural ability or is the after effect of controllable elements, for example, exertion and cognisant diligent work.

Given the across-the-board faith in the presence and essentialness of a characteristic ability or bent for language learning, it is conceivable that a more altered outlook may be particularly predominant in the space of outside language learning. Language learners holding such an outlook are more prone to keep away from difficulties, which chance disappointment, or they set themselves lower objectives and therefore stand in peril of becoming demotivated. This may conceivably be due to the degree of a condition of powerlessness, notwithstanding the apparent purposelessness of participating in any key conduct. As such, educators must be in a position to help language learners create a *development attitude* about their own particular capacities (Mercer, 2011).

According to social construction theory, development includes the integration of other cultures into their knowledge community. Attitude will affect this acculturation process, either making the process easier or more difficult. Yet, one's attitude toward self has a significant impact on learning ability and this integration of culture. The mental attitude of the individual learner has an impact on their ability to meet key objectives. One of the reasons why this occurs is through a change in learners' perceptions of themselves and their ability to achieve these objectives in the longer term. When this happens, they will have fewer challenges and can overcome any issues they are facing.

An earlier study by Dweck (1986) demonstrated how the thought process influences attitudes. The study determined that those who have positive beliefs about themselves will be able to achieve various goals more easily. This is because they are encouraging themselves to understand specific ideas and master them; they have higher levels of self-esteem, which allow them to positively think about self and engage in positive thinking. This is the point at

which their levels of success will build upon each other, so as to help them achieve even bigger objectives. In the future, this mind-set becomes a part of who the learners are, and it continues to empower them (Dweck, 1986). In a later study, Dweck (1988) identified that the individual's thoughts, or cognitive abilities, could have an impact on how successful they are. This influences their behaviour based upon what they are saying to themselves mentally. Those who are the most successful have better attitudes and have more empowering beliefs. This creates a situation where they have greater control over their behaviour and emotions. In the future, this creates a situation where they will be successful because of these distinctions (Dweck, 1988).

Mercer (2009) concluded that mental attitudes have the potential to play a significant role within ELT, as mental attitudes or mind-sets have a powerful influence on learners, including on their approaches to learning, individual goals, and success levels. Thus, it is possible that foreign language learning relies heavily on fixed mental attitudes. This corroborates previous research by illustrating how cognitive abilities have a positive impact on EFL learners. These findings can be used to demonstrate specific factors that contribute to their underlying levels of success (Mercer, 2009).

In addition to the key role played by mental attitudes in influencing how learners learn, set goals for themselves and achieve success in EFL learning, language learning is also affected by the value the learners place upon their own capacities and abilities (Dweck, 1986). Such self-assessment is known as self-esteem. Self-esteem is the psychological state of self-evaluation, which can be positive or negative (Hewitt, 2002). Hewitt argues that self-esteem is a social construction with cultural roots. It stems from acceptance during childhood, positive appraisal from others, flattering comparisons with others and idyllic views of self. Self-esteem increases when one is able to positively compare self to others, or the ideal perception of self, and increases further when an individual is interacting in a social environment (Hewitt, 2002). Self-esteem compounds when one is accepted into their social world and belongs to a group or community, permitting a person to manifest feelings of worth, value and encouragement. While the notions that self-esteem is internal and therefore open to control and that the self develops in social interaction with others may appear to reflect a conflict, it stands to reason that self-esteem is an internal concept that can be affected by social means.

Individuals' self-esteem or lack thereof directly affects their ability to learn. Problems with learning will cause internal stressors, which not only impede the process but also impact one's self-esteem level, thereby causing stress. Stress levels have a direct correlation to the way someone learns. This causes additional worry, subsequently affecting their state of mind. Once this occurs, they will be challenged in understanding and applying specific ideas on their own. This is when their levels of achievement and perception of self will decline because of these issues.

In many cases, the beliefs someone has will have a direct effect on their capacity to understand the material. This occurs hand in hand with anxiety, providing learners with a sense of doubt in their ability to comprehend key concepts. These views have a direct impact on their behaviour, as they will feel unable to master these ideas and recall them on their own. In this case, one could argue that the state of mind will influence how well someone learns English in the process. Teachers' beliefs also have an effect on the ability of students to learn new concepts in a foreign language. According to Horowitz (2010) and Schwitzgebel (2011), the way teachers design their lesson plans will have an impact on how they connect with students. This is because the educator will communicate and exhibit specific mannerisms that influence student attitudes (Horowitz, 2010; Schwitzgebel, 2011). These attributes convey the teachers' emotions, attitudes and beliefs about the subject matter. Moreover, Farrell (2008) and Alresheed (2013) contend that the teachers' level of confidence and mastery has an influence on the way students learn because their ability to explain specific aspects of the language leads to shifts in the how they connect with them. Over time, this affects the student's ability to read, write and speak English more effectively (Farrell, 2008; Alresheed, 2013).

The discussion will now move forward to a consideration of the role of culture and socio-cultural contexts on learners' foreign language learning success, thereby allowing a review of the significance of culture in attitude formation.

2.2.3.2   Cultural factors in the formation of the attitudes of EFL learners

Platsidou, Kantaridou and Papadopoulou (2016) make the salient point that globalisation has promoted world cultural discourse between individuals possessing a range of cultural personalities. Alongside Erez and Gati (2004), they argue that Internet use has emerged as a 'global culture' (p. 1) that forms the external part of a socio-cultural identity construct.

Within this context has emerged English as Lingua Franca (ELF), which Jenkins (2009, p.200) defines as 'the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds'. It has also been highlighted that 'linguistic identity […] is a complex phenomenon that cannot be divorced from other phenomena such as language attitudes and ideologies, and linguistic power, while the relationships among them are becoming ever more complex in postmodern societies' (Jenkins, 2007, p.190). In line with Joseph's view (2004, p.224) that identity is 'at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used, Jenkins (2007, 190) makes the assertion that 'identity is crucially involved in attitudes towards ELF'. To understand how culture shapes attitude, we must look at the impact of culture on identity. This has been widely acknowledged in literature (e.g. Tang, 1999; Hall, 2013; Dumitrašković, 2014;). Gunderson (2000, p.694), for one, contends that 'language and culture are inextricably linked. Unlike the Gordian knot, nothing comes from separating them because they have little or no meaning apart from each other'. This relationship between the two may be understood with reference to Bhabha (1994, p.177), who avers that culture is 'discursively rearticulated', being reflected in the discourse and exchanges 'between individuals in particular sociocultural contexts at particular moments of time' (Hall, 2013, p.17).

Having explicated the link between culture and identity, we turn now to Atchade (2002, p.45) who notes that the attitudes of second language learners are held to be reflective of 'their beliefs or opinion about the second language and culture, as well as their own culture'. Drawing upon Breen (2001), Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005, p.1) observe that within the pedagogical context, 'the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and metacognitive knowledge that students bring with them to the learning situation' are seen as contributing significantly to the effectiveness of the language learning process. In an extensive review of literature on learner attitude and perception as well as motivation towards language learning, Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013, p.70) also find that attitude as well as perception plays an important role in helping the learners to learn more effectively.

Factors contributing to the manner in which learners manage their learning of a foreign language include not just their motivation, nature of task and earlier experiences but also their cultural background. These findings are of great importance given that in existing research, exemplified by research such as that conducted by Weinstein (1994, p.298) it was found that

'a number of students professed a goal of resisting new information that might conflict with their existing beliefs'. Resistance of such provenance is at the heart of the importance of factors influencing learner attitudes. The foregoing discussion has delineated how culture influences learner attitudes. In extension and connection of this idea, the discussion will now progress to how culture influences student learning. This is based on the understanding that as 'attitude is considered as an essential factor influencing language performance' (Eshghinejad, 2016), examining the effect of culture mediated by attitude is also important to understanding how to improve foreign learner attitudes towards EFL.

Luk (2012) found that culture plays an important part in determining how quickly someone learns English. In a study that was conducted in Hong Kong, he found that those educators who are taking a multicultural approach were more effective in the long term. This helped learners to make the connection between these concepts and their existing schema. In view of this, Luk suggests that curricular aims of teaching EFL must include the development of intercultural competence and communication. The fundamentals of constructivism also suggest the need for EFL teachers to deploy culture as a discursive resource for meaning making and to consider cultural pedagogy as interlingual and intercultural exploratory dialogues with the students. Thus, culture plays a major part in determining how effectively someone will understand and apply specific concepts from English on their own. Indeed, culture helps to bridge any kind of challenge EFL students may face in linking different concepts together (Luk, 2012).

Furthermore, Purba (2011) found that culture has an impact on how quickly someone is able to learn English. This is achieved by blending different backgrounds and traditions together. Once this occurs, the student will more effectively make the connections between various ideas. Commenting about the importance of these techniques, Purba (2011) has noted that language and culture are inseparable, thereby suggesting that language learning is cultural in nature. Thus, the mastery of linguistics alone does not ensure success. Rather, this requires learning how to communicate culturally.

These studies clearly illustrate how the integration of culture can enhance learners' understanding of specific ideas related to foreign language learning. The insights from these studies assist in understanding how and why it is important to integrate culture within foreign language learning. Through making a direct connection between the two, this optimum

cultural context enables the foreign language learner to more effectively comprehend various aspects of reading, writing and verbal language techniques.

From the perspective of the social construction of reality, a major premise is that knowledge is socially constructed. Advocates of this view argue, for example, that what one considers to be real in one culture may not be so in another. This is because the idea of social construction posits that the interaction amongst members' forms ideas, which may be distinct from those found in other cultures. Hence, across different cultures, social realities are different, and even the processing of these sociological determinates may be different due to the constructs of those cultures.

The experience of society as subjective reality occurs via primary socialisation whereby individuals are given their identity and societal place, which is then followed by secondary socialisation. Burr (1995) has proposed that identity does not originate internally, but that it is derived from the social realm. The concepts outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1991 in Foster and Bochner, 2008, p.88) 'established the primacy of close personal relationships, and drew attention to the circulation and consumption of cultural and institutional narratives'. Language is the mode through which meaning is created and then internalised. A native language is not only a form of communication, but also the medium through which an individual perceives the world and the self. According to Burr (1995), language with regard to social constructionism serves as a means of conveying thoughts and feelings, made possible through the construction of concepts and ideals. Thoughts and concepts are possible because of language. In sum, language predates concepts and provides a means of structuring the way the world is experienced.

Additionally, the acquisition of knowledge is a form of social progression. Within cultures, language is the fundamental commonality to those within the culture, and society as a whole is comprised of various overlapping knowledge communities, all based on the distinctive human capacity for symbolic human communication. Cultures and subcultures constitute knowledge communities, as do other groups with particular social functions within the collectivities of relationships found in extended families. Cultures are fluid entities in stages of constant change and evolution that overlap and compete with one another, especially in today's society wherein technology has made it possible to travel widely and experience other cultures. Although the lines are blurred when it comes to language and culture, one's

native language and culture represent the primary form of communication and vehicle for interpreting the world.

From this perspective, learning starts as integration into the culture that is reflected by the child's primary caregivers, and education is a process of adopting other cultures and communities into self. As a person develops, he or she adopts knowledge communities. Subsequently, maturation is a string of acculturations and re-acculturations into an assortment of increasingly sophisticated knowledge communities, beginning with family and then expanding to one or more world societies.

Hence, socio-cultural settings assume a critical part in the advancement of learners' L2, as these impact teaching practices, classroom environment and learners' advancement. Language cannot be limited to any fringe of the classroom because learning happens through social collaboration inside particular connections (Fagan, 2008). Stern (1983) noted that, for language education, society serves as more than the foundation and significantly more than the context for what happens in a language classroom as these events are securely attached to their socio-cultural connection, referred to in Hall, (2011, p.200). Since language education is attached to its social connection, teaching and learning cannot occur in a classroom, which is separated from the encounters and individual engagements of learners outside the classroom (Candlin and Mercer, 2001). As Berger and Luckmann (1991) have noted language is the most important vehicle for maintaining, modifying and reconstructing subjective reality.

Subjective reality encompasses impressions that can be shared easily with others because within a culture there is mutual meaning and understanding. There is no need to redefine these concepts in everyday conversation because of this common frame of cultural reference. The broader the life setting beyond the classroom, the greater the critical impact these experiences have between learners and instructors and amongst learners. It is additionally accepted that most learners do not learn languages in classrooms. Rather, language is learned at home, in the city, in the group, and in the working environment (Khan, 2011).

In view of the fact that this study focused on Saudi Arabian learners' attitudes to EFL learning, the discussion turns to review how Saudi Arabian culture and Saudi Islamic culture shape these learners' attitudes towards their learning of EFL and also establishes the social embeddedness of the language learning process.

In order to establish the context for this study, it is necessary to provide background detail about the variation that has been observed between broad Saudi Arabian culture and socio-cultural aspects of EFL learning and the tenets of Middle Eastern Islamic culture. Such discord arises because the Middle East embraces different values and ideas. The following two sections highlight the complexities of broad Saudi Arabian culture in respect of socio-cultural aspects of EFL learning, and their conflict with the tenets of Islamic culture.

Malcolm (2013, p.100) has observed that existing research suggests that Arab learners' motivation tends to be instrumental. That is to say, Saudi learners study the language out of a sense of obligation or need. Despite modernisation in political and social trends, the attitudes of Arab learners have been influenced by their 'traditionalism' of cultural values to which their varying attitudes towards EFL are largely attributable (Drbseh, 2015, p.253). In a study conducted to inquire into the motivation of Arab university learners to study English, Sulemian (1993) found that the attitudes of the students surveyed reflected a range of emotions including dislike, fear and indifference towards learning English, which 'become more complex and reflected culture conflict' upon arrival in the United States to pursue further studies. Most of the participants did not feel the need to study English further.

Such an approach is not conducive to the need to learn new ideas autonomously. This cements the negative beliefs associated with the language, as Saudi learners believe that the study of English is being forced upon them (Butler and Lee, 2010). This is exemplified through the insights gained from the study conducted by Alseweed (2009) who found that the lack of English language acquisition is contributing to negative beliefs. As evidenced in the preceding discussion in this chapter, negative learner beliefs lead to negative learner attitudes. Alseweed found that Saudis who do study English at primary and secondary levels often have a limited focus. In many cases, the requirement to take these courses helps students to broaden their horizons, yet, it also leads to a backlash against mastering the language (Alseweed, 2009). The result is that students have limited background and experience for comprehending these ideas. Thus, once the learners progress to university level, they become more reluctant to learn EFL. This is because they consider that there is no advantage for them and they dislike having the language imposed upon them. Subsequently, these factors influence Saudi learners' ability to apply these concepts on their own, hence leading to a situation wherein learning autonomy is non-existent (Alseweed, 2009).

In some cases, there are individuals who believe that learning English inside Saudi Arabia could lead to them being criticised, believing that they are erasing their national identity. Early studies, such as that of Al Abed (1996), established that English does not take away from someone's national identity. Instead, it enhances these beliefs regarding the use of English among Saudis, suggesting that Westernisation will occur (Al Abed, 1996). This suggests that the study of English improves a person's ability to connect different cultures.

In many situations, attitudes are more positive when the teacher uses Arabic in conjunction with English. This is because the Saudi EFL learner is able to make the connections between these ideas and their own culture. This is illustrated in a study conducted by Al-Nofaie (2010), who found that attitudes regarding the use of Arabic were positive; however, the use of Arabic and English resulted in a more intense connection with the concepts (Al-Nofaie, 2010). This could be because using their native language encourages familiarity that in turn transforms the learners' negative beliefs via motivation towards a positive attitude to English learning.

Saudi Arabians prefer to focus on speaking English, favouring it over reading and writing. This can prevent the learners from achieving English fluency, which comes from comprehending written material and expressing ideas through the written mode. For instance, Sharifian (2009) found that these differences could create a situation wherein the Saudi learner could experience difficulty understanding the material and its personal importance. In many situations, Saudi learners are taught differently and are given the impression that oral proficiency is more important than written proficiency in English. This is problematic, as these areas have the potential to affect their capacity to understand and become proficient in other aspects of English. In the future, this can increase their difficulties since these factors can adversely impact the way they comprehend and apply specific concepts on their own (Sharifian, 2009).

Socially diverse and pedagogically dynamic in nature, the L2 classroom is an area where the local and global converge. In Saudi Arabia, educators frequently encounter censorship around socially taboo issues in their classrooms. To avoid learner discomfort, non-Arab educators by and large and Western instructors specifically shun examining religion, governmental issues and inverse sexual orientation in classrooms. Li (1994, p.24) explains that exclusion or avoidance of potentially controversial issues by EFL educators can lead to a lack of intercultural understanding and develop learner expectations that their needs will always be

accommodated in situations where they need to use the L2, whereas this may not always be the case. However, Yeh (2010) notes that teaching and pedagogy must remain responsive to adjustments merited by the social influences in the L2 classroom.

Meanwhile, Iskander (2008) found that most Saudi Arabian educators utilise traditional learning techniques. This means emphasising various lectures, writing out the ideas and presenting them on the blackboard. This is problematic, as students will often become disinterested in what they are learning. To deal with these issues, there needs to be a change in educational culture. This means utilising more tools and applications that will bridge the differences between the various environments. The most notable include technology, self-empowerment and practising English in real world settings (Iskander, 2008).

Furthermore, Alharbi (2008) identified that in the Saudi Arabian school system students are taught English in primary and secondary schools. The problem is that the culture focuses on teaching students how to speak English effectively, without parallel focus on EFL writing. This makes it difficult for learners to independently apply different EFL concepts when interacting with others in a real-world environment. To address these challenges, he considers that students need to read specific passages out loud. This enhances their ability to recognise key words and to distinguish specific lexical items effectively. This can help EFL Saudi learners to build up their language learning capacity and skills in the long term (Alharbi, 2008).

In many cases, students in the Saudi Arabian school system are intimidated by teachers, as educators are considered authoritarian figures who dominate the classroom. To deal with these challenges, Lippman (2012) contends that a new approach must be taken. This can be accomplished by talking about key ideas and encouraging students to think outside the box by drawing on attitudes that are more liberal. This enables the student to make connections with key ideas and apply their new understandings so that the culture inside the classroom is transformed (Lippman, 2012). Moreover, the education system in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East is geared towards covering a lot of content. This means that teachers will move the class along quickly without providing adequate support to individuals due to shortage of time. Those who experience difficulties on the course will often be left behind, with educators feeling increased amounts of pressure to maintain the pace set by the administration. This is problematic, as it means that these courses are designed for learners

with a pre-existing background in English or capacity to understand complex and new ideas (Kubota and McKay, 2009).

These social and behavioural standards contained within Saudi Arabian culture clearly create exceptional complexities that manifest themselves within the EFL classroom environment. The convictions, namely beliefs, and desires of Saudi EFL learners, institutional supervisors and arrangement producers, and the connections between the members in the classroom are all controlled by the socio-cultural standards of a specific setting, which impact the classroom environment and make it a more intricate, complicated and diverse arena for language learning.

While the previous section focused on the conflict of EFL learning in Saudi Arabian culture, this section highlights the fact that such challenges exist in the wider Middle East region as well and are specific to the Saudi Arabian context alone. For instance, Momani (2009) discovered that negative attitudes can hurt Middle Eastern students' capacity to learn English comprehension. For instance, in his study, Momani found that these issues arose in many classes throughout Jordan. In this situation, the individual's beliefs about the West influenced their mind-set. Those who had neutral or favourable opinions performed better and were capable of accomplishing more in the process (Momani, 2009).

Earlier, Qashoa (2006) found that attitudes and motivation were directly correlated with the student's level of performance. In Dubai, he surveyed 100 students who were taking English classes. He found that those who were more proficient in different aspects of the language were more effective in connecting with these. This meant that those who excelled were proficient in verbal abilities, comprehension, writing and spelling (Qashoa, 2006).

In some countries, attitudes about learning English will be different. For instance, in Kuwait students had better perceptions of the language. Evidence of this can be found in a study conducted by Malallah (2010) who found that Kuwaitis did not favour the English language or accept associated learning. However, EFL learning for academic purposes was viewed as positive by students, who were deeply motivated to learn. This illustrates how opinions about studying English vary from one country to the next. If the society places a high value on these ideals, it will yield a positive correlation. Moreover, in Yemen, those who have more specialised skills have better perceptions of studying English. For instance, when Shuib (2009) conducted a study of different engineering students, he found that they viewed

English language learning as more positive due to greater utilitarian academic reasons, and personal reasons.

In many cases, English is considered a threat to Arabic. In Saudi Arabia, there are concerns that the Islamic culture will disappear with greater exposure to English. Evidence of this can be found in a study that was conducted by Al-Jarf (2008), who investigated college learners' perspectives on the status of English and Arabic in Saudi Arabia as well as their attitudes towards using EFL and Arabic as mediums of instruction at university. Al-Jarf found that 96% of the participants viewed English as superior due to its international status and position as the language of science and research. Eighty-two percent favoured Arabic for teaching religion, history, Arabic literature and education majors. Yet they also considered English was better for teaching science, engineering and computing subjects. They cited many educational, technological, social, and labour market reasons for favouring the English language. The study concluded that Arabic faced a serious threat from the dominance of the English language in higher education. This is because of the lack of language planning and linguistic policies to protect, develop and promote the Arabic language.

Furthermore, there is a slowing of the Arabicisation processes in the Middle East. This leads to inadequacies in technical materials translated and published in Arabic (Al-Jarf, 2008). Hence the study of English is viewed negatively by learners, due to its growing dominance and perceived impact on Saudi culture. In response, many students evidence a sense of nervousness that encompasses concerns for their families and indigenous culture.

It may be noted briefly that in Saudi Arabia, gender protocol entails that women are subservient to men. This affects the type of education they receive and influences the social attitudes they embrace. The problem with these perceptions is that these can negatively impact learner attitudes and the way Saudi women learn (Shammiri, 2007). Shammiri found that, in the classroom, women were more reluctant to speak up, thereby adversely influencing their ability to understand and apply specific concepts. One of the main issues pivoted on how English requires teaching possession and taking different attitudes, in contrast with the positioning afforded to women within Saudi culture. The problem is that some have negative emotions tied to the information presented (Shammiri, 2007). Indeed, in an EFL classroom, when women are expected to speak up and voice their opinions, this may create the feeling that they are bucking social trends or are trying to rebel against traditional Muslim ideals in Saudi culture. Over the course of time, this can make it more challenging for learners to

understand and apply these shifts to their thinking. In this respect, one could argue that the feelings of the female student will have a direct correlation to the way they learn new ideas and that those who are more optimistic can make effective correlations with these concepts (Shammiri, 2007).

In general, considerable research has been carried out on how students learn within the public-school context, most notably in the US and Australia (Bernat, 2006; Bernat, 2009). Yet, in the Middle Eastern countries, such literature is limited. This offers additional challenges towards understanding the impact of Islamic culture on student attitudes (Karahan, 2007; Al-Quyadhi, 2009). This increases the ability of educators to make key mistakes in their oral and written presentations. In Muslim countries, this can translate into educators failing to apply these tools most effectively. As a result, students will not feel comfortable in making mistakes and speaking up about areas they may not understand (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993; Horowitz, 2010).

Thus, contrasting perceptions of EFL have been identified within the discussion presented thus far. While some Saudis believe that English is a threat to the Saudi culture, in the wider context of other Arab countries and members of the oil/gas industry, English is viewed more favourably. This is because they see the value it provides and how it can help to improve their lifestyle choices. As a result, the varied perspectives are likely to have more impact on how quickly Saudi learners are motivated to learn English and the way they apply it. The next section identifies that the Saudi Arabian learner culture gives rise to additional challenges that all Saudi learners face in their EFL learning.

While Section 2.5.1 discussed the largely socio-cultural provenance of negative attitudes of Saudi learners towards EFL, this section focuses on the specific educational culture to which the learners are exposed in Saudi higher education institutions. Aspects of this culture include pedagogy, learner preparation for university, materials, strategies used in class and technology. Pedagogically, the Saudi Arabian learning culture views learning as approximating the transfer of information from the teacher to a learner. Hamdan (2014, p.204) describes the Saudi system of education as reflecting the banking approach to education outlined by Freire (1970) in that it lacks teacher-student dialogue and is led by 'transmission of uncontested knowledge from professors to students, [which] depends heavily on rote learning, and generally fails to impart critical-and analytical-thinking skills'. Hamdan argues that this recourse to an 'instrumental, teacher focused pedagogy' is the source of

learner passivity. In fact, the emphasis is on educational outcomes based on learner achievements evaluated via an examination system, and this is no different in EFL learning (Darandari and Murphy, 2013). With learning being seen as a matter of receiving knowledge, it follows that the assessment of that knowledge is also seen as reproduction of the taught knowledge under exam conditions.

Learner preparation for university studies is based upon intensive year-long study with a compulsory focus on EFL skills. Saudi students attending higher education establishments in their country, for instance universities or colleges, are commonly required to undertake a yearly course of study before commencement of their university major degree courses (Alshehri, 2013). This aims to prepare students for the university level degree courses, surmounting the distance that inevitably occurs between secondary education and tertiary education. English skills are taught compulsorily on this course, featuring a heavy teaching and learning schedule (Alshehri, 2013).

With reference to materials, it is easy to see why these might pose a significant challenge in the light of the explanation offered by Morris (2011, p.13-14) as to the limitations on what Saudi learners can discuss, think and write about. Morris notes that the religion-focused curriculum' which offers 'little encouragement for problem solving and critical thinking' prevalent in the Saudi context leads to the avoidance of any topic deemed inimical to religion and even politics. The recourse to the very limited 'safe' topics that can be discussed or used in class means that learners lack the ability to think very much or to move beyond the simple 'regurgitation of well-worn, non-offensive ideas'.

In terms of particular teaching approaches towards English, Saudi educators utilise the social constructivist approach, with an emphasis on communication activities, but it must be noted that this does not mean that they have fully abandoned traditional grammar-as-translation methods or audio-lingual methods (Bakarman, 2004, cited in Alshehri, 2013). The Arabic language is not permitted in the learning environment. This is a relatively new development that has been introduced by Saudi policymakers who consider that speaking only English encourages optimum English language learning (Jenkins, 2010).

In terms of technology, Ageel (2011, p.56) reports that while the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has made considerable investment in ensuring learner access to electronic sources of information, considerable resistance to the use of Internet technologies is

identified amongst teachers. One reason for this reluctance to integrate technology in their teaching stems from cultural misgivings over the use of the Internet in a setting, wherein the primary goal of education is seen as being related to the meeting of religious rather than societal needs.

Having examined the psychological and cultural factors of influence upon the formation of EFL learner attitudes, the final section of this chapter explores five pedagogical approaches. These approaches are recommended because various studies on family-school partnerships (St. Clair and Jackson, 2006), peer influence (Bekleyan, 2004; Bartram, 2006), cooperative learning (Zuo, 2011; Bolukbas et al., 2011), fostering learner autonomy (i Macià et al., 2003; Lee, 1998), use of instructional technologies (Al Sulami, 2016) and Extensive Reading (Yamashita, 2013; Rahmany et al., 2013) suggest that these help in enhancing EFL learner attitudes towards language learning.

2.3   Pedagogical approaches to improving higher education Saudi EFL student attitudes

Five pedagogical approaches including family-school partnerships, peer collaborations, cooperative learning, fostering learning autonomy, use of instructional technologies and Extensive Reading are reported to be useful in helping to improve EFL learner attitudes towards learning English. Family and schools' partnerships, premised on the idea of cooperation, coordination and collaboration with educators improve opportunities for the learners across multiple domains (Kim et al., 2012, p.3) by influencing learner 'outcomes through the development of cross-system supports and continuities across settings'. As the motivation to learn is 'socially distributed [and] created within cultural systems of activities involving the mediation of others' (Rueda and Moll, 1994, p.131), peer collaborations shape how learners perceive and experience attitudes of peers towards foreign language learning with an attendant effect upon their 'own FLL orientation, attitudes and motivation' (Young, 1994).

Defined as a 'socially structured exchange of information' involving learners in groups and holding them accountable for personal learning and working to motivate the learning of others (Olsen and Kagan, 1992, p.8), Cooperative Learning improves 'attitudes toward the subject' and lowers 'anxiety and prejudice' (Oxford, 1997, p.445). Learner autonomy, which means 'becoming aware of, and identifying, one's strategies, needs, and goals as a learner, and having the opportunity to reconsider and refashion approaches and procedures for

optimal learning' (Thanasoulas, 2000, p.11) is also considered 'a key element in language learning process', (Salimi and Ansari, 2015). The use of instructional technology represents the 'optimal medium for the application of constructivist principles to learning (Murphy, 1997, p.3) as it encourages learners 'to navigate, create, and construct their unique knowledge base' while accessing Internet-led content, learning experiences and tools (Conceição-Runlee and Daley 1998, p.39). Extensive Reading (ER) is believed to benefit learner autonomy. Maley (2009, paras. 4-10) observes that ER helps in this regard because it allows learners to choose the reading material, to stop and start a text whenever they wish, while reading at a comfortable speed and offers comprehensible input in a language the learners may not encounter excessively beyond the classroom. ER also develops their general language competence, general knowledge and lexis development and their writing. The next section will look at these pedagogical approaches in more detail.

2.3.1 Establishing family-school partnership and peer collaborations to promote EFL

Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997) propose that family or peer influence contributes to foreign language learning success. According to an Australian government report (2008, p.2) titled *Family-schools partnership framework: A guide for schools and families*, partnerships between family and schools can be defined as 'collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at a school'. On the other hand, peer influence can be extended through peer collaborations, which have been defined as learning situations involving learners working in collaboration within a pedagogical context to attain co-constructed understanding, termed convergence (Webb and Palinscar, 1996). Within the literature, there has been a move towards creating a family-school partnership to promote better learning at the school. Such an approach places an emphasis on 'collaborative problem solving and shared decision-making strategies' to further the learning of students, with a particular focus on relationship building (Christenson, 2002, p.7).

In examining the challenges faced by schools in collaborating with Somali immigrant families in the US so as to improve English Language Learners (ELL) outcomes, Hutchins (2015) found that parental involvement and collaboration with schools was valued by teachers and parents alike as influencing learner outcomes.

Here it may be useful to draw upon some of the strategies outlined by Breiseth, Robertson and Lafond (2011) for engaging the families of English language learners (ELLs) who have arrived as immigrants in an English-speaking country. These strategies include integrating the cultural traditions of the families, demonstrating that the families' native language is considered important, creating ways for ELL parents to volunteer or to participate in the school and identifying ways for ELL parents to take on leadership roles in the school context.

While these strategies are outlined with reference to ELL learners, they hold equally true for the parents of EFL learner in the Saudi Arabian context as learning EFL in a country where the home language, Arabic, is so intertwined with culture and identity, it is important to create a nexus amongst stakeholders so that EFL is learnt more effectively. This is because a foreign society's norms are mirrored within the family unit and are disseminated through education (Platsidou et al., 2016). Moreover, as Van Patten and Williams (2007) also believe, socio-cultural theory suggests that any learner's active involvement in cultural, linguistic and previously documented contexts formed through the conglomeration of family and peers and educational establishments collectively will essentially reform that learner's mental attitude positively or negatively.

On this note, Dörnyei (2001) claims that the expectations of the family, which also affect the amount of support that a learner receives in this direction, moulds the motivation component of their attitude towards learning in their choice of goal achievement and their intention to learn. Notably too, Kormos, Kiddle and Csizer (2011) identified encouragement from parents as key to producing learning that is positively motivated, thereby reflecting the learner's positive attitude. Positive encouragement can easily influence learners' knowledge direction, attitudes to learning, their view of a foreign culture and their ideal L2 self.

Based on the findings of an attitudinal survey of 295 French and German language learners at schools in England, the Netherlands and Germany, Bartram (2006, p.52) found that 'the effect of peer impressions on language attitudes is important and needs to be taken seriously by schools and language teachers'. For instance, survey results showed that Dutch and German students held the view that French was a feminine language, thereby resulting in fewer boys choosing to take up French as a foreign language. Peer influence on language learners can also be quite significant given the fact that the manner in which learners deploy strategies for learning can depend on social as well as situational factors (Ellis, 2008). With the key role of interaction advanced in this understanding, it is important to put peer

influence to effective use by embedding it within cooperative training strategies in which peers work together to improve their English language learning.

A study by Nguyen and Sato (2016, p.49) examined the changes in learners' beliefs about EFL learning following strategy training in a range of learning strategies focused on listening, communication, reading and discussion. The participants were first year university students, who met once a week to engage in activities centred on song/rhythm practice succeeded by pair work in which learners shared their experiences and tried out strategies they had received training in. The class concluded with literature circles wherein students worked together in groups of five with designated, rotated roles of 'discussion leader, summariser, passage person, connector and word master', reflecting on their understandings of a textbook chapter. They were then required to individually write a reflection log on what they had learnt and their experience of using new strategies outside the class. Nguyen and Sato (2016, p.61) found that 'peer that the cooperative strategy training course played a significant role in changing student beliefs about English language learning'. For instance, it was found that as peers talked to each other during the pair and group activities, their beliefs experienced a shift with a lot of the learners wanting 'to try out new things that their classmates recommended to have a better way to study English' (p.60).

2.3.2   Encouraging cooperative learning

The second of the pedagogical approaches selected for discussion in thesis as the means to improve EFL language learner attitudes is Cooperative Learning (CL). A number of works that serve to provide support for the use of cooperative learning in the foreign language classroom have been authored. Prominent amongst these texts are books by McCafferty et al. (2006) and Gillies (2007). While McCafferty et al. provide guidance for applying the principles of cooperative learning to language teaching, Gillies offers a well-theorised account of the efficacy of cooperative learning that can enable teachers interested in applying the approach to counter resistance linked to the purported difficulty of its implementation and apparent threat to teacher beliefs in learner individualism and competition (Kohn, 1992). Balkcom (1992, para. 1) defines cooperative learning as a strategy for teaching, which puts students of heterogeneous levels of ability in groups to better understand the subject by using a range of learning activities. Balkcom points out that each group member is not only responsible for their own learning, but also that of their peers in the group. Roger and Johnson (1994, p.2) have highlighted that key elements or principles of this approach include

positive interdependence, face to face interaction, individual accountability and personal responsibility towards achievement of group goals, interpersonal and group skills and group processing. Positive interdependence allows students to develop the feeling that they need one another, access shared resources and experience assigned roles, collective goals and joint rewards. Students also experience the benefits of facing one another in a group seating arrangement in order to interact and pursue group goals. Being accountable for the success of the group outcomes makes learners more responsible. Cooperative learning also allows the development of skills needed to work with other people in addition to processing tasks in collaboration with peers and colleagues.

The grounds for the definition provided by Balkcom (1992) were laid by the work of Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1984) who conceptualised cooperative learning as involving collaborative work on the accomplishment of common goals with a view to achieving mutually beneficial outcomes, describing it as 'the instructional use of small groups that allows students to work together to maximize their own and each other's learning'. The key components of this strategy comprise responsibility of the learners towards their learning as well as that of their peers, constructive dependence on one another, interpersonal skills, face-to-face interaction and processing in groups. In this connection, the concept of ZPD or Zone of Proximal Development originated by Vygotsky is of particular relevance and utility (for definition of ZPD see Section 2.1.1). Discussing ZPD with reference to the foreign language classroom, Cirocki (2016, p.35) explains that ZPD harnesses the dynamics of 'socially mediated interaction' to enable the construction of meaning in a process that brings 'experts come into social interaction […] with novices to assist them in both language learning and cognitive development'. Cirocki (2016, p.35) emphasises that ZPD, when considered in the context of learning in the classroom, is actualised not in the physical space of the classroom but rather in the 'purposeful tasks occurring in it'. It is achieved through 'collaborative problem-solving tasks that set up the ZPD for the participants of a class culture' (Cirocki, 2016, p.35). In addition to enabling learners to learn more effectively with the support of knowledgeable others, the collaborative learning entailed in ZPD allows 'learners to personalise their learning experiences' and to 'examine their own self-concept and its expression' (Cirocki, 2016, p.44).

Perceived competence can be considered as the 'belief of individuals in their ability to produce results, reach their goals and complete tasks in the second language (L2) whether

inside or outside the classroom' (Platsidou and Kantaridou, 2014, p.254). From a cognitive perspective, these authors contend that perceived competence reflects learners' perceptions, or attitudes of their L2 proficiency. This is particularly relevant in the EFL learning environment, where young learners begin to adopt perceived competence through the influence of significant others, and, perhaps because it has internalised itself in young learners, it influences older learners' learning outcomes.

Similarly, MacIntyre et al. (2002) discovered that the greatest increase in perceived competence of the L2 was between the 7th to the 8th grade, and Diseth (2011) in a study of undergraduate students indicated that their perceived competence reflected their future learning success because of interceding motivation variables and learning strategies. In the latter case, it seems that these students' attitudes could have altered in a positive direction due to the intervening effect of motivation, which manifested itself as perceived competence to these learners. Taking this further, it can be argued that whilst research reveals that perceived competence in learners is influential in their learning success, it is silent upon the actual variables that may control its positive effects in learners.

In this context, the use of cooperative learning can be valuable to encourage language learners in achieving their study outcomes. A study conducted by Bayat (2004, p.ii) to inquire into the 'effects of cooperative learning activities on student attitudes towards English reading courses and cooperative learning' demonstrated that cooperative learning not only positively influence learner attitudes towards the course itself but also the participants' attitudes towards the use of cooperative activities to learn.

In the context of this study, the use of tasks (Cirocki, 2016) involving collaborative problem solving would lead to group work based on cooperation. Since collaborative learning of this nature is rooted in constructivism with a specific emphasis on the significant role of social interaction in catalysing effective learning, using tasks and group work to accomplish this would allow learners to take advantage of the benefits of activating ZPD paralleled 'by positive group interdependence' entailed in working together on problem solving (Brame and Biel, 2015). A further advantage of collaborative task-solving as Goodman, Bird and Goodman (1991 in Cirocki, 2016, p.36) suggest is that 'learning occurs in relevant and meaningful tasks […] since these enable novices and experts to construct products with their own intrinsic values'.

2.3.3 Fostering learner autonomy

In examining the selected pedagogical approaches for positively shaping the attitudes of EFL learners in the Emirati context, fostering learner autonomy stands out as a particularly useful approach for achieving such outcomes due to a number of reasons. There is considerable support for this idea in current literature, and the concept and its implementation have been variously explored. Lamb and Reinders (2008) provide a state of the art review of the literature on the importance of teacher and learner autonomy in addition to considering the nature of the concept as it evolves within a range of learning settings in an increasingly dynamic and globalised world. More recently, Morrison and Navarro (2014) have attempted to provide the means to foster learner autonomy through a focus on developing a classroom and teacher-led capacity for self-directed learning amongst learners via the use of self-access materials. In view of the growing prevalence of technology in education, Hamilton (2014) has sought to establish the theoretical basis for an interface between fostering learner autonomy and language learning within a virtual learning environment. Closer to home, within the Omani context, Bildi (2017) has demonstrated the efficacy of the use of reading circles as a means to creating greater learning autonomy and more effective language learning amongst Omani leaners.

In its earliest manifestations during the 1980s, the concept of learner autonomy was mostly linked to 'adult education and self-access learning systems' with the emphasis being on 'learners doing things on their own' (Little, 2007, p.14). However, the next decade saw a shift to learner autonomy being about leaners doing things 'not necessarily on their own but for themselves' (Little, 2007, p.14) and the 'common thread run[ning] through the increasingly diverse literature' became '*the ability to take charge of one's own learning*' (Little, 2007, p.16, emphasis in original). The work of Henri Holec published in the form of a report by the Council of Europe in 1979. Holec (1981, p.3 in Reinders, p.45) conceptualised learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' entailing 'a potential capacity to act in a given situation–in our case learning–and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation'.

While this was considered to be a 'foundational definition' (Little, 2007, p.16), it was seen as being premised on the idea of 'learner self-direction and control of the learning process' (Little, n.d., p.2). On the other hand, Little (n.d., p.3) saw the 'essence of learner autonomy [as being] willing, proactive and reflective involvement in one's own learning', which

differed from Holec's conceptualisation in that learner autonomy was seen as the means to harness learner agency rather than the actual goal. Little's conceptualisation of learner autonomy is also particularly relevant for the Emirati context because he views it not just as an individual-cognitive phenomenon, but also as a social-interactive one, thereby accommodating 'the learner's sense of identity and the knowledge and experience he or she has gained outside the classroom' and the use of the target language as the 'medium of learner agency in the autonomy classroom'. The agency view means that language learning and the development of learner autonomy are seen as indistinguishable and nothing less than 'two sides of the same coin' (Little, n.d., p.3).

Self-regulated learning premised on learner proactivity, engagement and reflectivity can serve as the means by which EFL learners may learn English more effectively as well as affect improvement in their attitudes towards learning English. Cirocki (2016, p.51) presents a number of approaches for developing learner autonomy within the mainstream EFL context. These approaches are learner-related, classroom-related, resource-related and technology-related. In this context, Cirocki (2016, p.55-77) suggests a number of approaches that can be used to enable learners to manage their learning and to learn to reflect on what they are learning. These include the learner-centred approach, the classroom-centred approach, the resource-centred approach and the technology-centred approach.

The learner-related approach aims to encourage learners to become self-reliant and independent of teachers through a teacher-organised development of a repertoire of skills. Cirocki suggests that such self-reliance can be developed through i) cognitive, ii) metacognitive, iii) social and iv) affective strategies. Cognitive strategies entail interaction with the learning input and can take the form of notetaking, summarising and deductive reasoning. Metacognitive strategies, which relate to planning and self-assessment and self-monitoring can range from preparing schedules of work, language-learning journals to self-reports. Interactions and cooperation are the focus of social strategies, which can take the form of games, role plays and simulations. Lastly, affective strategies pertain to the emotional conditions and experiences in learning. An example of this strategy-in-use is the utilisation of stress questionnaires. The learner-centred approach is achieved through strategy training. This can include helping learners develop their language and learning cultures as well as methodological competence. Such training can also take the form of teaching learners to reflect and to communicate upon their learning experiences and enabling them to self-

select appropriate strategies. It can further include raising their awareness, changing their attitudes and developing their ability to change roles within the language-learning situation.

On the other hand, the classroom-related approach, according to Cirocki, pertains to developing the learners' decision-taking processes and planning as well as assessment of classroom learning. This can entail co-teaching, negotiation of the syllabus, critical reflection and assessment through self-marked tests, diaries or self-rating scales. In this context, peer feedback also serves to enhance learners' critical analysis and reflectivity. At the cognitive level, this approach fosters the ability to make decisions about the learning process, whereas at the organisational level, this relates to the management of the classroom. Last, but not least, at the procedural level, this can relate to making decisions about the learning materials.

The resource-related approach, according to Cirocki, entails the use of self-access learning centres as well as self-access materials, which can foster learner autonomy as they help to develop learner confidence and competence. The technology-related approach is linked to the increasing prevalence and use of technologies within the foreign language-learning classroom. Cirocki discusses the importance and usefulness of the blended learning approach to deliver the syllabus. New technologies, which can foster learner autonomy include the use of interactive whiteboards, email/skype, blogs and wikis as well as technology based materials. This approach can develop cross-cultural collaboration, interaction as well as literacies through the use of digital tools. Empirical research has demonstrated the effectiveness of the kinds of approaches to fostering learner autonomy suggested in the foregoing discussion. Some of these studies are discussed below.

In a study aimed at examining the impact of 'integrated strategy training as a means to foster greater autonomy' amongst first year university level EFL students (p.57), Oxbrow and Juarez (2010) found an increase in the intrinsic motivation of the participating learners (p.69). This was found to be significant because, in contrast to extrinsic motivation which promotes language learning in a time-limited and classroom-restricted manner, intrinsic motivation helps to stimulate learner interest in the 'target language and a favourable attitude towards the target culture', thereby appearing to catalyse 'greater language learning success' over a longer period of time (Oxbrow and Juarez, 2010). This is the kind of attitudinal change, which is desirable in the context of Saudi EFL learners in order to bring about effective language learning.

It has been found that 'metacognition' or self-monitoring serves as a useful strategy for catalysing effective learning (ARIS, 2000). In the ARIS information sheet, it is suggested that teachers should consciously model and verbalise how they use appropriate learning strategies, while incorporating earlier learning and choosing materials amenable to metacognitive strategies. Such a strategy should also 'encourage students to verbalise and share their thinking strategies; provide students with feedback about how they accomplished a task; and support learners with metacognitive language and frameworks' (ARIS, 2000, p.1). Using this strategy, Kunitake (2006, p.10) made use of the teacher action student cycle based on Breen (1989) and Skehan (1998) to focus on effective use of strategy to achieve short term goals for EFL learning with three Japanese learners. A similar teacher action student cycle making use of modelling and verbalising of learning strategies, incorporating reflection can be used by the EFL teachers and learners in the study context for more effective language learning

2.3.4   Integrating educational technology

The use of educational technology in the EFL classroom in the Emirati context represents another pedagogical approach that can be harnessed to improve the language learning experience as well as the attitudes of the EFL learners. There is considerable useful literature to support the use and application of educational technologies. For instance, Dudeney and Hockly (2007) provide a useful and practical introduction to maximising the efficacy of digital learning in the classroom, offering not just guidance as to the use of the Internet, emails, podcasts, blogs and whiteboards in addition to pedagogical guidance for implementing these. Offering a more theorised account of the increasing integration of technologies within the language classroom, Al Mahrooqi and Troudi (2014) present a detailed overview of the challenges entailed in this integration as well as insights into the optimal conditions for utilising these technologies.

Motteram (2013, p.5) observes that in the:

> 'early part of the 21st century the range of technologies available for use in language learning and teaching has become very diverse and the ways that they are being used in classrooms all over the world […] have become central to language practice'.

According to the CIE Education Brief (n.d., para. 1), 'digital technology in the classroom' (DTC) means 'digital processing systems that encourage active learning, knowledge

construction, inquiry, and exploration on the part of the learners, and which allow for remote communication as well as data sharing' to take place between instructors and students who may be geographically apart. Blake, speaking with specific reference to the language classroom (2013, p.9), observes that language learning is supported by three significant technological platforms in the contemporary era. These include 'the web, CD-ROM or hypermedia applications, and network-based communication (i.e., e-mail, electronic mailing list, user groups, MOOs, chat programs, blogs, and wikis' (Blake, 2013, p.9). Blake notes that the web offers 'authentic target language sources', which can be used for 'content stimulation and a means for further inquiry' (p.9), while the CD/DVD platform delivers digitally-enriched applications (p.10) and the CMC platform allows 'L2 students can transcend the spatial and temporal confines of the classroom via the Internet'.

Improving student attitudes towards learning English in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia requires taking a focused approach. This means that educators will play an important part in helping learners to realise the significance EFL will play in their future. In general, English is spoken as a part of the basic language utilised inside the business world. Those who understand this will be motivated when they perceive its positive impact on their future. Alongside this, educators need to ensure that learners are aware that all knowledge, including foreign language learning, is adaptive in nature, and can thus be construed as an experience rather than a solid fact (von Glasersfeld, 1995). This is because within all learners the adaptive nature of knowledge can be created internally and drawn upon by the learner to achieve learning success.

To help encourage students to effectively maintain positive attitudes requires educators to utilise a combination of approaches. According to Al-Asmari, (2013), one of the most successful ways this can occur is through intensive practices utilising a number of techniques. The most notable include interactive activities, group works, audio-visual tools and online resources. To this end, educators must be friendly and flexible in their approaches to reaching out to students. Those who do this will drastically improve their students' capacity to understand various aspects in their capacity to utilise and apply it autonomously. This is when they will feel greater motivation in the process.

Al-Asmari (2013) also observes that Saudi learners prefer friendly educators who are attentive to learner needs and stimulate learner interest in EFL learning by offering more interactive activities in addition to textbook exercises. Their preferences also include the

consistent use of L2 in the classroom for greater learning opportunities. Al-Asmari suggests that teachers should help learners identify opportunities for using the English they learn in real world settings as well as online. In addition, they should create opportunities through special interest groups to provide target language practice in the Saudi context. Educators must use a variety of tools and attitudes when teaching English to students inside Saudi Arabia so that learners come to understand the value of EFL learning and develop positive beliefs towards English during the process.

In many cases, the use of the Internet is an effective way for improving student attitudes and beliefs when it comes to studying foreign languages. The Internet is able to assist students to grasp the concepts being taught through access to websites and videos that allow for a type of visual experience rather than sole reliance on written down descriptions. These visual representations allow students to utilise their own socio-cultural constructs to gather meaning for possible foreign examples for learning English.

In this context, Yulin (2013) inquired into the impact of combining technology as well as social experience on the motivation of 315 Taiwanese university students to learn English and found that:

> 'learning with technology, technology experience and social experience had positive relationship with their desire to learn English, and learning with technology and social experience were also strong predictors of desire to learn English' (Yulin, 2013, p.169).

The findings of this study support the use of technology within the study context to influence the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners towards language learning. Technology integration also ties in with the use of cooperative learning activities in the EFL context discussed in Section 2.8.1.2.

These strategies also allow the accessing of the individual's unique way of understanding and make it easier for them to apply concepts on their own. At the same time, they see how the real world embraces these ideas (Albadri, 2013). Exemplified in Albadri's (2013) study was the fact that the Internet can empower female students to develop attitudes that are more positive. This is because they can learn about various English concepts on their own, which allows them to build upon their nascent knowledge.

These insights are useful as they indicate that educators need to utilise an all-encompassing, multi-pronged approach to be more successful. Those who do so will see their students develop more positive attitudes about what they are learning and its importance in their lives (Albadri, 2013). In his study, Albadri found that to reach out to specific demographics (such as women), someone from the same demographic should be a part of the process, namely the educator. This person can help to reduce stress and relate to the students more effectively. When this happens, they can understand specific concepts more effectively and will have positive attitudes (Al-Jarf, 2006). For instance, Al-Jarf (2006) conducted a study on the way this can influence perceptions in and outside of the classroom. He determined that students would connect with the educator more effectively if they were from the same racial group or gender. Al-Jarf investigated the effects of female freshman student enrolment figures in EFL programmes on student achievement. He found that female faculty educators had an impact on the learners' ability to learn and apply foreign language concepts on their own, as female educators represented role models.

Furthermore, Farooq (2012) found that the Internet is an effective strategy for improving student attitudes when it comes to learning foreign languages. This is because it reaches out to the student differently and builds upon many of the concepts, which are covered in class. However, most educators do not have training in these areas and they are reluctant to utilise the Internet or new technologies in any way.

In view of such attitudes, learners may develop negative perceptions of the materials (Farooq, 2012). Farooq suggests that a new approach must be taken, which involves having the classroom offer an introduction to specific ideas. Then, the class must utilise the Internet to build upon these concepts and improve their connection with them. When this happens, the students are able to connect these ideas from repeating the material to them using numerous approaches. Farooq observes how training educators in integrating e-learning technologies in their instruction and classrooms can improve the learning of English. These insights demonstrate how the Internet can be effective in changing student attitudes when it comes to learning foreign languages. However, the Internet will only be as effective when educators are trained in understanding and applying these concepts as part of their teaching philosophy.

Al-Jarf (2006) also found that the smaller class sizes help to improve student attitudes. This is because the educators can offer more attention to students and help those who are struggling. In situations where they are from the same racial or ethnic groups, these tactics help them to

develop attitudes that are more positive in the process. To improve student attitudes, it is imperative for educators to be trained in different techniques. This means that they have to be ready to integrate specific tools to enhance the quality of the information presented. One of the most notable relates to development in the areas of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which consists of applying various technology platforms with traditional and enhanced practices. The basic idea is to provide students with a more interactive experience. As Alshumaimeri (2008, p.) notes, 'staff development programs in support of teachers in the process of orienting to technological advances in EFL classes also must be considered if learning is to be meaningful and effective'. Training educators can enhance their ability to work with students. At the same time, they must understand how and when to apply specific technology in order to achieve these objectives. Once this takes place, students will have more favourable attitudes about learning English.

Whilst educators may also be referred to as instructors, in actuality, they serve as facilitators of the learning process (Brown and Palincsar, 1987). Hence, educators do not transmit knowledge to students, since knowledge is an acquisition based on experiences. Rather, educators facilitate the learning of material by students, guiding them to understand concepts based on their own knowledge constructs (Forrest-Pressley and Waller, 2013).

According to constructionist theory, reality is comprised of the experiences of the individual. To that end, educators guide students to create their own realities of the material so that it is learned (Gergerly and Gergerly, 2005). Therefore, role of an educator is to motivate, discuss, guide, challenge, support, and provide examples for students where students are able to create their own realities. It follows from this that learning is enhanced when an environment where various perspectives are represented is fostered. Rather than one perspective, other perspectives open students up to other possible realities, thereby expanding interpretation beyond individual knowledge constructs. More than one example gives students options they may not have considered before and helps in further and more sophisticated development of knowledge constructs (Gergerly and Gergerly, 2005). Hence, adaptability and comprehension are enhanced through an awareness of multiple perspectives (Brown and Palincsar, 1987). Meanwhile, for learning to be successful, students must be able to create mental constructions of reality for adequate learning of subjects. Since students are able to connect the material to internal indicators, comprehension is perceived to be greater and more personal, and students

develop improved attitudes since they are better able to understand and apply the material. Combined, these factors together point to more favourable student attitudes.

To help students develop favourable attitudes to learning, content and skills need to be relevant and applicable to the learner's environment. Knowledge will be better attained when the materials have been tailored to the student's culture and existing situation. If knowledge is to enhance one's adaptation and functioning, then the knowledge can be attained. When teaching is relevant to the student, there is an increase in motivation (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996), as the student begins to appreciate the need for certain knowledge. Relevant experience provides the foundation for cognitive procedures, social knowledge, and personal experiences that will allow individuals to function better within their home base. Students learn better when they have high self-esteem and are able to motivate themselves. Teachers should encourage students to become self-sufficient, develop the ability to control their learning process, and gain awareness of their own abilities and how to challenge themselves. Within constructionist theory, learners must be active participants in the creation of meaning they place on ideas and the knowledge they acquire (Gergerly and Gergely, 2005). Learning is further enhanced when students are able to have a personal stake in the process, are encouraged to manage their learning, and are able to connect to personal representations so as to aid interpretation and interact with others for wider options in knowledge acquisition. When students, specifically adult learners, take responsibility for their learning and are aware of their progress, while being able to connect to the material, negative attitudes can be minimised. This is especially true when teaching foreign language where frustration arises easily due to differences in cultural representations and social norms.

Learners themselves can improve their attitudes to learning through individual exploration and organisation of their unique personal experiences in order to evoke a mental attitude, or mind-set, favouring development and growth. Learners have to the able to think creatively, apply previous knowledge to new situations and catalogue new experiences for future use. In other words, they should build upon existing foundation and structure of knowledge for advancement to the next level. This metacognition, where one regulates, mediates, and is aware of self, is an essential element of the learning process (Forrest-Pressley and Waller, 2013) because it is a means by which learners' negative attitudes could become positive if the educator can provide external stimuli such as introducing communicative, real life activities to exemplify knowledge in real terms.

2.3.5   Promoting Extensive Reading

Another pedagogical approach that can prove useful in the Saudi EFL context is Extensive Reading. Susser and Robb (1990) offer a working definition of the Extensive Reading (ER) approach 'as a language teaching/learning procedure is that it is reading (a) of large quantities of material or long texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text'. Day, Bamford, Renandya, Jacobs and Yu (1998) define the Extensive Reading (ER) approach as 'the independent reading of a large quantity of material for information or pleasure'. Day (2015, paras. 3-4) traces the genesis of the ER approach to Harold Palmer's view that books were for 'language study and real-world experiences', whereas the pioneering of the ER methodology is attributed to Michael West who used the term 'supplementary reading' for Extensive Reading. Day also notes that the earlier conceptions of Extensive Reading made much use of terms such as 'reading a great deal, reading quickly, and real-world experiences', which ideas have persisted in modern conceptualisations of the approach. According to Day and Bramford (2002, p.137), the ER approach has several key principles, which include accessible material, variety of reading material on a range of topics, learner freedom to choose reading texts, Extensive Reading and reading is related to pleasure, information and comprehension. Other principles include a faster reading speed, individual and silent reading, orientation and guidance of learners by students and teacher as role model of reader.

Blair (2009) observes that research on the ER approach reports multiple benefits for the learners. These include enhancement of learner vocabulary and associative lexical learning, improvement in grammatical competence and increase in learner autonomy, motivation and confidence due to the fact that the texts are self-selected. The increase in motivation also has a positive influence on learner attitudes towards learning the language. In this regard, Takase (2007) evaluated the motivation of 219 female high school learners who were enrolled in an ER programme for one academic year. Takase found that participating in the ER programme significantly influenced the learners' 'intrinsic motivation for first language (L1) reading and second language (L2) reading' in a positive way. In his review of nine empirical studies on the 'book flood' approach to improving learner reading, Elley (1991, p.397) concluded the development of 'very positive [learner] attitudes toward books as they raised their literacy levels in English'. More specifically, Elley found that when learners were 'immersed in meaningful text, without tight controls over syntax and vocabulary, children appear to learn the language incidentally, and to develop positive attitudes toward books' (p.375).

According to Day and Bamford (1998, p.6), the aim of the ER approach is to make it possible for learners to read as much as possible in the language they are learning and enjoy the activity in the process. In this approach, reading is considered to be intrinsically rewarding, with learners doing the reading on their own or under the guidance, but not control, of their teachers who serve as role models in addition to monitoring their progress. Learners not only read extensively but they also select the material to be read on their own, exploring a wide range of genres as well as topics at a level that they can comprehend (Day and Bamford, 1998, p.7). Using this approach in the Saudi EFL context would help to positively influence learner attitudes towards learning EFL, in addition to building up their lexis and grammatical competence. Citing Al Yacouq (2012), Jenkins, Lambe and Badri (2013) observe that the Saudi Arabian culture is primarily an oral culture in which 'reading and writing are not widely utilised/practiced skills'. In view of this, ER programmes can also help Saudi EFL learners to develop these competencies within EFL, which culturally views effective language learning as being demonstrated in the ability to speak and write competently.

2.4 Conclusion

In view of the discussion in this Chapter, it can be concluded that the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language is a complex undertaking for educators and students alike. Taking as its theoretical trajectory the understanding that reality is socially constructed, a view rooted in the philosophy of social constructivism, this Chapter reviewed the literature identifying the impact of social and cultural factors on determining learner attitudes towards learning a foreign language. The literature identified that emotions such as language learner anxiety influence EFL learning, and learner attitudes towards foreign language learning are influenced not only by opinions of interactants beyond the classroom, including family and peers, but also by the historical and cultural narratives of the wider culture. In the case of Saudi Arabia, which formed the focus of the study contained in this thesis, this context was identified as being led by both Saudi culture and by a Middle East Islamic culture. However, Saudi culture was not found to be at odds with key EFL objectives, while it was observed that a number of pedagogical approaches exist to address the internal and external factors that influence the formation and/or the manipulation of, learners' attitudes to learning. Thus, insights from the literature reviewed corroborated the view that EFL learners are influenced by several social, cultural and psychological factors, which, in turn, determine their attitudes towards EFL learning.

It should be noted that whilst the studies reviewed certainly offered much valuable enlightenment on this complicated issue, many of these, which can be considered attitudinal studies exploring EFL learner attitudes in an Arabian context, relied on questionnaire surveys, a method of data collection which tends to provide a broad rather than in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. Therefore, this current study took a phenomenological approach with a focus on the learners' 'lived experience' and used interviews, diaries and life histories, which is discussed in Chapter 3 to explore participant perspectives. This augments its vital contribution to a body of literature presently reflective of methodological restrictions.

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology, including paradigm, approach, and data collection methods as well as procedures that were adopted in this study.

Chapter 3.   Research methodology

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology adopted in this study to inquire into the attitudes of Saudi students towards learning English. This chapter first provides the background to the research questions and explicates the significance of these to the study, progressing to the presentation of the rationale of the study and its research contributions. Subsequently, it examines and justifies the phenomenological research approach adopted within this research, including its key methods. These included the use of semi-structured interviews, narratives and diaries. Further, this chapter evaluates the research rationale and the research questions, and presents the details of the pilot study, participants, procedure and instruments, data analysis, ethical issues and the study limitations. The next section summarises the background and context of the study in relation to the methodological choices undergirding the research design.

3.1   Contextual background

Section 3.1 revisits the study's contextual background to highlight the importance of student attitudes towards learning EFL in the Saudi context, thereby anticipating the grounds that are explored more fully in the discussion of the research rationale (see Section 3.2). The EFL teaching and learning reforms launched in 2008 by the state in KSA led to massive changes in pedagogy and learning. Yet, whilst the changes appeared enlightening and progressive, within the school establishments these reforms gave rise to clear challenges for educators. For example, educators were pressurised to reap rapid results, and the new teaching methods imposed were unclear, while the application of the methods demotivated students and teachers confused by the major pedagogical transformations entailed in the reforms. Notwithstanding the fact, as observed by Altayar (2003, cited in Alnahdi, 2014), that Saudi Arabian teachers at all levels of education are averse to taking responsibility or displaying enthusiasm for teaching their students, the reforms additionally generated concerns about student attitudes as a potential hurdle to effective implementation (Jenkins, 2008). Indeed, in the current Saudi EFL context, the difficulties being experienced in the effective implementation of EFL reforms can be traced back in large part to student demotivation in EFL learning. This situation in itself has been linked back to a number of societal and cultural factors (Jenkins, 2008), which are related to language.

It has been observed that language is the single most 'important channel of social organisation embedded in the culture of the community where it is used' (Dörnyei, 1998,

p.118). In view of this, it can be concluded that when learners undertake to learn a second language, their attitudes and learning are influenced by their L1 culture as well as the culture of the L2. There are many reasons for this. For instance, as Dörnyei (1998) has pointed out, not only is language a system of communication taught at school but also it is integral to the identity of the learners in almost everything they do.

In fact, because language is 'also socially and culturally bound', it has been noted that 'language learning [is] a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture' (Dörnyei, 2003, p.3). This is the crux of the issue, which is extremely significant in the case of Saudi EFL learners who attempt to negotiate two very different cultures, including the culture of their birth and that of the second language they are learning. Hence, ambivalence and difficulty in learning English on the part of the Saudi EFL learners may be expected, given that the divergence between their own language and culture and that of English may compel them to view 'learning a new language [as requiring the] learning [of] a new culture and thus a new way of viewing the world' (Spackman, 2002, p.3).

The above discussion lends credence to the idea that the attitudes of Saudi learners are shaped by the imaginable challenges of adjusting to the new 'culture' and perspectival lens of English. This also suggests that learner attitudes and motivations may play a large role in the failure or success of EFL teaching and learning reforms. Against this backdrop, it was seen as essential in this study to map the impact of learner attitudes English language learning stemming from their social and cultural contexts. An in-depth understanding of this was viewed as being of vital importance to the academic literature relating to Saudi learner attitudes with a view to assisting in the ascertainment of how the negative role of attitudes may be minimised in the Saudi EFL learning context.

The current study examined the attitudes of Saudi students towards EFL learning by way of exploring their experiences, perceptions and motivations. The rationale for the study is outlined below in Section 3.2 below.

3.2   Research rationale

In this section, the key reasons necessitating the carrying out of this research are discussed. Before exploring these, there are two important facts related to EFL teaching and learning in KSA that must be highlighted to further our understanding of EFL reform implementation effects. The first is that majority of the EFL educators are non-Arab, and lack familiarity with

the social and cultural factors shaping the attitudes of their learners towards learning English. The second is that there exists considerable student resistance to learning English. Such resistance takes two forms. This is linked not only to the students' learning experiences in the EFL classroom, including factors such as the pedagogy adopted to teach them and the instruction provided by the teachers and learning materials, but also the learners' unexplored social, cultural and linguistic identities and the culture and norms of the second language.

The primary rationale for this study rested upon the following considerations. As EFL learners have been observed in prior academic literature to be influenced by their culture and L1, the culture of the L2 and the attitudes of EFL educators, there was an urgent need to unpack both their experiences of the EFL classroom and the subsequent impact of these on their language learning attitudes. It was found that the vast majority of studies exploring English language learning conducted in Saudi Arabian settings were focused on issues related to learners, largely blaming them for their low accomplishment in the English language (Liton, 2013).

One study that did look beyond learner-related factors was carried out by Khan (2011) who found that many of the challenges faced by EFL educators were attributable to ineffective teaching, poor preparedness of EFL instructors, naiveté as bilingual educators within the Arabic setting, misconception of Arab society, and the inability to understand the needs of the learners. Thus, these findings provided strong grounds for seeking insights into learner experiences in the EFL classroom as an index to better understanding student attitudes towards learning English.

A secondary rationale for the research study is linked to the need for awareness of learner socio-cultural histories and identities and their impact on the language learning process. As L2 learning is a 'social event' (Dornyei, 2003, p.3), the socio-cultural connection deeply influences not only the instructor/learning relationship but also successful mastery of the pedagogical process (Freeman and Johnson, 1998, p.407). In this instance, the influence stems from the intertwining of the social and cultural identities of the students with those of their linguistic identities as L1 and L2 learners. If there is keen awareness on the part of the learners and their teachers of the learners' socio-cultural histories, beliefs combined with cultural and social norms, then there is greater likelihood of EFL instruction, and by extension EFL reforms, succeeding in a context such as the KSA.

Hence, this study was seen as a means of gaining insights into the ways in which learner attitudes were influenced by their learning experiences in the EFL classroom, in addition to identifying how learner histories and identities were contributory factors in the language learning process. These understandings were expected to inform improvements of the existing English programme, teacher preparation programmes, and future EFL reforms/policymaking. In addition, they were projected to play a role in making learners more aware of influences on their language learning process through reflexivity, thereby transforming them into more effective EFL learners. The next section explicates the background for the research questions.

3.3   Research questions

The emergence and the uneven trajectory of English through the Saudi educational landscape between 1940 and 1996 has been ably charted by Al-Haq and Smadi (1996, p.308), who anticipated its subsequent rise in KSA by identifying key facilitators including trade, commerce and international higher education. Moreover, post 9/11 when the eyes of the world looked towards KSA as one of the hubs of ideological extremism, Saudi Arabia was faced with urgent calls for educational reform (Elyas, 2009) so as to furnish a balanced and liberal education to its population of students. Consequently, Saudi Arabia introduced English within academic curricula across the nation, thereby keeping pace with the pre-existing global integration of English within education curricula.

As with all educational reforms, the period of implementation is also a period of transition, and in many cases resistance, for all stakeholders. In view of the complexity of L2 learning due to its social nature and links to culture, it was evident that researching student attitudes could help to index the link between attitudes and successful language learning and to identify ways to improve the situation. Thus, this study focused on students' attitudes and on considering whether a link existed between attitudes and motivation levels in connection to learning English. The research questions framing the study are appended below:

1. What are the main self-reported attitudes of a Saudi University foundation year students towards learning English as a foreign language?

2. What are the factors, according to foundation year students at a Saudi University, which shape their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language?

3. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and their well-being and participation in the classroom?

4. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes and academic performance in EFL classes?

Question 1 (see above) helped to identify how the participating students felt about learning English. It also assisted in identifying the range of attitudes which exist towards learning English as a Foreign Language. Question 2 allowed an exploration of the reasons students attributed to the attitude or attitudes they held towards learning English in their educational context. Question 3 provided data for documenting the students' perspectives on how their attitudes were linked to the nature and quality of their learning experiences in the EFL classroom, and Question 4 provided insights into whether students saw their attitudes and academic performance as having any reciprocity. Having established the backdrop to the research questions addressed in this study, the discussion will now progress to a consideration of the paradigmatic stance and allied research approach adopted in this research.

3.4   Research paradigms and research approach

3.4.1   Research paradigms

Research paradigms represent the overarching frame for research design within any study. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.22) describe a research paradigm as 'the net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises'. The implication of a research paradigm is that it regulates the totality of aspects of the research process, beginning with the central philosophical assumptions underlying the research to the selection of research instruments, participants, and methods of data accumulation and analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). From this perspective, the research paradigm is the overall interpretive framework within which the sum of decisions concerning the research are taken, providing consistency, coherence, and unity among the assorted aspects of the research process.

In line with the above, the research objectives must fit in with the paradigm adopted for the study. The broad objectives of this study were to examine student attitudes and perceptions regarding their beliefs about learning English in relation to their academic progress and to examine the possibility of a relationship between attitudes of students and their academic performance.

The study focused on analysing the varying perspectives of its participants. This means that it relied on primary sources of information. The primary sources examined the focus of information from various participants. The most notable included looking at the participants' responses for their epistemological (scope of knowledge) and cognitive (ability to learn) abilities. Therefore, the study was framed by the specific objectives of analysing student attitudes and perceptions regarding the effect their beliefs about EFL learning could have on their academic progress and by investigating the possibility of correlation and effect between attitudes of students and their academic performance.

This study utilised the 'constructivist-interpretive' paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.20). There are varying assumptions concerning this paradigm with regard to the following points of focus: (1) nature of knowledge or reality (ontology); (2) how knowledge is studied or acquired (epistemology); and (3) relationship between the knower (participant) and the would-be knower (researcher) (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005; Richards, 2009; Robson, 2002a).

Within this paradigm, reality is deemed to consist of multiple realities and to be co-constructed within social contexts (Husserl, 1965). Hence, one of the implications of this understanding is that if participants are placed in their social settings, the researcher is likely to understand how they perceive their experiences and activities better (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Accessing perceptions of participants' lives 'as [they are] lived, felt, undergone, made sense of and accomplished by human beings' (Schwandt, 2001, p.84) is possible through a reliance on participant accounts. Given the emphasis laid upon studying participants in their social settings within interpretivism, such accounts or self-report data can be considered legitimate sources of knowledge according to this perspective.

Therefore, it can be concluded that interpretivism considers qualitative data to be appropriate for serving as the basis for knowledge (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). In view of the above, as the focus of the research was on understanding rather than explaining the impact of language learner attitudes in EFL settings, the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm appeared appropriate given that it is accommodative of self-report data and the role of the researcher as instrument of data collection. The discussion now moves to explaining the research approach adopted in the current study.

3.4.2   Research approach

Within educational research, researchers can make use of two kinds of methodologies, namely quantitative or qualitative (Mujis, 2010, p.1). According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002, p.81), quantitative research can be defined as 'explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically-based methods (in particular statistics)'. Qualitative research focuses on 'understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences' (Merriam, 2009, p.5). As Atkinson, et al. (2001) point out, qualitative research is an 'umbrella term' that refers to a wide range of different methods whose main goal is to help the researcher explore and understand the social reality of cultures, groups of people and individuals. Saldaña (2011) notes that qualitative research leads to data that is mainly, although not exclusively, non-numerical. It can take the form of:

> 'interview transcripts, field notes, and documents, and/or visual materials such as artefacts, photographs, video recordings, and Internet sites', which can help to map experiences of individuals 'in social action and reflexive states' (Saldaña, p.3).

This study made use of the phenomenological qualitative research approach. According to Creswell (2007, p.57), 'a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon', and the focus of phenomenology is on 'what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon'. Phenomenology is deemed to be essentially a qualitative approach as it is 'based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasise[s] the importance of personal perspective and interpretation' (Lester, 1999, p.1).

In the context of this study, the phenomenon universally experienced by the participants is that of learning English as a foreign language within the Saudi context. Langdridge (2013) contends that phenomenology focuses on the lived human experience and on descriptions, rather than on explanations of this phenomenon. Key philosophical perspectives in phenomenology cited by Creswell (2007, pp.58-59) include the: (1) reconceptualisation of the approach as 'a search for wisdom' rather than exploration of the world through scientism; (2) suspension of all philosophical presuppositions about what is real; (3) promotion of the idea that reality does not consist of the separation of subjects and objects; and (4) assertion that reality of an object can only be apprehended within the lived human experience.

Since the focus of the research was on eliciting participant descriptions and participant perspectives, a descriptive phenomenological approach rather than an interpretive phenomenological one was selected to study Saudi students' lived experiences and perceptions of learning EFL and the influence of their social and cultural contexts on language learning. This was because interpretive phenomenology factors in pre-existing researcher knowledge and understandings to reveal meanings in the data in order to produce a rich text-based representation of the studied phenomenon (Kleiman, 2004, cited in Penner and McClement, 2008), whereas descriptive phenomenology does not intrude upon the raw data for interpretation purposes. The latter therefore permitted the categorisation of the participant descriptions into significant statements of the nature of their EFL experiences and attitudes towards language learning (Penner and McClement, 2008).

3.5 Research instruments

The study employed semi-structured interviews, diaries and life histories, and the language used was Arabic (see Appendix). The data collected were also transcribed and coded in Arabic, where applicable. Extracts included in the Results and Discussion Chapters were translated into English for the purposes of this thesis.

3.5.1 Narratives

To understand EFL learner perspectives on learning English, it was considered important to acquire insights into learners' life histories, which have shaped their views, beliefs and perspectives regarding their education and future goals. These retrospective insights were gained by using their life histories as a data collection strategy. This strategy helped to 'detail an individual's life', thereby serving as 'a visual depiction of a life history, displaying events in chronological order and noting the importance, or meaning, of events' (Gramling and Carr, 2004, p.207).

Polkinghorne (1995, p.7) defines this 'storied narrative [as a] linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts'. Within this context, Polkinghorne indicates that the story can constitute narratives that describe life events including 'biographies, autobiographies, histories, case studies, and reports of remembered episodes that have occurred' (p.7).

As Gluck and Patai (1991), Roets and Goedgeluck (1999), and Sosulski, Buchanan and Donnell (2010, p.37) highlight, life stories are valuable because they allow the researcher to collect nuanced data replete with participant-led interpretations of their experiences. They also allow coverage of the 'social circumstances in which their story has unfolded, and the ways in which they continue to be active agents' (Sosulski et al., 2010, p.37). In the current study, the participants completed narrative sheets detailing their life histories and experiences of learning EFL, thereby providing rich insights into their beliefs and perspectives towards learning a second language and stemming from their respective histories.

Narratives were used to obtain additional information from the participants as a supplement to the interviews conducted. Students were provided with a set of instructions (see Appendix 1) and asked to write about their overall experience in English classes along with the reasons that could possibly be behind these feelings. Participants were given one week to respond to five key questions. These were:

1. What are your feelings toward English as a foreign language and language learning?

2. What are the reasons behind the feelings you described above?

3. Comment on your English learning experiences in primary school.

4. Comment on your English learning experiences in secondary school.

5. Comment on your English learning experiences in your current foundation level.

Although participants were asked to write not less than 500 words, the length of the responses differed, as did the amount of time participants spent on each question or statement. Further, as participants completed this activity at home, on their own time, some participants chose not to respond to all five components of the narrative. Despite this limitation, several prominent themes emerged in narrative data.

3.5.2   Diary studies

According to Cirocki and Arceusz (2016, p.9), 'diary studies make use of introspective tools such as diaries, journals, and logs'. Drawing upon Curtis and Bailey (2009), Horváthová (2012) and McKay (2006), Cirocki and Arceusz (2016, p.9) note that diaries enable researchers to access information related to '(1) language learning experiences, (2) language

teaching experiences, (3) teacher-learner interaction, and (4) various aspects of language use'.

In line with phenomenology's emphasis on the lived experiences of participants, diaries can enable participants to provide access to how they interpret their worlds and experiences (Alaszewski, 2006, p.37). The maintaining of diaries by participants not only allows the maintenance of a complete record of what they have done and said (Willig, 2001, p.27), but also helps to provide detailed descriptions of what the participants do in their lives (Polit and Beck, 2006). It has also been suggested that diaries can enable more accurate reporting than recall via interviews and enable more effective capturing of participant perceptions (Burns and Grove, 2005). In view of this, the students in this study were asked to keep a diary to write in at home.

Participants were asked to keep a diary as another means of data collection for this research. Instructions for the diary asked students to write (at home) about the learning experiences that have occurred during the English classes taken in the foundation year course. This was a longitudinal process where students were sent (via email) a diary sheet every four weeks during the period from December to April, with the first sheet being sent after the first interview. In total, four diary sheets were sent to every participant, and it was requested that their responses should be sent to the researcher by email (details for the research instrument can be found in Appendix 4).

Participants were guided by two question prompts. The first asked them to write freely about learning experiences related only to experiences from the corresponding weeks for the diary sheet. The second question asked students to comment on how these experiences might have changed their feelings towards learning English. Not all participants responded or emailed the researcher back each week, and responses for this section were sporadic with some participants sending information back every four weeks, some sending it back for only 2-3 instances, and some sending it back only once.

3.5.3   Interviews

Englander (2012, p.13) states 'the interview has become the main data collection procedure closely associated with qualitative, human scientific research'. Based on the phenomenological approach, the optimum tool for conducting research on the topic of this study is the unstructured interview. In this study, the open-ended and dialogue-inviting

interview format was selected, which corresponded to the requirements of the phenomenological approach in order to understand the unique experiences of each participant.

According to Englander (2012, p.25), questions within the phenomenological interview 'ask the participant for a description of a situation in which the participant has experienced the phenomenon' so as to allow participant insights to emerge freely. Participants were asked the same set of questions, which focused on their levels of satisfaction with the English course they were taking. General foci were their perceptions of teaching, styles and their perspectives about learning the language. The students were also asked if there was a relationship between specific trends that were uncovered and perceived link with their academic performance. Thus, the purpose of the interview questions in this research endeavour was to access the feelings of the participants with regard to their exposure and experiences in EFL classrooms. For the purposes of accuracy, the interviews were tape-recorded and notes were made. The facial expressions and body language of the participants as they described their experiences and feelings regarding their experiences were also detailed in the notes. Along with the verbal interview data, these details were used to identify the emotional and mental themes that participants expressed in regard to their own individual experiences. Each participant was interviewed separately with at least two hours elapsing between each successive interview in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participation. Each interview lasted at least one hour so as to afford participants enough time to elaborate fully on the topic of the research.

The study employed individual interviews in two stages. This was to note the changes in the students' motives, if any, and how these fluctuations eventually impacted the students' attitudes towards learning English. The first set of interviews was conducted in December, three months after the beginning of the academic year. The second set of interviews was conducted in April, during the second half of the academic year. The interview schedule largely depended on the time available for conducting the interviews of students. Scheduling was accomplished by adjusting the two sets of interviews within the students' schedules in December and April respectively. The students were sent a few questions via email concerning their overall experience in English classes and the reasons that they believed may play a role in their perspectives. They were instructed to answer these questions in no less

than 500 words and in their own time. They were further instructed to send this information back to the researcher in no less than two weeks following receipt of the email.

The second set of interviews for this research project was largely conducted in the same way as the first set of interviews. The same group of participants was interviewed (15 male and 15 female students). The researcher interviewed the female students, while the male students were interviewed by a trained (male) research assistant. This procedure was followed in accordance with gender segregation implemented at each university campus, as is standard practice in Saudi Arabia.

By the time that the second interview was conducted, the students had completed the first three levels of the Foundation level course at university and were working on their fourth and final level. Depending on participant availability, interviews were either conducted face-to-face at the university campus (n = 7) or online via Skype (n = 23). All the interviews took place in Arabic, the participants' native language. The responses were then transcribed and translated into English for the purposes of presentation within this thesis. Participants were asked to comment on four aspects of their learning, feelings, motivation, achievement and actual academic performance.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Soderhamn (2001) argues that validity and reliability are pivotal to research, which focuses on objective, knowable reality. In the case of this study, which is grounded in constructivism-interpretivism, reality is understood to be co-constructed and human experiences are foregrounded. This means that 'the issues relating to validity are different' (Research Observatory, 2016) when applied to the existing study. Drawing upon Long and Johnson (2000), Noble and Smith (2015, p.1) explain that in the case of qualitative research, broadly speaking, validity refers 'to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data, while reliability describes consistency within the employed analytical procedures'.

As Collis and Hussey (2003, p.55) observe, studies guided by the phenomenological paradigm are likely to reflect high validity as the aim within such research is to capture the essence of the phenomena and [to extract] data which is rich in explanation and analysis'. However, while the phenomenological paradigm holds fast to the notion that it examines the subjective lived experience of individuals so as to provide insights into the phenomenon as it

is occurring at that point in time, there are still ways to address issues of validity and reliability in the sense of concepts pertaining to qualitative research.

Within the phenomenological approach, validity may also be understood as a focus on plausibility and the accretion and connectedness of the data. As Neuman (2006, p.197) notes, the data do not offer a single account of the perceived world. However, rather than thinking of the data as invented or arbitrary, these accounts may be understood as 'powerful, persuasive descriptions that reveal a researcher's genuine experience with the empirical data'. As Neuman (2006, p.197) adds, within a phenomenological study 'validity arises out of the cumulative impact of hundreds of small diverse details that only together create a heavy weight of evidence'.

Specifically, within this study, several techniques were used to ensure trustworthiness of data, including methodological triangulation, examination of contradictory evidence, member check and constant comparison (Anderson, 2010, p.2). The use of multiple research instruments in this study allowed the mapping of the phenomenon as it was explored from different perspectives, providing insights from the vantage point of participant histories as well as lived experience in the present. The use of interviews allowed a third perspective on the insights provided by the participants.

Although the data generated through all the research instruments could be characterised as self-report data, at least two of the sources did not include the presence of the researcher. This provided opportunities for participants to share their insights freely without the pressure of interview time and researcher presence. Examining data from the same participant through three instruments helped to trace the consistency in the participants' views and experiences being reported, thus contributing to the validity or trustworthiness of the data.

Member check or respondent validation also proved a useful strategy in this context. Once the interview data had been transcribed, participants were invited to peruse their transcripts and point out inconsistencies, if any. A similar technique was followed once the analyses had been carried out. Of the thirty participants, ten interviewees chose to go through the transcripts, and in some cases, the analyses. The others declined on account of time constraints and the pressure of studies. Of the ten participants who carried out the member checks, none asked for a revision of the transcript or the analyses in any way, thereby suggesting that the data had been transcribed and analysed in correspondence with participant

views and without being inflected by researcher bias. Constant comparison of the data allowed a holistic picture of the phenomenon to emerge as the data were seen as part of the whole rather than discrete pieces of information. Further, this technique allowed the identification of a number of key themes in the study.

Further, in line with the framework proposed by de Witt and Ploeg (2006, p.215) for ensuring rigour within phenomenological research, this study also endeavoured to implement key criteria including: (1) balanced integration, (2) openness, (3) concreteness, (4) resonance, and (5) actualisation. Balanced integration was achieved by creating balance between the 'voices of study participants and the philosophical explanation' (de Witt and Ploeg, 2006, p.215). Thus, while there is extensive philosophical explanation integrated within the discussion of the findings, the liberal use of excerpts from interview transcripts allows the voices of the participants to be presented directly.

Careful documenting of the research procedures used in this study allowed an explication of 'the multiple decisions made throughout the study process' in the interest of the criterion of 'openness' regarding the research design, research site, participant selection, piloting, choice of research instruments and procedures. De Witt and Ploeg identify 'concreteness' as a further criterion pointing out that it 'relates to usefulness for practice of study findings' (p.215).

The attempt to give background to the study by addressing key issues in detail, reviewing relevant literature judiciously and reporting on the findings insightfully represents the fulfilment of the fourth criterion, namely resonance. It is anticipated that the 'lived experience' of the participants as they negotiate the trajectories of learning EFL in the Saudi context, while being subject to social and cultural imperatives that can conflict with the aims of learning EFL, will resonate with the readers. It is also believed that readers, including educators, policymakers and other stakeholders, will help the study to address the final criterion of actualisation by using the findings to guide their actions in practice and future policymaking. Moreover, the careful detailing of procedures and accounting for all decisions made during the research process allows for a replication of the study in other contexts. The next section discusses details of the pilot study conducted in preparation for the main study within the research context.

3.7   Pilot study

The purpose behind conducting the pilot study was to ensure that the actual study would be effective in addressing the research questions. Pilot studies are beneficial because they can show directly or indirectly where 'the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated' (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001, para. 1).

Pilot studies can also demonstrate feasibility of the research to funding sources and stakeholders. They are also important because they help to estimate variability in the outcomes in relation to sample size and to collect preliminary data. This assists in determining what resources are needed within the research study, and in training the researcher in the research process and specific project requirements. It is also useful in ensuring the research questions and research plan are viable, including the proposed data analysis techniques (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

The data for the study was collected during July and August 2014. As it was not possible to interview male students due to cultural constraints, I trained my colleague to conduct the interviews with the students studying at the male campus (see Appendix 2), whereas I conducted the interviews with the female participants myself. In the pilot study, four female students and three male students participated in the interviews. The students were provided with information regarding the research process and with consent forms (see Appendix 1). Each interview lasted between 45 to 55 minutes, and subsequently the interviews (see Appendix 3) were audio recorded and saved as secured computer audio files.

Narrative sheets (see Appendix 3) were provided through e-mail to allow participants opportunities to reflect on their English learning experiences. Six participants returned satisfactory responses within two days. Diary sheets (see Appendix 4) were sent through e-mail to allow participants to reflect on their English class experiences, and six of the participants returned satisfactory responses within two days. The only participant to not participate in these activities was one of the male students.

The interviews designed by the researcher were effective, and participants showed enthusiasm in sharing their views and experiences. The interview questions were deemed to be comprehensible and the participants provided clear responses. However, the order of the questions was changed to make the interview conversation flow more naturally in terms of

the topics being discussed, and two of the questions were deleted as I considered that these were influencing the students' responses. For instance, in the initial interview guide, learners were asked to respond to questions related to their attitudes towards learning English (Section III: Q 11 and 13, (see Appendix 2), specifically as EFL and English as a subject in the foundation year. The participants were given a range of responses (I love it, I hate it, and neutral) to describe their feelings and three words/phrases (easy, difficult, not easy/not difficult) to describe the EFL learning process. After piloting, the response options were deleted, and the questions were left as open-ended inquiries, allowing participants to describe their feelings towards EFL in their own words. This resulted in richer data in the later interviews.

Another change was to move the questions 'When did you develop these feelings? Can you specify a certain phase of your life?' and 'What are the factors you think are behind shaping these feelings?' from Section IV in the original guide to Section III in the final interview guide. The question order was changed because it was felt that these questions served as a natural progression of the topic in Section III rather than in Section IV (see Appendix 2).

The narratives and diaries were returned in a timely fashion. The researcher sent a reminder to the participants regarding the return of the narratives and diaries, and it was found that the participants who generated satisfactory responses understood the idea of narratives and diaries.

EFL instruction in the foundation year was spread across levels 1 to 4. Each participant (N=30) was forwarded a diary sheet via email four times during the period from December to April. They were instructed to write about their feelings and attitudes towards the learning of English in the diary and return it to the researcher via email.

Once the pilot study involving seven student participants (4 female, 3 male) had been concluded, two rounds of interviews were carried out successively. It was envisaged that this arrangement would map the transformation in student perspectives and experiences as the participating learners matured from novice to more seasoned EFL learners. It permitted the noticing of any changes in the students' motives and of how these fluctuations eventually impacted the students' attitudes towards learning English. The first set of interviews was conducted in December, three months after the beginning of the academic year. The follow up interviews were conducted in April, during the second half of the academic year. The

interview schedule largely depended on the time available for conducting the interviews of students. Scheduling was accomplished by adjusting the two sets of interviews within the students' schedules in December and April respectively. The students were sent a few questions via email concerning their overall experience in English classes and the reasons that they believed played an important role in their perspectives. They were instructed to answer these questions in no less than 500 words and in their own time. They were further instructed to send this information back to the researcher in no less than two weeks following receipt.

Each participant was then interviewed separately with a gap of two hours between successive interviews to ensure privacy and confidentiality of participation. Each interview lasted at least one hour to afford participants enough time to elaborate fully on the topic of the research. This was repeated for the follow-up interviews.

Before the start of an interview, each participant was invited to read and sign an *Explanation of Procedure, Permission, and Informed Consent* document (see Appendix 1). This document explained the purpose and procedures of the research study and secured the consent of the participants for utilising the information collected from them. It also explained the mechanisms employed to maintain participant confidentiality and data privacy, and that participation was voluntary and did not involve remuneration of any kind.

3.8   Participants and sampling procedure

Thirty students undertaking the Foundation Year programme at a Saudi university volunteered to take part in the study. Aged around 18, fifteen of these students were male and fifteen were female and they studied at separate, gender-segregated campuses. None of these students had experienced previous learning contexts in which English had been used as a medium of instruction.

Although these students had enrolled in programmes ranging from sciences to humanities as entry-level students, they all required the foundation year programme of study, which made it necessary for the learners to study the same subjects. The students came from a similar socio-economic background and were taught by both native and non-native EFL teachers during the course of the first foundation year, hence making for a considerable homogeneity in English learning experiences.

This particular study utilised the flexible design method for sampling the students. The aim was to collect relevant data to improve the individual learning environment, methodology, setting and/or approach depending upon what the findings showed (Lumley, 2011). Sampling was conducted through convenience sampling, which means that subjects or units are selected 'for examination and analysis […] based on accessibility, ease, speed, and low cost [and] units are not purposefully or strategically selected' (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). This means that the participants were chosen on the basis of their being located on campus that was convenient for researcher access and proximity.

The data from all three data sources (interviews, diaries and narratives) were collected from the same sample of students. Hence, a single sampling strategy for participant selection was used at the outset.

3.9   Ethical issues

Ethical issues were considered of paramount importance throughout the study's duration. As such, ethical guidelines on ethical principles were researched and employed during data collection and data analysis. The four standard principles upon which this research study was based comprised the following. The participants' interests were protected, and that the participation was voluntary, with participation being preceded by informed consent. In addition, the procedures were non-deceptive and maintained scientific integrity through participant and data anonymity and confidentiality, and the study obeyed all relevant legalities (Dornyei 2007; Mertens and Ginsburg, 2009; Denscombe, 2010).

The primary areas of ethical considerations that needed to be addressed in this study were access and acceptance, informed consent, anonymity of participants, and confidentiality. Ethics approval for the study was granted to the researcher by the Ethics Committee at the University of York (see Appendix).

Access and acceptance are very important ethical issues in research (Cohen et al. 2000, p.55). Access and acceptance refer to the ability of the researcher to gain access to the site of the study and be accepted by the organisation, thereby allowing the researcher to carry out the fieldwork that is required. This typically requires official permission from the authorities heading the institution. To obtain the official permission to conduct the study, a letter was sent explaining the nature of the research and the types of data required. Permission was granted to conduct the study from the Director General at a Saudi University (see Appendix),

and a copy of the official communication was forwarded by the Director General to the Dean of the College in question. The Dean then forwarded the letter to the Heads of the relevant academic departments to ensure the necessary cooperation and assistance needed in conducting the study.

Informed consent is defined as a person's agreement to take part in the research after being informed of the facts and information that are likely to affect their decisions (Cohen et al., 2007). Patton (2002) states that gaining informed consent involves providing the participants with information on the purpose of the research, the party for whom the data is being gathered, the use of the data, the questions to be asked, and the risks and/or benefits for the person being interviewed.

Before this study commenced, the required information about the research was provided to the participants in efforts to seek their formal, written agreement to take part in the research study. The participants were informed that participating in the research was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point (see Appendix.).

Cohen et al. (2007) clearly identify anonymity of participants as one of the ethical considerations that a researcher must always take into consideration in the course of conducting the study. The participants were assured that identifying details would be omitted from the published thesis. With regard to the data analysis, each person participating in the study was given a unique symbol instead of names. Each symbol consisted of two parts (i.e. ENG5, COM3) to identify the participants and the department, and any other descriptive academic identifiers corresponding to their order in the interview plan. The decision was made to include an indication of the department so that comparisons between student responses could be made. This strategy meant that the results were reported anonymously with no reference to names of the participants.

Confidentiality involves disguising the identities of the participants in an effort to ensure privacy and anonymity protection (Patton, 2002). Hence, the participants were assured that they would not be identified by name in reporting the findings of the study in the final thesis. This approach allowed participants to remain anonymous. They were further informed that the data gathered would be strictly utilised for the research purpose and would not be revealed to anyone outside the defined framework.

In all research of this nature, there may be reluctance to explicitly express individual views about issues considered sensitive. Teachers, for example, may withhold negative opinions about college or ministerial practices and policies due to a fear of their career being harmed by such revelations. Therefore, it was imperative to assure participants that they would not be subjected to any harm as a result of their taking part in the study, and that their anonymous responses would only be used to answer the research questions. This was meant to further assure them that participation would have no future consequences on their affiliation with the College.

Several steps were taken to mitigate any potential ethical issues. For example, the participants were granted full access to the findings and outcomes of the study. Simultaneously, informed consent was obtained from the participants before involving them in the research. These considerations were dependent upon reducing researcher bias, fair data acquisition, sampling bias and awareness of the limitation of the case study design. As a result, ethical oversight was employed utilising advisor review and having an open process that was shared with administrators.

3.10 Phenomenological analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2002, p.2015) 'data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data [which] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning'. As Merriam (2009, p.171) has observed, such analysis is conducted as the data are being collected in view of the 'large volume' of qualitative data.

The phenomenological approach which was adopted in this study describes the reality of the individual participant as they construct it (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenological analysis seeks to understand the basic structure of the phenomenon under study and entails the deployment of techniques such as epoch, bracketing, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. While these processes differ from one another, the point of each is to analyse the experience of the participant. In ethnographic analysis, the process involves description of what is happening, analysis via the identification of essential features and interrelationships, and interpretation of the meaning of the findings.

This analytical process provides a rich and thick description of the cultural and social regularities of the people who are the focus of the study. In this study, the data collected took

the form of phrases and body language that provided insight into the experiences of the participants and served as the basis for the formation of theme categories and coding methods. Drawing upon Kvale (2007), Turner (2010, p.12) shows that 'these themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants'.

In this study, Streubert's procedural steps (Streubert, 1991, cited in Streubert and Carpentar 2011, p.81) were followed to analyse the interview data. These include:

1. Explicating of personal description of the phenomenon under study.

2. Bracketing of my presuppositions.

3. Interviewing of participants in unfamiliar settings.

4. Carefully reading the interview transcripts to obtain a general sense of the experience.

5. Reviewing the transcripts to uncover essences.

6. Apprehending of essential relationships.

7. Developing of formalised descriptions of the phenomenon.

8. Returning to participants to validate descriptions.

9. Reviewing the relevant literature.

10. Distributing the findings to the academic community.

Spiegelberg (1975, p.57) explains that descriptive phenomenology involves 'direct exploration, analysis, and description of particular phenomena, as free as possible from unexamined presuppositions, aiming at maximum intuitive presentation'. Spiegelberg (1965, 1975, cited in Speziale, Streubert and Carpentar, 2011, p.81) has also identified a three-step process for descriptive phenomenology, as explicated below. These include intuiting, analysing and describing. Intuiting comprised immersion in the phenomenon of the Saudi EFL learner language learning experience with a focus on excluding all 'criticism, evaluation, or opinion' while studying the experience of the participants (Spiegelberg, 1965, 1975). Analysing consisted of identifying the 'essence of the phenomenon' (Speziale, Streubert and Carpentar, 2011, p.81) being studied based on how the data were presented. As the different constituents were distinguished, the data's interconnectedness with adjacent phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1965; 1975) was examined, which allowed for 'common themes or essences' to emerge with the aim of distilling a 'pure and accurate description' (Speziale,

Streubert and Carpentar, 2011, p.81). Describing comprised phenomenological description with the aim of generating a classification or grouping of the phenomenon was undertaken, whilst ensuring that this did not result in premature description (Spiegelberg, 1965; 1975). The aim herein was to ensure that all critical elements or essences that characterised the learning of EFL by Saudi students were identified and described, including their relationships to one another (Speziale, Streubert and Carpentar, 2011, p.81-82).

Data obtained via the data collection methods were analysed thematically with the key benefit of thematic analysis being its flexibility. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.5), 'through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data'. Especially relevant to this study, with its aim of informing programme development and policymaking, is the fact that thematic analysis 'can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.37).

The first step in thematic data analysis was the construction of codes, and this process is described in detail in the succeeding sections.

3.11 Qualitative data analysis

During the transcription process, the interviews, narrative and diary entries were typed into a word processing document (i.e. Microsoft Word). Once uploaded into a computer-assisted qualitative analysis tool (i.e. atlas.ti), they were manually coded or auto-coded with the corresponding material. Essentially, analysis consists of dissecting the words, sentences, phrases, paragraphs, and stories of the participants in order to make sense of the data and to interpret and theorise according to the previous research surveyed in the literature review.

The coding process requires the 'breaking up' of data. Whether it is called 'coding' (Silverman, 2011; 2016) or 'categorising' (Dey, 2003), it requires a process of placing data, through a decision-making process into constituent components to explain its structure and display its very basic elements. Description of the data, in this case, is just as important as explaining the objects or situation to which the data refer. It is in these instances where interpretation is required. This was particularly important in my study, as sometimes the verbal commands issued (i.e. during interviews) did not always match the non-verbal codes and body language. As a result, data analysis for my study took into consideration the how, why and what components of language, and attempted to move beyond the initial description.

Coding and interpretation of events is a single factor in qualitative analysis. In more practical terms, the researcher needs to consider bias. According to Silverman (2010), bias will always exist when carrying out research. Dey (2003) suggests that bias directly relates to pre-conceived ideas, and in some instances the assumptions can blind the researcher to the evidence of the data. As a researcher, I believe I am aware of my own bias. Being a Saudi national with a direct relationship to the school in question, I am not a stranger to the context where this research was set. Further, having English as my own second language, I understand the challenges faced by students related to areas wherein I struggled myself. I am also aware that this does come into play during the data analysis process and is more relevant to qualitative studies than to quantitative ones. Therefore, the 'facts' presented in my results section are largely 'manufactured', as they relate to and are shaped by my own thinking.

In the initial stages, after the interviews had been transcribed and the narratives and diary entries had been inputted, data classification was undertaken, which included the 'breaking up' of data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Classification involved the selection of multiple categories, sometimes for the same piece of speech or writing; it was an essential part of the analysis that led to the eventual establishment of a conceptual foundation. Classification is only the initial step; once this had occurred there was room to examine the regularities, or variations of the regularities (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). There were opportunities to seek out peculiarities and to reclassify as necessary. During this stage, it was possible to begin to highlight specific patterns. These patterns afforded insight into an initial picture of the data, which was, ultimately, clearer than the initial impression conveyed. In essence, it was a puzzle, where the pieces were slowly coming together (Dey, 2003).

The initial stages of data analysis were challenging. There were two components of qualitative analysis that required attention, namely the need to 'break up' the data and the need to code it. Atlas.ti software was used to code/classify and organise large sections of this qualitative data study. Atlas.ti is a powerful tool for qualitative data analysis which offers a way to organise large chunks of text, audio records, and visual representations (Punch, 2000). It was relatively easy to use, as it utilises an overall Hermeneutic Unit (HU), which provided a foundation for all of the material within the study. Within Atlas.ti, once the data was inputted, there were opportunities to run searchers and to employ retrieval functions of data that had been inputted in a prior session. Atlas.ti also facilitates network building, as it allowed me to provide visual representations (through charts and diagrams), which linked my

own selected texts, memos, and codes through a few steps. Atlas.ti is heavily influenced through grounded theory, a concept that involves the process of explicitly coding texts (Gibbs, 2002). A knowledge of grounded theory assisted in the analysis of my data because a large part of my project was associated with interpreting the results rather than simply giving labels to pieces of data I had broken up. One of the ways this was achieved was through open coding. This is discussed in the next section.

3.11.1   Coding

Open coding is, essentially, careful examination of the data where phenomena are named and categorised (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In this stage, data were broken down into instances of where, when what, and how with the goal of establishing categories and, in some instances, concepts. There is some link to abstraction, as the process requires similar instances to be grouped in an attempt to 'build theories' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), which is essentially the foundation of grounded theory. The process was begun with line-by-line coding, which is acknowledged in the research as being particularly time consuming (Lonkila, 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), but also comprises an approach that generates one of the most effective ways of categorisation. Once some initial codes at the line level (i.e. the sentence level) had been established, the text at the paragraph level (especially for the narratives and diary entries) was examined in order to ensure that the context intended by the participant remained intact.

The line-by-line approach was an effective way to start coding, but it meant that responses from participants between interviews, narrative, and diary entries could not be compared. Therefore, axial coding to facilitate this comparison was undertaken. Under axial coding, the pieces that had initially been disintegrated during the open coding were put back together in new ways in order to identify relationships between the categories or the codes (Kelle and Bird, 1995; Kendall, 1999). Atlas.ti was particularly useful for this process as it is possible to create 'linking codes' where categories can include multiple subcategories and codes can include multiple sub-codes. By including subcategories and sub-codes, a more detailed explanation of the data and link to the research questions posed initially was attempted.

It is important to identify that axial coding has two components. Initially, analysis relies on the complexity of the actual words that appear in the transcription; the second component includes how the researcher conceptualises the words within the transcription (Strauss and

Corbin, 1998). Within this study, this was done through the inclusion of subcategories and sub-codes, along with the grouping of lines/sentences into multiple codes, where necessary.

In addition to the axial coding, selective coding was also employed in this study. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), selective coding generally includes the process of choosing a central core category and then attempting to relate the other categories to this initial central one. During selective coding, the goal is to refine the categories as well as to integrate them. In atlas.ti, code families can be created where the relationship becomes more evident. This step was particularly useful in my research for two reasons. First, as a novice researcher, there were often instances where an initial code did not quite fit with the data selected for it. In this instance, it was possible to rename the code. In addition, as the data developed and each code began to take shape, there was a need to ensure that an accurate representation of what information fitted within each code was being provided.

3.11.2   Data analysis procedure

When exploring attitudes of students learning English in the foundation year programme, it was expected that an initial list would be compiled. In view of this, this section outlines the underlying theories associated with the coding of attitudes in alignment with the literature. It attempts to demonstrate the way that the results have been used to answer the research question posed initially.

Attitudes play an essential role in the learning process (Gardner, 2006; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Krashen, 1981) and research generally suggests that L2 achievement is influenced by attitudes (Gardner, 2010, cited in Alrabai and Moskovsky, 2015). As students continue to gain skills in learning English, it is important to turn to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory to examine both the nature of the classroom and the students within it. The difficulty, initially, was to determine what constituted an attitude and how, for example, an attitude might differ from an opinion, a belief, or a behaviour, although it is recognised that multiple models exist (e.g. the expectancy-value model, the vector model, the technology acceptance model).

According to Kara (2009), student beliefs and opinions have an influence on performance, and students who possess positive beliefs about language learning generally have more positive attitudes. On the other hand, Kara (2009) argues that students who have negative beliefs are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of motivation.

This, in turn, leads to lower performance scores during assessment. This is not necessarily surprising, though, as is the case with most subjects, assessment outcomes lead to grades, and grades are the cornerstone upon which students base their decision-making.

Therefore, based on the literature, it was evident that there was some overlap between the terms of belief, opinion, motivation, emotion, and attitude, amongst others, although in the Expectancy Value Model, the likely beliefs of a person are essentially contained within the overall understanding of attitude (Jain, 2014). Yet, other research studies had pinned 'attitude' as a prominent factor for success in the learning of English (see Asgari and Mustapha, 2011; Ghazali et al. 2009). It was further evident that attitude had some sort of cultural implication, in that the way students approached a task, test, course, or programme seemed to depend on how English was viewed in their culture (see Al-Saidat, 2010; Gardner, 2010, cited in Alrabai and Moskovsky, 2015). Considering that not much research had been conducted on Arab students in Saudi Arabia, the researcher first needed to find an appropriate way to identify an 'attitude' within atlas.ti in order to assign the appropriate code to the appropriate pieces of data.

After some careful consideration, it was determined that examining planned behaviour, a theory underlying work by Montano and Kasprzyk (2015) was a good starting point for the data analysis process. Their definition of attitude comprised the following:

> 'Attitude is determined by the individual's belief about outcomes or attributes of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behaviour will have a positive attitude toward the behaviour. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behaviour will have a negative attitude' (Montano and Kasprzyk, 2015, p.97).

This helped me to distinguish between attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours as a set of intertwined understandings and made the coding process easier, as the definition of an attitude or a belief was not being questioned herein. Rather it was simply being assumed that both were intertwined and could be categorised as such. Gardner (1991) suggests that attitude is evaluative – namely a response to some object. He suggests it is inherently linked to values and beliefs, and attitude can relate to either academic or more informal aspects of life. Gardner (1991) goes further into the classification of 'attitudes', suggesting that they are cognitive, affective, or behavioural. Cognitive attitudes encompass thoughts and beliefs about learning English. Affective attitudes would relate to feelings and emotions towards learning

English (i.e. whether the student liked learning English or not), and behavioural attitudes relate to the tendency to adopt particular learning behaviours (i.e. studying or undertaking actions that would benefit/enhance the learning of English).

As Gardner (1988) had already divided up the term attitudes into these three components, the data in this study was also coded in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioural components. In line with this, three sub-codes for each section, outlining a positive response and a negative response and a neutral response for this (i.e. there were 9 sub-codes at this level of analysis) were established. Initially nine categories were identified. During this time, I was also able to assign smaller sub-codes (which I will refer to as tags from this point forward) to the text within each of these larger sub-codes. Flags were employed to distinguish between gender, to distinguish between whether the text came from the interview, narrative, or diary component, and to distinguish between the first and second interviews.

The attitudes towards learning English presented by students were positive, negative or neutral. See Table 4 on the subject of learning English and subsumed under three main headings of cognitive, affective and behavioural.

In terms of the second research question, the difficulty then became how or what to define as a factor. One of the ways this could be achieved was through the examination of motivation.

Table 1 – Coding Procedures for factors affecting attitudes

Motivational Construct	Sub-code Heading	Abbreviated Code
Instrumental motivation	1) A requirement of the university (General) 2) A requirement for my future program (Specific) 3) Necessary for future job prospects 4) My family motivates me to learn English 5) My friends motivate me to learn English	REQU REQP JOB FAM (POS, NEG) FRND (POS, NEG)
Integrative motivation	1) Communication with English Speakers 2) Learn about English Culture	COM CUL
Developmental motivation	1) To watch English movies 2) To read English books 3) Study or travel abroad 4) Personal development	MOV BOO TRVL PD

In constructing the codes, some of the categories had both positive and negative responses, especially in addition to family and friends (IM). As a result, two categories for this sub-code were created in order to distinguish the negative aspects of influence from the positive ones. When coding for instrumental motivation, the five sub-codes were employed to determine the extent to which instrumental motivation played a role in participants' learning of English. Instrumental motivation comprised by far the largest category, having the most codes as well as the most instances of data input into each sub-code. This was the area that was considered to be the primary source of students' motivation.

Table 2 – Examples from the qualitative data coding

REQU	[Learning English] strongly affects my GPA which determines which college I am going to join which mean my future. (M10)
REQP	For me it is very important to do well in English and improve myself because I am planning to take a master degree in Special needs from abroad. (M4)
JOB	I have to work hard to be good in English if I want to get a well-paid job (M7)
FAM (P)	I was always supported by my parents. They used to encourage me to learn English and improve myself. (F1) My father is a strong support to me. He wants me to do my best and be the best in class. (F7)
FAM (N)	All my family hate English too and if I needed help in exams or with homework, I couldn't find anyone to help me. May be this helped in developing my feelings. I took a course last summer for 6 weeks, 5 days a week, 2 hours every day, but it didn't help me much. (M6)
FRND (P)	My Friends and I are all cooperative. We help each other the best we can [M13
FRND (N)	My parents speak at least 2 languages. They support and encourage me to be good too. My friends have no effect on me. (M15) My friends always discourage me but I don't care and I try to convince them that English is not difficult if they put some effort. (F3)

After these codes had been implemented, it was easy to see where the overlap might exist. For example, one of the students (M4) suggested that he required English for a programme on special needs, which he planned to enrol in abroad. In this instance, this was coded under both a programme requirement (REQP) and under personal development in the study abroad sub-code (TRVL).

I was not particularly interested in which aspect of motivation was most important when responding to research question 2; rather, the focus was on identifying the factors that affected attitudes. So, while the research is inconclusive as to the importance of the different types of motivation, for this study, an attempt was made to highlight the aspects of motivation as they relate to attitudes.

Examples from the qualitative data coding that fell within each of these subheadings COM and CUL included:

Table 3 – Examples from the qualitative data coding

COM	Also, to communicate with non-Arabic speakers in my future job as a politician. (M5) All companies are looking for employees who can speak English. In addition, it is the language of education and communication. I would like to study abroad for higher education and I like to travel and see the world and of course I need English to communicate. (M3)
CUL	This way made me feel that it is a nice language to learn to understand these cultures more and visit them one day. (F7) It is also a way to learn about other cultures like Europe and America. I have been always interested in learning the history of the world. I always kept my teacher's words in mind. It helped me enjoy learning English even when it got difficult. (M5)

As demonstrated by these examples, there is some overlap between codes. For example, in both of the COM examples, there was overlap with instrumental motivation, and more specifically the code JOB. While this overlap existed, it was important to make the distinction between these two categories. It was impossible throughout the data analysis process to determine what aspects of communication would apply solely to each of the motivational categories. For example, for the student who required English to speak to others in his job as a politician, one could assume that not all of that communication was solely going to be related to work. One might argue that as a politician, English would be beneficial in everyday life and to truly understand the culture of a particular community as well.

Additionally, there was overlap with the CUL code. Students often linked the ability to understand a culture with the desire to travel, to study abroad or to enjoy English language media. Again, this was not necessarily surprising as students who want to experience culture are likely to seek out more experiences than those requiring simply oral communication amongst peers and/or colleagues. Therefore, the benefits of multiple codes and the cross-categorisation became more evident again.

With reference to the response of the student who suggested that he would need to either communicate with his own Arabic community or to speak English with anyone outside of the Arabic community, this provided the impression of dual communities. It became evident that he planned to pursue these strategically through his choice of employment. This entire response contributes to the responses indicated in the literature related to aspects of integrative motivation. As such, it was essential to employ and develop this sub-code so that links could be drawn with the previous research done on this topic.

As the line-by-line coding of the qualitative data analysis progressed, multiple examples where the students had highlighted aspects of teacher effectiveness and teaching pedagogy were discovered, specifically from earlier in their English learning career. Therefore, it was essential to add this as an additional coding stream within my HU. In adding this to the model, it was demonstrated that student attitudes were shaped not only by their own inner focus. Initially, I began with a code titled 'Teaching' under which I included all instances wherein the student referred to aspects of classroom learning that related to an external source. This included both the role of the teacher and the learning strategies employed by teachers.

Table 4 – Coding Procedures for teaching factors affecting attitudes

Construct	Sub-code Heading	Abbreviated Code
Teaching	Positive Teaching Related Comment	TEP
	Negative Teaching Related Comment	TEN
	Neutral Teaching Related Comment	TENU
	Other Teaching/Pedagogy Related Comment	TEO

Examples of student comments that fell under the TEP code included:

> My English teacher in year 6 and 7 was excellent. She used to make us play games with words and letters and form simple sentences. She was the reason why I love English. I used to memorise new words to impress her and to be praised in front of the whole class. She was very kind and enthusiastic. (F3)

> I was influenced by my teachers in secondary school especially the first year. I was taught by a very good teacher, she used to show us videos about the different cultures of English speaking countries. This way made me feel that it

is a nice language to learn to understand these cultures more and visit them one day. (F7)

My teachers in secondary school taught me that English is not just a subject. It is a language of communication and a way to learn about other cultures. I always kept this in mind. It helped me enjoy learning English. (M5)

As the coding of this section continued, the examples students provided to explain why a particular teacher, class, or activity was particularly positive for them proved useful in delineating the factors that frequently affected students' attitudes towards English.

It is acknowledged, however, that not all student responses were positive when they were discussing their teachers or their classes. This is not surprising, especially for students who were not intrinsically motivated to take English in the first place. Examples of student comments that generally fell in the TEN sub-code included:

I had bad teachers since I was in primary schools. Some of them were absent most of the year, some very tough and bad tempered, some careless. (M12)

[When speaking about the contrast with foundation year teachers] This was unlike my teachers at secondary school. (F9)

I feel that English is a difficult subject […] In primary and secondary school, my teachers are not special. They are always in a rush to finish the text book. All they care about is how well we do in exams. They never helped me like English. (F4)

I used to have a teacher with a very bad personality. She was always in a bad temper. She used to yell a lot at the students and punish them irrationally sometimes. She forced me to write a sentence 50 times every class for a week because I got the grammar wrong in the exam. (F14)

The coding of the negative section allowed the identification of a relationship between the students who were not intrinsically motivated, or those who had expressed negative views of English and others who had commented on negative teaching experiences from the past. Yet some of the students denied that teachers had an influence on their motivation. These responses fell into the 'neutral' category (under the sub-code TNEU) and included examples such as:

I never had a teacher who made me love or hate English. (M13)

I don't think schools or teachers had influenced my thoughts about English. For me it always has been a subject I need to pass and a language I need to learn to find a good job in the future. (F6)

> Schools and teachers didn't have an influence on me. I am aware since I was very young with the importance of learning a language such as English. (M9)

With the creation of this category, differentiation between learner comments on past experiences with teachers and their comments on their experience of learning from the teachers in the foundational level courses became possible. In the above examples, all of the responses related to past experiences. As I continued to go through the data, it was also possible to create additional sub-codes, which related to past and current markers. In this way, I could link both the current attitudes and past attitudes of teacher enthusiasm and/or teaching pedagogy to how students were doing in their foundational level studies. Through the creation of the sub-code TEP-C (Positive Teaching Related Comment – Current Foundational Course), I was also able to differentiate student attitudes to their teachers in the foundation year. Examples included:

> The teacher was very patient today with one of the students. The student was supposed to give a presentation and was very slow and did many mistakes in grammar and in pronouncing several words. The teacher gave him additional time to let him finish and praised his work. I liked this very much and encouraged me to participate not worrying about my mistakes. (M11)

> In one of the classes, the teacher presented a picture of the Syrian refugees in camps on the border of Lebanon. She presented the picture to teach us some adjectives. She asked us to guess the adjectives we could use to describe the picture. I thought this was a smart way to teach because she brought something from reality, something we saw on the news and we could sympathize with. This made me pay more attention to the teacher's explanation and made other students more interested too. (F3)

> At the end of a 3-hour class the teacher made us play an interesting guessing game that depends on our memory and use new learnt vocabulary. The game made us all excited and more energetic after we were sleepy. This will make me look forward to next class. (F6)

It was not only the positive responses that warranted examination, as not all of the participants felt the same way about the teaching and/or pedagogical experiences in the classroom. Therefore, the sub-code TEN-C (Negative Teaching Related Comment – Current Foundational Course) also required creation. Examples under this coding system included:

> The teacher was not in a good mood today. It seems he is having a problem in work or at home. He was not patient with our mistakes. He even shouted on one of the students because he was late after the break. I think this attitude makes the students avoid attending the class. If the teacher has a problem he should deal with it and not let it affect his treatment to students in class or affect his teaching. (M13)

Interestingly, there were more positive than negative comments about the foundational level course, and students were much quicker to comment on their negative experiences from both their elementary and secondary school experiences. At this point in the coding process, the concern was with assigning the data into appropriate categories in order to attempt to develop the main themes as described above in the results section

In addition to the breakdown of positive and negative teaching experiences, there were also a few reflections by students that offered useful insights into how participants perceived the teaching experience, which did not fall into any of the above categories. These were coded as TEO and included examples such as:

> I feel bored in class most of the times because of the long hours. (M7).
>
> I find myself enjoying the class more, but it is difficult to get a high mark on the exams. I am confused. I think what is stopping me from scoring high marks is the level of difficulty. (F9)
>
> They tried their best with their limited resources to make the class fun and enjoyable. (M14)

This last example by one of the students (M14) was initially difficult to code. I felt it was a positive response, although not necessarily positive 'enough' to list it in the positive teaching code category. Some of this was because it was a transcribed note and I could not determine the students' line of thought with this comment, but secondly, there is some underlying implication that the teachers tried to make class interesting but had not been necessarily successful in doing so. For this reason, it ended up being coded under this heading.

The overall outcome from the qualitative data coding process was that two major factors were identified (and multiple sub-factors) when attempting to answer research question 2. Initially, motivation was determined to be the primary focus for attitudes, although the inclusion of this did not indicate the entire picture of what students were highlighting as important. As a result, aspects of teacher influence or external sources were included in order to provide a more rounded view of what was actually being presented. Again, through this process, time was taken to ensure that in addition to factors affecting attitudes, indications of when each response was recorded (i.e. during interviews, narratives or diary entries) and who (i.e. which gender) had said what was maintained so that a detailed comparison could be made in the next chapter.

Research question 3 was designed to link the attitudes considered in research question 1 (and to some extent in research question 2) and then link this to both well-being and performance. This was challenging in some regards as a comparison of three variables rather than the standard two was entailed. Yet within each section, multiple sub -codes existed, making the links within the HU particularly complex.

In the qualitative data analysis undertaken for this research question, attitudes had already been coded as being affective, cognitive, or behavioural. This left questions over how to code 'well-being' and how to code 'performance'. Initially, my focus of well-being was largely centred around feelings, though it is acknowledged that 'well-being' can be tied to a range of different factors – some topics of well-being include health, emotion, and psychology.

While recognising that well-being could encompass multiple different facets and be considered from multiple different theoretical constructs, my first challenge with the data analysis process was how to deal with such a broad and contested topic. There was no denying that well-being could have been related to a number of different qualities. Some studies link well-being directly to motivation, but in my research the focus of motivation was largely associated with attitudes. Instead, well-being was identified as something that was intrinsically linked to feelings. It was recognised that these feelings could have come across as positive or negative, and as a result they were recorded as such. Examples of the codes for well-being were as follows:

Table 5 - Coding Procedures on Student Well Being

Construct	Sub-Code	Abbreviated Sub-code
Positive Feelings/Emotions	Positive Well Being	PWB
Negative Feelings/Emotions	Negative Well Being	NWB
Neutral Responses Feelings	Neutral Well Being	NUWB
Construct	Sub-code Heading	Abbreviated Code
Teaching	Positive Teaching Related Comment Negative Teaching Related Comment Neutral Teaching Related Comment Other Teaching/Pedagogy Related Comment	TEP TEN TENU TEO

By focusing only on one aspect of well-being, it is recognised that this poses a limitation to my research in some regards. This choice was made for two reasons. First, it was relatively easy to identify student feelings while taking this approach. This was specifically because they were asked self-reflective questions during the interviews that requested comments on how they were feeling. These responses could be easily coded as positive, negative, or neutral. In addition to asking students to consider their feelings, the choice to select well-being as a construct related only to emotion was chosen out of simplicity. In this instance, there had already been multiple codes assigned to the data. By considering environmental, academic, psychological and external factors connected to motivation, the data would have required significant additional coding and the responses would have ended up being beyond the scope of this research project. Therefore, in considering time, scope, and my intentions, well-being was limited to feelings and based upon participants' own self report for this category.

Responses on feelings of well-being were coded with the above headings. Examples of PWB included extracts like those presented below:

> In my case, there is a relationship [between my feelings and motivation]. I do my best because I like English and would like to be perfect in this language. (F7)

> There is a relationship [between my feelings and motivation]. I like English and this make it easier for me to study. (M5)

This contrasted with negative feelings of well-being, which were coded as NWB:

> In my case, no [there is not a relationship between feelings and motivation]. I study hard to get high grades, but I don't like English because of the difficulty. (M9)

> No there is no relationship, I feel bored in class most of the times because of the long hours and teacher's method of teaching not because how I feel about English. (M7)

Finally, participants' responses to well-being sometimes also fell within a neutral category. Examples of NUWB included:

> I feel normal in my English classes. This doesn't have to do anything with my feelings. (F6)

Once students' feelings were accurately coded, there was room to compare this with students' attitudes and with their performance. While attitudes had been previously coded, students'

performance needed to be assessed. When performance was examined, there were questions surrounding the issue of whether it would be more appropriate to take a qualitative approach and to determine what the students thought about their own performance. This was essential because links could then be drawn to well-being and to attitudes. Initially, students were asked to assess their performance in the first interview. Students were given three alternatives: average, above average and below average. These responses could be coded and associated with each student within the atlas.ti programme (under Interview 1). Students were asked the same question in interview 2 and given the same three options. In terms of qualitative data analysis, the outcome from this research question was that students who indicated positive attitudes, and positive well-being generally had a better overall performance in the classroom than those who had negative or neutral attitudes combined with negative or neutral well-being. Interestingly, however the connections were not always as clear as one might expect. This is highlighted further in the discussion chapter.

3.11.2.1 Cognitive attitudes coding

Cognitive attitudes were classified as thoughts and beliefs about learning English. This differed from affective attitudes, which generally only encompassed (for the purpose of coding) whether the student indicated that they liked learning English or not. While this seems a bit rough in terms of classification, it seemed to offer the easiest, clearest, and most straightforward way to approach the data.

Within the cognitive attitudes, three sub-codes were created CP (Cognitive Positive), CN (Cognitive Negative), and CNEU (Cognitive Neutral). Examples of codes that fit within this framework were as follows:

> **CP:** For me it is very important to do well in English and improve myself because I am planning to take a master degree in Special needs from abroad. When I was in Secondary school, I realised how important it is to plan for my future. So, my first decision was to study abroad because people who do that return back with good qualifications, skills, and a well-developed language. And these are the requirement for a good job. (M4)

> **CN:** English is very difficult to learn. The grammar and writing rules are very complicated. Since I was in school, English used to be difficult to understand. (F10)

> **CNEU:** To me it is a subject like other subject. I know it is very important. As a student, I have to score high marks in English because it affects my GPA. If I don't get a high GPA, I will not enter the college I want. English is important

to get a job too. All companies are looking for employees who can speak English. In addition, it is the language of education and communication. I would like to study abroad for higher education and I like to travel and see the world and of course I need English to communicate. (M3)

As demonstrated with the CNEU category, it was possible to include multiple codes within the same piece of writing – so for example, while the phrase 'it is a subject like any other subject' was coded as CNEU, the following phrase 'I know it is very important' was categorised as CP.

It is important to note that determining attitudes was simply the first point of the data analysis process. Ultimately, and what will be shown in the following sections, is the link between attitude, well-being and performance. This research question allowed the researcher to create a starting list, one that offered slightly more organised data. Then, with the use of flags, and other sub-categories, the researcher could examine the data from multiple different perspectives.

3.11.2.2 Affective attitudes coding

Affective attitudes, as stated above, primarily focused on whether the participant indicated that they liked or did not like learning English. Generally, for a phrase to be categorised within this code, the participant actually had to use the word 'like' in the sentence (or to clearly express their neutrality). A few exceptions existed. Sometimes students used phrasing such as 'I am keen to learn' – in these instances, where the language clearly related to the affective attitude, it was coded within this category. As with the cognitive attitudes, three sub-codes were created AP (Affective positive), AN (Affective Negative) and ANEU (Affective Neutral). Examples of coding applied using these classification systems are as follows:

> **AP:** In my case, there is a relationship [between my feelings and motivation]. I do my best because I like English and would like to be perfect in this language. (F7)
>
> **AN:** I don't like English honestly. I feel that English is a difficult subject […] In primary and secondary school, my teachers are not special. They are always in a rush to finish the text book. All they care about is how well we do in exams. They never helped me like English. (F4)
>
> **ANEU:** I can't say that I feel anything. English is just a language like any other language that needs to be learned. Like other subjects, English can be difficult sometimes, but with some effort a student can overcome any

difficulty. I believe that English is very important to everyone in all fields. I personally, will need it in my job in the future, and in everyday life when using my smart devices or surfing the internet. In order to improve my English, a private English teacher used to teach me English for 3 years, 2 days a week for 2 hours. This was mostly to support my school curriculum and help me with my English homework. My parents are very supportive and my friends too, but none of them have influenced me to like or dislike English. In primary and secondary school, English has always been a subject I need to pass with high grades. In the foundation year, my views have not changed. (F6)

Again, in the affective attitudes categorisation, there were instances of overlap. Specifically, in the ANEU categorisation, there was overlap between the attitude of the participant (i.e. 'I can't say that I feel anything') and their attitude towards others learning English (i.e. English is very important to everyone in all fields). In later sections, these attitudes of like, dislike and neutral responses were also flagged to include justifications, for example, the influence of family and friends, assessment requirements, and changing views on learning English, among others. These are discussed later in this section.

3.11.2.3 Behavioural attitudes coding

During the implementation when coding the behavioural attitudes, the distinction about what actually constituted a behavioural attitude was less clear than with the previous two coding examples, making the actual coding process more difficult. Behavioural codes relate to the way participants reacted to a certain situation (Christensen and Knezek, 1996), in this case, learning English. For this coding section, I was looking for places where participants indicated that they were pursuing certain choices within their language learning experience for a specific outcome.

The three sub-codes for this category were created as BP (Behaviour Positive), BN (Behaviour negative) and BNEU (Behaviour Neutral). It was assumed, as per the literature that:

> 'Positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive behaviours toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Such students are also observed to be more eager to solve problems, to acquire the information and skills useful for daily life and to engage themselves emotionally' (Kara, 2009)

Using this as a framework, data could then be inspected on a line-by-line basis with the inclusion of certain behavioural elements reflected in the responses. Examples of behavioural attitudes included:

> **BP:** Secondary school, I realised how important it is to plan for my future. So, my first decision was to study abroad because people who do that return back with good qualifications, skills, and a well-developed language. And these are the requirement for a good job. (M4)

> [Learning English] strongly affects my GPA which determines which college I am going to join which mean my future. My parents encourage me to get high marks in all subjects including English. Although, my study will be in Arabic in the college of Economic which I wish to join, and my future job as well, but I have to study hard to get the marks required for my acceptance. (M10)

> I like English and like to enjoy entertainment in English such as music and movies. It is also important to succeed in future career. My teachers in secondary school helped us realise the importance of English to our future. They tried their best with their limited resources to make the class fun and enjoyable. (M14)

> **BN:** What I hate about English is how complicated learning it can be especially grammar and writing. It has always been difficult for me to understand what the teachers are saying and I suffer when study for exams. I studied simple things in primary school such as letters and numbers. Real English started in secondary school and since then I discovered how difficult English can be. All my family hate English too and if I needed help in exams or with homework, I couldn't find anyone to help me. May be this helped in developing my feelings. I took a course last summer for 6 weeks, 5 days a week, 2 hours every day, but it didn't help me much. (M6)

> **BNEU:** I am confused. I think what is stopping me from scoring high marks is the level of difficulty not my feelings. (F9)

As demonstrated by the underlined examples that were coded in this section, the types of responses offered by the participants were much more diverse than in the previous sections. In the first cognitive section, the focus ended up being largely based on difficulty. Many of the text extracts that ended up in that section surrounded the importance of English – the focus was not necessarily on the why, though that did come into play in some capacity, but much more on their understanding of a viewpoint in learning English. In the affective category, it was all about 'like' and 'don't like', recognising that this type of perception is most certainly not equal among participants (i.e. we don't always know the reasons why the participants liked learning English or how much they liked/disliked it). In the behavioural section, however, because the focus was on the 'what', meaning what participants did or

focused on in order to demonstrate their attitude toward English, the outcomes were more diverse. Participants focused on their attitudes towards parents, family and friends as well as the need to study hard and achieve high grades. This category, as a result, encompassed not only the attitudes participants had towards learning English, but how other beliefs and values played a role in their own conduct.

In working with these codes, there was certainly the most overlap between this and the other attitude codes. This was because the participants often made statements such as 'I like learning English because…' where the 'like' section would be classified as affective, while the remaining phrase may have been categorised as behavioural.

3.11.2.4 Limitations to data analysis

This section outlines some of the limitations associated with my data analysis process and attempts to provide justification for the reasoning behind each approach.

First, when taking a grounded theory approach to data interpretation, it was assumed that the data collected was not influenced by my prior theoretical viewpoint, but to assume this in its entirety is a flawed formulation. Prior to conducting the data analysis, a research literature review was conducted. This information led to prior assumptions on what types of themes would emerge as a result of this study. The research instruments were designed and applied with this information at hand. According to Barbour (2001), researchers are often tempted to create a 'neat and tidy' account of the data that describes, rather than analyses. This uncritical analysis, Barbour (2001) argues, can lead to explanations and themes that emerge from the data because the data were crafted in a way that allows this to occur.

Barbour (2001) suggests that this manipulation of data under the umbrella of grounded theory can be mitigated in two ways. First, she argues that systematic analysis of the commonalities and contradictions is required, and second, she suggests that a step-by-step procedure on the theoretical insights offered within the research needs a detailed explanation. In terms of this relationship to my research, I was able to outline the steps of the data analysis procedure at the beginning of this chapter along with the line by line coding that I initially used for the data analysis process.

Under this process, I indicated that the research process was considerably flexible and required ongoing and cyclical analysis (i.e. I did not simply start at the beginning and move

through each section once, I needed to go back and forth between responses to ensure that each answer was being appropriately and consistently coded). Once all the data were coded, a final analysis was conducted to ensure consistency. The above chapter is essentially justification of the transparency and accuracy of the representations of participant responses for each of the individual narratives identified in the data.

In addition to the systematic procedures followed in the data analysis process, some of Barbour's (2001) concerns can be mitigated through the use of computer software. While many of Barbour's (2001) arguments are completely justifiable, technology has progressed significantly since her article was published. Now, more than a decade later, programmes like atlas.ti offer programmes that can be easily navigated by novice researchers. These programmes also offer a steep, but quick, learning curve, whereby errors are minimised as a result of continued use (and in relation to the ability to move within code families at various levels).

Barbour (2001) also suggests that triangulation is essential for qualitative research. In terms of the data analysis process, her justification (which is consistent with observations by other researchers with reference to qualitative research) is that the use of triangulation supports the idea of rigour. She notes, however, that triangulation is difficult to perform properly (p.1117). She suggests that the 'production of similar findings from different methods merely provides corroboration or reassurance; the absence of similar findings does not, however, provide grounds for refutation' (p.1117). This is because each type of data collection instrument only provides a partial view of the whole story. Her solution for this is to approach qualitative data analysis as complementary, where each instrument is working together to provide comprehensiveness, where contradictions only provide scope for refining pre-existing theories. In my research, this occurs in the way that the study has been designed. One of the goals of my research project was to provide a context for students in Saudi Arabia. Through the use of interviews, narratives and diary entries, I ended up with 30 longitudinal stories that reflected not only on foundation year studies, but also on the nature of English language learning for these participants over their lifetimes.

By initially selecting these instruments (and based upon the justification of these instruments in the methodology), the data could be analysed in a complementary way. The pieces of story ended up fitting together well, although arguably there was considerable overlap between each of the three instruments, which led to overlap in the coding process.

Overlap in the coding process was perhaps the most challenging part of the data analysis process. There were many situations where a piece of text would end up being coded in multiple different constructs. This occurred for multiple reasons. First, in the coding process, different pieces of participants' responses fell within different categories, yet in many instances, in order to keep the language clear, entire sentences were coded in one way. For example, the phrase 'I am motivated to study hard in English because I like it and it will lead to a good job' would fall within multiple categories. It would relate to motivation (instrumental) because of the JOB coding structure. It would also fall within affective attitudes because of the phrase 'I like' and within behavioural attitudes for the phrase 'study hard'. As a result, this one phrase would end up coded in three constructs, as well as being identified as Male or Female Response, and Interview, Narrative, or Diary Entry. The outcome was that one phrase had the ability to influence multiple different categories. This was not necessarily an issue because, as stated previously, the data collected was complementary, though it did mean that some pieces of information played a stronger role in when interpreting the data than others did.

While the above may be accepted as limitations, there are limitations to any research study. Steps were undertaken to ensure that appropriate procedures were followed and that these limitations were identified and mitigated when possible.

3.12 Limitations to the study

While the use of interviews, diaries and life histories with participating students allowed rich data to emerge regarding the possible link between student attitudes and effectiveness of EFL learning, the inclusion of teachers in the study would have allowed the introduction of distinct but valuable perspectives with respect to the description of the EFL learning phenomenon. However, considerations of time and non-availability of teachers for participation in the study constrained the inclusion of teachers' voices in this inquiry.

Additionally, the findings of the study may have had more applicability if data had been collected from more than one Saudi university. As the premier institution in the country, the university under study provided access to the student perspectives, which may differ substantially from those found in less cosmopolitan and more traditional educational settings. If the findings of this study are to truly inform policymaking, then the voices of more students from more tertiary Saudi settings need to be taken into account.

Again, time constraints and limitations imposed by the scope of this study prevented the inclusion of more than one educational setting in the current study. This is a limitation, which can be rectified with similar research in other Saudi universities, not only to corroborate the findings but also to add to the insights generated herein. Sample size was another limitation. Although the inclusion of 30 participants is substantial in terms of qualitative research, the addition of more students amongst the participants would have generated valuable insights.

This study focused on determining whether there existed a relationship between student attitudes and level of motivation associated with learning English. The focus here was on only investigating the attitudes and level of motivation associated with English learning practices related to writing and speaking, although academic literacy encompasses the four language skills of writing, listening, reading, and speaking, in addition to critical thinking skills, reasoning and study skills. Focusing on student writing and speaking may give the false impression that academic literacy practices are mutually exclusive or separable entities when in reality they are not.

Another limitation was that the development of academic writing is a continuous process and the best way to understand it is by conducting longitudinal studies (Leki, 2007). Although the data collection lasted for several months, a longer interaction in the study context is needed before the full dimensions of student attitudes and motivation levels associated with learning English can be understood. In addition, for logistical reasons, the data for the current study comes only from one college amongst the many associated with the University. Therefore, future longitudinal studies that explore a wider range of student attitudes and level of motivation connected with learning English in different and additional colleges are needed.

A final limitation of some significance is the fact that this study relied only on a qualitative approach to address the research questions. The use of quantitative measures would have helped to develop an additional perspective on Saudi EFL learner attitudes to language learning. While the data generated through the phenomenological interviews was rich, the understandings developed in this study are necessarily limited due to the use of a single research approach. Future studies could make use of both approaches to gain multi-perspectival insights into how learner attitudes influence language learning in the Saudi EFL context.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter explained the use of a phenomenological approach to investigate the experiences of Saudi EFL learners and the formation of their attitudes towards learning EFL. Research instruments used within the study were described in detail, along with approaches to participant selection, research procedures, ethical considerations, issues of validity and reliability and limitations to the research. The next chapter will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4.   Results

This chapter outlines the findings from the data collected at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. Initially, participant profiles and the selection process of these participants are documented. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the data collected through the interviews, narratives and diary entries. The analysis presented in four sections is related to the research questions given below:

> 1.   What are the main self-reported attitudes of a Saudi University foundation year students towards learning English as a foreign language?
>
> 2.   What are the factors, according to foundation year students at a Saudi University, which shape their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language?
>
> 3.   How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and their well-being and participation in the classroom?
>
> 4.   How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes and academic performance in EFL classes?

The following sections present the findings on the attitudes of the learners towards learning English as a foreign language, in addition to the factors which shape their attitudes towards EFL learning. The chapter then moves to presentation of findings on learner perceptions of their attitudes towards learning EFL and their well-being and participation in the classroom, concluding with consideration of participants' assessment data to examine the relationship between students' attitudes and academic achievement in EFL. It is of a great importance to know that in this study, attitudes are investigated in terms of three elements – beliefs/knowledge, feelings, and behaviour. When analysing students attitudes in relation to the four research questions, one of these elements was at times more evident depends on the research question and data.

4.1   Attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language

Language learner attitudes play a pivotal role in the effectiveness of EFL learning. These attitudes, whether positive or negative, arise from early childhood, schooling and classroom experiences as the data in this study shows. To answer the research question as to the link between language learner attitudes and EFL learning, female participants initially expressed

positive attitudes towards learning English. Their responses indicated that this positive attitude had emerged at a young age with examples such as:

> I like English very much. I liked it before I enter school. When I was in kindergarten, the teachers used to teach English rhymes which I liked to sing all the time and remember until now. My parents were happy that I used to pick up the letters and words fast. When I was year 6, I started to take English in school as a main subject. I did well and was taught by good teachers (F1)(N).

> When I started learning English in year 6 I liked it very much. For me it was something different and exciting (F2)(I1).

> I like English and learning English very much. It was my favourite subject in school. When I was a child, I used to like watching the movies of Disney (F8)(I1).

These positive memories of EFL associated with early childhood continued into adulthood for this group of female participants. They also expressed many positive responses towards English in secondary school and in their foundation year. This is represented by the following extracts:

> I remember when I was in my first year of secondary school, I was taught by a very good teacher, she used to show us videos about the different cultures of English speaking countries. This way made me feel that it is a nice language to learn to understand these cultures more and visit them one day. (F7)(N)

> […] when I grew up, particularly in secondary school, I started to be fond of the movies of Hollywood and the actors and actresses. So, I am keen on learning English to enjoy watching them. In addition, to its importance in my future career, I have always been blessed by good English teachers as well as parents. (F8)(N)

The above quotes indicate that learning about the culture of English speaking countries, teacher effectiveness and parental support were important factors influencing learner motivation. However, the views shared were not always positive, and some participants were still able to outline areas that required improvement or things that affected motivation in some way. For example, two of the interviewees identified long class hours, poor teachers, and negative peer attitudes as demotivating factors. For example:

> My friends always discourage me but I don't care and I try to convince them that English is not difficult if they put some effort. I had some good and bad teachers in my secondary school. Some of them could explain well and some were not so good (F3)(I1).

> School and teachers didn't make me love English at all. English classes were boring in general. I am lucky I love English on my own (F13)(I1).

Nevertheless, the negative answers from this group of students were minimal, and the overall attitudes displayed suggest that teachers, educators, parents and other family members offered support throughout the English language learning process, thereby motivating them to learn English.

Unlike their female counterparts, the male participants did not express such fond memories of English language learning during the primary school process. Instead they tended to focus much more on the practical elements of language learning, including work, personal enjoyment and higher grades. These ideas are identifiable in extracts such as those appended below:

> English is easy for me and I like it for two reasons. First, I used to watch animation since I was young. I used to download the episodes from the internet and many were in English with no Arabic subtitles. I looked for meanings of words and practiced them to understand the episodes. The second reason is my school. My school focused on English, teachers used to give us extracurricular activities in English and extra homework. I liked English in school despite the additional work (M1)(N).

> If you are asking if I am passionate about English, the answer is no. I believe that English is very important and it is the language of opportunities everywhere (M9)(I1).

This answer suggests that the learner made extensive use of Internet technologies to access English content on his own, also accessing lexical resources to aid comprehension of words and utterances. Meaningful extra-curricular activity assigned by the school which was related to learning English was also found to be helpful (M1). As the extract below shows, another learner (M5) was taught to view English as a 'language of communication' and linguistic heuristic to learn about European and American cultures, which he could use for 'leisure or study'. He was further encouraged by the fact that knowledge of EFL would help him in his future career as a politician. The interest in culture is similar to that expressed by some of the female learners during the interview.

> I like English as a subject and as a language. This feeling developed since I was in school. My teachers in secondary school taught me that English is not just a subject. It is a language of communication with others when I travel abroad for leisure or study. Also, to communicate with non-Arabic speakers in my future job as a politician. It is also a way to learn about other cultures like Europe and America. I have been always interested in learning the history of

the world. I always kept my teacher's words in mind. It helped me enjoy learning English even when it got difficult (M5)(N).

The extract below indicates that another male participant (M14) liked English because he could use his linguistic knowledge to help him while watching films and listening to music as well as to enable him to do well in his future job, a view shared with another participant (M5).

> I like English and like to enjoy entertainment in English such as music and movies. It is also important to succeed in future career. My teachers in secondary school helped us realise the importance of English to our future. They tried their best with their limited resources to make the class fun and enjoyable. (M14)(N).

One of the student's (M14) teachers also seem to have played a positive role in making EFL learning enjoyable for him, despite limited resources, which highlights how teachers are central to effective EFL learning.

As was the case with the female interviewees, the male participants within this group did not always express positive responses in their narrative. For instance, these related to being taught by less than amiable or indifferent and uninspiring teachers. However, in the case of the following interviewee, the language learning experience, while difficult, was not so challenging as to hamper him completely.

> It got more difficult in secondary school, but still I enjoy learning it. True I had a bad-tempered teacher or two in secondary school, but it was still ok (M11)(I1).

Despite the overall positive responses given by this participant group, male responses generally indicate that teacher-related issues are primarily linked to the experiencing of more negative attitudes.

There were only three female participants who expressed solely negative responses towards the language learning process in English. These students expressed similar themes when outlining their justification for a negative response. These centred on the difficulty of learning English and the lack of motivation to do so. Three participants indicated that:

> I don't like English honestly. I feel that English is a difficult subject [...] In primary and secondary school, my teachers are not special. They are always in a rush to finish the text book. All they care about is how well we do in exams. They never helped me like English (F4)(N).

> I've been learning English since I was about 7 years old, but I don't like it. I feel it is boring and difficult to learn sometimes. I am good in class and exams in general. However, I don't care much to learn or use English. I know it is useful especially abroad. Nonetheless, I travel with my family all the time and I don't need to use English on my own. In school, English classes were always boring (F9)(N).

> English is very difficult to learn. The grammar and writing rules are very complicated. Since I was in school, English used to be difficult to understand (F10)(N).

While the interviewees quoted above all agreed as to finding English difficult as a subject, they provided a variety of reasons for not liking the subject. For instance, one of the participants (F4) indicated that she found the EFL instruction to be uninspiring and her teachers to be in a hurry to cover the syllabus, with a parallel focus on assessment. Other reasons included the non-usefulness of English even on travel abroad due to reliance on family members to communicate with English speakers (F9), and in the case of another participant (F10), the dislike seemed to stem from the complicated grammar and writing rules of the language.

Many of these interviewees indicated the need for English as preparation for their future careers. Thus, despite misgivings about the language on the part of many of the participants, it appears that instrumental reasons tend to keep them in the EFL classroom.

A number of male participants revealed negative attitudes towards studying English. The extracts below illustrate such views:

> What I hate about English is how complicated learning it can be especially grammar and writing. It has always been difficult for me to understand what the teachers are saying and I suffer when study for exams. I studied simple things in primary school such as letters and numbers. Real English started in secondary school and since then I discovered how difficult English can be. All my family hate English too and if I needed help in exams or with homework, I couldn't find anyone to help me. May be this helped in developing my feelings. I took a course last summer for 6 weeks, 5 days a week, 2 hours every day, but it didn't help me much (M6)(N).

> The problem in schools especially secondary school is the way we are taught English. Teachers are under so much pressure. They want to finish the stuffed, complicated curriculum and make sure we pass. This leaves no room for them to make us love the language or subject. At least this is my experience (M7)(I1).

> My friends don't like English too. I had bad teachers since I was in primary schools. Some of them were absent most of the year, some very tough and bad tempered, some careless (M12)(I1).

Amongst these participants, it seemed to be the difficulty of the language that appeared to make them feel negatively about EFL. This was combined with the challenge of problematic teachers and a lack of familial support and negative attitude towards English amongst family members. Some of the interviewees also observed that it was the methodology used to teach English as well as the pressure upon teachers to finish the extensive syllabus. Interestingly, in the case of one of the participants (M12), another issue seemed to be negative peer attitudes. Unlike their female counterparts, the males in this grouping generally tended to provide a more rounded reflection on the link between attitudes and the current study of English. Some extracts indicate the importance of English to job prospects. For instance, one of the participants (M13) found English to be important for higher education as well as his career, as noted in the extract below:

> English is very important for my future study and career. Without English, I will not find the job I wish for in a big company or government with a good salary […]. I never had a teacher who made me love or hate English. It is an important subject to me that I have to pass […] but the classes are very long. This makes them boring sometimes (M13) (I1).

> I care about my grades very much since I was in primary school. English grades in the foundation year is very important. It strong affects my GPA which determines which college I am going to join which means my future (M1) (I1).

In other cases, it was believed that the language was important because it was the parents of the learner who had told him this, highlighting the significance of the language to his career prospects, as quoted below:

> English is an important language. I can't say that I like it, but I understand how important it is. My parents are the ones who taught me how important English is and how being good in English can open various opportunities to me in my future career (M7) (I1).

Despite evidence of an overall negative view and lack of motivation to learn English, both the male and female participants in this category were able to identify the reasons why they did not like the language, provide examples of situations wherein this occurred and link the continuation of study to some future purpose (e.g. getting a well-paid job).

The foregoing analysis establishes that students are aware of the importance of learning EFL. The next part of the analysis considers how understanding student attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language is key to gaining insights into the effectiveness of the language learning experience. In this context, diary entries provide substantial insights into how students feel about learning EFL. Three main attitude categories, including positive, negative and neutral are identifiable in the data presented. In the case of students who found it difficult to define their attitudes, the term neutral is indicative of this ambivalence. For instance, four female participants expressed ambivalent or neutral responses when asked about their attitudes and motivations towards learning the English language. One participant (F6) accurately summed up her neutral response with the following diary entry:

> I can't say that I feel anything. English is just a language like any other language that needs to be learned. Like other subjects, English can be difficult sometimes, but with some effort a student can overcome any difficulty. I believe that English is very important to everyone in all fields. I personally, will need it in my job in the future, and in everyday life when using my smart devices or surfing the internet. In order to improve my English, a private English teacher used to teach me English for 3 years, 2 days a week for 2 hours. This was mostly to support my school curriculum and help me with my English homework. My parents are very supportive and my friends too, but none of them have influenced me to like or dislike English. In primary and secondary school, English has always been a subject I need to pass with high grades. In the foundation year, my views have not changed (F6)(N).

In this response, the diary writer highlights themes of great significance including the difficulty of the language, the necessity of English to prepare for a future career, the influences (or lack of influences) of teachers, family, and friends and the link between assessment and schooling.

On the other hand, other participants (F11) are less neutral towards the language, observing as in the extract below that although 'the English language is very beautiful, the problem is that the classes are very boring'. She continues that she has:

> [...] never liked my English classes in primary and secondary. They are boring from start to end. I think teachers could have worked more to make it more enjoyable for students. I don't think my parents and friend had an influence on my feelings towards English (F11) (I1).

Similar to her peer (F6), she does not feel that her family of peers have influenced her attitudes towards the language. Teaching instruction was also identified by other participants

within this group as having an overall influence on motivation. This is demonstrated through the extract below:

> Learning English can be difficult sometimes especially if you don't have a good teacher. Some teachers can be mean to students too. Their bad personality and bad treatment to students can put the students off and make them hate the subject all together. I remember when I was in year 3, I used to have a teacher with a very bad personality. She was always in a bad temper. She used to yell a lot at the students and punish them irrationally sometimes. She forced me to write a sentence 50 times every class for a week because I got the grammar wrong in the exam (F14) (N).

The influence of the teacher is identified clearly in the extract above, and the diary writer (F14) recalls a bad learning experience in the class of a teacher who punished her for getting 'grammar wrong'. Despite this negative personal experience, this student (F14) reveals that 'none the less, I grew up to like languages and English is one of them', indicating how the initial questions surrounding motivation link to the narrative entries.

To link back these findings with similarly ambivalent responses showcased in the interviews, it is important to consider the neutral views of three male participants and their attitudes towards learning English. While the responses are sometimes similar to those of female participants (i.e. expressing both sides of the issue), this is much less common than the expression of a forward-looking response. For example, one of the participants (M3) indicated that 'English is more fun to learn but not something that I like or hate', which is one of the few examples of a mixed response. Instead, most of the participants focused on the need to learn English. For example, the extracts taken from three different participants reflect perceptions of the importance of English:

> To me it is a subject like other subject. I know it is very important. As a student, I have to score high marks in English because it affects my GPA. If I don't get a high GPA, I will not enter the college I want. English is important to get a job too. All companies are looking for employees who can speak English. In addition, it is the language of education and communication. I would like to study abroad for higher education and I like to travel and see the world and of course I need English to communicate (M3)(I1).

> For me it is very important to do well in English and improve myself because I am planning to take a master degree in Special needs from abroad. When I was in Secondary school, I realised how important it is to plan for my future. So, my first decision was to study abroad because people who do that return back with good qualifications, skills, and a well-developed language. And these are the requirement for a good job (M4)(I1).

> [Learning English] strongly affects my GPA, which determines which college I am going to join which mean my future. My parents encourage me to get high marks in all subjects including English. Although, my study will in Arabic in the college of Economic which I wish to join, and my future job as well, but I have to study hard to get the marks required for my acceptance (M10)(I1).

These extracts show how English is considered important by the participants because having proficiency in the language determines admissions to the college of choice, continuing academic success, and preparation for future study or job. As demonstrated by these three responses, participants in this category are separating attitudes from tasks, suggesting that motivation to learn English does not necessarily relate to their attitudes but to other external factors. These could be linked to finance (e.g. jobs) but could also have cultural representation (e.g. wanting to make parents/family members proud).

Data from narratives provide further insights into attitudes towards EFL learning on the part of the students. By asking participants to write down the thoughts in a narrative format, I was able to better understand the responses provided in the interviews. This comparison helped to address the research questions more effectively and to contribute to research on the whole. Insights from this section suggest that with positive attitudes towards learning English, participants are more likely to document positive memories, with the opposite being true about participants who indicate negative responses.

> English have always been fun to learn especially in primary school, thanks to my teachers of course (M1)(N).

> I like English very much. I liked it before I enter school. When I was in kindergarten, the teachers used to teach English rhymes which I liked to sing all the time and remember until now (F1)(N).

> I like English since I was little […] in school I had good teachers. English was never a problem (F3)(I1).

> I have always loved English and feel attracted to the language wherever I listen to someone speaking it. That's why, I want to study English as major and be perfect in it. I remember when I was in my first year of secondary school, I was taught by a very good teacher, she used to show us videos about the different cultures of English speaking countries. This way made me feel that it is a nice language to learn to understand these cultures more and visit them one day (F7)(N).

> My school focused on English, teachers used to give us extracurricular activities in English and extra homework. I liked English in school despite the additional work (M1)(I1).

Participants expressing negative responses did not share very positive memories of learning English:

> What I hate about English is how complicated learning it can be especially grammar and writing. It has always been difficult for me to understand what the teachers are saying and I suffer when study for exams (M6)(I1).

> In primary and secondary school, my teachers are not special. They are always in a rush to finish the text book. All they care about is how well we do in exams. They never helped me like English (F4).

Those who gave neutral responses were observed to fall somewhere in the middle, providing neither totally positive nor totally negative responses. However, they still had the ability to comment expansively on their experiences. For instance, the extract below reflects such feelings:

> I never thought of my feelings towards English. To me it is a subject like other subject. I know it is very important. As a student, I have to score high marks in English because it affects my GPA. If I don't get a high GPA, I will not enter the college I want. English is important to get a job too. All companies are looking for employees who can speak English. In addition, it is the language of education and communication. I would like to study abroad for higher education and I like to travel and see the world and of course I need English to communicate. My parents always encourage me to achieve my goals. Nothing special happened in primary and secondary school. English was a subject like all subjects. In the foundation year, English is more fun to learn but not something that I like or hate (M3)(I1).

> I can't say that I feel anything. English is just a language like any other languages that needs to be learn. Like other subjects, English can be difficult sometimes, but with some effort a student can overcome any difficulty (F6)(I1).

4.1.1 Change in learner attitudes towards EFL after a year of study

By the end of the academic year, participants in this study demonstrated largely similar views on learning English as the ones they had shared at the beginning. Responses generally fall into three categories of responses (positive, negative, or mixed attitudes). A breakdown of participant responses by the type of response is presented below:

Table 6 - Breakdown of participant attitudes towards learning English

Response	Participant

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Positive	F1, F2, F7, F8, F12, F13, F15, M1, M2, M5, M8, M11, M15
Negative	F4, F10, M6, M9, M12, M13
Mixed emotions	F3, F5, F6, F9, F11, F14, M3, M4, M7, M10, M14

As Table 6 shows, there were only five participants who indicated a difference in attitudes between the beginning and end of the foundation year programme. Three of these students experienced a shift from positive to mixed (F3), a shift from mixed to negative (F5), and a shift from negative to mixed (F9). The remaining participants experienced a shift from negative to mixed (M7) and a shift from positive to mixed (M14).

In the case of these five participants, the difficulty of the course seems to be justification for the more negative responses. For example, the following four extracts show that many of the participants had experienced a shift in their attitudes, whether from positive to negative or vice versa since the beginning of the year:

> I still like the language, but the grammar and reading are still very boring (F3)(I2).
>
> I don't like it very much now. It is very difficult this quarter (F5).
>
> I can't deny, I started to like English more than before, but it is still very difficult (F9)(I2).
>
> English is a nice language and enjoyable to learn although it can be difficult sometimes (M14)(I2).

These responses demonstrate that the challenges of learning English as an academic subject can create negative attitudes in response to specifically difficult work.

One of the participants, who was the only one to shift from negative to mixed attitude also commented on the level of difficulty with studying English, as he noted that 'I am actually starting to like English now although it is very difficult' (M7).

A possible explanation could be his growing familiarity, if not competence, with the language, which could have led him to experience less negative attitude about EFL learning. Participants were then asked to clarify their responses with a follow-up question targeting

attitudes. While the initial question above asked them what their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language were right now, the follow up question asked them to explain (if possible) how these attitudes towards learning English had changed. While some participants (F5, F9 and M7) indicated a change in their attitudes, others (F3 and M14) indicated no change in their response. The differences between the outcome of the first and second question led to inconclusive results, although it could just be that participants did not provide accurate examples in the first set of interviews, or that the changes in attitudes were very small in the first place.

As three participants (F5, F9 and M7) were clearly able to identify changes in their attitudes, these participants were then asked to indicate what led to this change. Two prominent points came to the fore at this point, namely the difficulty level of the material and the overall perceptions of the teachers. These themes are evidenced in responses such as:

> I always thought English was easy and I could understand it and use it easily, but in levels 3 and 4 the material taught became very difficult. I feel I lost my confidence in using English as I struggled to understand and answer questions in the exam as well as in the homework. Another thing, the level is only taught in 4 to 5 weeks. We don't have the time to practice the new material enough and work more on improving our language (F3)(I2).

This response highlights some interesting points for discussion, including the pressures associated with assessment. Students in this foundation year course rely on their GPA from this English foundation course in order to gain entry into the university programme of their choice. The short time frame and high standards associated with this programme make the language learning essential but sometimes also a stressful process.

In addition to difficulty in language learning, the importance of teacher input was highlighted in some of the responses (F9 and M7). Examples of this are included in the two extracts below:

> I started to like English more because of the teachers. They are very dedicated and very careful to ensure that all students get the needed attention. This was unlike my teachers at secondary school. Also, the teachers here are using more attractive teaching methods. They let us practice and understand through games and different fun activities. In addition, they teach us through playing videos (F9)(I2).

> The teachers' fun methods of teaching are an important factor. They are very kind to all students and helpful. They never leave the class until everyone understood and practice the new taught material (M7)(I2).

4.1.2 Learner motivation for learning English during the foundation year

At the end of the academic year, participants were asked to use one word to describe the last quarter of their foundation year course, and the overwhelming response was 'difficult' with every participant selecting this word, excepting two students, who chose 'complicated', although this is indicative of difficulty too. These responses were starkly different from the ones provided during the first interview, which generally indicated an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere. In their fourth level, the participants seemed to experience a shift in perspective, which then affected their motivation and attitudes towards English, as demonstrated in this section.

Within motivation, there was also a shift in the perspective in terms of how some of the students were doing within the class. When asked to describe their performance in class as average, above average, or below average, any participant who had initially indicated above average from the first interview changed their response to only 'average'. In fact, 29 out of 30 participants indicated an 'average' result, whereas another participant (M8) consistently suggested he was 'below average'. More specific analysis is included in Table 7.

Having considered the attitudes of the learners in this study towards EFL, the discussion of the results now moves forward to considering the wide range of factors that affect the attitudes of the language learners towards EFL learning.

Table 7 - Participant self-evaluation of performance at the end of year

F1	Average	M1	Average
F2	Average	M2	Average
F3	Average	M3	Average
F4	Average	M4	Average
F5	Average	M5	Average
F6	Average	M6	Average
F7	Average	M7	Average
F8	Average	M8	Below average

F9	Average	M9	Average
F10	Average	M10	Average
F11	Average	M11	Average
F12	Average	M12	Average
F13	Average	M13	Average
F14	Average	M14	Average
F15	Average	M15	Average

4.2   Factors influencing learner attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language

As discussed in the literature review chapter (Section 2.2.3), there are a number of factors that can influence the attitudes of learners towards learning EFL. These can include encouragement or discouragement from family and friends, factors related to teachers, teacher quality, and teaching styles and materials which can determine learning experiences. Other factors include considerations of finance, the desire or need to learn English for understanding media, travelling and working, and future benefits and prospects arising out of being proficient in EFL. The succeeding sections discuss these in detail, also presenting data to support the findings.

4.2.1   Family and friends

The question, 'Have your family and friends shaped your attitudes towards learning English?' was posed to all students. The female participants generally suggested that familial support played an important role in their learning of English. This can be demonstrated by the three responses below:

> My father doesn't speak English. That's way he always encourages me. He wants me to speak and use the language fluently (F2)(I1).

> I was always supported by my parents. They used to encourage me to learn English and improve myself (F1)(I1).

> My father is a strong support to me. He wants me to do my best and be the best in class (F7)(I1).

A positive familial relationship linked with the students' preference for learning English, implying that the participants who expressed strong familial support, generally suggested that they liked learning English.

On the other hand, the male participants provided less specific responses, thereby indicating that family relationships were less influential in their lives. The following extracts are provided by three participants (M2, M10 and M13):

> My parents want me to do well in all subjects, including English (M2)(I1).
>
> My family are supportive in everything (M10)(I1).
>
> My family support me in English as well as other subjects. They help me when I need help (M13)(I1).

While the male participants did sometimes acknowledge strong familial support, friends seemed to be particularly important in shaping their attitudes towards language learning. For example, two participants stated that:

> My Friends and I are all cooperative. We help each other the best we can (M13)(I1).
>
> My family did not pay special attention to English. My friends are good in English (M14)(I1).

Although friends are seen as more influential generally among the male population, one male participant (M15) highlighted the importance of family by stating that 'my parents speak at least 2 languages. They support and encourage me to be good too. My friends have no effect on me'. As indicated by the wide range of responses, male and female interviewees generally have differing views on the influence of family and friends with females indicating stronger familial ties.

4.2.2 Finance

Finance was also identified as an area that might have contributed to student attitudes/motivations towards learning English. However, 24 of the interviewees actually indicated that finances played minimal, if any, role in shaping their feelings. The other six participants indicated that money gave them access to resources, such as summer school or private tutoring, which led to the improvement in their skills. None of these participants commented on how this affected their motivations, only that they got more practice. For example:

With money, I was able to get a private teacher to help me when I needed (M4)(I1).

Money helped me improve in English. I was able to take summer courses for a number of years (F7)(I1).

4.2.3   Media and the Internet

The female participants also focused on another area with respect to which they felt learning English would be particularly useful, namely accessing the media and the Internet. The students who had already reported positive attitudes towards learning English displayed enthusiasm wherein this theme which was clearly distinguishable. For example, one participant (F2) noted that she liked 'watching English movies and programmes', whereas another (F13) observed that she loved 'every English thing, movies, books, websites, cartoons, and even documentaries' and 'worked hard' to improve 'my language so I can enjoy all of these things'. Some did not want to rely on translation to access the media. As one of them (F8) noted she liked 'to watch movies and understand them without translation'. Others (F4, F6) were keen to access Internet technologies and computer applications as they were predominantly in English and required users to have a certain degree of proficiency in English for effective use:

Internet and computer applications are mostly in English. I like to be good in English to use them with no difficulty (F4)(I1).

Most mobile apps and reliable webpages are in English. I would like to be good in English so I can use them easily (F6)(I1).

The male participants who indicated a positive motivation to learning English also highlighted media as an influential factor. For example, one of the participants (M1) observed that he liked 'to watch animation very much and they are in English', and another (M14) wanted to 'be better in English to enjoy entertainment music, movies'. Others wanted to understand movies without relying on translation. For instance, one of them (M8) stated that 'I am a movie fanatic. I like to go to cinemas and watch movies and understand them without translation'.

4.2.4   Travel

Many of the participants also cited travel as being the motivation for wanting to learn English. For instance, one of the male participants (M3) pointed out that he liked to 'travel often and English is the language used everywhere'. Others highlighted that English was

needed to communicate with other people, while travelling for vacations. One participant (F2) observed that she had 'to use English when I travel abroad in summer vacation' (F2), whereas another corroborated this by noting that she liked 'travelling to English speaking countries. Being good in English will make it easy for me to chat with others and communicate' (F7). Communicating with others seemed to be a major reason for needing English while travelling. As a participant (F5) pointed out she liked 'be able to communicate with others easily when I travel abroad'.

4.2.5   Future job prospects

The link between using English well and future job prospects is evident in many of the extracts. For example, it was observed that by one participant (M7) that 'I have to work hard to be good in English if I want to get a well-paid job' and another (M15) that 'speaking languages is definitely a plus when it comes to finding a job and English is on top'.

The results from these questions, which asked participants to think about their motivations from a historical perspective, indicate that while both positive and negative attitudes are associated with learning English, necessity and enjoyment of English culture are at the forefront of participant responses. It is possible that learners who indicate cultural influence as a factor are making a connection between English concepts and schema.

4.2.6   Factors related to EFL teachers, their teaching and use of learning materials

The data generated a number of interesting insights regarding teachers and their teaching styles as being important factors of influence upon the learners. When asked to comment on their own learning experiences, participants did little self-reflection in the writing process and chose instead to focus their attention on what the teacher did or did not do in the class and how this affected their attitudes. Teacher mood and attitude seemed to have a considerable effect on the students. Some of the main themes identified in participant diary entries link well with those identified in the interviews and narrative responses. Positive characteristics associated with teaching generally included patience on the part of the teachers, as demonstrated in the extract below:

> The teacher was very patient today with one of the students. The student was supposed to give a presentation and was very slow and did many mistakes in grammar and in pronouncing several words. The teacher gave him additional

time to let him finish and praised his work. I liked this very much and encouraged me to participate not worrying about my mistakes (M11)(D).

In contrast, negative experiences were often linked to a lack of patience by the teacher. For example, one participant wrote:

> The teacher was not in a good mood today. It seems he is having a problem in work or at home. He was not patient with our mistakes. He even shouted at one of the students because he was late after the break. I think this attitude makes the students avoid attending the class. If the teacher has a problem he should deal with it and not let it affect his treatment to students in class or affect his teaching (M13)(D).

Interestingly, based on the two preceding examples, the link between attitudes and responses to learning English is clearly highlighted. Whereas one participant (M11) generally had positive associations with learning English as indicated from the narrative and interviews, another (M13) indicated negative attitudes towards learning English. This is reflected in the diary entries, wherein the first participant provides positive comments, while the second recorded more negative responses.

In addition to teacher characteristics, there were also multiple comments about teaching characteristics, as the general consensus among participants was that the classes were long and sometimes boring. Thus, sessions during which teachers attempted to break the monotony, implement interesting exercises and provide personal communication examples seemed to garner positive responses among students. According to one participant:

> At the end of a 3-hour class the teacher made us play an interesting guessing game that depends on our memory and use new learnt vocabulary. The game made us all excited and more energetic after we were sleepy. This will make me look forward to next class (F6)(D).

This was an insightful response, as this student initially suggested that she had mixed attitudes towards the process of learning English. With this comment, it is possible to link her motivation to specific instances of interest.

There was also consistency demonstrated between responses distinguished by gender about the benefits of personal communication examples by the teacher and the link to motivation. One female participant revealed that:

> [the teacher] took us out of the class and we all sat on the benches in the college yard and had many interesting discussions using English. This was nice. I felt that teacher cares about us and wants us to feel happy (F14)(D).

A corresponding response from a male participant also highlights the benefits of personal communication by the teacher as he wrote:

> After we finished today's lesson, the teachers started to tell us about his experience in learning English and the difficulties he went through. This made feel positive about myself. I said to myself, if he was able to overcome the difficulties and become an English teacher, I could do it too (M7)(D).

Finally, another topic that was prominent in the diary entries was the use of materials using photographs. This was linked to personal communication, as such materials were not part of the curriculum, but still offered the students the opportunity to learn the required material through information that was relevant to the current context. One participant indicated that:

> In one of the classes, the teacher presented a picture of the Syrian refugees in camps on the border of Lebanon. She presented the picture to teach us some adjectives. She asked us to guess the adjectives we could use to describe the picture. I thought this was a smart way to teach because she brought something from reality, something we saw on the news and we could sympathize with. This made me pay more attention to the teacher's explanation and made other students more interested too (F3)(D).

Teacher quality and learning materials also seemed to be major foci in participant data. When asked about educational factors that shaped their attitudes toward learning English, there was indication of a strong relationship between the interpreted 'quality' of the teacher and the desire to learn English. Students who generally indicated that learning English was a positive experience were more likely to suggest that the teacher and lesson material considerably influenced the way of thinking. The following three extracts are indicative of these perceptions:

> My English teacher in year 6 and 7 was excellent. She used to make us play games with words and letters and form simple sentences. She was the reason why I love English. I used to memorise new words to impress her and to be praised in front of the whole class. She was very kind and enthusiastic (F3)(N).

> I was influenced by my teachers in secondary school especially the first year. I was taught by a very good teacher, she used to show us videos about the different cultures of English speaking countries. This way made me feel that it is a nice language to learn to understand these cultures more and visit them one day (F7)(N).

> My teachers in secondary school taught me that English is not just a subject. It is a language of communication and a way to learn about other cultures. I always kept this in mind. It helped me enjoy learning English (M5)(N).

The participants who initially demonstrated negative attitudes toward learning English also apportioned 'blame' to teachers for their lack of interest in learning EFL. For instance, one interviewee noted that:

> I had bad teachers since I was in primary schools. Some of them were absent most of the year, some very tough and bad tempered, some careless. With all this history, even if I had a good teacher or two, this will never change how I see English. (M12)(N)

For those participants who chose not to highlight teachers as a deciding factor, the educational component seemed to link to necessity, namely the idea that English was a subject that *required* learning because of the possibility of future benefits. Two participants indicated this in their comments:

> I don't think schools or teachers had influenced my thoughts about English. For me it always has been a subject I need to pass and a language I need to learn to find a good job in the future (F6)(I1).

> Schools and teachers didn't have an influence on me. I am aware since I was very young with the importance of learning a language such as English (M9)(I1).

The next section considers how the learners participating in the study perceived the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL and their level of comfort in the EFL classroom and enjoyment of EFL learning.

4.3 EFL learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL learning and classroom participation

The results presented in the following section discuss the link between student well-being and effective performance in the EFL class. The discussion explores whether enjoyment of EFL learning has a positive impact on learner motivation to learn English, and it further looks at whether negative attitudes can in fact demotivate learners towards learning EFL.

4.3.1 Student well-being and performance in EFL class

Student well-being in terms of their level of comfort in the class and their performance in class appeared to be an influential factor upon the attitudes of the learners towards learning EFL. Participants in this study generally fell into two categories with respect to their well-being in the English classroom. They expressed being either happy (or relaxed) or bored (or uncomfortable). They were then asked if these moods contributed to their motivations to

learn English and their overall well-being. Participant responses from those who initially expressed positive associations with learning English include examples such as:

> In my case, there is a relationship [between my feelings and motivation]. I do my best because I like English and would like to be perfect in this language (F7)(I1).

> There is a relationship [between my feelings and motivation]. I like English and this make it easier for me to study (M5)(I1).

In contrast, participants who initially expressed negative attitudes associated with attitudes toward learning English suggested:

> In my case, no [there is not a relationship]. I study hard to get high grades, but I don't like English and I find it difficult (F9)(I1).

> In my case, no [there is not a relationship]. I study hard to get high grades, but I don't like English because of the difficulty (M9)(I1).

> From this perspective, a link is certainly demonstrated between motivation and student attitudes (whether positive or negative). A similar situation arose when asked about the relationship between motivation and well-being. Students who initially outlined positive responses suggested a relationship, as demonstrated by the extracts below:

> Yes, there is a relationship. I like English and this makes me enjoy my English class (F2)(I1).

> Yes, there is definitely [a relationship], I enjoy my English class because I love the language and want to be the best in it (M5)(I1).

Participants who initially expressed negative attitudes when learning English gave responses such as:

> There is not necessarily [a relationship], I feel normal in my English classes. This doesn't have to do anything with my feelings (F6)(I1).

> No there is no relationship, I feel bored in class most of the times because of the long hours and teacher's method of teaching not because how I feel about English (M7)(I1).

Overall, the data collected suggests that interviewees may have been motivated in the leadup to this foundational level course. In primary and secondary school, participants generally linked a strong motivation to learn the good teaching practices of teachers, but also to external components such as job prospects, studying abroad or travel. Participants declared that these external components required a functional knowledge of English. 'Functional';

however, these are often defined by this participant population as obtaining a high GPA based upon assessment in class (which is largely writing-based). As such, participants do not seem to feel strongly about engaging in the classroom discussions in an attempt to improve oral performance.

Ultimately, it seems that participants who enjoyed learning English were more likely to point out the relationship between motivation and achievement, whereas the other participants were more likely to dismiss this link. The succeeding sections consider :1) how learners perceive the relationship between their attitudes toward EFL learning and academic achievement; and 2) whether this link is evidenced between the attitudes of the language learners and their academic achievement.

4.4 Learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and performance in EFL classes

The link between language learner attitudes towards English and performance in the EFL class is a significant one, with implications for learner motivation and EFL pedagogy. The following section discusses whether student attitudes towards EFL learning and their performance are linked, and in cases where they are not, it discusses other factors which have a bearing on effective EFL performance of the learners. The discussion in Section 4.4.1 is concerned with student perceptions of a possible relationship between their attitudes and performance in the EFL class.

4.4.1 Student attitudes and performance in EFL Class

Interviewees were asked questions pertaining to the perceived decline in achievement. Specifically, participants were asked to comment on how their own academic performance was linked to their attitudes. The participants had previously indicated positive attitudes towards learning English. For some participants, these attitudes changed over the course of the foundation year course, but for others, the attitudes did not change. When examining this data, there was a relationship between participant attitudes (positive, negative, or mixed) and how this was linked to academic performance.

The following four female participants who suggested positive relationships between learning English and achievement generally indicated that the relationship existed. Examples include:

> There is a relationship [between my feelings towards learning English and performance]. Because I like English I enjoy studying it even if it is difficult (F1)(I1).
>
> I like English and this make it easier for me to study (F2)(I1).
>
> In my case, there is a relationship. I do my best because I like English and would like to be perfect in this language (F7)(I1).
>
> I don't know if it is true for everyone. For myself, I love English and enjoy studying it very much (F13)(I1).

While expressing their enjoyment of English, these female participants indicated both the difficulty of the material but also the need to study it outside of class time. In turn, it appeared as if these participants found the motivation to complete this task.

The male participants who expressed positive attitudes also demonstrated similar responses, indicating a strong link between attitudes and performance. Four of them stated the following:

> Because I like English I enjoy studying it (M1)(I1).
>
> There is a relationship [between my feelings towards learning English and performance]. I like English and this makes it easier for me to study (M2)(I1).
>
> There is a relationship. I study for long hours and practice a lot to be better in English because I like the language (M8)(I1)
>
> Yes, there is [a relationship], If I don't like the language I won't be able to learn it (M11)(I1).
>
> Yes, there is a definite relationship, I enjoy studying English because I love the language and want to be the best in it (M15)(I1).

Again, the extracts from these responses generally indicate that practice and studying are influential in the learning of the language. In addition, the link between actually completing the study and academic performance is indirectly implied by these participants. Interestingly, despite the motivation to study and the relationship indicated between attitudes and assessment outcomes, these participants still only indicated that their performance was 'average' in the class.

As for the responses provided by participants who had negative attitudes overall to learning English, their answers to the questions generally indicated that there was not a significant relationship. For example, two female participants with negative attitudes said:

> There is not necessarily a relationship; I study hard even though I don't like English (F4)(I1).

> English is boring and difficult, that is why I don't like to study it (F10)(I1).

The male participants (negative response) provided similar responses, as exemplified by the three extracts below:

> There does not have to be a relationship; I study English hard because of other reasons. It has nothing to do with whether I like it or not (M9)(I1).

> May be there is [a relationship], I can't study as much as I should be because I don't like English (M12)(I1)

> There is not necessarily a relationship. I have to do my best in English so I can get high marks and reach my goal (M13)(I1).

In the case of both the male and female participants, the relationship was deemed to be inconsequential at best. The participants still highlighted the need to study, but for these students (except for M12), the motivation to study came from other factors. These factors have been previously identified as the ability to obtain a 'well-paid' job, the opportunity to travel abroad, or study at a foreign university. Familial implications were also previously discussed as a factor, although this was suggested only indirectly by the participants.

The participants who initially evidenced mixed attitudes towards the desire to learn English, also tended to give mixed responses to the relationship question. This is best demonstrated by the example below:

> Maybe there is [a relationship], people who like something do better in it. For me I am not sure (F3)(I1).

Other participants also give mixed reviews, as demonstrated by four examples from the female participants:

> Yes, I think so. Maybe because learning English is harder now I don't enjoy studying it like before (F5)(I1).

> There does not have to be a relationship. I study English hard for personal reasons. This has nothing to do with my feelings about learning the language (F6)(I1).

> I am not sure [if there is a relationship or not]. I feel that English is attracting me more than before. I find myself enjoying the class more, but it is difficult to get a high mark on the exams. I am confused. I think what is stopping me from scoring high marks is the level of difficulty not my feelings (F9)(I1).

Yes, there probably is a relationship. I find English boring and that's one of the reasons why I don't like to study it (F11)(I1).

The male participants (who suggested mixed views) gave similar responses, providing an overall mixed review. This is demonstrated by the following four examples:

There is not necessarily a relationship; I study hard to achieve my goal. It doesn't have anything to do with my feelings (M3)(I1).

There might be a relationship for some people, but in my case, I focus on the subject and work hard to get the grade I want (M4)(I1).

Even though English is becoming more appealing, I still see no relationship. I study hard to get high grades no matter how I feel (M7)(I1).

I don't think [there is a relationship]. I work hard to get good grades because that's what matters to me (M10)(I1).

The outcomes by the end of the foundation year revealed that the participants focused more on assessment than they did at the beginning. Whereas when they started the year, participants were focused on the opportunities (e.g. getting a well-paying job or studying abroad), but as the weeks progressed the focus seemed to shift from the 'ideal' to actual practice. This meant that the participants began to focus more on grades specifically.

When examining the results based upon the relationship of attitudes and performance, it is apparent that positive attitudes towards English led participants to affirm the relationship between attitudes and achievement. Likewise, participants with negative attitudes affirmed a lack of such a relationship.

4.5   Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results from this qualitative study. Four main themes and a variety of sub-themes have been identified in these results. The main themes included the relationship between attitudes/motivation to: 1) family and friends, 2) finance, 3) media and the Internet, 4) travel, 5) future job prospects, and 6) factors related to EFL teachers and their teaching and use of learning materials. Among these, sub-themes included aspects such as the difficulty level with learning English, personal anecdotal evidence associated with the learning process, pedagogical practices by teachers and cultural implications. Additionally, questions arose as to the relationship between final grades in each level and participants' attitudes with respect to learning English. As questions still exist, there is a need to compare

this research with previous literature. These questions are discussed in detail with close reference to literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 5.　　Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion of the key findings from the data collected at a university in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the study was to develop a better understanding of Saudi learner attitudes towards learning EFL, factors that shape these attitudes, and learner perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL and their well-being and participation in the classroom. To ensure a logical and coherent discussion, this chapter is divided into four sections, with each section corresponding to the four research questions framing this study listed at the beginning of Chapter 4. These sections also correspond to the theoretical framework and literature presented in Chapter 2. The sections to be discussed are titled below:

1. Attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language

2. Factors influencing learner attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language

3. EFL learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL learning in the classroom

4. Learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and academic performance in EFL classes

5.1　Attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language

Language learner attitudes are believed to play a pivotal role in the effectiveness of EFL learning. Within research literature, the importance of learner perceptions and attitudes to ESL/EFL learning (Breen, 2001, cited in Bernat and Gvozdenko, 2005 p.1) is well-documented. Indeed, attitude and perception are believed to be central to effective foreign language learning (Hosseini and Pourmandnia, 2013, p.70), as are ESL learner beliefs about the context and the culture of the second language and the mother tongue (Atchade, 2002, p.45).

The findings in the previous chapter offered confirmation of the close nexus between language learner attitudes and the effectiveness of foreign language learning. Based on the data collected, it is found that most of the learners view EFL learning positively and that this positive attitude, which emerges at a young age, influences how they view EFL learning.

In particular, the findings established that the attitudes seem to arise from early childhood, schooling and classroom experiences. The importance of these experiences to language learning can be explained with reference to the theorisations of constructivism. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is a theory of learning which sees learning as an active rather than passive process (Payne, 2009, p.233; Von Glaserfeld, 1991; 1995), identifiable in a framework that sees the personal experiences of students having a bearing upon their experiences in the classroom and influencing their perspective of how the world functions (Powell and Kusuma-Powell, 2011; Schulte, 1996).

Hence, constructivism accommodates not only the active role of the learners in the creation of knowledge (Garrison, 1998), but also the learners' ability to interject their own 'self' (i.e. personal perspective) on issues, so that knowledge creation becomes distinguishable from the reality it represents (Duffy and Jonassen, 2013; Solingen, 2008). Under socio-constructivist theory, none of this is, of course, possible without social interaction, which leads to the formation of sociocultural practices, with culture being inherently embedded in language and linguistics and ultimately influencing how members within a community interact with one another (Harper and Jong, 2004). As the findings show, this framework has substantial explanatory force here in that it helps to explain the key role played by the experiences of the participants in the success or the challenges they experience while learning English as a foreign language.

A positive view of EFL was found to be linked to a number of factors. These include quality of teaching and activities in early schooling, parental encouragement, and peer influences. Students who indicated positive emotions did, more often than not, also indicated that they were motivated to learn English. This was found to be consistent with conclusions drawn by Dweck (1988) who indicated that individuals' own thought processes influence how successful they are in the achievement of their task. This has also been borne out by recent research on positive emotions and academic achievement (Valiente, Swanson and Eisenberg, 2010). Further, the various studies reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrated a link between positive emotions and positive attitudes, with a concomitant effect on motivation to learn key concepts, thereby enhancing fluency within language learning (Horwitz, 2010) and the role of positive and negative emotions in successfully learning new ideas (Al-Asmari, 2013; Al Quyadhi, 2009; Al-seweed, 2012; Al-Zahrani, 2008).

Early schooling experiences influenced participant attitudes in this study significantly. EFL learning is viewed positively, as is evident in responses that expressed a liking for the subject because early EFL learning made use of rhymes and games and allowed learners to access Disney movies. Good teaching, the influence of parents and peers on learner attitudes to EFL, and the desire to excel in future careers where English would be needed are some of the factors considered important in predisposing the participants in this inquiry to the study of English as a foreign language.

Many of the learners felt their desire to learn English had been affected by ill-trained, ill-tempered and indifferent teachers, although some of the participants, who revealed similar experiences, pointed out that they had still developed a liking for English as a subject. Male participants, in particular, indicated that teacher-related issues were primarily linked to the experiencing of more negative attitudes, highlighting how their teachers were pressured to finish the curriculum and to ensure that exams were passed. This is in line with research, which also suggests that the teachers' level of confidence and mastery has an influence on the way students learn because their ability to explain specific aspects of the language leads to shifts in the how they connect with them (Farrell, 2008; Alresheed, 2013). Over time, this can even affect the student's ability to read, write and speak English more effectively (Farrell, 2008; Alresheed, 2013).

Parental encouragement or absence of it also comprised some of the reasons for the way the participants felt about EFL learning. These findings can be linked to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which highlights the importance of parental support. The expectations of the family affect the amount of support that a learner receives in this direction, thereby moulding the motivation component of learner attitude towards learning in their choice of goal achievement and their intention to learn (Dornyei, 2001). According to Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizer (2011), parental encouragement is key to producing learning that is positively motivated as such positive encouragement can easily influence learners' knowledge direction, attitudes to learning, their view of a foreign culture and their ideal L2 self.

Further negative peer influence was identified by some of the participants and observed to have an effect on their language learning. This finding resonates with Rueda and Moll's (1994, p.131) assertion that the motivation to learn to be 'socially distributed' involves sustenance within 'cultural systems of activities' involving 'the mediation of others'. The influence of peers on the learning of students has also been noted in more recent research,

which suggests that friends and peers strongly influence learner attitudes (Oskamp and Schultz, 2005) and that learners in their adolescence specifically seek the approval of peers (Harmer, 2007). They also correspond with the idea that peer attitudes can have a substantial influence on the EFL learners' 'own FLL orientation, attitudes and motivation' (Young, 1994, p.86).

The study also confirmed that Arab learners' motivation tends to be instrumental (Qasho, 2006), which is to say that Saudi learners study the language out of a sense of obligation or need (Malcolm, 2013). This was reflected in many of the responses given by the learners in this study, especially so in the case of the male participants. A number of the interviewees focused more on the practical aspects of EFL learning, observing that learning EFL gave them access to opportunities and the ability to communicate internationally, to learn about English-speaking cultures, and to do well in future careers.

This research identified attitudes of three kinds amongst the participants, including positive, ambivalent and negative that were influenced by the experiences of the learners. While much research on attitudes defines these in terms of a cognitive strand (Allport, 1954; Early and Chaiken, 1993; Ferguson and Fukukura, 2012; Orey, 2010; Zimbardo and Lieppe, 1991), attitudes have also been defined from a sociocultural perspective (Gardner, 1985; Ushioda, 2005; Yu and Watkins, 2011). The definition by Chambers (1999, p.27), takes into account the contribution of sociocultural influences on attitudes to language learning through defining attitudes as a 'set of values which a pupil brings to the FLL experience' that is shaped by anticipated psychological benefits and benefits of learning the target language. The findings of this study confirm that the values held by the EFL learners in this study are influenced by a range of variables including the language learning experience, the community to which the language being learned belongs, and the attitudes towards the target language demonstrated by parents and peers of the language learner.

These perspectives are supported by Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985), also examined in Chapter 2, which views learners' attitudes to foreign language learning as comprising one part of their motivation to learn the language. In extension, research has found that positive learner attitudes towards foreign language learning and towards the learning context enhance learners' achievement of the targeted language (Gardner, 2001; 2010). Within Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985), motivation comprises three parts. These are: (1) the level of motivation intensity; (2) eagerness to learn the foreign language;

and (3) learners' positive or negative attitudes to learning the foreign language, which as Amanda Gardner (2010, p.48) explains, derives from integrativeness, 'a notion that L2 learning is facilitated by the learner's positive identification with L2 culture and community'.

As mentioned earlier, three main attitude categories, including positive, negative and neutral emerged in the data from the diaries written by female participants. The data shows that students with ambivalent attitudes have a tendency to see English as having an instrumental function and do not reveal any kind of strong emotion towards the language. Diary data from male participants reveals a more future-oriented perspective, evidencing a link to the need for English with reference to college admissions, travel and work as well as a desire to fulfil parental expectations. As demonstrated by the responses above, there seems to be a separation of feelings from tasks, suggesting that motivation to learn English does not necessarily relate to their feelings, but to other external factors; for instance, to do with financial reasons or cultural representation related to fulfilling familial expectations.

Data from the narratives suggests that participants are more likely to document positive memories, if the language learning experience and parental and peer attitudes have been positive, which in turn affects how they feel about EFL. This links up with the importance of experiences and the idea of active learners whose prior experiences and beliefs have an impact on the effectiveness of language learning. The opposite is found to be true of participants who indicate negative responses. Narrative writers offered a range of responses suggesting that they like learning English due to good teachers or an interest in English-speaking cultures, On the other hand, negative memories are linked to a dislike of English due to its complicated grammar or rushed teaching and coverage of the curriculum, or lack of attention to their needs as learners. More neutral responses dwell largely on needing to learn English for college placements, jobs, and travel.

These findings are consistent with the idea that socio-cultural influences can shape language learner attitudes. For instance, those with neutral attitudes towards English are striving to fulfil parental and societal expectations as to academic and career success. These findings correspond to the conclusions drawn by Malcolm (2011) while investigating how Arab students at a medical university coped with failing their English courses. The findings of this study suggest that the learners in this study also manifest instrumental motivation that is related to their needs to pass qualifying examinations in English as well as integrative

motivation wherein they enjoy accessing media and the Internet to become part of an 'English-dominant' global culture (Malcolm, 2011).

Although the attitudes of most of the participants towards EFL remained more or less the same after the first year of study at university, some of the learners did reflect a change in their attitudes. Only five students indicated a difference in attitudes between the beginning and the end of the foundation year programme. These five students displayed shifts from positive to mixed, mixed to negative, negative to mixed, and positive to mixed. Largely the change was attributable to the growing difficulty of learning English as an academic language, with one participant who had actually felt negatively about EFL expressing more positive feelings towards the language noting that 'I am actually starting to like English now although it is very difficult' (M7).

In other cases, the shift was due to the challenge of the study materials leading to a loss in confidence (F3) or due to the expertise, attentiveness, and dedication of the teachers and novel learner-friendly teaching methodologies (F9, M7). These findings link back to literature which suggests that prior experiences, parental and peer influences and exposure to classroom experiences have significant bearing on how effectively language is learnt.

At the end of the academic year, participants were asked to use one word to describe the final quarter of the foundation year, and the most oft-cited word was 'difficult'. These responses contrasted with descriptors used in the interview at the beginning of the academic year, which generally indicated an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere. In the final quarter, the participants seemed to experience a shift in perspective, which then affected their motivation and attitudes towards English, as well as self-evaluation of their performance. These findings are reflective of the findings identified by Malcolm who inquired into the experiences of struggling EFL learners at a Saudi medical university, wherein the increasing academic challenge of studying English at higher levels added to the pressures faced by the students (Malcolm, 2011).

5.2 Factors influencing learner attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 showed that there were a number of factors affecting the attitudes of language learners, including encouragement or discouragement from family and friends, the desire or need to learn English for understanding media and factors related to

teachers and materials, which can determine learning experiences as well as, traveling and working. These factors are separately discussed below.

5.2.1   Family and peers

The findings of the study corroborated that familial support plays an important role in their learning of English, with both female and male participants feeling well-supported by their parents. In particular, one of the participants noted that as his parents spoke at least two languages, and they encouraged language proficiency in him too (M15). Peer support was particularly important to shaping the attitudes of the male participants towards language learning, who noted that 'my friends and I are all cooperative' (M13) and although in the case of one participant the family was indifferent to English, his friends were 'good in English'(M14).

These findings correspond to existing literature, which indicates that family or peer influence contributes to foreign language learning success (Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret, 1997; Han, 2007). Moreover, as Van Patten and Williams (2007) also point out, sociocultural theory suggests that any learner's active involvement in cultural, linguistic and previously documented contexts formed through the conglomeration of family and peers and educational establishments collectively will essentially reform that learner's mental attitude positively or negatively. This means that parental and peer influence must be engaged in a positive way to ensure these factors lead to a positive impact. This can include building family-school partnerships (St. Clair and Jackson, 2006) and deploying peer influence (Bekleyan, 2004; Bartram, 2006) through cooperative learning (Zuo, 2011; Bolukbas et al., 2011).

5.2.2   Media and the Internet

While familial or peer-related factors comprise significant influences upon student attitudes towards EFL learning, another factor of some impact on EFL learner attitudes is the desire to access media and the Internet in English. The findings reflected the participants' enthusiasm for using English to access the media and the Internet. Responses ranged from needing English to watch English movies and programmes, animation or to access books, websites, and documentaries. There was also a desire to watch movies without having to rely on translation. Others wanted to access Internet technologies and computer applications as they were predominantly in English and required users to have a certain degree of proficiency in English for effective use. The data discussed here suggests that these learners would benefit

from instruction that integrated 'authentic target language sources', which can be used for 'content stimulation and a means for further inquiry', while the CD/DVD platform delivers digitally-enriched applications and the CMC platform allows 'L2 students can transcend the spatial and temporal confines of the classroom via the Internet' (Blake, 2013, p.9-10). `

Teachers could also make use of existing multi-media technology and learner interest in the media and the Internet to help learners learn about the foreign language. As Gilakjani (2012, p.57), writing in the context of improving EFL instruction in Iran through the use of multimedia technologies, writes 'the use of multimedia in teaching and learning leads to higher learning'. According to Gilakjani, this could include any 'computer-mediated software or interactive application that integrates text, colour, graphical images, animation, audio sound, and full motion video in a single application'. Given learners' existing interest in media and the Internet, multimedia technologies could be used to incorporate images, sounds, animations and videos to stimulate learner interest in EFL and to help them understand and study the language more effectively.

In a study by Han (2015) carried out in EFL educational settings in Taiwan, video projects making use of educational technologies proved successful in mobilising low proficiency students, as these required learners to browse online for information about their project and incorporate music as well as videos in their projects. The interest of Arab EFL learners can be similarly stimulated with the integration and use of educational technology in language learning and assessment.

5.2.3 Travel

Many of the participants also cited travel as being the motivation for wanting to learn English. For instance, one of the male participants (M3) pointed out that he liked to 'travel often and English is the language used everywhere'. Others highlighted that English was needed to communicate with other people while travelling for vacations. One participant (F2) observed that she had 'to use English when I travel abroad in summer vacation' (F2), whereas another corroborated this by noting that she liked 'travelling to English speaking countries. Being good in English will make it easy for me to chat with others and communicate' (F7). Communicating with others seemed to be a major reason for needing English while travelling. As a participant (F5) pointed out she liked 'be able to communicate with others easily when I travel abroad'. These findings are consistent with conclusions drawn by other studies investigating student attitudes towards learning English in a number

of EFL contexts. For instance, while inquiring into the motivation of Taiwanese towards learning EFL, Lai (2013, p.98) found that 'the ideal L2 self has a strong correlation with intrinsic motivation, and travel, integrative and instrumental orientations', thereby leading to the conclusion that for EFL learners, such 'an imagined L2 self [was] perhaps a powerful light to guide them to become successful English users through the learning process and to step into this global village'. In the Arab context, McLaren (2009) investigated the 'levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation' (p.177) reported by learners at a Middle Eastern university and found that EFL learning was closely linked to the learners' desire to improve their English and that a number of participants viewed English as 'a vehicle for international […] modes of communication and understanding' (p.191). Inquiring into the attitudes of Arab EFL learners towards learning English and their academic attainment, Al Samadani and Ibnian (2015, p.100) also found that participants in their study were enthusiastic about learning English so that they could 'travel abroad'. This discussion suggests that the desire to learn English for wider communication while traveling can be successfully harnessed by using approaches that can support such learning. In this regard, approaches such as those suggested by Shih and Leonard (2014) can prove useful in harnessing EFL learner motivation to learn English for travel. These approaches can include:

> 'field trips and travelling, role-playing, simulation, virtual tours, cultural immersion, scavenger hunts, and the integration of podcasts, videos, audio recordings, authentic materials, maps, and other media in the EFL classroom' (Shih and Leonard, 2014, p.268).

5.2.4   Future job prospects

The link between using English well and future job prospects was evident in many of the extracts. For example, it was observed that by one participant (M7) that 'I have to work hard to be good in English if I want to get a well-paid job' and another (M15) that 'speaking languages is definitely a plus when it comes to finding a job and English is on top'. These findings are line with the conclusions of other investigations on Arab learner motivation towards learning English, for instance Al Asmari (2013), Alfawzan (2012), Al Kaabi (2016) and Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009).

The results from these questions, which asked participants to think about their motivations from a historical perspective, indicated that while both positive and negative attitudes were associated with learning English, necessity and enjoyment of English culture were at the

forefront of participant responses. It is possible that learners who indicated cultural influence as a factor were making a connection between English concepts and schema.

5.2.5 EFL teachers, instruction in the classroom and learning materials

Another factor of significant influence upon EFL learning was related to teacher-related issues. When asked about educational factors that shaped their attitudes toward learning English, there was a strong relationship between the interpreted 'quality' of the teacher and the desire to learn English. Students who generally indicated that learning English was a positive experience were more likely to suggest that the teacher and lesson material considerably influenced the way of thinking. Learners talked about the excellence and kindness of their teachers and how they had taught them that English was much more than just a subject. At the same time, there were some negative perceptions of teachers too, with learners apportioning 'blame' to teachers for their dislike of English. The findings indicate the learners show a desire to be taught by teachers who are attentive to their needs and could inspire them, which confirms earlier research showing the preference of Arab learners for friendly educators who could stimulate their interest by more interactive activities to supplement existing materials (Al-Asmari, 2013).

Although teachers are instrumental in any classroom, and the Saudi Ministry of Training has allocated many resources to the development of EFL teachers working in Saudi Arabia (Asiri et al., 2012), the quality of the teaching of the Saudi educators has been uneven, a finding upheld to an extent by data collected from participants in this study commenting on their EFL experience in schools. One finding from the literature is that teachers can influence students by providing a classroom where the programmes create positive associations (e.g. Bernat, Carter and Hall, 2009). The findings of the current study corroborate existing literature in this area.

Taking the examples of two students (F3 and F7), it becomes evident that such programmes would inspire EFL learners and stimulate them to learn more effectively. Data showed both of these students favouring particular strategies that motivated them to learn English. In both of these examples, the teachers used concepts that were outside of the typical strategy for instruction. In the first example, the teacher was using game-based learning, which is something that is gaining popularity in Western countries (Zheng, Young, Wagner, and Brewer, 2009). In the second example, the teacher was using multimedia and linking it to culture. Typically, in the Saudi Arabian context, students are expected to be passive learners

(Al Ayed and Sheik, 2008). In the first example, the students had exposure to a much more active approach, which can be one way that teachers can encourage motivation (Oyaid, 2009). In the second example, the teacher was providing relevant information for the students. Students who want to travel, or who are particularly interested in the culture associated with the English language, would likely be more motivated to pay attention (Elyas, 2008).

Further, the findings suggest that such learners can be helped through the fostering of learner autonomy (Lee, 1998; Macià et al., 2003) and training the learners to use the Extensive Reading approach (Yamashita, 2013; Rahmany et al., 2013). Greater independence as a learner and the use of the ER approach to reading extensively can influence language learner attitudes towards EFL learning positively. In this context, a number of approaches suggested by Cirocki (2016) to develop learner autonomy can also prove helpful. At the classroom level, these can include cognitive strategies such as note taking and summarising, metacognitive strategies related to planning, self-monitoring, and self-assessment, and social strategies such as role plays and affective strategies; for instance, stress questionnaires. Classroom approaches proposed by Cirocki relate to learners' decision-making processes and planning as well as an assessment of learning, while resource-related approach entails the use of self-access learning centres as well as self-access materials, which can foster learner autonomy as they help to develop learner confidence and competence. Last, but not least, Cirocki suggests the technology-centred approach, which is linked to the increasing prevalence and use of technologies within the foreign language-learning classroom and which would tally with the EFL learner interest in the Internet technologies.

Another issue of impact on learner attitudes was discouragement by teachers. Certainly, with some of the female participants, the lack of encouragement by the teachers led to negative experiences. For example, participant F11 observed that:

> 'the problem is that the classes are very boring. I never liked my English classes in primary and secondary. They are boring from start to end. I think teachers could have worked more to make it more enjoyable for students (F11).

This student never elaborated about how the teachers could have worked to make the class more enjoyable, yet based on what is already known about the Saudi Education system, this student may be reacting in this way because of the largely teacher-centred format that is often employed, even at the primary and secondary levels. In this teacher-centred approach,

teachers do the majority of the speaking in the classroom and learners are expected to simply 'absorb' the material through passive reception (Shehdeh, 2010; Rehman and Alhaisoni, 2013). This is clarified by participant F14 when she indicates:

> Learning English can be difficult sometimes especially if you don't have a good teacher. Some teachers can be mean to students too. Their bad personality and bad treatment to students can put the students off and make them hate the subject altogether. I remember when I was in year 3, I used to have a teacher with a very bad personality. She was always in a bad temper. She used to yell a lot at the students and punish them irrationally sometimes. She forced me to write a sentence 50 times every class for a week because I got the grammar wrong in the exam (F14).

In this example, the student indicates the dominant position of the teacher, suggesting that 'meanness' exists within the school system, even in classes with young students (i.e. Year 3). The literature suggests that, at least in some instances, students in the Saudi Arabian school system are intimidated by their teachers, as in this system the teacher is seen as an authority figure who typically dominates the classroom in both poise and speaking (Lippman, 2012). Stirling (2011) suggests that when educators encourage learners to share experiences, these learners become more relaxed and positive. Failure to encourage may lead to instances of unhappiness. Stirling (2011) highlights this as a particularly important concept for female students, as he posits that it moves them to become more independent in what they have learned.

While some of the literature highlights female students (e.g. Stirling, 2011), this does not suggest that male students are exempt from negative teacher influences. For example, one participant reports how he has:

> …had bad teachers since I was in primary schools. Some of them were absent most of the year, some very tough and bad tempered, some careless. With all this history, even if I had a good teacher or two, this will never change how I see English' (M12).

According to Schwitzgebel (2011), the way that educators react to a situation, and the way that they communicate material has a profound influence on student attitudes. Failure to establish a connection with students can lead to negative attitudes which influence the students' ability to read, write, and speak English over time (Farrell, 2008; Alresheed, Leask and Raiker, 2015). The findings from my study align with this previous research. Students who generally indicated poor past teaching experiences generally displayed more negative attitudes overall. This does not necessarily translate into performance, however. For one of

the participants (F14), her average on the assessment was one of the lowest in the class, while her peer (F11) achieved average scores. On the male campus, one of the participants (M12) demonstrated scores above the class average.

Based on the findings from the literature and paired with the findings from this study, it is quite clear that teachers have considerable influence over the students that reside in their classes. When this is a positive experience, students may, in turn, reflect more positively on their attitudes towards learning English. When this is negative, students may demonstrate more negative emotions. Yet regardless of whether students demonstrate positive or negative attitudes and emotions, they are not affected by the performance assessment (Al-Jarf, 2008). This could be because, in Saudi Arabia, there is often a desire for teachers to 'teach to the test', so it is possible that the assessment tests are not accurate representations to be used as a variable. We also have only past experiences of the students. It may be that the students remember one bad experience over several good ones. This information is unclear and would require further research.

5.3 EFL learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL learning and classroom participation

This section will discuss the findings on how learners perceive the link between their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language and the level of participation they undertake in the EFL classroom.

Student well-being in terms of their level of comfort in the class and their performance in class appears to be an influential factor in the attitudes of the learners towards learning EFL. Participants in this study generally fell into two categories with respect to their well-being in the English classroom: they expressed being either happy (or relaxed) or bored (or uncomfortable). They were then asked if these moods contributed to their motivations to learn English and their overall well-being. Participants who had initially expressed positive associations with learning English provided positive which indicated a link between feelings and motivation (F7, M5), whereas those who had earlier expressed negative attitudes denied any such link (F9, M9). Similarly, those who liked English enjoyed their classes (F2, M5), while others did not see any relationship between how they felt in class and whether they liked English (F6, M7). Petrides (2006, p.2) has pointed out that within the context of 'foreign language learning theories […] motivation can be [related] to the needs of the learners and their attitudes towards the second language and the second language

community'. The findings of the current study with respect to the link between learner perceptions of their attitudes towards EFL and class participation confirm, as suggested by Nakanishi (2002), that whether the EFL learners have positive, negative or ambivalent attitudes, they will be motivated to learn English because they must learn the language to fulfil requirements or set objectives, or because they are interested in the target language culture and have a desire to communicate with target language speakers. Hence, the motivation to learn EFL does not have to stem from a positive attitude towards the language, as it can also be derived from more instrumental reasons.

These findings also raise questions about the nature of participation in the EFL classroom. In a cross-cultural study of classroom behaviours in an ESL classroom, Breckman-Brito (2003, p.20) found that what some international students viewed as participating in the class according to their cultural schemas did not correspond to their North American teachers' notions of active participation. Similarly, the findings of this study are aligned to these conclusions. The data from this study highlighted that students interpreted active participation differently, with only nine of the interviewees indicating that participation played some sort of important role in learning. Amongst these nine students, students related participation to checking comprehension but not to practicing their English skills or improving oral communication skills. Grades and academic grade point average (GPA) were considered essential in the learning process, which finding aligned with the instrumental motivation of Arab students noted in earlier research. Self-rating by students indicated that students viewed themselves largely at an average level within the English class. The next section discusses how learners perceive the relationship between their attitudes towards EFL learning and their attainment in the EFL class.

5.4 Learners' perceptions of the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and academic achievement in EFL classes

The following section discusses perceptions of the link between their attitudes towards EFL and their performance in the classroom.

5.4.1 Student attitudes and perceptions of performance in EFL class

Interviewees were asked to comment on the perceived decline in their own academic performance and link to their attitudes. Examination of performance data showed that there

was a relationship between participant attitudes (positive, negative, or mixed) and how this was linked to academic performance.

The four female participants who suggested positive relationships between learning English and achievement generally indicated that the relationship existed (F1, F2, F7, and F13), also expressing their enjoyment of English and the motivation to pursue the study of challenging material outside of the class. Male participants also expressed positive attitudes and demonstrated similar responses, indicating a strong link between attitudes and performance (M1, M2, M8, M11, and M15). Again, the extracts from these responses generally indicate that practice and studying are influential in the learning of the language. In addition, the link between actually completing the study and academic performance was indirectly implied by these participants. Interestingly, despite the motivation to study and the relationship indicated between attitudes and assessment outcomes, these participants still only indicated that their performance was 'average' in the class.

Others viewed a relationship between attitudes and performance with scepticism, as they observed that they studied hard despite their dislike of English (F4, F10, M9, M12, and M13). In the case of both the male and female participants, the relationship was deemed to be inconsequential at best. The participants still highlighted the need to study, but for these students (except for M12), the motivation to study came from other factors. These factors have been previously identified as the ability to obtain a 'well-paid' job, the opportunity to travel abroad or study at a foreign university. Familial implications were also previously discussed as a factor, although this was only indirectly suggested by the participants. Participants who gave ambivalent responses about the desire to learn English, also tended to give mixed responses to the relationship question, expressing uncertainty over whether such a link existed (F3, F5, F9, M3, M7, and M10). The outcomes by the end of the foundation year revealed that the participants focused more on assessment than they did at the beginning. Whereas when they started the year, participants were focused on the opportunities (e.g. getting a well-paying job or studying abroad), but as the weeks progressed the focus seemed to shift from what was desirable in the future to what they had to do in the present, and this was largely related to grades.

When analysing the results based upon the link between attitudes and performance, it became evident that positive attitudes towards English led participants to affirm the relationship between attitudes and performance with the reverse being true in the case of the participants

with the negative attitudes. A limitation of this study is the small sample size wherein the outcomes from 15 male and 15 female participants are not large enough to offer generalisations with respect to the larger body of knowledge in this area.

5.5 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the results from this qualitative study. Based on the results, four main themes and key findings have been discussed with reference to the literature. The main themes included the relationship between attitudes/motivation and a number of factors related to families and peers, the language learning experience and classroom experiences. Amongst these, sub-themes included aspects such as the difficulty level with learning English, personal anecdotal evidence associated with the learning process, pedagogical practices by teachers and cultural implications, which have also been discussed. The next chapter will present the conclusion to this thesis, further providing a summarisation of the key findings from this study as well as recommendations and an overview of future research directions.

Chapter 6.   Conclusion

6.1   Introduction

This chapter begins by revisiting the background of the research and briefly reprising the rationale for the study. Next, it outlines the main findings from the literature and their implications. The discussion then progresses to the presentation of recommendations to stakeholders based on the findings, outlining of future research directions, highlighting of limitations of the study and finally its contributions to policy making, practice, and literature.

This research explored the attitudes of Saudi EFL learners studying English in a preparatory foundation year programme at a university in KSA over the course of an academic year. The aim of the study was to determine the attitudes of the EFL learners participating in the study, also identifying factors influencing their attitudes and the learners' perceptions of a link between attitudes and their participation in the EFL classroom and performance. The topic is an important one, considering the heavy investment made by the KSA government in envisioning, provisioning and implementing curricular reforms at educational institutions in the country to ensure that Saudi learners attain EFL proficiency. Hence, this research was deemed necessary because of the way resources were being funnelled by the government into programmes that facilitated English language learning. Specifically, the Saudi Ministry of training encouraged the improvement of EFL teaching and learner accomplishments (Al-Seghayer, 2005), placing great emphasis upon an appraisal of the programme and reliance on foreign teachers to teach the classes (Al-Omrani, 2008; McMullen, 2009). This initial strategy was deemed to be problematic because it did not consider the sociocultural differences and pedagogical foundations (e.g. the teaching of Islam) within the pedagogical processes (Freeman and Mason, 1998; Ali, 2009; Liton, 2012).

As someone who has lived and studied in KSA, in addition to working within educational settings in KSA, I have experience as a learner and observed as a teaching practitioner the challenges of learning EFL in an ecology shaped by the many variables of impact influencing the EFL learners. It has been my observation that language learner attitude plays a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of EFL learning. A major contribution of this study is the use of a qualitative approach and the way the study enables the students voice to be heard the thing that was highly appreciated by the participants. To this end, it has been my objective through this research to identify findings that can benefit policy makers, curriculum designers,

teachers and the learners themselves by furnishing insights into the connections amongst attitudes and performance as well as influential factors shaping learner attitudes.

Four research questions were addressed in this study. They are as below:

1. What are the main self-reported attitudes of a Saudi University foundation year students towards learning English as a foreign language?

2. What are the factors, according to foundation year students at a Saudi University, which shape their attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language?

3. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes towards learning English and their well-being and participation in the classroom?

4. How do EFL students view the relationship between their attitudes and academic performance in EFL classes?

The purpose of these questions was not only to establish the nature of the EFL learner attitudes towards studying EFL, but also to see how learners perceived their attitudes in terms of their well-being in the EFL classroom and academic achievement on the preparatory programme. These were important considerations as language learner attitudes are complex constructs at the intersection of multiple influencing variables. Frequently, they can determine whether EFL instruction and learning will be successful.

Based on the data collected, one of the key findings of this study was that at the end of the preparatory year programme, all the students who participated in this study were successful in their completion of the programme, regardless of their attitudes towards learning English. The key implication here was that while language learner attitudes can play an important role in determining perceptions of EFL learning and the need to pass examinations in English to access academic programmes making use of English as a medium of instruction, and to display proficiency in English for workplace communication determined efforts towards academic attainment. Therefore, this finding confirmed the largely instrumental nature of Arab EFL language learner motivation, as delineated by a number of earlier studies in academic settings (for instance, Sadek, 2007).

Language learning has been presented by Dornyei (2003) as a deeply social event, wherein knowledge is constructed. Sociocultural components, such as history, culture, and L1 context, provide a background on which EFL learning can develop. Allport (1954) suggests that attitudes are learned and relate directly to these sociocultural components.

The findings from the current study suggest that students were not only able to express their attitudes but also that these attitudes could be coded and sub-coded into units. What was, perhaps, one of the more useful findings to emerge was the diversity in the positive cognitive responses. This diversity related in part to the idea of the 'self'. In Dornyei's model (2003), the self is identified in three ways; the ideal L2 self, the ought to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. Under the cognitive framework of attitudes, students were able to demonstrate all three notions of self and how these intertwined to offer prospects of success (in terms of the necessity of English). The study also found that the participants were likely to portray certain attitudes because of internal or external pressures along with the personal justification that they required (or felt they required) English to be successful upon completion of the PYP programme.

The literature review identified several factors that were suggested to influence attitude. Many of these included familial obligations and/or pressure, financial implications, higher education achievements and travel/study abroad. Many of these initial findings were consistent in the Saudi context within the participant group of this study. There did not seem to be a large difference between the way that the male and female participants responded. While some differences were acknowledged, there was not enough evidence to conclude that one gender demonstrated attitudes that were significantly different to the other.

One area of interest within the findings of this research related to the well-being of the participants. Under the coding and the framework of this project, well-being largely centred upon the feelings of the participants. Well-being could be divided into positive, negative and neutral components. In some of the previous literature, emotions and well-being have been linked to stress (Inam, 2007). In these instances, students who were under greater stress were more likely to exhibit negative emotions and feelings. In this study, stress was not examined explicitly (i.e. participants were not directly asked about their stress levels), though it was likely that pressures surrounding academic success and acceptance could have played considerable roles in their stress levels. In future research, it would be interesting to examine whether the relationship indicated by the participants reflected on their academic achievement over a longer period of time and with more standardised or rigorous examination of the testing instruments, as both of these factors could have considerable influence on the final results.

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations are made for different stakeholders in the EFL learning and teaching context in KSA by way of improving the EFL experience and outcomes for learners.

6.2   Recommendations

Policymakers need to understand that mere investment in resources, infrastructure or foreign expertise is unlikely to help Saudi EFL learners develop greater proficiency in English. The prevailing emphasis on student achievement data to determine how effectively English has been learned offers only a one-dimensional picture of the EFL language learning experience, especially as the tests administered may only be evaluating what has been taught. Specifically, policymakers need to evaluate the EFL language learning experience through other means. One way to do this is to base their policies on data that provides insights into language learner attitudes, as reflected in learner participation in the EFL classroom and engagement with the content and learning processes. Creative assessment offers the most interesting way of achieving this. In this regard, it is recommended that assessment practices may be encouraged wherein learner proficiency is gauged through other means such as portfolios containing examples of what learners can actually do with the English language. This may be used for entry into academic programmes and for career opportunities. For instance, the use of videotaped presentations can allow viewers to evaluate the EFL learner's ability to use English effectively to present their ideas, by making use of a range of rhetorical strategies suited to the subject, purpose, and audience of the presentation. Fluency and grammatical accuracy, as well as pragmatic competence, may all be gauged successfully in this way. Such assessment can be used in tandem with examination grades to build a more multidimensional picture of EFL learners' ability to use English communicatively.

It is recommended that, in view of EFL learner interest in accessing media and using English for travel, EFL teachers may structure assignments that allow the learners to deploy and demonstrate a range of their EFL skills within real world tasks. For instance, this can include learners being asked to plan a trip to a country of their choice by looking up information on the Internet, creating an itinerary for their stay, booking a hotel, having to deal with a problem during the trip such as losing their passport, and successfully using English at every stage to negotiate the situations presented to them effectively. Such task-based assignments related to learner interests can mobilise learners' integrative as well as their instrumental motivation, thereby getting the learners to develop a more favourable attitude towards EFL

learning. Incorporating technology and media in language learning and setting up an Extensive Reading programme can also help EFL learners to be more positive about the EFL learning experience, as it can integrate pre-existing interests into their learning in the class.

Institutions can take into consideration the importance of familial and peer influence on EFL learning. Parental and university partnerships can create more favourable attitudes towards EFL learning with a positive impact on the attitudes of EFL learners at the university. Encouraging the use of cooperative learning approaches in the EFL classroom can help to engage peers in positive group work and help learners influence one another's attitudes towards EFL learning positively.

6.3   Limitations of the research

In any research study, there are bound to be some limitations. These limitations exist regardless of whether the study is qualitative or quantitative (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2007; Schmidt and Hunter, 2014; Spencer et al., 2003). It is important to outline these limitations in the interest of providing a full and comprehensive review of what has occurred. Future researchers may be able to use these limitations to build upon the work that has been done in order to further contribute to the community of practice.

One of the key limitations was to do with interviewing in this study. Due to the policy of gender segregation in KSA, the male participants were interviewed by a male colleague trained by the researcher. It is possible that the additional questions, if any, asked of the male students by the colleague interviewer may have been considerably different than those posed to the female students by the researcher herself (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007; Shenton, 2004).

Another limitation was that this research was not generalisable with the sample size being somewhat small (Malterud, 2001; Mays and Pope, 2000). With only 15 female and 15 male participants, a total of 30 participants was not a large enough sample to provide a comprehensive representation of the attitudes of students learning English in this preparatory year programme. Future studies can consider a larger sample of participants to ensure a greater comprehensiveness of views as to language learner attitudes.

Finally, the decision to utilise solely qualitative research methods could be considered a limitation. Creswell (2013) suggests that qualitative research is valuable because it

contributes to the overall picture of the scenario being examined. The research, in qualitative instances, offers a deep level of understanding. Yet this deep level of understanding comes at a cost. By not including quantitative data, the outcome is a lack of numerical responses that can quantify the responses.

There were several limitations to this research, none of which were particularly problematic given the scope of the project and the research questions that had been initially posed. Many of the limitations described in this section have been addressed, but in addition, due to careful ethical protocols before the commencement of this project, the limitations of the research were considered, mitigated and addressed as applicable.

6.4   Future research directions

This research set out to answer some very specific research questions. However, this section seeks to offer possible expansions and/or pathways under which future research studies could be conducted (see Allen et al., 2008).

First, in response to the small sample size, the number of participants included in future studies could be expanded. This could be achieved by collecting data from larger numbers of students at other universities within Saudi Arabia, or it could be achieved by sampling groups of students from any of the dozens of universities located within KSA. By canvassing a larger sample size and maintaining similar research questions, future researchers may attain a more generalisable understanding of student attitudes within the preparatory year programme (PYP).

Another aspect of this research study that could be addressed in future research is the use of the solely qualitative model. While the qualitative framework was seen as most preferable for this research study because the researcher sought to achieve depth in participant responses, there is also value in the implementation of a mixed methods approach. Future researchers might want to consider validation of the assessment tools used in PYP study.

There are also possibilities to expand this research beyond the student perspective. Within this research project, one major finding indicated that students had very vivid memories of past teaching experiences (both good and bad). It may be also possible to examine the attitudes of teaching professionals currently employed in Saudi Arabia within the field of EFL. As more and more Saudi teachers have been educated to higher levels, there is room for

further analysis of how these teachers are functioning in the classroom along with the attitudes and emotions they bring to the context. It may also be beneficial to examine pedagogical teaching approaches, as new and innovative strategies might benefit not only the students but also the teachers who are working within these classrooms (e.g. so that teacher burnout is avoided).

It may also be possible to examine students over a longer period of time. Many of the reasons that the participants in the current study cited with regard to their desire to learn English were linked to necessity (i.e. entrance into a degree programme, future job opportunities, travel/study abroad, etc.). It would be interesting to examine whether the students were actually able to achieve these goals and possibly if their attitudes changed over the course of any future study or employment periods. There is also room to negotiate what is meant by an attitude. While this research carefully examined the definitions of attitude, there are conflicting definitions surrounding this area of study. By considering attitudes and emotions from a different perspective, it is possible that different findings would emerge.

These are only some of the many possibilities that could be employed by future researchers. As this is a fluid topic wherein the context is currently changing, future research could build upon particular findings from this research, changes to the research design, development of a new framework or model surrounding assessment, providing a new (or longer term) context (Trochim and Donnelly, 2001), and by examining a larger population within various locations across KSA.

6.5   Implications of the research

This research project contributes to the overall understanding of the educational context in relation to the Ministry of Education (MoE). It has been the goal of the MoE to improve the quality of EFL teaching across the Kingdom. Their vision of education has meant that considerable financial resources have been allocated toward this initiative. By gaining insights into the experiences of students and their perspectives on English education, the MoE can continue to make positive and smart decisions towards further improvement on their models. Therefore, this research project contributes to knowledge of benefit to overarching government bodies that are responsible for change and development. In extension of this, training programmes developed for EFL teachers may also draw upon these findings to help participants understand the role of language learner attitudes upon EFL

learning and factors influencing EFL learner attitudes. Additionally, they may be trained to use appropriate strategies for enabling EFL learners develop positive attitudes towards learning English. Furthermore, academic institutions may also use the insights gained within this study to help EFL learners develop more positive attitudes towards learning English.

Finally, this research project has implications for the wider academic community of education. As the world continues to move towards complete globalisation and English becomes more and more prominent within business and international communication, there are benefits to knowing how students feel about the EFL context. Saudi students are undertaking education abroad in larger numbers each year. In addition, Saudi Arabia is enhancing its business ventures to broaden its offerings beyond the oil industry. With more Saudi influence on the world stage, academics may benefit by understanding the perspectives of these adult students.

While these contributions to knowledge are small in some ways, they are representative of what a PhD project is meant to be, specifically the addition to other research in the field through an organised and logical study process. This has been achieved within the current study.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Informed consent for participation in research

Title	An Empirical Study of Students' Attitudes Towards Learning English as a foreign Language in Foundation Year Level, Saudi Arabia
Researcher	Rolla Massri Mobile # 05005606304 email: ram536@york.ac.uk
Ethics Committee Member	Dr. Emma Marsden Tel. 01904 323335 email: emma.marsden@york.ac.uk
Supervisor	Dr. Florentina Taylor
Aim	This research aims to explore the attitudes students have towards learning English as a foreign language, the factors behind of shaping these attitudes, and how these attitudes correlate with the students well-being, performance, and achievement in English classes.
Means of collecting information	1. One to one interviewing 2. Essay 3. Diary
Procedure	1. You will be interviewed about your feelings towards learning English as a foreign language. Interviews will be conducted twice. The first interview will be in December and the second will be in April. Each interview will last for an hour and will be audio recorded. 2. You will be sent via email few questions about your overall experience in English classes and the reasons you think are behind your feelings. Answer these questions in not less than 500 words, in your own time, and send it back to the researcher in not later than two weeks. 3. You will be asked to keep a diary to write in the comfort of your own home. In this diary, you need to write about the class related experiences you go through during your English classes and how they affect you feelings towards English learning. You will be sent a diary sheet via email four times during the period from December to April. You will need to write the diary and send it back to the researcher by email.
Handling data	The information provided by you in this study will be used for research purposes only. The recording, subsequent transcript, narrative, and dairy will be stored in secure protected computer files and locked files cabinets. All data will be destroyed once the research has finished and aims have been reached.
Voluntary participation	Your participation is voluntary and completely confidential. You have the right to decline or withdraw any time during the study.

Confidentiality	All data will be completely confidential. No one but the researcher will have access to data. Quotations and reports in the thesis will be anonymous and will not lead in anyway to the identification of you or your institution.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me anytime. You can also contact Dr. Emma Marsden if you have any ethical concerns.

Do you agree in participating in this research?

Yes ___ No ___

Name of participant _____   Name of researcher _____
Signature _____   Signature _____
email _____

Date _____

Appendix 2 – Diary

Dear student,

Thank you for participating in this study.

Here you are kindly asked to keep a diary to write in the comfort of your own home. In this diary, you need to write about the learning experiences you have been through during your English classes and how they affect your feelings towards English learning.

You will be sent a diary sheet via email four times, once every for weeks. The first will be sent right after the interview. You will need to write the diary and send it back to the researcher by email in not later than a week.

<u>Entry one:</u>

In not less than 350 words, please write freely about the significant learning experiences you have been through during the past few academic weeks in your English classes.

In what way did these experiences change your feelings towards learning English?

Appendix 3 – Narrative

Dear student,

Thank you for participating in this study.

Here, you are kindly asked to answer few questions about your overall experience in English classes and the reasons you think are behind your feelings towards learning English as a foreign language. Answer these questions in not less than 500 words, in your own time, and send it back to the researcher by email in not later than one week.

5. Which English level are you studying now?

How long have you been studying English before starting your foundation year?

When did you start learning English?

Did you take any English courses outside school? If yes,

How long were the English courses? How many hours? Weeks?

Are the courses in or outside Saudi Arabia?

What was the propose of these courses?

How do feel towards English learning?

In your point of view, what are the reasons that made you feel this way towards learning English?

- family and friends
- education
- finance
- other

Appendix 4 – First interview questions

I. Introductory

- Thank you for participating in this study.

- In this interview, I will ask you some questions about your feelings towards learning English.

6. What would you like to study as a major?

Will your study be in English?

Is English going to be part of your study in anyway?

Are you going to use English in your future career?

II. History of English learning:

Which English level are you studying now?

How long have you been studying English?

When did you start studying English?

Did you take any English courses outside school?

If yes,

Are the courses in or out of Saudi Arabia?

How long were the English courses? How many hours? Weeks?

What was the purpose of these courses?

III. Attitudes towards learning English & the factors behind these attitudes:

How do you feel towards learning English as a foreign language?

Which word do you choose to best describe your feelings:

When did you develop these feelings? Can you specify a certain phase of your life?

What are the factors you think are behind shaping these feelings?

- family and friends

- education

- finance

- other

In what way, your feelings towards learning English have changed during the foundation year?

How do you feel towards English as a subject in Foundation Year?

Which word do you choose to describe learning English:

How do you feel about attending English classes? why

V. Motivations for learning English:

Why do you learn English as a foreign language?

From your point of view, how important attending English classes is?

From your point of view, how important participation in English classes work is

From your point of view, how important scoring good marks in English is?

Is there a relationship between your feelings and your motivation for learning English as a foreign language? Explain.

How important do you think motivation is to learning English?

IV. Class performance, achievement, and well being

How do you feel when you are inside an English class? Use adjectives

How can you describe your performance in class? average/above average/below average

How can you describe your achievement in English as a subject? average/above average/below average

Is there a relationship between your feelings towards learning English and your academic performance in English classes? Explain.

Is there a relationship between your feelings towards learning English and your well-being in English classes? Explain.

IIV. Ending interview:

What are your language goals in the future?

What are your plans to achieve these goals?

Appendix 5 – Second interview questions

- Thank you for participating in this study.
- In this interview, I will ask you some questions about your feelings towards learning English now in the last quarter of the Foundation Year.

1. Which English level are you studying now?

2. How do you feel towards learning English as a foreign language right now after you have studied almost 4 levels in foundation year?

3. In what way, your feelings towards learning English have changed from the beginning of the year until now?

4. What are the factors you think are behind shaping these new feelings?

5. How do you feel towards English as a subject in the last quarter of the foundation year? Which word do you choose now to describe learning English?

6. How can you describe your performance in class in this current quarter? average/above average/below average

7. How can you describe your achievement in English as a subject in this current quarter of the foundation year? average/above average/below average

8. Is there a relationship between your new feelings towards learning English and your academic performance in English classes? Explain.

Thank you very much for participating in this study wishing you the best of luck!

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