

**An investigation of the impact of flipped instruction on EFL
students' engagement in academic writing classes: A case
study of foundation students in Oman**

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by

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Abstract

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Developing adequate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing skills is of paramount importance for students' success in higher education in Oman. The traditional teaching approaches adopted in writing courses often lead to students' disengagement, however. Although several studies have examined students and teachers' perceptions of flipped instruction in various EFL courses, no study has examined the impact of flipping on students' engagement in writing courses.

This practice-based research project, where the instructor was the researcher, explored the impact of flipped teaching on 57 General Foundation Program (GFP) EFL learners' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in academic writing in a higher education institution in Oman, and the variations that exist in students' engagement according to gender, age, English language proficiency and technology skills. The study adopted a mixed-methods design and used a student engagement questionnaire, focus group interviews and participant observations to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics and deductive and inductive analytical procedures were used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

The study presents new practicable knowledge about the implementation and implications of flipped instruction for Omani EFL students' engagement in academic writing at the GFP level. It proposes flipping as an instructional approach which helps to address GFP students' lack of

behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in writing courses in the Omani context. Behaviourally, students in the flipped classroom experience increased effort, improved concentration levels, persistence, communication and collaboration, and amelioration in their attitude to class attendance. It is reasonable to conclude that learners undergo cognitive growth and develop self-regulatory strategies and meta-cognitive awareness. At the level of emotional engagement, learners initially experience negative emotions such as anger and frustration, and then more positive emotions such as contentment and increased interest in the subject as they adapt to the flipped teaching-learning model. Flipping also seems to influence students' autonomy and ability to ask questions and express opinions. It appears, however, that this approach does not influence students' capacity to contribute to their own learning resources and activities.

This study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge about students' engagement in EFL writing courses. It revealed that a strong positive correlation exists between students' behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement, and that a positive correlation exists between students' technology skills and linguistic proficiency and several aspects of their engagement. The study demonstrated, however, that no correlation exists between gender and age and students' engagement in the flipped classroom.

Furthermore, this practice-based research indicated that although flipped instruction helps to address the problem of students' disengagement in writing courses in our context, factors such as students' linguistic proficiency and technology skills should be taken into consideration before implementing this instructional approach in the current setting.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
Table of Contents	5
List of Tables	11
List of Figures	11
List of Abbreviations	12
Chapter One: Introduction	13
1.1 Writing in Higher Education in Oman	13
1.2 Academic Writing in the General Foundation Program	16
1.3 The Current Study	19
1.3.1 Rationale for the Study	19
1.3.2 Study Aim and Research Questions	20
1.4 Thesis Structure	21
Chapter Two: Literature Review	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Part One: The Concept of Student Engagement	23
2.2.1 The Significance of Student Engagement	23
2.2.2 The Evolution of the Concept of Engagement	28
2.2.3 Factors that Contribute to Student Engagement	33
2.2.3.1 Individual Student Characteristics	33
2.2.3.2 Contextual Factors	37

2.3 Part Two: The Flipped Teaching Model	39
2.3.1 What is Flipped Teaching? A Brief History of its Origin and Development	39
2.3.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of Flipped Teaching	45
2.3.3 Implications of Cognitive and Constructivist Psychologies for Flipped Instructional Design	46
2.4 Summary	49
Chapter Three: Methodology	51
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 Research Paradigm	51
3.3 Rationale for Selecting Mixed-methods Design	54
3.3.1 Definition of Mixed-methods Research	54
3.3.2 Research Problem	55
3.3.3 Research Purpose	57
3.3.4 Research Questions	59
3.4 The Pilot Study and its Implications	63
3.5 Recruitment and Selection of Participants	69
3.6 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	71
3.6.1 Data Collection Procedures	72
3.6.1.1 Self-report Questionnaire	72
3.6.1.2 Observation	79
3.6.1.3 Focus Group Interviews	81
3.6.2 Data Analysis Procedures	82
3.7 The Flipped English Language Academic Writing Class Procedures	86
3.7.1 Out-of-Class Learning Activities	88
3.7.2 In-Class Learning Activities	90

3.8 Ethical Considerations	91
3.9 Summary	93
Chapter Four: Findings	95
4.1 Introduction	95
4.2. Quantitative Results	95
4.3 Summary	103
4.4 Qualitative Findings	104
4.4.1 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Behavioural Engagement	104
4.4.1.1 Increased Effort	105
4.4.1.2 Improved Concentration	107
4.4.1.3 Persistence	108
4.4.1.4 Improved Communication and Increased Collaboration	110
4.4.1.5 Shift in Attitude to Class Attendance	112
4.4.2 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Cognitive Engagement	113
4.4.2.1 Cognitive Growth	113
4.4.2.2 Development of Self-Regulatory Strategies	116
4.4.2.3 Increased Awareness of One’s Learning Process and Academic Progress	119
4.4.3 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Emotional Engagement	121
4.4.3.1 Anger	121
4.4.3.2 Frustration	123
4.4.3.3 Contentment	124
4.4.3.4. Students’ Increased Interest in the Course	126
4.4.4 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Agentic Engagement	128
4.4.4.1 Question-Asking	129

4.4.4.2 Increased Student Autonomy	129
4.4.4.3 Expressing Opinions	130
4.5 Summary	131
Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings	133
5.1 Introduction	133
5.2 Significance of the Study	133
5.3 How does Flipped Instruction Impact on Students’ Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional and Agentic Engagement in EFL Academic Writing Classes?	135
5.3.1 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Behavioural Engagement	136
5.3.1.1 Student Effort	136
5.3.1.2 Student Concentration and Attention	138
5.3.1.3 Student Collaboration and Interaction with Peers and Teacher	140
5.3.1.4 Student Attendance	142
5.3.2 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Cognitive Engagement	143
5.3.2.1 Student Cognitive Growth	143
5.3.2.2 Student Self-Regulation	146
5.3.2.3 Student Metacognitive Awareness	147
5.3.3 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Emotional Engagement	150
5.3.4 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Agentic Engagement	153
5.3.4.1 Student Autonomy	153
5.3.4.2 Student Resilience	154
5.4 To What Extent does Male and Female Students’ Engagement in Flipped Writing Classes Vary?	156
5.5 To What Extent does Student Engagement in Flipped Writing Classes Vary According to Age?	158
5.6 Do Other Factors, Specifically Students’ Language Proficiency and Technology Skills, Affect their Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional and Agentic Engagement in Flipped Writing Classes?	160

5.7 Why do Variations Between the Engagement of Male and Female Students and Students Belonging to Different Age Groups Exist?	161
5.8 Summary	163
Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations	164
6.1 Introduction	164
6.2 Summary of the Main Findings	164
6.3 Pedagogical Implications	168
6.4 Implications for Practice	172
6.5 Implications for the Institution	173
6.6 Limitations	175
6.7 Future Research	177
6.8 Reflections on my Doctoral Journey	178
References	181
Appendices	207
Appendix I: Student Engagement Questionnaire	207
Appendix II: Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview	211
Appendix III: Observation Scheme Checklist	212
Appendix IV: Participant Information Sheet	213
Appendix V: Participant Consent Form	216
Appendix VI: Nvivo Coding (Keywords and Phrases)	217
Appendix VII: Flipped Academic Writing Course Weekly Outline	218
Appendix VIII: Screenshot of a YouTube Video – Basic Essay Structure	220
Appendix IX: Screenshot of a Narrated PowerPoint Presentation	221

Appendix X: Screenshot of a Weekly Short Quiz (Basic Essay Format)	222
Appendix XI: Screenshot of a Brainstorming Page on Padlet	223
Appendix XII: Screenshot of a Discussion Forum	224
Appendix XIII: Screenshot of a Live Socratic Quiz	225
Appendix XIV: Item Mean Scores and Standard Deviations	226
Appendix XV: Screenshot of Edmodo Progress Gradebook	228
Appendix XVI: Screenshot of Teacher-Student and Student-Student Communication	229

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Applications of Cognitive and Constructivist Assumptions in Instruction

Table 3.1: Frequency Distribution of Students Across ‘Age’

Table 3.2: Frequency Distribution of Students across ‘Language Proficiency’

Table 3.3: Frequency Distribution of Students across ‘Technology Skills’

Table 4.1: Composite Scores for the Four Engagement Subscales

Table 4.2: Composite Scores for the Fifth SEQ Subscale

Table 4.3: Total Mean Scores by ‘Gender’

Table 4.4: Mann-Whitney U Test Significant at .05 Level (Grouping Variable: Gender)

Table 4.5: Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: Age Group)

Table 4.6: Total Mean Ranks by ‘Technology Skills’

Table 4.7: Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: Technology Skills)

Table 4.8: Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: English Language Proficiency)

Table 4.9: Test of Variance (Grouping Variable: English Language Proficiency)

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model

Figure 4.1: Sub-Themes of Self-Regulation Strategies

Figure 6.1: Institutional Implications of the Study

List of Abbreviations

CFS:	Centre for Foundation Studies
EFL:	English as Foreign Language
EGFP:	English General Foundation Program
GCC:	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFP:	General Foundation Program
GPA:	Grade Point Average
GRE:	General Records Examinations
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
ICDL:	International Computer Driving License
IELTS:	International English Language Testing System
KSA:	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LMS:	Learning Management System
MHE:	Ministry of Higher Education
NSSE:	National Survey of Student Engagement
OAC:	Oman Accreditation Council
SEQ:	Student Engagement Questionnaire
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SQU:	Sultan Qaboos University
TOEFL:	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UAE:	United Arab Emirates
USA:	United States of America

Chapter One

Introduction

According to Robson (2011, p. 4), research “concerns problems and issues which are practical, local and grounded in a specific context”. Consequently, making sense of a particular research finding necessitates a thorough understanding of its contextual background. This chapter therefore sets the context for the current study. It explains the value of academic writing within Omani higher education institutions (HEIs) and General Foundation Programs (GFPs). It then provides details of the current study, explaining its rationale, its aim, and the questions it addresses. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Writing in Higher Education in Oman

Although listening, speaking and reading are important, it is a common perception that writing is the most important skill to develop to succeed in HEIs. According to Hyland (2006) and Krause (2001), writing contributes effectively to students’ successful transition from school to university and to their integration into the higher education system. Similarly, Leki and Carson (1994) and Zhu (2004) emphasise the importance of writing as a skill that prepares students to complete assignments in various academic disciplines and to become high-level professionals in the future. Thesen (2001, p. 133) considers the written mode of communication as “privileged, mediated and policed as the dominant mode in the institution” and emphasises that “university-based literacy practices carry a heavy formal, written language load”. Therefore, academic writing is vital for students’ academic success in tertiary education.

According to Reid (2001, p. 28), writing plays a “gate-keeping” role in HEIs. Moreover, researchers such as Ahmed (2010), Al-Badi (2015), Al-Mansour (2015), Al-Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) and Bacha (2002) consider it the most challenging and the most difficult skill to master by EFL learners regardless of their educational background. Lea and Street (1998) express their concern about the ‘falling standards’ of students’ literacy and their inability to write in general. Omani students are not an exception. Al-Issa (2006b; 2015), Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) and Al-Mahrooqi, Denman and Al-Maamari (2016) argue that the majority of Omani secondary school graduates join HEIs with several types of English language deficiencies and inadequacies, among which are writing skills. Indeed, according to Al-Badi (2015), writing constitutes the major challenge that most Omani students face. More particularly, Al-Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) claim that among other problems, Omani students experience difficulties with sentence formation, generation of ideas, text coherence, and use of adequate vocabulary to express ideas. Furthermore, Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan and Asante (2012) highlight that many Omani students are unable to motivate themselves to learn English and to write in English due to socio-cultural influences that are beyond their control.

The deficiencies discussed above have an immediate negative impact on students’ performance in examinations, as well as an indirect impact on their overall academic progress. For instance, in the institution where this study was conducted, students’ scores in the final academic writing examinations have been below average and lower than the scores for the reading, speaking and listening examinations since 2014. The pass rates in the writing module in three semesters, Autumn/2014, Spring/2015 and Autumn/2015, were 37 per cent, 45 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

Studies that involved Arab-speaking EFL learners in similar contexts such as Egypt conducted by Ahmed (2010), and neighbouring countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) conducted by Ismail (2011) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) conducted by Al-Mansour (2015) and Alnufaie and Grenfell (2012) suggest that the challenges Arab EFL learners face in writing are quite common. Yet, Omani scholars (Al-Issa, 2006a; 2007; 2015; Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012) attribute the challenges that Omani learners encounter primarily to EFL teachers' inadequate instructional methodologies, which are textbook-based, product-oriented and teacher-centred. Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015, p. 80) state that "writing instruction in Oman has traditionally occurred in teacher-centred classrooms where rote memorization and the reproduction of teacher-presented models dominate". In a teacher-centred learning environment, writing is often relegated to a secondary position and students are mostly confined to the replication of de-contextualised reading passages in the absence of a purpose and audience (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015).

In a doctoral study which aimed to examine the pedagogical practices of EFL monolingual and bilingual teachers in Oman, Al-Jadidi (2009) found that despite the commitment of some monolingual teachers to learner-centred pedagogies, bilingual teachers, who constitute the majority, adopted more teacher-centred approaches characterised by inadequate student participation, overdependence on Arabic translation, restricted use of group work, and passive learning environments. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that most Omani students' interest and engagement in EFL learning in general (Al Mahrooqi, 2012), and in academic writing specifically, are very low (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015).

Implementing learner-centred teaching approaches which "provoke independent reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking" (Emenyeonu, 2012, p. 243) in the Omani context is not

problem-free, however. Emenyeonu (2012) conducted a study which involved 30 teachers and 60 students to identify the obstacles to implementing learner-centred approaches in HEIs in Oman.

The author identified nine barriers, which he summarises as follows:

- Students' limited linguistic proficiency
- Students' attitudes to collaborating in mixed-gender groups
- Students' lack of exposure to classroom interaction dynamics
- Culturally irrelevant imported teaching materials
- Students' poor conceptualisation of student-centred learning
- Presence of social loafers which limits collaboration opportunities
- Teachers' inappropriate teaching methodologies
- Inadequate access to educational resources
- Heavy reliance on ready-made learning materials.

The abovementioned limitations indicate that students, teachers and educational institutions are all responsible for the heavy reliance on teacher-centred approaches in Oman and consequently for students' lack of engagement in writing courses.

1.2 Academic Writing in the General Foundation Program

The GFP is a one- or two-year introductory program. It is offered to students in all public and private HEIs operating in Oman “to ensure that students are adequately prepared for their higher education studies” (Oman Accreditation Council [OAC], 2006, p. 42) in terms of language skills, computer skills and mathematics skills. It marks the transition of Omani school graduates to higher education. Nevertheless, students are exempted from the English component if they obtain

a score of 5.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Moreover, they are exempted from the Introduction to IT and Computer Applications courses if they receive an International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) upon completion of their secondary school studies.

In the institution where the study was conducted, the English General Foundation Program (EGFP) lasts for one academic year and is spread over a total of three 14-week semesters with each comprising twelve teaching weeks and two examination weeks. It consists of three levels of study (English Levels 1, 2 and 3). Before joining the institution, students take a Placement Test which aims to stream them by assessing their grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing ability. Students who score 0-24, 25-44 and 45-59 in the test are placed in Levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively, while those who score 60 and above are exempted from the EGFP.

Academic writing is an integral component of the EGFP and plays a fundamental role in students' success in undergraduate courses. The Oman Standards for GFP document issued by the OAC (2008, p. 10) in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE) outlines the major writing learning outcomes for EGFP students:

- Paraphrase information in writing from a written text or from graphically presented data.
- Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organisation, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary.
- Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, note-taking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarising, use of quotations and use of references.

Students are therefore expected to acquire several competencies, namely, the ability to write different text types of varying lengths utilising linear and/or non-linear texts as prompts, to

master the writing mechanics, including punctuation, spelling, capitalisation and grammar, and to use cohesive devices to produce a coherent piece of writing.

Students' first experience with academic writing as the production of an extended 250-word piece of writing which adheres to academic conventions occurs in the third level of the EGFP. In this level, writing is considered more important than other language skills and deemed a determinant factor of students' academic attainment. Its value is evident in the module teaching time (seven hours per week) and the weight it is given in formative and summative assessments. The mark distribution in assessments is as follows: 50, 30, 15 and 5 marks for writing, reading, listening and speaking respectively. It is evident from this distribution that students' failure to achieve the writing course learning outcomes directly hampers their academic progress.

Academic writing continues to be an important skill at the undergraduate level and beyond. All students who successfully complete the GFP take common introductory modules during the first semester of the degree program, namely, Oral and Written Communication, English for Communication, English for Engineering, and English for Special Purposes, all of which aim to hone students' English language and research skills further. These courses depend heavily on writing as an assessment tool. The College where this study was conducted offers diploma and bachelor's degrees in Computer Sciences, Electronics and Telecommunication, Civil Engineering, Business and Information Systems, and master's degrees in Business Administration and Information Technology, Science in Information Technology, and Science in Electronic Engineering. English is exclusively the medium of instruction in these programs, where more than 60 per cent of the assessment is in a written format. This is why only students who successfully complete the EGFP are eligible to enrol in undergraduate programs.

1.3 The Current Study

Given its significance, there has been increasing concern in the higher education literature about students' lack of engagement in writing classes. This practice-based study attempts to address this problem and investigates the impact of flipped instruction on students' engagement. This aim is explored within the context of an academic writing course which adopts a task-based teaching approach and which I offered to students enrolled in Level 3 of the EGFP in a private HEI in Oman.

1.3.1 Rationale for the Study

In order to understand the significance and rationale of the current study, it is necessary to discuss the role played by academic writing in the lives of Omani students who pursue post-secondary education. Omani students who join post-secondary education face several difficulties in writing (Al Badwawi, 2011; Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). Combined with other factors such as their “weak educational background from school, unprepared mindset for higher studies and attitude toward hard work” (Baporikar & Shah, 2012, p. 17) and their general lack of motivation to learn English (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015), the challenges which students encounter in writing courses lead to their disengagement. This negatively affects their performance, examination scores and overall academic progress because of the vital role writing plays in assessment in all of the undergraduate programs the institution offers.

One of the reasons why students' academic writing skills are inadequate relates to EFL educators' teaching approaches and practices, which are teacher-centred and rooted in the audio-lingual method (Al-Issa, 2006a; 2007; 2015; Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Mahrooqi &

Denman, 2015). Such approaches and practices fail to help Omani students to develop satisfactory writing skills and to prepare them for their undergraduate studies. Therefore, a different instructional approach which places students at the centre of teaching and learning, encourages active participation in this process, and harnesses students' higher-order thinking skills instead of rote-learning habits needs to be investigated.

Among the different inductive approaches currently available, the flipped instructional approach shows most promise (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015; Deslauriers, Schelew & Wieman, 2011), and its implementation in the Omani context warrants further investigation. Current discussions about effective writing instruction in the Omani context revolve around the process-oriented approach, which is advocated as a better alternative to the product-oriented instructional model (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015). In contrast, this study presents flipping as an alternative model that viably integrates process and text in teaching students to write (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann, 2003), and which could effectively enhance student engagement. In this sense, the present study provides a valuable contribution to practice in the EFL field in Oman and to knowledge about student engagement in writing courses in Oman and other educational contexts.

1.3.2 Study Aim and Research Questions

This study problematizes engagement as an outcome of the teachers' instructional approaches and as inherent in students themselves. It constitutes a systematic inquiry into the impact of flipped instruction on students' engagement in an academic writing course. The study also aims to explore whether factors such as gender, age, linguistic proficiency and technology skills

influence students' engagement in the flipped writing course. A justification for the focus on these particular factors will be provided in Chapter Three. Student engagement, which will be reviewed in more detail in Chapter Two, is conceptualised as a four-dimensional construct that involves behavioural, emotional, cognitive and agentic engagement.

The study is therefore designed to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How does flipped instruction impact on students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in EFL academic writing classes?

RQ2. To what extent does male and female students' engagement in flipped writing classes vary?

RQ3. To what extent does student engagement in flipped writing classes vary according to age?

RQ4. Do other factors, specifically students' language proficiency and technology skills, affect their behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in flipped writing classes?

RQ5. Why do variations between the engagement of male and female students and students belonging to different age groups exist?

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter Two offers a critical literature review of the key terms and concepts in this study and is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the concept of student engagement. It highlights the importance of investigating this concept in the current study, provides a brief overview of its evolution while focusing on the conceptualisation

the current study adopted, and clarifies some of the key factors that contribute to student engagement. The second part addresses the concept of flipped instruction. It defines this teaching approach and its theoretical background, and highlights its importance in relation to students' academic engagement. Chapter Three presents and discusses the study design and methodology. It covers the following topics: research paradigm, rationale for selecting mixed-methods research, the pilot study and its implications for the main study, recruitment and selection of participants, and data collection and analysis procedures. The chapter also discusses the procedures I followed in the flipped writing course on which this study focuses, and the study's ethical considerations. Chapter Four reports on the findings obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Chapter Five discusses the research findings in light of the existing literature. The concluding chapter provides a summary of the study's major findings and its practical implications and limitations, and makes suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to establish the conceptual framework for the study. It is divided into two major sections. The first section discusses a significant aspect of student learning, i.e. academic engagement. It defines the concept and explains its historical evolution. This section also explains the value of engagement and argues that disengagement in writing classes hampers students' academic progress in HEIs in Oman. Some of the individual and contextual factors that contribute to student engagement are also discussed. The second section focuses on the concept of flipped teaching. It starts by explaining the origin and development of this teaching approach, and then clarifies the underlying theoretical foundations of this approach and their respective pedagogical implications with a particular focus on the reasons for selecting this instructional approach in the current study.

2.2 Part One: The Concept of Student Engagement

2.2.1 The Significance of Student Engagement

Chapter One discussed the status of academic writing in the lives of students enrolled in HEIs in Oman. The heavy reliance on written assessments in university and college studies shows that writing is of paramount importance for students' success in various disciplines (Leki & Carson, 1994). In recent years, the concept of academic engagement has attracted the attention of

educators, researchers, policymakers and other parties concerned with students' learning. For example, Krause (2005a, p. 1) states that "engagement has emerged as a cornerstone of the higher education lexicon over the last decade".

Despite its importance, the topic of student engagement has not been explored in relation to EFL writing courses in Oman. Therefore, the perceived significance of this concept and the increasing concern about the falling standards in students' writing capacities (Lea & Street, 1998) and their overall disengagement in writing (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015) illustrate the importance of focusing on this concept in this study.

The concept of engagement, which will be discussed in the next section, has been valued for several reasons. Firstly, it impacts on students' academic performance, learning experience, intellectual ability and cognitive growth. Reeve (2012) argues that engagement contributes significantly to students' academic achievement. According to Greenwood, Horton and Utley (2002, p. 342), student engagement is an "enabler of academic achievement". It makes learning possible and helps to predict a student's academic performance and overall progress (Reeve, 2012). Research conducted in several HEIs in the United States of America (USA) by Carini, Kuh and Kleint (2006) and Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie and Gonyea (2008) found that an association exists between student engagement and their overall grades, scores in tests such as General Records Examinations (GRE), and college grade point average (GPA). Furthermore, the report by Tross, Harper, Osherr and Kneidinger (2000) highlights the claim that engagement affects students' grades positively and indirectly enhances their academic achievement. In other words, a lack of student engagement results in apathy and dissatisfaction, which limits academic performance (Gunuc, 2014; Sbrocco, 2009). Krause (2005a) and Tinto (2000) also emphasise the

value of student engagement and explain that it results in several positive outcomes, such as persistence and satisfaction, which are indispensable for academic success.

The second reason why this concept is significant relates to students' overall academic learning experience. Finn and Zimmer (2012) and Graham, Tripp, Seawright and Joeckel (2007) emphasise the centrality of engagement in the enhancement of the quality of students' learning. This idea has been reinforced by other researchers, for example, Guthrie, Wigfield and You (2012), who argue that students' behavioural engagement affects the quality of their learning experience through the medium of motivation.

Another reason for the importance of the concept of student engagement is highlighted by Trowler (2010) and several other researchers. Research findings show that a correlation exists between student engagement and improvement in several desired outcomes, such as general and intellectual abilities (Kuh, Hu & Vesper, 2000; Pike, Kuh & Gonyea, 2003), practical competence and other skills such as critical thinking (Kuh, 1993), cognitive development (Pascarella, Seifert & Blaich, 2010) and self-esteem (Bandura, 1993; 1997). These skills are vital for college graduates. Halpern (1998; 1999) and Mann (2001) maintain that upon completion of a college/university course, a student should demonstrate the ability to think critically and to solve problems creatively to be able to deal with the increasingly complex workplace demands. Disengaged students are unlikely to develop such essential skills. According to Kuh et al. (2000), disengaged students squander the opportunities available to them to grow personally and intellectually. This opinion is strongly supported by Greenwood et al. (2002, p. 328) who add that disengaged students exhibit negative behaviours such as being unruly and disruptive, and are often unable to "manage subject matter tasks rapidly and accurately", which negatively affects their class performance. Moreover, Case (2008) contends that the types of approaches that

'alienated' or disengaged students adopt are inadequate. The term 'alienation' was coined by Mann (2001) and used to describe learners who adopt a surface rather than a deep learning approach. According to Case (2008, p. 331), although alienated students manage to survive within the tertiary-level educational community, they are likely to "throw up all they have learned in disgust" when they complete the university course and fail to transfer the knowledge and skills they are supposed to have developed to the workplace.

It should be noted, however, that the relationship between student engagement and the abovementioned positive outcomes is not straightforward, i.e. it is not a mechanistic cause/effect relationship since several other interrelated factors contribute to student engagement (Kuh et al., 2008). Appleton, Christenson and Furlong (2008) argue, for instance, that increased engagement in the form of an increased sense of belonging and relatedness to others and to the learning environment, which authors such as McMahan and Portelli (2004) consider the highest level of psychological engagement, does not necessarily lead to improved performance. A study which involved 301 students and aimed to explore their sense of belonging found that despite the fact that students had high success expectations, valued academic studies, and displayed considerable efforts and persistence levels in studying, they had a very low sense of belonging and satisfaction with the school (Appleton et al., 2008). Moreover, another study which involved 612 participants found that an increase in students' sense of belonging was accompanied by a substantial decline in their intrinsic school value and interest (Appleton et al., 2008).

Therefore, various aspects of engagement may not be equally worthwhile and perhaps do not contribute equally to students' positive learning outcomes (McMahan & Portelli, 2004). Another explanation, however, could be that other individual and/or contextual factors interact with student engagement to influence students' academic success. For example, Dörnyei and Ushioda

(2011) consider student motivation a prerequisite for engagement and essential to persist and succeed academically. Similarly, McMahon and Portelli (2004, p. 62) emphasise the role an individual student's involvement plays "in the creation of meaningful engagement" and in the achievement of learning.

Kuh et al. (2008, p. 555) adopt a different stance, however. According to the authors, the institution contributes significantly to student engagement through "teaching practices and programmatic interventions such as first-year seminars, service-learning courses, and learning communities". Optimising these areas is necessary to enhance students' engagement and ultimately maximise the benefits they gain from higher education studies.

It appears from the discussion above that there is a general agreement that a connection exists between student engagement and successful academic learning. Nevertheless, neither the definition of engagement nor its perceived benefits are prescriptive and linear in nature. Student engagement is far more complex as it involves more than the simplistic interpretation of students' external behaviours (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). Consequently, an exploration of student engagement, specifically in the current study, requires a comprehensive understanding of the concept, its meaning, and its constituent parts. The next section, therefore, reviews and critiques the various conceptualisations available in the literature on student engagement and argues that this construct should be treated as multifaceted and multidimensional in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of student engagement in learning.

2.2.2 The Evolution of the Concept of Engagement

Despite the widespread concern regarding student engagement in higher education and the recognition of its significance, it is argued that the concept is still “weakly theorized” (Kahn, 2014, p. 1005). Bryson and Hand (2007) and Parsons and Taylor (2011) state that different researchers ascribe different meanings to engagement. Similarly, Reschly and Christenson (2012, p. 3) contend that a “conceptual haziness” relating to the engagement construct still exists and that a unified definition does not exist (Lester, 2013).

Coates (2006) points out that several learning theories have influenced the conceptualisation of engagement, from early behaviourist to cognitive and more recent social constructivist theories, and consequently it has undergone several changes over time. Firstly, Trowler (2010) maintains that the term ‘engagement’ was rooted in Astin’s (1984) work on student involvement. Early perceptions were influenced by behaviourist views which emphasised the importance of observable learner behaviours. According to Astin (1984, p. 518), engagement is the “amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience”. Engagement is therefore considered as a one-dimensional construct that is measured in terms of students’ class attendance, time they spend on task, and their overall academic learning time (Admiraal, Wubbels & Pilot, 1999; Fisher et al., 1981; McIntyre, Copenhaver, Byrd & Norris, 1983). This early behaviourist conceptualisation has been criticised as being inadequate for two reasons. Firstly, observed behaviour is considered insufficient for student engagement since the learning process is not merely a behavioural event (Coates, 2006). Secondly, observable behaviour could be misleading since it “may suggest that an individual is engaged, when in fact he or she is quite disengaged cognitively or affectively” (Coates, 2006, p. 28). Consequently, this

rather simplistic perception is incapable of providing a full account of students' actual engagement.

Newmann, Wehlage and Lamborn's (1992) conceptualisation of engagement constitutes a departure from the early perceptions discussed above. While initial conceptualisations focused primarily on students' external behaviours, Newmann et al. (1992) added a psychological component to engagement. They define it in terms of the psychological investment and effort students put into "learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (Newmann et al., 1992, p. 12) and argue that students' psychological investment does not involve the mere completion of tasks with the purpose of achieving high grades or social acceptance.

The abovementioned conceptualisation was criticised by McMahon and Portelli (2004) for three main reasons. Firstly, they argue that this conceptualisation seems to equate student engagement with the motivation to complete assigned tasks, which reflects a narrow psychological understanding and a strong behavioural conception of this construct. Secondly, according to Newmann et al. (1992), it is the teacher who establishes the content of engagement and "sets the conditions to 'hook' students" (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 63). This makes student engagement "a form of psychological imposition" (McMahon & Portelli, 2004, p. 63) rather than something that resides within the individual. Thirdly, McMahon and Portelli (2004) contend that Newmann et al.'s (1992) conceptualisation views engagement in a continuum from less engaged to more engaged rather than "as a dichotomous state of being either engaged or unengaged" (p. 64), which means that it does not account for students who are not at all engaged.

It is clear that the three conceptualisations discussed above focus primarily on students' external behaviours and say very little, if anything at all, about the inner workings of students'

minds. Under the cognitive paradigm, the cognitive aspect of student engagement was highlighted. Consequently, a new three-dimensional conceptualisation was adopted by scholars such as Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004), Reeve (2009) and Skinner and Belmont (1993) with a particular focus on the cognitive dimension of engagement. Skinner and Belmont (1993, p. 572) wrote:

Engagement includes both behavioural and emotional components. Children who are engaged show persistent behavioural involvement in learning activities accompanied by positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks, they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity and interest ... such emotional engagement can be contrasted with the construct of cognitive engagement, which refers to the level of thinking skills used by students.

Despite the fact that the individual is considered “the primary site of student engagement” (Gourlay, 2015, p. 403), the above conceptualisation views engagement as something which instructors do for students instead of something that is produced by both teachers and students (McMahon & Portelli, 2004). It downplays the students’ role in shaping their own engagement. According to Reeve and Tseng (2011), students are not passive recipients who only react to various factors in the learning environment, including the teacher’s proposed learning activities, but rather act upon those factors through various means such as modification, enrichment and creation. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007, p. 260) point out that “learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience”.

The perception of engagement as a meaning-making process has its roots in constructivism – a theory which assimilates behaviourist and cognitivist learning views. More specifically, social constructivists consider learning a dynamic process of knowledge-building where a learner engages actively in meaning construction while interacting with the surrounding environment and collaborating with others (Perkins, 2006; Smith, 1999). This conceptualisation values students’ roles and the learning environment and takes into account the complexity involved in both of them, resulting in the emergence of the notion of student agency as a component of student engagement. Student agency refers to the level of control and autonomy which students experience in a particular educational setting. It can be manifested in the choices students make about the learning environment, the subject matter, the learning approaches they adopt, and their learning pace.

According to Kahn (2014, p. 1005), engagement is actually “a form of distributed agency, with the impact of a learning environment on this agency mediated by reflexivity”. This conceptualisation is rooted in realist social theory. It argues that students’ reflexive deliberations determine the way they exercise agency, their engagement level in the learning process, and the outcome of their learning. Kahn (2014) argues that students engage in, and assume, responsibility for their learning in three possible ways depending on the mode of reflexivity they adopt. Reflexive deliberation “involves a mental process in which the object under consideration is bent back upon the subject doing the considering whether through planning, prioritizing, imagining, rehearsing, monitoring or so on” (Kahn, 2014, pp. 1006-1007). This view of engagement demonstrates that being engaged not only involves participation in a certain form of practice, which is interpreted exclusively through external behaviours, but is also accompanied

by a range of emotions about that practice and an attempt to make sense of that practice or activity.

It should be noted at this point that Gourlay (2015, p. 404) warns against favouring the “active, public and observable forms of participation” in the discussion of student engagement, as this may lead to considering practices which are “quiet, private, non-verbal and non-observable” as “essentially deviant and in need of remediation” (Gourlay, 2015, p. 405). This could raise concerns about the perceived value of engaging in private learning practices such as silent listening, individual reading, individual writing and private study. In the same vein, Macfarlane (2015, p. 338) contends that the increasing focus on student performativity, i.e. “the way students are evaluated on the basis of how they perform at university in bodily, dispositional and emotional terms”, constitutes a threat to students’ right to be autonomous and may disadvantage students who resist or refuse to conform.

Consequently, studying and measuring student engagement in this study requires a precise definition of this construct (Eccles & Wang, 2012). As advocated by Reeve and Tseng (2011), engagement is conceptualised here as a multifaceted construct which involves behavioural, emotional, cognitive and agentic dimensions which interact in an unpredictable and non-linear manner. This conceptualisation is particularly useful for this study because of the dynamic and complex nature of the learning process and the environment in which it occurs. The behavioural dimension of engagement refers to students’ attention and concentration on the task and their effort and persistence in completing it. The presence of positive emotions, such as interest, curiosity and enthusiasm, and the absence of negative emotions, such as distress, anger and frustration, constitute the emotional dimension of engagement. Students’ cognitive engagement consists of their usage of complex, deep and individualised self-regulatory learning strategies

and the conceptual understanding which students seek. Finally, students' intentional and constructive contribution to their learning through suggestion-making, input-offering and the degree of enrichment they add to their learning experience is referred to as agentic engagement. This conceptualisation contributes partially to our understanding of this construct.

Engagement is, presumably, not a fixed construct. Indeed, Fredricks et al. (2004, p. 59) indicate that it is “malleable, responsive to contextual features and amenable to environment change”. Researchers suggest that several factors contribute to student engagement. A review of these factors is needed in order to broaden and deepen our understanding of this construct.

2.2.3 Factors that Contribute to Student Engagement

Several factors correlate with student engagement in learning. These are classified under two categories: individual student characteristics and contextual factors. At the individual level, researchers such as Diprete and Buchmann (2013) and Rabourn, Shoup and BrckaLorenz (2015) discuss the relationship between student engagement in academic studies and individual characteristics such as gender and age. At the contextual level, researchers such as Krause (2005b) highlight the role that the learning environment plays in student engagement.

2.2.3.1 Individual Student Characteristics

Gender and age are key student characteristics which determine their engagement in their learning. The findings of several research studies conducted in foreign educational settings, including those conducted by Diprete and Buchmann (2013) and Kinzie, Gonyea, Kuh, Umbach,

Blaich and Korkmaz (2007), indicate that the way male and female learners engage in their academic studies differs. Some researchers claim that females are more academically engaged than their male counterparts (Kuh, 2003; Morisse, 2015). In a study which involved about 500,000 first-year and senior undergraduate students from 487 HEIs in the USA and Canada, Kinzie et al. (2007) found that male and female students' engagement levels differed in favour of the female group. The discussion of the concept of engagement in relation to student gender is particularly relevant in the context of Oman, as both anecdotal evidence and research evidence indicate that female students are more academically engaged than their counterparts and outperform them in formative and summative assessments (Mathew, Job, Al Damen & Rafiqul Islam, 2013).

Several reasons have been offered for this variation. Firstly, Ambu Saidi and Al-Mahrooqi (2012) and Mori and Gobel (2006) indicate that female students exhibit higher motivation to learn, which may explain their higher academic engagement levels. Wang and Eccles (2012) argue that female students are more behaviourally engaged than their male counterparts as they usually put more effort into studying, participate more actively in class, and display higher attention and persistence than male students. Similarly, Lietaert, Roorda, Laevers, Verschuere and De Fraine (2015) state that the 387 male and female language students who participated in their research study exhibited different behavioural engagement levels in favour of the female students, and that the relationship between gender and students' behavioural engagement was partially mediated by involvement and autonomy support. Furthermore, Meece, Glienke and Burg (2006) suggest that gender effects are often moderated by other factors such as ability, ethnicity and the learning environment.

Secondly, Gurian, Stevens, Henley and Trueman (2011) argue that evidence shows that the difference that exists in the brain structure of males and females is associated with variations in their approaches and attitudes to learning. Gurian et al. (2011) explain that males and females differ in their information processing, speed and memory capacity, and ability to store and retrieve information. The way they communicate, rely on themselves and take risks in the face of uncertainty, and cope with stressful experiences also varies considerably. Gender variations act upon students' academic engagement through the mediation of their cognition and emotion, which results in variations in male and female students' cognitive and emotional engagement. Ablard and Lipschultz (1998) conducted a study which aimed to explore the engagement of 222 high-achieving school students in the USA. The results indicated that female students were more cognitively engaged than their male counterparts, as they utilised self-regulated learning strategies more often than male students. Results from the EFL field corroborate these findings. Other studies by Catalan (2003), Liyanage and Bartlett (2012) and Radwan (2011) indicate, however, that female students' engagement is not higher than that of males, but is different, since males and females adopt different language learning strategies to cope with their studies' demands. Such contradictory findings further justify the focus on this area in the current study.

Another important relationship seems to exist between students' engagement and the age at which they study. Rabourn, Shoup and BrckaLorenz (2015) argue that overall, adult students (i.e. those aged over 21) are more engaged in academic studies than younger students. Although studies that directly addressed the association between age and engagement as conceptualised here are scarce, a few studies have explored engagement differences according to age in at least one engagement aspect. For instance, Richardson (1994; 1995) and Richardson, Morgan and Woodley (1999) point out that mature students' approaches to learning differ considerably from

those adopted by younger students. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Richardson (2013) which involved 3,861 distance education students whose ages ranged between 21 and 92, the author observed that student cognitive engagement reflected in the use of deep and strategic learning approaches increased with age. In other words, unlike younger learners, older learners adopted deep rather than surface learning approaches. A surface approach to learning is characterised by rote learning such as memorisation and lack of reflection. Similarly, Sindi (2010) found in her study sample that the ability to reflect, which constitutes another key aspect of cognitive engagement, was higher among older students.

Furthermore, anecdotal evidence from my own observation and research evidence indicate that older students are more behaviourally engaged than younger students through the amount of effort they place in their studies and their persistence level (Rose, Smith, Ross-Gordon, Schwartz & Hitchcock, 2013). Merriam and Bierema (2013) attribute adult learners' behavioural engagement to their high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Crick (2012) and Leach and Zepke (2011), students who are intrinsically motivated by personal goals are more engaged than others. In fact, Crick (2012, p. 679) believes that motivation is a prerequisite for engagement. She states: "It is a sine qua non that in order to be engaged in learning, a person needs to be motivated to learn... that [motivation] drives the individual to take advantage of particular learning opportunities". Thus, the more motivated learners are, the more they are engaged.

2.2.3.2 Contextual Factors

Along with the individual characteristics discussed above, it has been acknowledged by researchers that the instructor's role, classroom dynamics and learning resources correlate with student engagement (Krause, 2005b). According to Günüç and Kuzu (2014), Hashim, Alam and Yusoff (2014) and Linvill (2014), the amount and quality of teacher-student interaction inside and outside the classroom impact on students' engagement. Similarly, Fredricks et al. (2004) and Parsons and Taylor (2011) emphasise the significance of the teacher-student rapport in student engagement. The authors argue that a supportive and respectful relationship enables student engagement to flourish. Furthermore, as early as 1987, Chickering and Gamson (1987) highlighted that faculty behaviour and attitudes have a significant influence on student engagement levels. Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) explain that students' engagement is positively influenced by the extent to which teachers encourage contact between them and their students, communicate high expectations, give prompt feedback, cherish diversity in learning approaches and talents, encourage collaboration, and engage students in higher-order cognitive activities.

Classroom dynamics also influence students' engagement. As stated by Ahlfeldt, Mehta and Sellnow (2005) and Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon and Barch (2004), instructional behaviours that support student autonomy and problem-based learning enhance students' motivation and ultimately raise their engagement insofar as collaborative learning, cognitive growth and personal skills advancement are concerned. Moreover, Coates (2006) emphasises that learning environments that create opportunities for students to use their higher-order cognitive skills, such as relating new information to existing knowledge, reflecting on, analysing and questioning new

information, and encouraging students to be creative, enhance engagement and reinforce learning.

Research studies conducted in different educational settings also indicated that technology-rich learning atmospheres, where students are both challenged and encouraged to collaborate actively with each other, increase their academic engagement (Markwell, 2007; Parsons & Taylor, 2011). For instance, Mango's (2015) exploration of the opinions of 35 college students enrolled in two Arabic as a Foreign Language classes on the use of iPads in Arabic language learning revealed that students believed that this device promoted active learning, as it enabled them to participate and collaborate with each other and to be more engaged in learning Arabic. Other research studies have been conducted, and are still being conducted, to explore the possible ways different technologies affect students' engagement in various subjects of study. Many researchers support the claim that technology-assisted instruction engages students more through increased collaboration (Lock, 2015) and class participation (Brown, Thomas & Thomas, 2014), improved in-class attention and involvement (Han & Finkelstein, 2013), and progressive goal-construction and activity-structuring (Järvelä, Veermans & Leinonen, 2008).

Although both individual characteristics and contextual factors are important for student engagement, individual characteristics are static and therefore cannot be altered. Conversely, contextual factors such as the instructor's pedagogical approach play a vital role in enhancing students' academic engagement (Krause, 2005b).

The current practice-based study focuses on the problem of EFL students' engagement as an indispensable skill for their success in academic writing. Students' disengagement in writing has been a major concern for educators and researchers operating in the Omani educational environment, including Al Mahrooqi (2012), Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015) and Al Seyabi

and Tuzlukova (2014). Researchers argue that teachers' traditional instructional approaches characterised by memorisation and rote learning constitute the most important factor that contributes to students' disengagement (Al Badi, 2015; Al Badwawi, 2011; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014). According to Engin (2014), Helgeson (2015) and Hung (2015), flipped instruction could help to address the problem of student disengagement. Consequently, flipping academic writing instruction is worthy of further investigation. Therefore, the next section defines flipped teaching and explains its usefulness in teaching academic writing in the context of Oman.

2.3 Part Two: The Flipped Teaching Model

2.3.1 What is Flipped Teaching? A Brief History of its Origin and Development

The flipped teaching approach, assigning course materials for students to review prior to class, has existed for decades and has been practised by teachers regardless of the subject taught and the context where it was taught (Strayer, 2012). The way flipped teaching is conceptualised today, however, is based on Aaron Sams and Jonathan Bergmann's work (Noonoo, 2012) and influenced by the proliferation of digital technologies. These two teachers first coined the flipped classroom concept in 2007 and defined it as "that which is traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 13).

Several scholars, including Clark (2015), Han (2015), Lage, Platt and Treglia (2000), Little (2015) and Moffett and Mill (2014), conducted studies to explore various topics related to the implementation of this approach in different subjects in the higher education context, which

resulted in several conceptualisations of the flipped classroom. A review of some of these is required in order to clarify the current study's research design.

Hodges and Weber (2015) suggest that flipping is a more sophisticated concept than the definition offered by Bergmann and Sams (2012). According to Hodges and Weber (2015, p. 57), flipping is an instructional approach where “students learn course content through videos, presentations, and activities outside of class and engage in enrichment and practice during class time”. In other words, flipped teaching consists of reversing the order of ‘traditional’ classroom procedures and integrating interactive technology into the learning process in a regular and systematic manner (Strayer, 2012). Conversely, Bergmann and Sams (2014), Horn (2013), Milman (2012), Moffett (2015), Riismandel (2014) and Tucker (2012) argue that neither reversing the order of activities nor integrating technology per se guarantees the effectiveness of the learning process in a flipped classroom. It is rather the way available technology is integrated and face-to-face class time is utilised to create an effective teaching-learning model which is important.

The definitions above show that a unified definition of flipping does not exist and that new conceptualisations arise as more educators implement this approach in their respective classes and newer educational tools emerge. This thesis adopts the definition offered by Abeysekera and Dawson (2015) and embraces the underlying assumptions the researchers developed. The authors offer a more sophisticated conceptualisation of flipping that is grounded in a pedagogical rationale articulated through six verifiable propositions. According to the authors, a flipped class is a type of blended learning environment in which: (a) information transmission is moved out of class; (b) class time is utilised for active and productive social collaborative activities; and (c) learning tasks are completed before and/or after class to maximise the benefit of in-class learning

activities. According to Gruba and Hinkelman (2012, p. xiii), blended teaching and learning consists of “integrating technologies in face-to-face environments through a principled selection of actions, tools and networks that are situated in particular groups, times and locations with an aim to meet specific educational goals” such as narrative, interactive, communicative and productive purposes. As a type of classroom blend, a flipped learning atmosphere is expected to satisfy students’ need for (a) competence, (b) autonomy, and (c) relatedness in order to (d) reduce students’ cognitive load, and to (e) enable them to manage it properly.

Flipping is preferred in this study for two main reasons. Firstly, comprehending key concepts in writing is crucial for students’ progress in the course. This could be explained by referring to Meyer and Land’s (2006) and Taylor’s (2006) notion of ‘threshold concepts’. This term refers to a “transformational way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress” (Meyer & Land, 2006, p. 3). According to Taylor (2006, p. 87), students’ inability to “progress past such a threshold may lead to ongoing problems in subsequent understanding and application” within the discipline. In a traditional classroom design, a detailed explanation of key writing concepts in class is time-consuming. This makes assisting individual students who do not grasp those key concepts extremely difficult, especially if we consider the large student numbers in a writing class (Maringe & Sing, 2014). The subsequent application of key concepts could be problematic if students fail to understand them within the allotted class time, which disadvantages them. This is likely to accentuate students’ disengagement.

Secondly, an elaborate explanation of key writing concepts in class reduces the amount of time allocated for the actual writing practice. An immediate consequence of this is to assign the productive task, i.e. essay writing, as homework. This could be extremely challenging for

students, especially in the absence of the teacher's assistance and immediate feedback. A study conducted by Asadifard and Koosha (2013, p. 1576), which involved 12 EFL university writing teachers and 37 EFL learners in Iran who were classified as disengaged in writing, found that students considered the lack of "systematic and objective feedback and correction by the teacher" as the main reason for their disengagement in academic writing. This further highlights the need to create more opportunities for students to write in class and to give them proper immediate feedback on their work. By introducing key concepts prior to class, more class time becomes available for frequent practice and individual students' assistance, which reduces the cognitive load and the stress students usually feel when new concepts are introduced in class (Abeysekera & Dawson, 2015). This could help to enhance students' engagement to a great extent.

A blended teaching-learning approach which merges offline instruction and technology-mediated instruction and involves learners in a variety of synchronous and/or asynchronous activities is particularly useful in this context (Diaz & Brown, 2010; Graham & Dziuban, 2008). The complexity of academic writing (Reid, 2001) and the inadequate skills which Omani students who join the HEI possess (Al Badi, 2015; Al Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2014) require teachers to cater for students' engagement to help them progress academically, which illustrates the value of classroom blends. Firstly, teacher-student and student-student communication in an ordinary writing class in our educational context is confined within the classroom. Students lose contact with their teachers and sometimes their peers immediately after they leave the classroom. Moreover, teachers are often unavailable outside the teaching time due to their busy schedules and heavy academic and administrative workload. This constitutes a problem for students who may need additional support to improve their understanding. Similarly, under normal

circumstances there are limited opportunities for students to collaborate and to assist each other outside the classroom due to the variance in students' timetables and other cultural factors which considerably limit male and female students' interaction outside class. As a dynamic and interactive medium, technology helps to overcome many of these problems through synchronous and/or asynchronous communication which is enabled through computers and smartphones. Warschauer (2001) points out that synchronous and/or asynchronous communication maintains teacher-student and student-student contact, which helps to improve student motivation and emotional engagement. Furthermore, Hanson-Smith (2001), Lee and Wang (2013) and Warschauer (2001) argue that this communication helps to develop students' cognitive engagement, as students make their writing more reader-centred when it is publically displayed. Furthermore, the traditional classroom design which Omani students are accustomed to encourages passivity among learners. Students' voices are often missing since composition consists mainly of the reproduction of teacher-presented, often de-contextualised essay models to which they contribute very little (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015). This instructional model leads to learners' lack of interest and alienation. Consequently, a classroom blend where both face-to-face and technology-mediated learning tasks are integrated helps to increase students' interest, engage them, and helps them to become more autonomous learners. This process is facilitated through the flexibility which digital technologies provide to both teachers and learners.

It should be emphasised, however, that digital technologies do not inherently enable language learning and that educators should identify the best possible ways to harness the educational potential of these technologies to optimise students' learning (Doughty & Long, 2003). Hanson-Smith (2001, p. 113) states that "where technology is deployed to its best advantage, we should see teachers' roles become that of guide and mentor, encouraging students to take charge of their

own learning, helping them to learn at their own pace”. Nevertheless, the integration of digital technologies in education is not problem-free (Selwyn, 2014). Among other problems, digital technologies are costly (Gips, DiMattia & Gips, 2004), inaccessible (Bateson & Daniels, 2012) and in a constant state of flux (Banerjee, 2011). The successful use of digital technologies necessitates adequate knowledge among teachers and learners alike (Lai & Kritsonis, 2006), which requires training (Rickard, Blin & Appel, 2006). The overwhelming pace at which digital technologies emerge complicates this process, however (Banerjee, 2011). Instructors in certain traditional learning environments such as Oman could also have extremely varying capacities and inclinations towards technology integration (Bateson & Daniels, 2012).

To conclude, as opposed to a traditional model, a flipped classroom model places the learner in the centre of the teaching-learning process and integrates face-to-face and online learning activities that use available technologies in order to engage students. The exploration of the impact of this teaching model on student engagement in the current practitioner research study contributes to existing knowledge about effective EFL teaching practices. O’Flaherty and Phillips (2015) and Stumpfenhorst (2012) contend that a lack of understanding of the underlying theories of flipped instruction could have a negative impact on the design of the flipped classroom. In other words, the mere reversal of learning activities does not guarantee the effectiveness of this teaching approach (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). For this reason, comprehending these principles is essential if we want to avoid the reproduction of the same problems that affect the traditional model.

2.3.2 Theoretical Underpinnings of Flipped Teaching

Researchers such as Brown (2007), Kumaravadivelu (2001) and Levy (1997) argue that interplay and a reciprocal relationship exist between theoretical and practical knowledge in English language instruction as they mutually inform each other. Theory of learning and pedagogy constitute a “dialectical praxis” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 540) and a fit should exist between them. According to Ertmer and Newby (2013), any theory of learning introduces associated instructional strategies which offer the educator a means of achieving desired learning outcomes. These instructional strategies either engage or, adversely, alienate students (Markwell, 2007; Parsons & Taylor, 2011).

To reiterate, a flipped classroom is conceptualised as a blended learning environment where digital instructional technologies are integrated in a structured and systematic manner in order to support traditional face-to-face lessons (Dowling, 2011; Graham & Dziuban, 2008) and the order of traditional classroom activities is turned upside down. The flipped classroom structure reproduces the underlying ideologies of classroom blends which are rooted in both cognitivist and constructivist learning theories. Constructivism is considered a branch of cognitivism; however, there are several differences between these two paradigms. According to Ertmer and Newby (2013), cognitive theorists posit that learning is a process whereby knowledge is transferred from an external world into the learner’s memory. The learner’s mind receives, organises and stores this knowledge in the memory, and retrieves and applies it in a different context when needed. Accordingly, factors such as the learning environment and the instructional method used impact significantly on learning. Cognitive theorists also posit that the learner’s beliefs, attitudes, values and intentions influence and even direct his/her learning by

either fostering or hindering it (Chan, Ho & Ku, 2011; Lucas, 2000; May & Etkina, 2002; Meyer & Land, 2003; 2006; Whitmire, 2004).

Conversely, constructivists consider learning as a process in which the learner's cognition and learning environment both play a major role, thus emphasising the social nature of learning and a learner's agency. In this paradigm, learning does not occur in a vacuum and is, instead, socially sculpted (Wilson & Peterson, 2006) through "dialogue, collaborative learning and cooperative learning" (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 292), making it a socially-situated and context-specific process (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000; Leondari, 2007; Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). Unlike cognitivists, constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed in the learner's mind as s/he interacts with the environment (Perkins, 2006; Smith, 2009). Therefore, memory does not consist of finite knowledge, but constantly evolves as concepts are used in new settings (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

2.3.3 Implications of Cognitive and Constructivist Psychologies for Flipped Instructional Design

Cognitivist and constructivist principles have several immediate implications for the design of classroom instruction. Ertmer and Newby (2013) summarise each of these principles in four basic assumptions and outline the possible applications of those assumptions in instruction (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Applications of Cognitive and Constructivist Assumptions in Instruction

Paradigm	Basic Assumptions	Instructional Design Applications
Cognitivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is an active participant in the learning process • Hierarchical analysis is utilised to establish and represent pre-existing relationships • The focus is on the facilitation of information processing through structuring, organising and sequencing • The learning environment should inspire the learner to establish linkages between current and previously acquired knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is in control of his/her learning through self-planning, monitoring, etc. • The learner is trained to use cognitive task analysis techniques • The learner is trained to use cognitive strategies such as outlining, summarising, synthesising, etc. • The learning environment recalls already acquired skills, makes use of appropriate examples, etc.
Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment in which to learn and apply skills is significant • The learner is in control of learning and is capable of manipulating knowledge • Information is to be offered in numerous ways • Go beyond the specified information through the use of problem-solving skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning must occur in meaningful contexts • The learner should use what s/he has learned actively • Content is to be revisited in different settings and for a variety of purposes • Present problems in several alternative ways, develop learner's pattern recognition abilities

The flipped classroom structure reflects the abovementioned principles in several aspects. Firstly, learners in a flipped classroom are expected to participate actively in the learning process. They engage in activities which require them to use both lower- and higher-order thinking skills (Hettler, 2015). The introductory knowledge acquisition phase which occurs prior to class involves lower-order thinking skills such as remembering and understanding, while more advanced in-class active learning tasks involve higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation and creation. Secondly, the flipped classroom design encourages learners to be

responsible for their own learning through the use of multiple cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies such as note-taking, organising, summarising, paraphrasing, concept mapping, self-monitoring and revising. The use of these strategies helps learners to comprehend and accommodate the new information effectively and, consequently, to apply it successfully in new contexts. Thirdly, although instruction in the flipped classroom is pre-designed, the activities still require learners to use their pre-existing knowledge to evaluate and update it and to construct new knowledge as they collaborate with each other during the three lesson phases to achieve shared goals. The instructor's role in this classroom design is to guide learners in this process through training and modelling (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

As a type of blended learning environment, the flipped classroom utilises technologies which support both cognitivist and constructivist learning principles. For instance, several modalities, including recorded presentations, videos and online reading materials, are utilised to present information to learners (Graham, 2006; Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012). This gives them an opportunity to use their cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to comprehend, organise and store the information they receive and retrieve it later. The flexible access to learning materials and online tasks enables learners to exercise agency over their learning (Cottrell & Robison, 2003; Graham, 2006; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003), which helps them to manage their working memory better and, consequently, reduces the cognitive load (Clark, Nguyen & Sweller as cited in Abeyskera & Dawson, 2015). Moreover, technology is employed in the flipped classroom to engage learners in several authentic and meaningful offline and online activities (Smelser, 2002). For instance, technology-mediated synchronous and asynchronous communication tools such as emails, messaging applications and learning management systems (LMS) facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication, and collaboration. These tools enable information

exchange to ask questions, share insights and clarify ambiguities, which enhances the learning process.

The cognitivist and constructivist theoretical principles and their corresponding pedagogical implications discussed above by no means imply that a unique flipped classroom design already exists. Rather, the discussion indicates that educators need to envisage a particular design while taking those principles and implications for pedagogies and the specificities of their local educational contexts into consideration.

2.4 Summary

According to Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) and Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015), traditional approaches still dominate EFL teaching practices in Omani educational institutions. Traditional instructional approaches in writing courses result in students' lack of interest and disengagement (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015), which impacts negatively on their academic progress (Reeve, 2012). The current practice-based study was conducted to address this problem and to contribute to our understanding of effective EFL teaching practices in this setting and knowledge about a vital aspect of student learning, i.e. engagement. Jamaludin and Osman (2014) advocate flipped teaching as an instructional model which makes English language teaching and learning more active, student-centred and engaging. Furthermore, Lane-Kelso (2014; 2015) argues that further research is required to explore the way the flipped instructional method supports teaching and learning in the Omani context, illustrating the need for and importance of this study.

The literature review established the conceptual framework of the research and focused on the two central concepts in the study, i.e. student engagement and flipped instruction. The next chapter will clarify the research design and methodology.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design and methodology and to provide an overview of the flipped writing class on which the study focuses. Firstly, the chapter reviews the main research paradigms identified in the literature and explains the rationale for the choice of mixed methodology in the current study based on the research problem, purpose and questions. Secondly, the chapter outlines the pilot test and its implications for the main study. Then, it clarifies the recruitment and selection of participants and data collection and analysis procedures followed in the main study. The chapter also provides a description of the procedures adopted in the flipped academic writing course on which the study is based and concludes with a discussion of the ethical issues the research raised along with the measures taken to overcome them.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). A paradigm represents an interpretative framework for the research as it determines all research actions and procedures, including the choice of research questions, data collection tools, data collection and analysis methods, and recruitment and selection of participants. A research paradigm, therefore, provides consistency and unity between these different aspects of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The three main research paradigms identified in the literature were ‘positivism’, ‘post-positivism’ and ‘scientific realism/pragmatism’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The differences between these three philosophical stances have been discussed extensively (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Salomon, 1991) on the basis of the assumptions they have about the following:

- ontology: the nature of truth or reality
- epistemology: how truth or knowledge can be attained or acquired
- axiology: the values and beliefs held about the importance of research
- the researcher-researched relationship.

Positivists argue that an objective, value-free truth or reality exists in the world independently of the individual’s experience and interpretation. In this paradigm, truth is absolute (Creswell, 2009) and can be attained through careful thinking and perceptual means such as observation and direct experience (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). According to positivists, the aim of research is to discover general laws, i.e. to identify and explain the regularities and patterns that exist in nature by establishing cause-effect relationships between different variables (Cohen et al., 2011; Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Under this paradigm, reality is considered unbiased and external to the participant, and the researcher’s obligation is to discover it using experimental statistical analysis.

The post-positivist paradigm, however, assumes “a relativist ontology” and “a subjectivist epistemology” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24). In other words, in this paradigm knowledge is not absolute, but rather “personal, subjective and unique” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6). Moses and Knutsen (2007, p. 12) explain that in this paradigm, truth “lies in the eyes of the observer”.

Therefore, multiple realities, worlds and truths exist and vary according to variables such as time, geographical context, gender, age and culture (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 6) and (Creswell, 2009), the major concern of post-positivist researchers is to understand how individuals “create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves” with the help of the research participants. Understanding is, therefore, co-created by the researcher and ‘researched’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The third paradigm, i.e. scientific realism/pragmatism, straddles the ontological and epistemological position of positivism and post-positivism (Creswell, 2009; Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Greene and Caracelli (2003) argue that pragmatists transcend old dichotomies such as voluntarism versus determinism and subjectivism versus objectivism, and paradigmatic incommensurability, i.e. that positivist and post-positivist paradigms and their related methods cannot be mixed. Under this paradigm, “there may be both singular and multiple versions of the truth and reality, sometimes subjective and sometimes objective” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 23), and knowledge is what works at a particular point in time (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). What is significant for researchers who embrace this paradigm is to find practical solutions to world problems and to discover answers that help them accomplish desired goals (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006).

According to Cohen et al. (2011), the positivist paradigm is consistent with the quantitative research approach, while the post-positivist and scientific realist/pragmatist paradigms are consistent with qualitative and mixed-methods approaches respectively. This practice-based research project aims to address a practical problem in the field of EFL education and therefore adopts pragmatic ontological and epistemological beliefs, and a mixed-methods research approach.

3.3 Rationale for Selecting Mixed-methods Design

According to Burton and Bartlett (2005, p. 37), practitioner research “starts with a problem, issue or set of questions arising out of professional concerns” and primarily aims to enhance education practice. The current practice-based research set out to address the problem of student disengagement in an academic writing course that I teach to GFP students at an HEI in Oman. This was achieved through the implementation of a novel instructional approach in the Omani context, i.e. flipped instruction.

Burton and Bartlett (2005) argue that practitioner research often borrows from both positivist and post-positivist paradigms as appropriate to develop a research design that best serves the investigation. The following section clarifies the rationale for selecting a mixed-methods research design. It defines mixed-methods research and then explains the reasons for selecting this approach in terms of the research problem, purpose and questions.

3.3.1 Definition of Mixed-Methods Research

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p. 123) define mixed-methods research as a type of investigation which “combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”. Creswell (2009) identified six main types of mixed-methods research design. The current study design fits into the concurrent triangulation category. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are utilised simultaneously to “offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other” (Creswell, 2009, p. 213). The results obtained through both methods

are often mixed in the interpretation phase. One of the advantages of this design is the short time required for data collection (Creswell, 2009). This was particularly useful in the current study where access to participants was confined to 14 weeks, which is the total duration of an academic semester in the institution. Another advantage of this design is that it results in “well-validated and substantiated findings” (Creswell, 2009, pp. 213-214).

Nonetheless, Creswell (2009) concedes that a concurrent triangulation design has two major limitations. The first relates to the difficulty in comparing the findings resulting from two types of analysis using different data forms. The second results from the discrepancies which may arise during the comparison and could be difficult to resolve. Revisiting the original database to gain new insights from the data inconsistency is a practical strategy to adopt to address these discrepancies, however (Creswell, 2009).

3.3.2 Research Problem

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that the research problem and approach should be aligned in order to achieve the research purpose. Robson (2002) classifies research enquiries into four categories: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and emancipatory. Exploratory research is concerned with the investigation of a little-understood phenomenon through different lenses in order to gain new insights and/or engender hypotheses. It is useful when the topic under investigation is relatively new and immature and when the topic has not been focused on in a particular context and/or with a particular group (Creswell, 2009; Morse, 1991). The focus of descriptive research is to portray an accurate profile of a particular topic, event or problem (Robson, 2002). Explanatory research seeks to explain a particular phenomenon and, usually, but

not necessarily, to establish causal relationships between the various aspects of this phenomenon (Robson, 2002). It is adopted to identify factors that affect a particular outcome and, consequently, to understand the predictors of that outcome (Creswell, 2009). Emancipatory research aims to create opportunities for social action engagement (Robson, 2002).

Unlike other studies which explored the topic of flipping in EFL instruction in foreign educational settings, the present research study has both exploratory and explanatory dimensions. It aimed to examine the impact of flipped teaching on EFL students' engagement in writing. This research problem was addressed for the first time in the Omani educational context. It should be noted here that flipping is an approach which originated in Western educational settings and is therefore considered 'alien' to the Omani EFL teaching-learning environment. Moreover, this topic was addressed for the first time in the context of GFPs in Omani HEIs when this research was conducted. Furthermore, despite its importance, investigations of students' engagement in flipped classes have been extremely limited to date and restricted to the exploration of the behavioural dimension of engagement. This has resulted in an incomplete picture since behavioural engagement does not provide sufficient evidence of students' cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement (Coates, 2006). Therefore, an exploratory approach was chosen in order to gain a better and deeper understanding of the potential implementation of flipping in a writing classroom and of its impacts on students' four engagement dimensions.

The study also had explanatory purposes. Researchers such as MacFarlane (2016) maintain that several factors contribute to the academic engagement of students, including the institution's environment and acculturation opportunities that it creates for them, especially in the first semester of study. Moreover, researchers such as Ahlfeldt et al. (2005), Felder and Brent (2005) and Reeve et al. (2004) point out that other factors such as the instructional approaches employed

also contribute to student engagement. The authors suggest that different students respond to teaching methodologies and engage in their academic studies differently. Simultaneously, many researchers operating in different educational contexts argue that factors such as gender (Diprete & Buchmann, 2013; Kinzie et al., 2007) and age (Rabourn et al., 2015; Richardson et al., 1999) also contribute to student academic engagement. This is particularly relevant in the Omani context, where both anecdotal evidence and research evidence indicate that female students and adult students are more academically engaged than their counterparts and outperform them in formative and summative assessments (Mathew et al., 2013). Therefore, exploring how and why students' responses to the flipped instructional approach vary from one group to another is of great value. The rich data which this aspect of the investigation provides helps to develop the analysis (Johnson et al., 2007; Salomon, 1991). Therefore, the exploratory and explanatory nature of the present study requires a combination of methods rather than dependence on one single method.

3.3.3 Research Purpose

As described in Chapter One, the major concern of this practice-based study was to address the problem of students' disengagement in writing courses by exploring the impact of flipped instruction on this central aspect of their learning and the way students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement varied in this classroom design. This study did not aim to provide a perfect representation of truth or reality. Rather, it intended to develop a deep understanding of and to provide useful and practical suggestions to solve a real-world problem. Therefore, mixed-methods research, which is "oriented to the solution of practical problems in

the practical world” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 23), is the most suitable approach to adopt to achieve this purpose.

Thus, the quantitative stance in this study enables the acquisition of a general understanding of the impact of flipped instruction by assessing all students’ responses to different variables representing the four engagement dimensions. Through a qualitative lens, however, we could obtain an explanation of the processes involved in students’ engagement in the flipped learning environment.

Moreover, it is argued that individual experiences, perceptions, attitudes and activities are not uniform and vary from one individual to another and from one learning environment to another (Holden & Lynch, 2004). For this reason, identifying variations in students’ overall perceptions of their engagement in the flipped learning environment and the reasons behind them would not be possible by using a quantitative lens exclusively. A qualitative approach where students express and discuss their thoughts freely and independently of their responses to the standardised questionnaire would be most useful.

Moreover, identifying contradictory results would not be possible if one specific approach was utilised. Obtaining results through various methods in this study would help to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ perceptions and experiences and of the phenomenon in general. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 18), such combinations are likely to result in “complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses”, illustrating the appropriateness of a mixed-methods approach.

3.3.4 Research Questions

According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), it is the research questions (rather than the researcher's biases about which research paradigm to choose) that dictate the selection of a research design and the subsequent data collection and analysis methods and procedures. Furthermore, Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) explain that research questions in a mixed-methods study should include clearly interconnected qualitative and quantitative aspects to be addressed through the collection of distinctly identifiable qualitative and quantitative data. The main research question in this study was:

RQ1. How does flipped instruction impact on students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in EFL academic writing classes?

This question focused on the way flipped instruction influenced the four engagement dimensions of EFL students enrolled in an academic writing course. The question aimed to gain a broader understanding of students' engagement in the course and to gain valuable insights into the individual students' impressions of this instructional design and its influence on their engagement. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative treatments were deemed beneficial to address this particular question (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006; Bryman, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011, Creswell, 2009).

Gender also seems to be an important aspect of the discussion of engagement in EFL learning in the Omani educational background for several reasons. Firstly, my personal experience in teaching writing skills to GFP students showed that differences existed between male and female students' engagement in the course. Among other differences, female students, more often than not, are more actively involved in classroom dynamics, contribute more to their

own learning through regular follow-up with the teacher, approach learning differently, and obtain higher grades in writing assessments. This observation is corroborated by research evidence which indicates that Omani male and female EFL students differ in their English language learning engagement and learning processes, especially in their use of meta-cognitive learning strategies (Al Bulushi & Al Seyabi, 2016; Ambu Saidi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2012; Diprete & Buchmann, 2013; Khalil, 2005; Kinzie et al., 2007).

The relevance of the question to this particular study, however, is attributed more to the contradictory evidence about variations in Omani male and female students' engagement. For instance, Mathew et al. (2013) conducted a study in the same educational context which involved 100 GFP learners and concluded that female students outperformed their male counterparts. The researchers attributed differences in students' performance to variations in female students' emotional and behavioural engagement. They argue that female students experienced "facilitating" anxiety (Mathew et al., 2013, p. 20) and invested more effort in their learning than their male counterparts. Conversely, the study conducted by Radwan (2011), which involved 128 students majoring in English at Oman's Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), indicated that overall, no statistically significant differences existed between male and female students' cognitive engagement, specifically in their respective use of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Surprisingly, the study showed that male students' use of social strategies, i.e. the way they interacted, communicated, cooperated and empathised with others to maximise their own learning, was significantly higher than that of female students. These results imply that further research is required to establish clearly the type of differences that exist between male and female students' learning in general, and specifically engagement. The exploration of the impact of flipped teaching on male and female students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic

engagement in the current context of study will hopefully help to develop the analysis and add value to the study. Accordingly, the second research question was:

RQ2. To what extent does male and female students' engagement in flipped writing classes vary?

Another important aspect of the discussion of student engagement relates to student age. There is ample anecdotal evidence that adult students in the current research site are more academically engaged than their younger counterparts and that they respond differently to classroom dynamics, including the teacher's instructional approach. My own observation of young and adult students' performance in academic writing skills in the current context shows that adult students are often more engaged in writing skills and outperform younger learners in end-of-semester writing examinations. Researchers such as Rabourn et al. (2015) and Richardson (1994; 1995) emphasise that a correlation exists between student age and engagement. This partly explains the interest in investigating this aspect of the topic in the current study. Consequently, the third research question was:

RQ3. To what extent does student engagement in flipped writing classes vary according to age?

Although the study initially intended to explore only these three questions in relation to the variables that correlate with student engagement in the flipped writing classroom, results obtained from the quantitative data analysis necessitated revisiting these questions, and another question was consequently added. This question aimed to identify the other factors that correlate with student engagement in the flipped classroom. Therefore, the next research question was:

RQ4. Do other factors, specifically students' language proficiency and technology skills, affect their behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in flipped writing classes?

The research questions did not aim to establish a causal relationship between gender, age, linguistic proficiency and technology skills and student engagement in the flipped writing classroom, but rather to identify whether a relationship existed between all these variables. This required a quantitative treatment, which was useful in three ways. Firstly, statistical analysis, which characterises quantitative research, helped to identify whether variations existed. Secondly, this approach was valuable to show how statistically significant those variances were. Thirdly, a quantitative approach in this case helped to identify the specific categories of students' responses where variations actually existed.

In order to broaden and deepen our understanding of this aspect of the topic and to provide a clear picture and attain practical knowledge, the study also explored the reasons behind the variations identified in the previous phase. Therefore, the fifth research question was:

RQ5. Why do variations between the engagement of male and female students and students belonging to different age groups exist?

Unlike the previous research questions which were concerned mainly with numbers and statistics, a qualitative lens helped to address this particular question. According to Hoy (2010) and Punch (2005), qualitative approaches encourage openness among the participants and help to collect a wide range of responses that improve our understanding of individual students' perceptions and attitudes about a particular phenomenon. Therefore, using this

approach in the current study helped to gain insights into not only the ways flipped instruction influenced individual students' engagement in the flipped writing classroom, but also the reasons for the variations in their engagement.

In conclusion, this section clarified the rationale behind selecting a mixed-methods design in light of the research problem, purpose and questions. The next part will describe the procedures followed to conduct the pilot study and explain its implications for the main study. This will be followed by an explanation of the procedures adopted for the recruitment of participants for the main study, data collection instruments, and data collection and analysis methods.

3.4 The Pilot Study and its Implications

Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), Mackey and Gass (2005) and van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) argue that the purpose of conducting a pilot study is to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of the data collection methods and procedures. Taking this into consideration, both the questionnaire and the interview were piloted. The results obtained from the pilot study informed the questionnaire design, interview instruments and administration procedures for the main study.

Firstly, the questionnaire was piloted in two stages and revisions were made accordingly. The first phase was completed in week 12 of the autumn 2015 academic semester. It involved 18 Omani students (six males and twelve females) enrolled in the same section of Level 3 of the EGFP, with the majority aged between 18 and 23 (80 per cent). The participants in this phase were, in many ways, similar to the main study's participants. An online version of the original

questionnaire was designed using SurveyMonkey, and the corresponding link was sent to students for them to access and complete the survey within seven days. An online survey was employed as it was affordable, practicable, flexible and confidential. Every two days, a reminder was sent via email to encourage students to respond. The survey aimed to collect quantitative data about the participants' perceptions of their cognitive, behavioural, emotional and agentic engagement in the flipped writing class. The quantitative data also informed and helped to develop the focus group discussion questions.

This phase highlighted four major issues. Firstly, the response rate was low despite the reminders. Only 33 per cent of students responded to the survey by the end of the one-week time period. Cook, Heath and Thompson (2000) and Nulty (2008) argue that although response rates in web-based surveys are usually lower than in paper-based surveys, an adequate response rate is required, especially when convenience sampling is utilised, as is the case in this study. The authors recommend a minimum 58 per cent response rate for a sample size of 20 participants, which was not applicable in this case. One reason for the low response rate was that students had completed the course and were busy preparing for the end-of-semester examinations. Moreover, the students were unfamiliar with online surveys. Secondly, the average time spent by the six respondents to complete the survey was too short (six minutes in total), with a range of between two and ten minutes. Furthermore, several respondents' answers were inconsistent. For instance, one respondent indicated that s/he strongly disagreed with the first statement in the survey, 'I planned out how I would review the learning materials before class, but at the same time stated that 'I planned my time to prepare for the module before class' was the biggest gain from reviewing the learning materials outside class. Another issue identified concerns missing and incomplete answers. For instance, the fourth respondent did not answer any of the questions in

parts II and III, while the second respondent selected only one option ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘very much’ to answer questions in parts I and II respectively. This was attributed to the lexical difficulty of the survey, which was administered in the English language. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) suggest that presenting the questions in the respondents’ mother language may enhance the quality of data obtained through a questionnaire.

The second phase of the pilot test was conducted in week 13 of the same academic semester (i.e. one week after the first phase was completed) and aimed to address the problems discussed above. The pilot involved 16 Level 3 students (14 females and 2 males) aged between 18 and 23. Fifteen students were Omanis and one was non-Omani. All respondents studied full-time and were not employed. The first pilot phase showed that online surveys are uncommon in the institution and are quite unpopular with students. Consequently, utilising it in my study might result in insufficient and inadequate data, which could constitute a real threat to the study’s reliability. Therefore, the online survey was replaced by a paper-based survey to increase the response rate. The questionnaire was administered by a colleague from the Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS) during his class. All students (n=16) returned the questionnaire, and the average time taken to complete it was about 18 minutes. The time spent answering the questions ranged from 11 to 25 minutes. Although the number of returned questionnaires (16 in total) was too small to conduct any reliability tests, an assessment of the respondents’ answers showed the following. Firstly, the majority of respondents were able to answer all the questions, although five questions in the original instrument (questions 7, 9, 23, 25 and 46) were not answered by four different respondents, which resulted in missing data. While this could not be directly attributed to the questions’ difficulty since the majority of students were able to answer them, those questions were simplified in the second version of the questionnaire (see Appendix I).

Questions 1 and 19 were also reworded after my colleague reported that two respondents complained about their ambiguity. Furthermore, there was a fairly good range of responses to each item. Nevertheless, one respondent's answers to some questions in the original survey (e.g. questions 14, 15, 16 and 17) were irregular. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p. 337) point out that question order and sequence may influence the responses, and argue that different sections must be ordered logically and questions within one section should move from the general to the specific in a "funneling process". Therefore, some of the sections and items in the original questionnaire were rearranged to ensure the respondents' cooperation and help to obtain accurate responses. Questions about the participants' English language proficiency and technology skills were also added to the demographic section (see Appendix I). This information proved to be valuable for the study since research has shown that the way students respond to technology integration in teaching and learning varies according to their linguistic and technology proficiency (Loucky, 2017; Moran, 2014). Similarly, Kim, Kim, Khera and Getman (2014) argue that providing students with familiar and accessible technologies is one of the design principles of a successful flipped class.

This study also used semi-structured focus group interviews to collect data about students' perceptions of their engagement in the flipped writing class. This method is appropriate when participants feel more comfortable speaking than writing and when their linguistic proficiency is limited, as is the case in this study which involved GFP students (Robson, 2011). The interview was piloted and the content and question wording were reviewed accordingly. The pilot was conducted in week 13 after the questionnaire had been administered. After approaching all 16 students who participated in the second pilot test, 14 of them (12 females and 2 males) agreed to participate in the interviews. The discussion was conducted after agreeing on the location and

timing with the participants. It was conducted in the English language and lasted for about 40 minutes. Similar to the survey, several issues were raised during the pilot interview. These issues were voiced by the participants during the oral feedback session that followed the discussion and confirmed by the researcher's interview observations.

The first major concern was the difficulty level of some of the original interview questions (questions 2, 3 and 4) as the interview was conducted in English. These were rephrased to improve comprehension. Moreover, the interview data showed that questions 1 and 6 did not help to collect information about the effect of flipped instruction on students' four engagement dimensions. Consequently, these were deleted in the revised interview (see Appendix II). Furthermore, sub-questions were added to facilitate the interviewees' understanding in case the questions lacked clarity. Moreover, the interview questions were translated into Arabic, the students' native language, to overcome this issue in the actual study. The protocol was distributed to students one day prior to the interview in order to ensure comprehension and active participation in the discussions.

The other issue observed during the pilot interview was that some participants (n=3) declined to give any comments during the discussion although they had agreed to participate. The participants had already spent about eleven weeks studying together and were familiar with each other when they participated in the discussion. Nevertheless, some female participants felt shy in the presence of their male counterparts which negatively affected their responses. This could be explained by the fact that the overwhelmingly conservative nature of Omani people does not encourage interaction between males and females. Furthermore, Omani students experience coeducation only in higher education. This is why personal disclosure was quite difficult during the mixed-gender pilot discussion. In fact, Conradson (2005) and Hennink (2014) advocate

homogeneity in terms of gender and age as a main principle in designing and conducting focus group interviews. The authors argue that participants of similar gender and age are more likely to share opinions and experiences, which leads to productive dynamic discussions. Consequently, it was vital to divide the participants into two separate groups (males and females) in the current study.

The pilot interview also showed that some female respondents tried to dominate the discussion and were more talkative than others. According to Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) and Hennink (2014), the focus group size plays a pivotal role in the smooth conduct and effectiveness of the discussion. The authors claim that a very small group size could limit the discussion's diversity and interactivity and increase the negative effects of having dominant group members. Nevertheless, the authors contend that a large group size also presents problems, for example, it could be difficult to moderate the group and limit the group members' contributions. Therefore, limiting the number of participants to a maximum of eight was important to guarantee equal participation for all participants in the research.

In summary, the first and second trial phases shaped the data collection design and administration procedures of the main study. The survey and interview questions were simplified, translated into Arabic and refined in order to improve comprehension, while new questions were added and others deleted to collect more relevant data. Furthermore, the online survey was replaced with a paper-based survey to be administered by a colleague and a survey administration guide and script were developed. The interviews also involved members of the same gender and age category to ensure equal participation and to encourage openness. Finally, checklists were added to the classroom observation scheme (see Appendix III) and observations were completed immediately after class.

3.5 Recruitment and Selection of Participants

A combination of the convenience sampling and purposive sampling design characterised this research project. According to Dörnyei (2007) and Gray (2014), the convenience sampling method is widely used by researchers in higher education in general and the English as a Second Language (ESL/EFL) field in particular. It was utilised by researchers including Lane-Kelso (2014; 2015), who explored the impact of flipped teaching on college students. According to Cohen et al. (2007), purposive sampling often characterises qualitative research and consists of including specific cases in the sample in a way that best satisfies the researcher's needs. The current study adopted purposive sampling for two main reasons. Firstly, individuals were purposefully sampled as they had experienced the phenomenon on which the study focuses and therefore could help the investigator to obtain insights into that particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). The study participants would have been able to provide relevant and useful data regarding their engagement only if they had experienced flipped learning for a reasonable length of time. Emmel (2013, p. 33) states that participants recruited using this method are “information rich” and “best provide insight into the research questions”, although the sample cannot be generalised to the larger population (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, this study's participants were selected based on their accessibility and level of study (Friedman, 2012). They were students enrolled in Level 3 and taking an EFL writing course as part of the EGFP requirements.

A total of 57 students volunteered to participate and consequently enrolled in the two sections opened for the purpose. All participants were Omanis except for one adult student who was from Iran. Of the participants, 61 per cent were females and 39 per cent were males, with the majority aged between 18 and 29 (85 per cent) (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Frequency Distribution of Students across 'Age'

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-23	35	61.40
24-29	14	24.56
30-35	6	10.53
41 and over	2	3.51
Total	57	100.0

About 56 per cent of the research participants were studying full-time and 44 per cent were studying part-time. Full-time students in the institution are usually a younger group who are not employed and who take morning classes, while part-time students are often employed males and females aged 25 and over who take evening classes. As Table 3.2 indicates, about 83 per cent reported having either very good or good English language skills.

Table 3.2 Frequency Distribution of Students across 'Language Proficiency'

Language Proficiency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	2	3.51
Very good	20	35.09
Good	27	47.37
Average	6	10.53
Poor	2	3.51
Total	57	100.00

The frequency distribution of students across technology skills shows that most of them reported having excellent (30 per cent), very good (38 per cent) or good (24 per cent) skills, while about 7 per cent of them reported having either average or poor skills (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Frequency Distribution of Students across ‘Technology Skills’

Technology Skills	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	17	29.82
Very good	22	38.60
Good	14	24.56
Average	3	5.26
Poor	1	1.75
Total	57	100.00

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The current study adopted a concurrent triangulation design (Creswell, 2009). It consisted of undertaking a quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis phase simultaneously, and mixing the findings during the interpretation phase in a process of data triangulation (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). According to Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann and Hanson (2003, p. 229) triangulation results in “well-validated and substantiated findings”; hence the adoption of this design in the current study. The interpretation phase aims to establish convergence in the findings although Doyle et al. (2016) point out that divergence does not necessarily signify that a problem exists in the study and its findings. Identifying such divergence could actually increase the study’s validity. Consequently, three main data collection methods were utilised for this purpose: a student self-report questionnaire, focus group interviews, and researcher observation. The rationale for selecting the abovementioned data collection methods is explained in detail in the following section.

3.6.1 Data Collection Procedures

The study employed multiple sources and types of data which informed the analysis and shaped the research findings. Firstly, observations were conducted during the semester to collect mainly quantitative data in the form of a checklist and partly qualitative data in the form of written comments. The observations included all of the study participants (i.e. 57 students) and took place twice before and after the mid-term examinations. Moreover, a self-report questionnaire was administered to 57 students to collect quantitative data about their perceptions of their engagement. One week after the survey was administered, focus group interviews were conducted with 46 students who were enrolled in the two academic writing sections.

3.6.1.1 Self-Report Questionnaire

A self-report questionnaire was administered in week 12 of the spring academic semester. It aimed to collect data about students' perceptions of the influence of flipped teaching on their engagement in writing classes. The self-report questionnaire was used for three main reasons. The first reason is that researchers such as Chapman (2003), Fredricks and McColskey (2012) and Robson (2002) state that questionnaires are the most widely used data collection method to measure learners' engagement in a particular school subject or task since they are inexpensive, easy and practical to administer when a large number of respondents are involved. Furthermore, Scott and Morrison (2007) emphasise that questionnaires are utilised when more inclusive data is needed. The research involved 57 students and aimed to collect comprehensive data about their engagement in the flipped writing class through indicators reflecting the four engagement

dimensions. A self-report questionnaire was therefore the most practical and effective data collection tool to use with such a large study population.

The second reason is that a self-report helps to collect information that only students are likely to know. This is why it could be an efficient, valid and reliable way of measuring the construct of student engagement in the current study. Coates (2006, p. 70) argued that self-reports accord with the concept of student engagement and that students' perceptions gathered using this method are "a reliable and accurate source of information". Fredricks and McColskey (2012) further explain that self-reports enable the researcher to collect subjective perceptions from the participants about their own engagement rather than rely exclusively on the researcher's observation of the behavioural indicators of engagement which Gourlay (2015) and Macfarlane (2015) warn against. Greene (2015) explains that this data collection method is particularly useful to measure the unobservable aspects of engagement, including emotional and cognitive aspects, which were focused on in my study. Nevertheless, under some conditions, especially when anonymity is not respected, students' responses may not be as honest as required (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012).

Along with its efficiency and usefulness, the type of analysis that self-report data lends itself to also supported its use in this study. Although questionnaires are typically used for descriptive purposes, Cohen et al. (2011) and Scott and Usher (2011) explain that they are convenient when an analysis of relationships between variables is required. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire served to assess the participants' perceptions of their engagement level and the extent to which male and female students and students of different ages engaged differently in the flipped writing classes.

The Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) the study employed was developed based on three validated instruments which showed acceptable internal consistency levels (see Appendix I). The study used items from Greene's (2015) Cognitive Engagement Scale, which was originally developed by Greene and Miller (1996), to assess students' cognitive engagement. Greene's scale was piloted and validated with two different samples and validity evidence was provided by factor analysis. Cognitive engagement is conceptualised here in terms of students' self-regulation (i.e. their ability to set goals, plan, monitor their learning, and self-reflect) and their ability to use 'deep learning' processes such as the active use of background knowledge, the evaluation of new information and the creation of complex knowledge through new and prior knowledge integration. Greene's original scale included 41 items, however, the scale the current study utilised comprised of a total of 15 items used to measure students' self-regulation (four items) and use of deep strategies (eleven items). According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010, p. 12), a questionnaire which is more than four to six pages long "may be considered too much of an imposition". This is why the items measuring the students' use of 'shallow strategies', which existed in the original instrument, were removed as the instrument would have become too large. Furthermore, Mackey and Gass (2005) argued that the instrument should be familiar to the respondents so that they take it seriously. For this reason, some of the items' wording in the original instrument was slightly modified to improve the face validity of the research. An example of this is Item 4 "It was difficult for me to find time to study." which was rephrased to focus on students' ability to plan their own learning in the flipped learning environment; hence the new wording "It was difficult for me to find time to review the learning materials before class". The current study indicated that this subscale of the SEQ demonstrated an internal consistency reliability $\alpha = .71$, which is acceptable for psychological constructs (Samuels, 2015).

The items measuring students' perceptions of their behavioural and emotional engagement were adapted from Miserandino's (1996) Perceived Behavioural and Emotional Engagement Questionnaire. Behavioural engagement is considered as the students' involvement and the extent to which they persevered and participated in the various pre-class activities assigned to them. It was assessed through fourteen items in total (seven items to assess involvement, four to assess persistence versus avoidance, and three to assess participation levels). On the other hand, the participants' emotional engagement in the flipped classroom was measured using thirteen items which assessed students' perceptions of their curiosity and interest, anxiety and enjoyment when completing the pre-class tasks which included completing readings, participating in discussions, watching videos and taking notes, and completing short quizzes.

The items used in the behavioural and emotional subscales were not adopted entirely but rather adapted for several reasons. First, only the validated items in the original instrument were used since items which show low internal consistency in any scale reduce the instrument's reliability (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010; Radhakrishna, 2007). Second, Miserandino's (1996) original questionnaire was developed for school students unlike the current study which involves college students. According to Korb (2013), it is possible to adapt items from an existing instrument when the target sample population is different as is the case here. Third, the manifestation of the engagement variable differs between the group the original instrument was developed for and this study sample. Along with classroom engagement, Miserandino's (1996) initial scale measures students' engagement in different academic tasks including taking exams which is not the case in the current study. For this reason, it was not possible to adopt the items in their entirety. Finally, keeping the survey instrument within an acceptable length also justifies adapting rather than adopting all the items in the original scale (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

That said, some items (e.g. Items 17 & 18) in the original behavioural engagement subscale were deleted while others (e.g. Items 29 & 31) were reworded which enhanced the instrument's face validity. Furthermore, items which covered only three of the five domains of positive and negative emotions discussed in Miserandino's (1996) original emotional engagement subscale were adapted in this study. Although this affects the instrument's content validity negatively, since the survey content should match the theoretical content of the construct to be measured (Brown, 2001), it helped keep the questionnaire within an acceptable length. The study indicated that both the behavioural and emotional engagement subscales in the SEQ the current study used demonstrated an adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

The study also adapted items from Reeve and Tseng's (2011) survey instrument to assess students' agentic engagement. However, validated measures of this new concept are yet to exist. Agentic engagement refers to students' intentional and constructive contribution to their own learning through various means such as suggestion-making and input-offering, and to the degree of enrichment they add to their own learning experience. The five-item measure in the original scale focused on students' agency during class. Conversely, the current study's focus extends beyond the classroom to involve students' contribution to their own learning outside class as well. According to Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 108), "construct validity can be enhanced when multiple estimates of a construct are used". For this reason, some items in the original scale (e.g. Items 1 & 4) were rephrased to reflect the study's aim. Moreover, five more items were added to this subscale in order to capture the construct the study focuses on more adequately, and consequently, to enhance the instrument's construct validity. For instance, Item 10 "I gave the teacher suggestions about how to make the out-of-class tasks better" was added in order to assess the participants' perceptions of their 'proactive' and productive engagement not only in the flow

of instruction inside class, but also outside the classroom. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the ten-item engagement subscale used in the SEQ was measured as $\alpha = .89$.

The SEQ consisted of five main parts and a total of 67 questions in addition to 9 demographic questions about gender, age group, nationality, mode of study, employment status, technology skills, years of learning English, English language proficiency, and the average preparation time for the writing class. The items in the first four parts aimed to measure students' perceptions of their cognitive, behavioural, emotional and agentic engagement, while the fifth part addressed students' impressions of the biggest gain from participating in the flipped writing class. Unlike Miserandino (1996) and Greene's (2015) instruments which used a 4-point and 5-point Likert scales respectively, each item in the SEQ was measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' (6) to 'strongly disagree' (1) in Parts I, II, III and IV, and from 'very much' (6) to 'not at all' (1) in Part V, with 'slightly agree'/'slightly disagree' and 'so-so'/'a little' forming the middle categories. Although a standard for the number of points on a rating scale does not exist yet, Krosnick and Presser (2010, p. 273) point out that "validity is higher for scales with a moderate number of points than for scales with fewer", which is reasonable to adopt in the current study. At the same time, the use of an even number in the response options aimed to encourage participants to provide more accurate responses especially that some respondents could overuse the 'undecided' middle option such as 'neither agree nor disagree' to avoid making real choices. According to Chen, Lee and Stevenson (as cited in Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), this option tends to be overused by respondents who belong to some cultures, for example, an Asian culture, where individuals are probably more reserved and do not state their opinions bluntly. Using a 6-point scale, therefore, helped to reduce the risk of receiving many undecided responses. Most of the items in the SEQ the main study utilised were worded in a way

that a high score (6) was positive; however, eleven items were worded in the reverse direction where a high score (6) was negative. Including reverse scored items helps to achieve diversity in the instrument. Nevertheless, in order to provide a meaningful analysis for all of the scale's items, the reverse scored items were adjusted so that (6) became (1), (5) became (2) and (4) became (3), etc. before any data analysis was performed.

The SEQ was translated into Arabic by a professional English-Arabic and Arabic-English translator and cross-checked by a colleague who was proficient in both languages. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) and Mackey and Gass (2005), questionnaires should be administered in the respondents' mother tongue whenever possible to increase data quality since lower proficiency in L2 may affect responses negatively. On the other hand, Griffiee (1998) and Rode (2005) argue that translation may threaten the instrument's validity. Although the SEQ did not undergo a rigorous validation process, content validity was ensured through several means. First, the translated instrument was piloted in two stages prior to the main study and several changes were made accordingly. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010, p. 54) point out that "any attempt to shortcut the piloting stage will seriously jeopardise the psychometric quality of the questionnaire". Second, it was ensured that the instrument was sensitive to the full range of engagement dimensions discussed in the literature, thus ensuring its representativeness, and consequently, enhancing its content validity (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Content validity was also enhanced through the clear definition of the engagement construct which the study provides (Griffiee, 1997).

The internal consistency reliability of the 67 items included in the SEQ which the main study utilised was measured as .95. Although Krosnick and Presser (2010) argue that concurrent validity improves as the scale's length increases, Samuels (2015) warns against Cronbach's

alpha inflation when different dimensions of a construct are combined to form one long scale, as is the case in the current study. Hinkin, Tracey and Enz (1997) suggest the use of a factor analysis test to evaluate whether the items adequately constitute the scale. However, this was not essential in the current study considering the given use of the original scales and the mixed-methods research design in which data triangulation strengthens the study's validity (Zohrabi, 2013).

3.6.1.2 Observation

In spite of being widely used, practical and easy to administer, self-report questionnaires proved to have limitations in my study. One of the major weaknesses was the risk that students would be unable to assess their own behavioural, emotional, cognitive and agentic engagement well (Chapman, 2003). Moreover, since self-reports depend largely on students' ability to reflect upon past events, some students could fail to remember how engaged they were during the various lesson phases. Therefore, classroom observations were utilised to address these two issues. Observations made obtaining first-hand authentic data about the participants' engagement possible (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition to being employed extensively in the social sciences and specifically in educational research (Punch, 2005), observations in my study had several other strengths, which are outlined below. Firstly, they complemented the information collected through self-reports, contradicting and/or confirming it (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015; Robson, 2002). Moreover, since observations were conducted in an educational setting, they provided details on what learners actually did during the writing classes (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015) and their learning engagement (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). The observational records compiled throughout the project provided useful information, particularly about the learners'

behavioural and agentic engagement, which were easier to recognise through this means (Sinatra, Heddy & Lombardi, 2015) since, unlike the cognitive dimension, behavioural and agentic engagement are situation-specific not inert and unobservable (Ryu & Lombardi, 2015). Furthermore, Greene (2015) and Ryu and Lombardi (2015), argue that observation helps to capture macro level differences in engagement patterns in a specific learning context and may assist in explaining the reasons for such differences.

That said, all the study participants were observed twice during the twelve-week flipped instruction period before and after the mid-term examinations held in week 7. Observing learners' engagement typically involves video-recording, note-taking and record-keeping. It could use either a pre-determined coding scheme or thick descriptions (Renninger & Bachrach, 2015). This study, however, utilised teacher ratings of students' engagement technique. The observation measure was developed based on Wellborn's (1991) comprehensive Teacher Report of Students' Behaviour (see Appendix III). Sixteen items were included to capture the four aspects of learners' engagement in classroom activities. Furthermore, information about whether the student watched the videos, completed the quizzes, participated in the weekly online discussion forums, and posted comments on Padlet was also documented in the observation sheet and used to supplement the data about students' engagement. Other important and relevant observations which demonstrated students' agentic engagement, such as students' verbal comments and questions, were also included in text format.

On the other hand, it should be noted that data collected through classroom observation in this study had three major weaknesses. First, being the teacher-observer, collecting data about events as they occurred in class and observing a large population was difficult. This could lead to missing important data. Second, observation data is "inherently interpretive, subjective, and

partial” (Heath & Street as cited in Renninger & Bachrach, 2015, p. 66). This is why the possibility of observer bias could not be discarded completely. Third, it was difficult to assess non-observable dimensions of students’ engagement, i.e. cognitive and emotional engagement through classroom observations. These weaknesses could threaten the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn solely from observational data. For this reason, triangulating data collection methods through group interviews helped to overcome these limitations and enhanced the study’s validity (Greene, 2015; Thurmond, 2001, Zohrabi, 2013).

3.6.1.3 Focus Group Interviews

Many researchers, including Greene, Dillon and Crynes (2003), Lane-Kelso (2015) and Strayer (2012) used multiple data sources, including focus group interviews, to assess students’ academic engagement. Thus, following the same design as prior research studies on flipped classes and student engagement, this study employed semi-structured group interviews. A total of eight interviews were conducted in week 13 and involved 46 students. Each interview lasted for 40 minutes. Ethical procedures established by the University of Liverpool Ethics Committee were followed to recruit the participants and conduct the interviews in order to reduce the possible negative effects of the dual teacher-researcher role, which I played, on students. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed before being analysed. The transcripts were shared with the participants to enable them to validate them and add information they thought had been overlooked.

According to Cassell (2009), Cohen et al. (2011), Punch (2005) and Wilkinson (2004), focus group interviews are naturalistic and dynamic. Most importantly, they encourage respondents’

personal disclosure. In this sense, the interviews in this study helped to address the self-reports' major weakness, namely the possibility that some students could provide misleading and dishonest responses that fail to reflect their actual behaviours. In addition, the interviews enabled the researcher to address the 'why' and 'how' behind the participants' perceptions which was not possible through the classroom observations and self-reports (Turner & Meyer, 2000). Furthermore, it is obvious that the participants' perceptions and feelings cannot be observed. For this reason, interviewing them was essential to understand how they actually perceived and interpreted their own engagement, especially cognitive and emotional engagement in the flipped classroom, and consequently to overcome one of the weaknesses of classroom observations. The interviews also facilitated the collection of a wide range of responses from knowledgeable informants which was not possible through observations. At the same time, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews supported the quantitative data analysis, which will be discussed in details in Chapter Five.

3.6.2 Data Analysis Procedures

The questionnaire was administered two weeks prior to the end of the academic semester. The numeric Likert-type data collected underwent several types of analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Firstly, descriptive statistics were used to describe and present the dataset (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, the frequencies and percentages were computed to describe the students' distribution across gender, age, language proficiency and technology skills. The mean scores and range of responses were also calculated to determine the average score and the distance between the highest and lowest scores in respondents' answers respectively. Moreover, the variance and standard deviation (SD) were computed to determine

how far the respondents' scores were from the mean scores and how dispersed they were. These approaches helped to obtain a general idea of students' responses.

Inferential data analysis tests were also performed. According to Cohen et al. (2007) and Larson-Hall (2010), inferential statistics are useful to make inferences and predictions based on the collected data. This type of analysis was performed first to identify whether there was variance in students' responses about their engagement in terms of gender, age, linguistic proficiency and technology skills. It was also used to check whether the variances were statistically significant, i.e. they were not attributed to mere chance, and that a real correlation between the dependent variable (i.e. student perceptions of their engagement) and independent variables (gender, age, linguistic proficiency and technology skills) actually existed (Cohen et al., 2007).

One of the inferential tests performed in the study was the Mann-Whitney U test. This test is used to compare differences between two independent groups. It enables us to see whether there are differences between male and female respondents on a rating scale (Cohen et al., 2007). There are four necessary conditions to perform this test: (1) the dependent variable is measured at the ordinal level (e.g. Likert scale); (2) the independent variable consists of two categorical, independent groups (e.g. male/female); (3) no relationship exists between the observations within each group and between the two groups (i.e. no participant can be in more than one group); and (4) the two independent variables are not normally distributed (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). This test was useful to identify whether there was a statistically significant difference between the male and female study participants' responses.

Another inferential test that was performed in the study was the Kruskal-Wallis test. According to Cohen et al. (2007), this test enables the analysis of variance for three or more

independent samples on an ordinal variable. Four major assumptions must be met to perform this test: (1) the dependent variable must be measured at the ordinal level; (2) the independent variable should consist of at least three or more categorical, independent groups; (3) observations in each group or between the groups must be independent; and (4) the distributions of each group's scores have the same shape to be able to compare the medians of the dependent variable. The Kruskal-Wallis test was employed in this study to check variances in students' scores based on the age group they belonged to, their linguistic proficiency, and their technology skills. Although de Winter and Dodou (2010) argue that parametric and non-parametric procedures are equally useful to analyse Likert-type data, Frost (2016) explains that these tests are particularly useful when the sample sizes are unequal, which is the case in the current study. The Kruskal-Wallis test did not identify clearly where the difference resided, however. Field (2009) and Larson-Hall (2010) recommend performing several Mann-Whitney U tests in order to overcome this problem, which was the procedure followed in this study.

The recorded qualitative interview data was translated by a professional translator and transcribed immediately after the interviews were concluded. The transcriptions were then cross-checked by the participants and later fed into Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to perform the necessary analysis activities to answer the research questions. Three main processes of qualitative data analysis activity were followed: data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), Punch (2005) and Robson (2002), these three data analysis streams are non-linear, take place concurrently, and are cyclical in nature (see Figure 3.1).

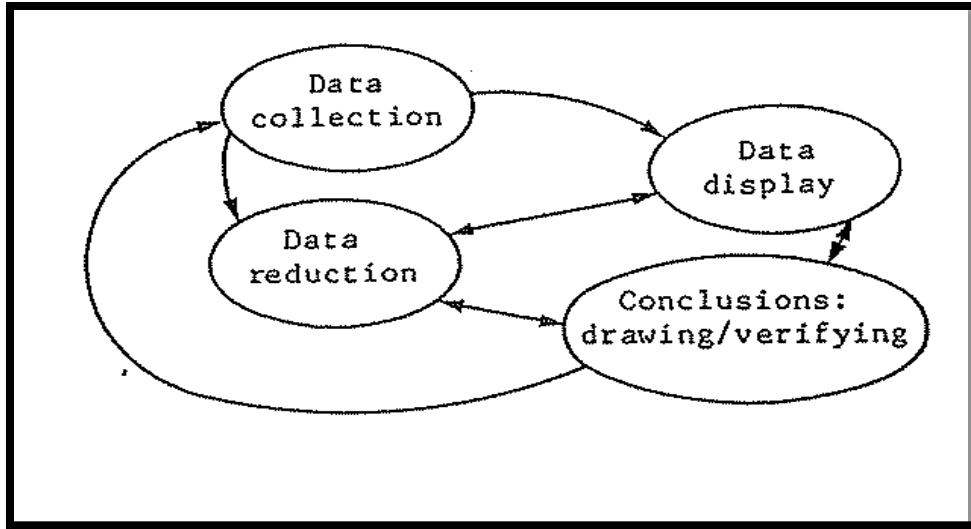


Figure 3.1 Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model (Source: Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12)

Two main processes were followed during the data reduction. Firstly, a general sense of the data was obtained through an initial descriptive coding activity, where important data relevant to the research topic and questions was highlighted and labelled while considering the pre-specified coding scheme the study required (Dörnyei, 2007; Punch, 2005). A second level of more inferential coding was then applied to the data using information from the descriptive analysis to identify patterns and recurrent themes.

Although the study necessitated the development of a pre-specified thematic framework and coding scheme to answer the first research question, a general framework involving inductive analytical procedures was adopted simultaneously in order not to miss any other codes and themes the data itself suggested (Adu, 2013; Punch, 2005) (see Appendix VI). Relationships between different themes were then identified, enabling comparisons to be made and conclusions to be drawn to answer the research questions. The conclusions were also verified by checking

their representativeness and cross-validating them through triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2005).

This practice-based study is centred on the integration of flipping in EFL writing instruction. A review of the procedures followed in the flipped writing class is provided in the next section.

3.7 The Flipped English Language Academic Writing Class Procedures

Practitioner research consists of researching a particular practical situation to resolve a clearly identified problem in order to improve it (Burton & Bartlett, 2005). According to Brumfit and Mitchell (1993) and Nunan (1997; 1998), practitioner research has three major benefits. It provides solutions to practical problems, leads to effective practice, and helps to generate insights into language teaching and learning. The current practice-based research is considered an interventionist study which aimed to address the problem of students' disengagement in an academic writing course that I teach to Level 3 GFP students through the implementation of a novel teaching approach in the EFL field in Oman, i.e. flipped instruction. The outcome of this research helps to improve my own teaching practices, contributes to knowledge about a vital aspect of student learning, i.e. engagement in writing courses, and adds practicable knowledge to EFL instruction in the Omani educational setting.

The writing module offered to Level 3 students in the institution has two main components, namely, an integral academic writing component (five hours weekly) and a basic research skills component (two hours weekly). The flipped classroom approach I adopted was implemented in the academic writing component of the course, which often constitutes a major challenge for students. The academic writing component aims to develop students' ability to write two main

essay genres (comparison and contrast and evaluation) and to describe graphs. The syllabus also aims to develop students' knowledge about active and passive voice, collocations, and other grammatical aspects associated with the essay genres in focus. *Headway Academic Skills: Reading, Writing and Study Skills* for Level 3 by Harrison (2011) is used for this purpose. Teaching extends over a period of 12 weeks and students are assessed both formatively through the number and quality of essays they produce and summatively through a mid-term and a final examination conducted in weeks 7 and 14 respectively.

In a traditional writing classroom, the teacher often presents students with models of good writing and asks them to imitate these texts with little analysis of their rhetorical aspects or social functions (Coffin et al., 2003). The analysis is completed in class and is often followed by an implementation phase, which usually extends beyond the classroom in the form of a writing homework that the students complete and submit in the next class.

The flipped writing course on which this study focuses adopted a task-based teaching approach which “involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language” (Nunan, 2004, p. 4), and in which the order of activities is reversed (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). The theoretical aspect of the lesson is introduced outside the class through different modalities, while students engage in enriching, practical learning activities in the class (Hodges & Weber, 2015). The section below outlines the major activities students in the flipped classroom were engaged in outside and inside the class. The flipped writing classroom outline and corresponding activities was shared with the students in the first week of the academic semester (see Appendix VII).

3.7.1 Out-of-Class Learning Activities

One of the main components of the out-of-class activities was video and/or presentation viewing. Several educational videos were shared with the students through the LMS Edmodo. Some of these videos were carefully selected from YouTube based on the relevance of content and simplicity of language they utilised. They served to introduce fundamental academic writing concepts such as the basic essay structure, the main components of an introductory paragraph, the constituents of a body paragraph, and the elements of a conclusion (see Appendix VIII). Videos were utilised for two main reasons. Firstly, Çelik and Aytin (2014) argue that digital tools such as videos motivate students and enhance their learning attitudes. Secondly, Köbler and Nitzschner (2014) suggest that videos facilitate the understanding of unknown concepts and ideas better than written texts. When needed, especially when the videos available on YouTube did not cover the range of concepts required for a particular lesson, PowerPoint presentations focusing on those specific concepts were prepared, recorded using Screencast-O-Matic software, and then shared with the students (see Appendix IX).

The length of the videos and presentations used in the flipped writing course ranged from 5 to 15 minutes. Morisse (2015) and Velegol, Zappe and Mahoney (2015) recommend using short videos to facilitate understanding and to enable students to control their learning, as very long videos could be counterproductive and could lead to disengagement.

In addition to watching videos, students in the flipped writing classroom completed weekly short online quizzes which aimed to give them an opportunity to check their own understanding of the concepts and ideas the videos and presentations contained (see Appendix X). These quizzes consisted of three main types of questions: true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. The reports the LMS generated helped me to identify the problematic content areas

which required additional explanation in class. According to Frederickson, Reed and Clifford (2005) and Kim et al. (2014), providing students with instant feedback enables them to identify flaws in their understanding and the areas on which they need to do further work.

Students also reviewed two types of reading outside class, model essays and authentic reading materials such as BBC news articles, which addressed some of the topics they wrote about. According to Wang (2013), providing students with sample essays familiarises them with the generic features of the writing genres focused on. Moreover, Bejarano and Chapetón (2013) and Yayli (2011) argue that this improves students' attitudes to essay writing in general and encourages them to include the information they learn about those generic features in their own writing. The supplementary authentic reading materials were utilised as a brainstorming strategy. Rao (2007) explains that sharing reading materials with students prior to class contributes to their understanding and generation of ideas for the actual in-class writing tasks. Furthermore, students contributed to an online noticeboard, where they brainstormed ideas for the essay and broadened their knowledge about the topics discussed (see Appendix XI).

Another component of the out-of-class tasks was participating in discussions on the LMS (see Appendix XII). Most of the themes discussed were argumentative in nature. They required students to take a position on a specific topic and to provide arguments to support their opinions. The LMS was also used for other purposes, for example, asking questions, communicating with peers and teacher, and receiving feedback about one's performance.

The role of the pre-class activities was three-fold. Firstly, Boslaugh (2013) argues that engaging students in learning activities prior to class would help to prepare them for the follow-up in-class activities. Thus, the pre-class tasks the students completed engaged them in lower-order thinking skills such as understanding and remembering specific information and concepts

which facilitated understanding and completion of the in-class learning tasks. Secondly, the pre-class activities aimed to keep students engaged with the writing module content and with their peers and teacher outside class, which was not possible in a ‘traditional’ classroom. Thirdly, the aim of these activities was to help the teacher to keep track of students’ involvement outside class, or lack thereof, and of their academic progress through the electronically generated reports.

3.7.2 In-Class Learning Activities

Khanova, Roth, Rodgers and McLaughlin (2015) and Kim et al. (2014) emphasise that the pre-class and in-class learning activities in a flipped classroom design should be carefully aligned and directly connected and clearly support each other in order to ensure students’ active engagement and maximise learning. Unlike the out-of-class tasks, the learning activities inside the flipped writing classroom on which this study focused engaged students in higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation and creation, which are more challenging and require the collaborative effort of students as well as the teacher’s assistance to be completed successfully. Each class commenced with a ten-minute review session to ensure that key concepts had been understood. When needed, students completed live online quizzes using the cloud-based student response system Socrative (see Appendix XIII). The live results generated by the system provided a valuable opportunity to reinforce correct information and to clarify issues in students’ understanding of the reviewed materials and concepts.

The activities that followed the quiz built on the previously introduced concepts and information and aimed to give students the opportunity to put them into practice. These activities included, but were not limited to, the analysis of model essay structures, the construction and

deconstruction of model essays, the evaluation of different text purposes and their cohesion and coherence, and the creation of different texts for different purposes, for instance, to evaluate and to compare and contrast.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Although language teachers “should be involved in researching their own professional practices in their own classrooms” (Nunan, 1998, p. 16), it is argued that practitioner researchers are confronted with several challenges and ethical dilemmas (Floyd & Arthur, 2012; Nortorn, 2007).

Being simultaneously the researcher and instructor in the current study entailed facing one major challenge which influenced the research process. This challenge concerns maintaining balance between the two conflicting roles of the teacher and researcher (Hoong, Chick, & Moss, 2007; Roth, Shani, & Leary, 2007). As an instructor, my role involved both organizing the classroom physically and mentally to enhance students’ learning and catering for individual students’ needs. However, as a researcher, I was more concerned with understanding how the students engaged behaviourally, cognitively, emotionally and agentically in classroom dynamics. The conflict that arose from these two roles influenced several aspects of the research including the study design and data collection procedures. For instance, to operate effectively within these two roles, the teaching-learning materials and learning environment were designed before teaching started. Moreover, the classroom observation records were taken immediately after class so that data collection does not interfere with the teaching-learning process.

The dual teacher-researcher role I played also raised several ethical concerns which pertain to fairness, informed consent, teacher-student relationship, and confidentiality (Zeni, 1998).

Therefore, these ethical aspects were given special consideration and several measures were employed to mitigate any threats they could cause.

Firstly, it was ensured that neither the research nor its results discriminate “on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, marital status, colour, class, or religion” (Nunan, 1997, p. 366). Moreover, it was guaranteed that the research participants were not disadvantaged in any way and that they were exposed to the same course content as other Level 3 students. Furthermore, the scripts which the participants produced in the mid- and end-of-semester examinations were assessed by other department faculties to avoid bias.

Secondly, voluntary participation was guaranteed throughout the research process. Thus, all prospective Level 3 students in the institution were invited via email to volunteer to participate in the study one week prior to the commencement of registration for the spring semester 2016. The participation request was sent to students along with the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix IV) and the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix V). A period of one week was given to potential participants to clarify ambiguities and to discuss their concerns about the project, including the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation and the data collection procedures. Furthermore, all of the participants signed a participant consent form before the data collection commenced.

A good rapport characterised by trust and confidence was also ensured to overcome the power imbalance that is inherent in the teacher-student relationship, especially in conservative contexts such as Oman (Cohen et al., 2011; Oliver, 2003). One way this was achieved was through the ongoing dialogues which I had with the students about the value of the research they engaged in and its potential positive impact on their learning experiences. MacLean and Poole (2010) state that such dialogues enhance the participants’ comfort and increase their trust which

guarantees voluntary participation. Furthermore, it was ensured that the study participants were aware of the exploratory rather than evaluative nature of the project during the various research phases. The issue of power imbalance was also addressed during the data collection. For instance, observations were carried out in a non-obtrusive manner (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In the same way, a colleague from the CFS administered the self-report questionnaire so that the participants would not feel pressured to respond. Although Wilkinson (2004, p. 179) argues that focus group interviews “inevitably reduce the researcher’s control”, other measures were also employed to eliminate this issue, for example, giving the participants ample time to reflect on the interview questions before the sessions were held and the opportunity to revise the transcript entries afterwards.

Thirdly, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the research project through the use of codes during the data collection, analysis and reporting phases. The interview participants also signed a confidentiality agreement which clearly instructed them not to use names to refer to participants and not to disclose any information shared during the discussions with a third party. All information gathered during the research period was safeguarded against unauthorised access by saving all electronic data in a password-protected personal computer and the audio recordings and hard copies of the transcripts in a personal cabinet secured under lock and key.

3.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the rationale behind selecting a mixed-methods design in light of the problem the study addressed, research purpose and questions. It also clarified the data collection

and analysis procedures which were informed by the pilot study's results. The chapter also clarified the procedures followed in the flipped writing classroom and the major decisions taken to overcome the ethical issues the study raised, as maintaining good ethical conduct was both an ultimate goal and an ongoing process in the study. Having explained the research design of the study, the next two chapters will provide a summary of the main study's results (Chapter Four) and a discussion of the research findings (Chapter Five), striving to provide both a broad and a deep understanding of the influence of the flipped approach on students' engagement in English academic writing.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports in two sections the findings pertinent to the main questions of the study, specifically the way the flipped instructional method impacts on EFL learners' engagement in an academic writing course, the extent to which there is variation in the learners' engagement according to gender, age, technology skills and linguistic proficiency, and the reasons behind such variation. The first section reports on the quantitative data results. The analysis aims to shed light on students' impressions of their behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in the flipped writing classroom and on the differences in the engagement of various student groups. The qualitative data analysis aims to explore the perceptions of individual students of their engagement, the reasons for variations in those perceptions, and simultaneously, to expand the quantitative findings. Together, the quantitative and qualitative data analysis attempts to provide an account of how the flipped learning environment affects EFL students' involvement, thus contributing to knowledge about both student engagement and effective EFL teaching practices.

4.2. Quantitative Results

The SEQ was administered to 57 students and had a 100 per cent response rate. The survey instrument was divided into five main parts which helped to obtain a clear and detailed picture

and ultimately a meaningful measure of what students claimed were their actual engagement levels. The first four parts constituted the subscales that measured the four engagement dimensions discussed in Chapter One, i.e. agentic, behavioural, cognitive and emotional, while the fifth part measured students' perceptions of the biggest gain they obtained in the flipped writing class.

The main question the study posed related to how flipped instruction influenced the four aspects of student engagement, i.e. agentic, behavioural, cognitive and emotional. To answer this question, the mean score and SD of each engagement subscale in the SEQ were computed. The results showed that the mean score ranged from 2.61 to 5.23, while the SD ranged from .88 to 1.76. (For a list of items and their corresponding mean score and SD, see Appendix XIV.) The total score for each of the four engagement subscales was also calculated. The results presented in Table 4.1 show that the mean score of students' responses in each engagement subscale differed. Overall, the raw mean scores were higher for the behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement subscales than for the agentic engagement subscale (see Table 4.1.).

Table 4.1 Composite Scores for the Four Engagement Subscales

Engagement Subscale	M	SD
Agentic engagement	3.63	1.12
Behavioural engagement	4.63	.75
Cognitive engagement	4.12	.56
Emotional engagement	4.35	.91

The fifth subscale of the SEQ aimed to explore students' perceptions of what they gained most by being in the flipped writing class. The subscale included 14 representative items of the

four dimensions of student engagement and aimed to cross-check students' responses. The item mean scores of the subscale ranged from 3.30 to 4.96 and the SDs ranged from 1.13 to 1.66 (see Appendix XIV).

Analysis of the total of the item mean scores and SDs showed that students reported being engaged behaviourally as the biggest gain, with a mean score of 4.83 and an SD of 1.00 (see Table 4.2). Emotional engagement and cognitive engagement were reported as the second- and third-biggest gains respectively (M=4.42, SD=1.33; M=4.36, SD=1.16). In contrast, students perceived their agentic engagement to be low, with a mean score of 3.96 and an SD of 1.18.

Table 4.2 Composite Scores for the Fifth SEQ Subscale

Biggest Gain	N	Mean	SD
Agentic dimension	57	3.96	1.18
Cognitive dimension	57	4.36	1.16
Behavioural dimension	57	4.83	1.00
Emotional dimension	57	4.42	1.33

Another question the study posed was whether male and female students' engagement was different in the flipped writing class. A comparison of the mean scores for male and female students' responses was performed and the results showed that the highest mean scores of male and female students' responses for the four subscales were 4.56 and 4.69 respectively, while the lowest mean scores were 3.59 and 3.66 respectively (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Total Mean Scores by 'Gender'

Engagement Dimensions	Gender	Mean	N	SD
Agentic engagement	Male	3.59	22.00	1.32
	Female	3.66	35.00	1.01
Behavioural engagement	Male	4.56	22.00	.95
	Female	4.69	35.00	.61
Cognitive engagement	Male	4.08	22.00	.61
	Female	4.16	35.00	.54
Emotional engagement	Male	4.38	22.00	.79
	Female	4.33	35.00	1.00

The measures were analysed using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 4.4). Larson-Hall (2010) advocates it as a suitable test to perform to identify differences between groups when data is not normally distributed and when there are two levels in the independent variable. The results show that the mean ranks of the male group are lower than the mean ranks of the female group. The test statistics in Table 4.4 show the U-values and the associated P-values, which were greater than .05, and thus there was no statistically significant difference between the male and female groups.

This study also aimed to investigate variations in the students' perceptions in terms of their age. To address this question, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed, and the results are presented in Table 4.5. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the different age groups' perceptions of their engagement in the flipped class ($p = .63$, $p = .06$, $p = .32$ and $p = .17$).

Table 4.4 Mann-Whitney U Test Significant at .05 Level (Grouping Variable: Gender)

Test Statistics				
	Agentic engagement	Behavioural engagement	Cognitive engagement	Emotional engagement
Mann-Whitney U	383.000	368.000	372.500	370.500
Wilcoxon W	636.000	621.000	625.500	623.500
Z	-.033	-.279	-.205	-.238
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.974	.780	.837	.812
Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.977	.785	.842	.817
Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.489	.393	.421	.408
Point Probability	.003	.003	.003	.003

Table 4.5 Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: Age Group)

Test Statistics				
	Agentic engagement	Behavioural engagement	Cognitive engagement	Emotional engagement
Chi-Square	1.70	7.36	3.44	5.03
df	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.63	.06	.32	.17

As explained in Chapter Three, the analysis was sensitive to the quantitative data, and other areas that could be valuable to the study and which would assist in depicting a broader picture of how flipped teaching impacts on EFL students' engagement were also explored. Therefore, two more questions were addressed, specifically, whether independent factors such as language proficiency and technology skills influence students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in the flipped writing class.

To address the first part of the research question, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether students' perceptions of their engagement differed according to their

technology skills. The results presented in Table 4.6 show that the mean ranks of the groups that reported having excellent and very good technology skills are higher than the mean ranks of the groups that reported having average and poor skills. The test results presented in Table 4.7 indicate that there was no statistically significant difference in students' agentic, cognitive and emotional engagement ($p > .05$). There was a statistically significant difference, however, between the various groups' behavioural engagement (Chi-square = 10.27, $p = .036$) at four degrees of freedom. These findings suggested that the participants' views regarding their agentic, cognitive and emotional engagement in the flipped writing class were unrelated to their technology skills, unlike their views regarding their behavioural engagement.

Given the statistical significance highlighted by the Kruskal-Wallis test, it is necessary to identify where the difference lies. Unlike other tests such as one-way ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis test does not provide post-hoc tests to identify which groups are statistically different (Field, 2009; Larson-Hall, 2010). Therefore, several Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted on the ten pairwise contrasts. The results indicated that a significant difference existed between the following pairs of groups in terms of behavioural engagement: group 1 (excellent technology skills) and group 4 (average technology skills) at a .013 significance level, and group 2 (very good technology skills) and group 4 (average technology skills) at a .008 significance level. In other words, students whose technology skills were lower than those of their counterparts reported lower behavioural engagement.

Table 4.6 Total Mean Ranks by ‘Technology Skills’

Ranks			
	Technology skills	N	Mean rank
Agentic engagement	Excellent	17	31.65
	Very good	22	32.45
	Good	14	24.07
	Average	3	19.83
	Poor	1	4.50
	Total	57	
Behavioural engagement	Excellent	17	30.26
	Very good	22	33.91
	Good	14	26.36
	Average	3	7.50
	Poor	1	1.00
	Total	57	
Cognitive engagement	Excellent	17	32.38
	Very good	22	31.70
	Good	14	25.54
	Average	3	15.50
	Poor	1	1.00
	Total	57	
Emotional engagement	Excellent	17	32.03
	Very good	22	32.73
	Good	14	24.96
	Average	3	11.67
	Poor	1	4.00
	Total	57	

Table 4.7 Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: Technology Skills)

Test Statistics				
	Agentic engagement	Behavioural engagement	Cognitive engagement	Emotional engagement
Chi-Square	5.724	10.272	6.748	8.062
df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.221	.036*	.150	.089

To address the second part of the question, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to determine whether any variation existed in the study participants' perceptions of their engagement in the flipped writing class according to their linguistic proficiency. The results displayed in Table 4.8 reveal statistically significant differences between the varying groups' scores in three engagement subscales, namely, behavioural, cognitive and emotional, but not in the agentic engagement subscale score.

Table 4.8 Kruskal-Wallis Test (Grouping Variable: English Language Proficiency)

Test Statistics				
	Agentic engagement	Behavioural engagement	Cognitive engagement	Emotional engagement
Chi-Square	9.245	18.391	16.539	13.727
df	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.055	.001*	.002*	.008*

A set of Mann-Whitney U test analyses was performed involving different pairs of groups to identify which pairs were significantly different. The results summarised in Table 4.12 show significant differences between the following groups' perceptions: group 2 (very good language proficiency) and groups 4 and 5 (average and poor language proficiency), and group 3 (good language proficiency) and group 4 (average language proficiency). A significant difference also existed between the perceptions of group 1 (excellent proficiency) and three other groups, specifically, groups 2, 3 and 4, whose language proficiency is very good, good and average respectively. It should be noted here that the difference in these groups' perceptions varied from one engagement subscale to another. The 'p' value for all the engagement subscales is presented in Table 4.9. The results indicated that students' perceptions of their behavioural, cognitive and

emotional engagement differed according to their language proficiency. Students whose proficiency was better reported being more engaged than their counterparts.

Table 4.9 Test of Variance (Grouping Variable: English Language Proficiency)

Group Pairs	Behavioural Engagement	Cognitive Engagement	Emotional Engagement
G 2-4	p=.000	p=.003	p=.006
G 2-5	p=.022	p=.029	
G 3-4	p=.005	P=.021	
G 1-2			p=.022
G 1-3			p=.025
G 1-4			p=.043

4.3 Summary

A careful analysis of the quantitative data obtained in this study showed that overall, students were engaged in the flipped writing classroom. Generally, students experienced more behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement than agentic engagement. The analysis also showed that males and females and old and young students experienced flipped teaching in the same manner, as no variation existed in the engagement of these groups. Conversely, the analysis revealed that students' engagement in the flipped writing class varied according to their technology skills. Different groups reported different levels of engagement based on how advanced their knowledge of hardware, software and Internet use was. In other words, students who believed that their knowledge was excellent and very good reported higher engagement levels than their counterparts. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that students' behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement varied according to their language proficiency. Participants

who reported having both very good and good language proficiency also reported being more behaviourally, cognitively and emotionally engaged in the flipped class.

In order to explore further how students' four engagement dimensions were influenced in the flipped writing class, it is essential to draw on the in-depth qualitative data provided by the transcribed interviews and the researcher's observations to supplement the quantitative data.

4.4 Qualitative Findings

Forty-six students (15 males and 31 females) participated in eight interviews conducted in the study. Each participant was identified by a code giving their initials, gender, discussion group number, and their number. The investigation of the impact of flipped instruction on students' engagement in the writing class resulted in the development of several themes which were categorised based on the four aspects of student engagement: behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic.

4.4.1 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Behavioural Engagement

The implementation of flipped teaching in the writing course I taught to Level 3 GFP students was associated with an enhancement of student behavioural engagement. Five major themes emerged from the data analysis: increased effort, improved concentration, persistence, improved communication and increased collaboration, and a shift in attitude to class attendance.

4.4.1.1 Increased Effort

Participants in the flipped writing course reported being engaged in several ways. Firstly, they reported increasing their effort compared to the amount of effort they had put into the same course in previous levels (1 and 2). The theme of increased effort is used to refer to the amount of work and the level of students' participation before, during and after class.

From the very beginning of the course, students noticed the difference in structure between the teaching method they were accustomed to and the flipped classroom design. This was reflected in their comments during the first weeks of the class, which they also confirmed during the interviews when asked to describe their experience in the flipped writing class. The students viewed being taught in the flipped classroom as 'different' and a 'new experience' and considered it a 'novel' method of teaching compared to what they were used to in previous classes (BAF2.8). Most importantly, students realised the need for regular preparation instead of depending exclusively on the teacher's in-class explanation (MOM1.4). Some participants claimed that they were not used to preparing for an English language class in high school and explained that English language examinations then were considered holidays by all students. It should be noted here that the learning activities that students completed during the three lesson phases (before, during and after class) were well-integrated, with one task leading to the other. This made preparation a major requirement in order to be able to cope with the task demands and to complete the tasks successfully. One of the students commented: "Now I have to prepare because if I am not ready for the class, I will feel lost" (ASF7.36). Another participant added: "When we prepared and went to class, we felt comfortable and assured that we would understand all the information" (KAM8.46).

Four interviewees also explained that studying in the flipped classroom kept them so engaged outside class that they had to put off some of the social activities they were used to doing to allot time to complete the assigned tasks. For example, one of them explained: “In the beginning, I used to hang out with friends... We used to go to the movies, but now we replaced that with studying” (AYM1.5). Moreover, ten participants explained that preparation for the writing class kept them engaged during weekends as well. Other participants claimed that they utilised the free time they had in college to complete the required tasks, including watching videos, completing quizzes, proofreading essays and typing them, which were unfamiliar activities for them. Another student commented that she did not like to study at home and preferred to spend her college free time completing the assigned writing tasks. It appears, therefore, that the flipped instructional model implemented in the writing class pushed students to put in extra effort in the course by spending more of what used to be free time preparing and ensuring that the assigned tasks were completed on time and regularly. The words ‘prepare’ and ‘preparation’ were used 84 times in the interviews, which emphasises the importance given to being ready for class.

In fact, the researcher observed that task completion rates, specifically quiz completion and essay submission, which were monitored through the grade book available on the LMS, increased gradually (see Appendix XVIII). The increase in the task-completion rate was reflected in students’ increased in-class participation, which simultaneously influenced the lessons’ pace positively and gave students an opportunity to complete more practice exercises. This observation was confirmed by one of the participants, who commented: “Ms, in class we became more active” and added: “In the beginning, we didn’t give our work enough attention... After a few weeks, personally, I learned a lot from my classmates who completed the tasks outside class... Like them, I started to participate in class” (MOM1.4).

4.4.1.2 Improved Concentration

The interviewees claimed that their concentration level in the flipped writing class improved considerably. This theme describes the level of students' attention when completing the assigned tasks before, inside and after class. Many participants reported that initially, they had low concentration levels and claimed that their attention and concentration improved considerably as they progressed in the course. For instance, they reported that they did not take the pre-class video-watching task seriously, did not pay attention to what was discussed, and did not take notes of the content. One interviewee said: "In the beginning, we just watched the video and solved the quiz, there was no concentration. However, because you asked us about what we understood from doing the tasks, we started to focus more, take notes of important information..." (BAF3.14). Another interviewee said: "I learned how to focus and extract ideas. Of course, there were difficult words, but I learned from them because I wrote them down, translated them and learned them" (REF4.24). It should be mentioned here that video-watching and quiz-solving were fundamental in the flipped writing class since they introduced students to key concepts and topics and formed the basis for the in-class activities. Students soon realised the value of doing the pre-class tasks for their subsequent understanding. One of the respondents explained this, saying: "When I first watched the video, I thought it was like a game. I thought whether I watch the video or not it was fine... the teacher will explain in class, but later I realised that if I don't watch the video, I will not understand anything, I will not be able to answer questions, and will not pass this module" (MOM1.4).

In addition to the increased amount of effort put into preparation that is discussed above, students learned to care about the quality of effort required from them. This is demonstrated by a comment made by one of the participants: "I learned how to focus on what is being said in the

video and learn from it, and understand the topic” (ABM8.45). This idea was emphasised by one of the other students, who pointed out that they learned to focus and extract important ideas from the learning materials despite the difficulty of some of the concepts, and another student who stated that they sometimes had to rewind the video and look up difficult words in a dictionary to be able to understand better. Thus, it is apparent from students’ accounts that they experienced increased attention and concentration in the flipped writing classroom as they believed it was essential for them to comprehend the course content successfully. The researcher also observed that more participants were involved in the review sessions during class, which reflected the increase in students’ concentration level. Similarly, the questions students asked about the learning materials increased in number and became more varied in quality as students started to compare information learned from the various sources offered to them and relate it to previously acquired knowledge. Furthermore, the researcher observed that students’ improved concentration was reflected in the group dynamics in class. As time passed, more students participated in the discussions within the groups and more debates or ‘fights’, as one participant put it, occurred, with each member trying to convince others of their opinions using notes from the learning materials.

4.4.1.3 Persistence

Along with increased effort and improved concentration, persistence was another theme that emerged from the analysis. This theme describes how students demonstrated perseverance in coping with the flipped writing class demands, i.e. completing the assigned tasks on time and regularly despite the challenges they faced.

Flipped teaching was obviously an instructional approach which students were exposed to for the first time. One of the participants expressed this, saying: “I was used to doing everything inside the class” (AMM1.3). This is why students initially faced several challenges in coping with it. In fact, the words ‘difficult’ and ‘challenges’ occurred in students’ comments during the interviews 85 and 50 times respectively. Some challenges that participants faced concerned the need for preparation and the difficulty of the language used in the materials. The following comment illustrates this: “In the beginning, I found it difficult because it’s a new experience... When we watched the videos, we felt we didn’t understand so we needed the teacher’s explanation” (AAF2.8). Despite these challenges, 28 of the interviewed students (about 61 per cent) reported high perseverance levels reflected in the behaviours they adopted. For instance, 14 interviewees (31 per cent) reported helping each other to comprehend the audio-visual materials’ content. One student commented: “You are all the time in contact with your classmates and teacher. If you don’t understand something, you can ask for help immediately” (HUM2.7). Another student said that they discussed the learning materials’ content with their classmates and relied on them to receive updates about the homework if they could not manage to log on to the LMS.

Some interviewees adopted other approaches and depended on themselves when faced with challenges. For instance, twelve interviewees stated that they used dictionaries and translators to comprehend difficult concepts introduced in the recorded materials, while others explained that they guessed the meaning of difficult words or simply asked for assistance from their friends and relatives. It seems that despite the challenges, reviewing the materials and understanding them before attending classes was of paramount importance for the participants. Furthermore, it is clear from the accounts that avoidance was not among the participants’ options, and as one

interviewee put it: “Depending on myself and challenging oneself was the lesson I learned in the flipped academic writing class. I should not give up if I don’t understand from the beginning. On the contrary, I should push myself to learn” (MOM1.4).

4.4.1.4 Improved Communication and Increased Collaboration

Students’ improved communication and increased collaboration were two other important themes that developed from the investigation of the impact of flipped instruction on students’ behavioural engagement. Communication refers to the frequency and quality of student-student and student-teacher contact, while collaboration refers to the rate at which students assisted each other inside and outside the classroom. The interviews indicated that students realised that the flipped classroom model encouraged communication and collaboration between students, which helped them not only to feel comfortable in class, but also to learn better. Upon asking the participants about what they learned in the flipped writing class, one interviewee responded: “Communication... I learned how to communicate with others... In this class, I feel that it made us very close” (HAF8.41). Another respondent added: “We learned how to deal with groups” (HUM7.37). The observation of students’ interaction outside the classroom supported these findings, as students felt more comfortable to ask for and provide assistance to each other through the LMS.

The flipped classroom design also provided students with opportunities to express their opinions and share ideas outside the class through the discussion forums on the LMS. These discussions encouraged communication and interaction among them. Students reported that it was the first time they had used an LMS in the writing course and participated in discussions on

such a learning platform. These group discussions helped students to broaden their knowledge, and as one informant put it: "...group discussions were really useful. They helped me personally because they made me think of different ideas and understand more" (RAM7.38). This idea was highlighted by another participant, who reported using the good ideas shared in the discussion forums when writing essays.

It should be noted in this context that in addition to the LMS, communication in the flipped classroom was also facilitated through other technological tools such as the college email services and face-to-face contact during the office hours. The researcher observed, however, that students mostly used the free text messaging service offered by the WhatsApp application for informal communication with each other. The two separate groups which comprised male and female students were not accessible by the teacher. Students also utilised the LMS to communicate with the teacher about various matters and to provide assistance to each other. By utilising several communication methods, it was hoped that students would receive immediate assistance when needed, share information easily and rapidly, and remain informed about the course content and requirements.

The flipped classroom design also encouraged students to collaborate in order to complete the pre- and in-class tasks. The researcher observed that initially, some students refused to deal with other group members, were reserved, and preferred to work individually to complete the in-class tasks. As time passed, however, those students felt more comfortable, became more active, and even took the lead in assisting their teammates throughout the various lesson stages. This observation was confirmed by a comment made by one of the interviewees during the discussion. The participant said: "In the beginning, when we worked in groups, I used to just observe, but after that I started to contribute more confidently" (FAF3.15). By collaborating with each other

to achieve shared goals, students communicated more with each other, became closer, and learned better. This was expressed in one of their comments: “When you gave us a lot of tasks in groups, each one of us used to give their opinion, say what they understand, and suggest how to complete the task” (AAF2.8).

4.4.1.5 Shift in Attitude to Class Attendance

At the behavioural level, another important theme that was developed was the shift in students’ attitudes to class attendance. This theme refers to the value which students ascribed to attending the flipped writing class, and this is demonstrated in the following account of one of the interviewees:

I have to come to class even if I sometimes have strong personal reasons for not attending... I tried as much as I could to attend all the writing classes because I would miss a lot if I did not. However, in level 2 it was normal, whether attending or not would not affect me. (FAF3.15)

Other participants emphasised the significance of attending classes when they explained that, unlike the flipped writing class, they used to attend grammar lessons but avoid composition lessons in Level 2 as they were difficult, and that they attended writing classes only when they had an attendance shortage. The well-structured flipped writing course rendered missing classes inadvisable for students if they were to manage the course content successfully, which indirectly encouraged regular attendance. The researcher observed that most students attended more than 85 per cent of the academic writing classes, which was an excellent record. It should be noted here that a minimum of 75 per cent attendance is required to be eligible to take the end-of-

semester examinations and that students in our context often miss most of the lessons in the first weeks of study and make up for that attendance shortage during the seven weeks that follow the mid-term examinations. Flipped instruction seems to have addressed this problem, as students felt the need to attend classes regularly instead of following the old pattern (Deslauriers et al., 2011; McLaughlin et al., 2014). One of the students explained this, saying: “In Level 2, I did not care much about whether to attend class or not. Only when my attendance percentage reached the minimum level allowed by the college, I started attending classes. But here, I attended regularly and when I did not, I would feel I had missed a lot” (ETF3.16).

4.4.2 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Cognitive Engagement

The flipped instructional model seemed to impact positively on other aspects of students’ engagement as well. Students’ behavioural engagement was accompanied by cognitive engagement, which was reflected in their cognitive growth, development of self-regulatory strategies, and increased awareness of their learning process and academic progress.

4.4.2.1 Cognitive Growth

This theme refers to students’ patterns of thoughts which organise different sets of information and the connection between them. Participants in the writing class realised that the flipped instructional model enhanced their cognitive growth, and one interviewee expressed this in the comment: “It developed our brain” (FAF3.15). It engaged them in a process of knowledge-construction through the pre- and in-class tasks. One participant commented: “Of course, there was a relationship between the quiz and video we reviewed outside class and activities we

completed inside class... I mean, I refer to them when I write” (ADF2.12). One of the students interviewed also reported utilising higher-order thinking skills when analysing the learning materials’ content and assessing their understanding of such content during class discussions. One student said: “We used to fight... for example, how to order sentences, and I used to justify my answers using proofs from the materials you give us before class” (AHF2.10).

Moreover, students reported that the gradual movement from easy to difficult tasks facilitated their learning. One of them remarked: “It was impossible to write right from the start because writing is difficult... but through questions and explanations in class, we were able to know how to write” (ADF2.12). Another interviewee emphasised this idea, saying: “The good thing in the tasks was that you used to give them to us in order... I mean, you start with easy stuff and then move to more difficult tasks. That helped us understand” (AMF2.11).

The participants also believed that their thinking patterns changed in the flipped class. One of the interviewees explained this, saying: “...before, when I wanted to write, I used to take a paper and start writing immediately. Now I think first, I plan my writing... my way of thinking improved” (HAF4.22). The interviewee added that she became “more open-minded” and “broad-minded” in the sense that her information base developed. One way the flipped instructional design facilitated this change was through the pre-class discussions and the large number of in-class group learning activities in which students were involved. One interviewee commented that the group discussions helped them to gain new ideas from peers and expand their knowledge and to understand better (RAM7.38). One student commented:

“The discussions we had on Edmodo helped me to write. I used to get information from my classmates during the discussions and use it. Before I start writing, I read all the ideas my classmates share. This helped me to get more ideas and to write an essay”. (HIF4.21)

As students progressed in the course, the researcher observed that there was an improvement in their performance in terms of the speed and quality of output during the writing process. According to Lane (2009), both ‘teacher-framed’ and ‘learner-framed’ contexts of interaction help to develop the learner’s cognition, which induces the learner to perform well and increases his/her curiosity to acquire matter from various sources. The contexts of interaction created by the flipped classroom design provided learners with an opportunity to access information from various sources, which resulted in cognitive development. This was reflected, for instance, in the brainstorming stage that preceded in-class writing. Initially, this lesson phase was extremely challenging for students; however, it became much easier and faster due to the exchange of ideas that took place prior to class and the various sources of information accessible to students. Students’ active participation in debates, which necessitated higher-order thinking skills such as agreeing and disagreeing, also reflected their cognitive development. One interviewee commented: “In the beginning, I didn’t use to discuss, but the discussions that used to take place in class were useful, especially when you asked us to agree or disagree. That gives us confidence to express our opinions and to analyse” (ASF7.36). Some participants also claimed that they adopted a reflective stance regarding their assumptions and beliefs and sought to understand things better. One participant commented:

The nice thing was there was room for discussion in class. You also don’t accept yes/no answers. In the beginning, I was satisfied with short answers, but now I started to think about the reasons for those answers because you all the time ask ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions, so my knowledge has broadened and I don’t think inside the box only. (ASF7.36)

Furthermore, the study participants were able to establish connections not only between the information and skills they learned before, during and after the writing class, but also between the academic writing class as a whole and the outside world. For instance, the participants recognised the significance of the skills they developed for their future careers, which this comment illustrated: “My future specialisation in Human Resources Management involves writing reports, so what I learned in writing will benefit me a lot in the future” (HAF8.41). Another interviewee said: “I found that this helped me at work as well. Since I am an artist, I now find it easier to explain my ideas to others and to help them understand my work... Expressing my ideas became easier” (ASF7.36).

4.4.2.2 Development of Self-Regulatory Strategies

The second important theme which relates to the impact of flipping on students’ cognitive engagement is the development of self-regulatory strategies. This theme describes the steps that students take in order to master important information and the ways they follow to succeed in the face of obstacles (Zimmerman, 1990). Figure 4.1 is a visualisation of the various sub-themes that developed from the analysis.

To begin with, participants in the flipped writing classroom reported setting goals and planning to complete the assigned activities in a timely manner to achieve those goals. For instance, some participants’ major concern was to manage the module requirements successfully and to avoid the accumulation of assignments. These participants claimed that they set schedules to review the materials and complete the corresponding tasks immediately after they were assigned to them, later, or at weekends. Other participants were more concerned about

comprehending the materials at hand, grasping the important information, and, most importantly, remembering it later. This is why they ensured that the period between completing the pre-class tasks and the scheduled class was not too long. This is demonstrated in one of the interviewees' accounts:

When you send us the materials, I review them on the same day if we were to discuss them the next day. However, if the class is two days after, I review them one day before class because I forget things fast, so I need to manage my time well... (AAF2.8)

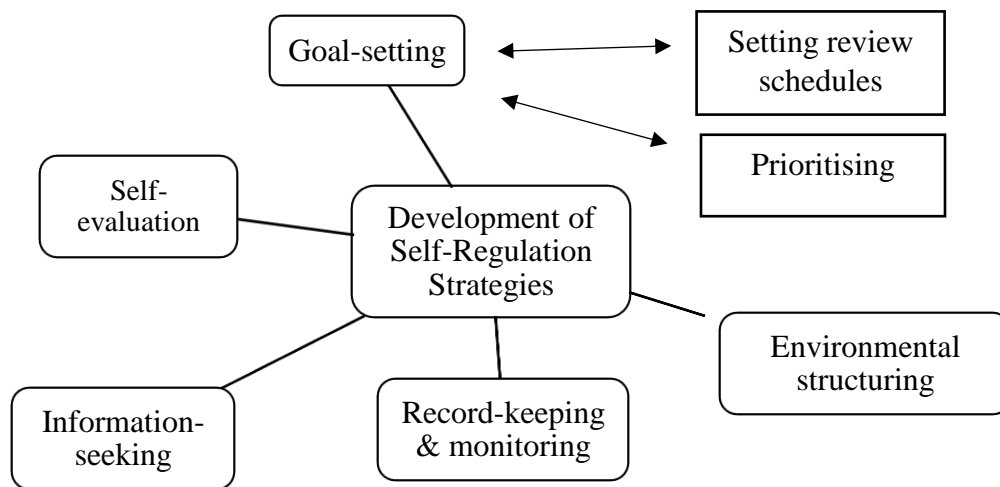


Figure 4.1 Sub-themes of Self-Regulation Strategies

Students reported that prioritising was a useful strategy to adopt in the flipped class to be able to achieve their goals. For instance, one participant reported watching the videos and presentations at home and completing the quizzes in the college labs as a solution to technical problems she was facing at home (YUF5.27). Another interviewee explained that they used to prepare immediately before class while driving to college or in the college library when they

arrived early (AMF8.40). Another student reported spending two hours on revision for class daily, however (MAF5.25).

Before carrying out their plans, some participants also demonstrated the use of other self-regulation strategies such as structuring the physical environment where they usually reviewed the writing materials and arranging it according to their needs to facilitate learning. This is illustrated in one of the participants' descriptions of her learning environment: "I ensured that I was alone in a quiet room and locked the door before I started watching the video... that was my time..." (AHF2.10).

During the execution phase, students reported utilising two other important self-regulatory strategies, namely, record-keeping and monitoring and information-seeking. Firstly, most of the participants claimed that they kept records of the important information they extracted from the learning materials and monitored them regularly. One informant explained this, saying: "I used to take notes about every video I watched. That helped me a lot to complete the tasks in class. I used to keep my notebook open while completing the tasks to check my answers" (AMF2.11). This was reinforced by 17 other participants, who indicated that they used notepads and/or notebooks to record important concepts, structures, phrases, expressions and ideas about interesting topics. Furthermore, the interviewees reported reviewing those records not only before classes, but also before taking the mid-term and final examinations. One interviewee said: "A day before going to class, I watch the video and take notes and keep them for the exam" (MAF5.29). Another student confirmed this idea, saying: "I am keeping the notes from the beginning of the semester because I will use them in the final exam, God willing" (ARF6.31).

Secondly, some participants reported initiating efforts to ensure that they obtain assistance and additional information about the topics discussed from other sources. For example, nine

participants indicated that they consulted other resources available on the Web to broaden their knowledge. One interviewee said: “I used to watch the video and search the Internet for more information... for example, I used to search for sample essays like compare and contrast essays to check how to write” (WAF7.39). The researcher observed that those students asked many questions in class while comparing the information in the additional materials they identified with the content the teacher provided for them. This helped them to clarify ambiguities and to expand their knowledge about the topics discussed. More than 52 per cent of the participants also reported that they used to monitor their own understanding and evaluate their progress in the writing class regularly. One interviewee explained this, saying: “I had to do my best to solve the quiz well because that benefited me. If my mark was low in one quiz, I would decide to do better in the next one to improve my level...” (AMF2.11). Another interviewee elaborated on this, saying: “I even used to check my answers to the quiz and try to understand why I got wrong answers. Then I watch the video again, check the correct answer and take a note of that” (ASF7.36). This shows that students learned from their mistakes.

4.4.2.3 Increased Awareness of One’s Learning Process and Academic Progress

Along with the development of cognitive abilities and self-regulation strategies, there was increased awareness among students of these processes and of their overall progress. This related to the third theme, which describes how aware students were of their learning and academic progress in the flipped writing class.

When students were asked about their overall experience in the writing class, many explained that they learned better. On the one hand, some participants reported being more active since

they came to class prepared and aware of what was going to take place. One participant stated: “Ms, in class we became more active. We get an idea about the lesson, understand 80 per cent of it, so if we don’t understand something from the video, we could ask the teacher” (MOM1.4). There was a kind of agreement among students that in-class comprehension was enhanced as a result of the pre-class preparation and the post-class follow-up activities. One participant commented: “The benefit I got from the tasks I did outside class... because I already had a good understanding of the topic, I felt understanding what you were explaining and the lesson as a whole became easier” (AMM1.3). On the other hand, some interviewees indicated that keeping in touch with the learning materials outside class improved their information-retention, and, consequently, their learning improved. One student explained: “The teacher sends you a message that outside class you should not forget everything you studied but try to learn more. This helped many students to understand better” (AMM1.3).

At the academic level, almost all students (89 per cent) were aware of their progress and indicated that they developed better knowledge of the writing mechanics and improved their writing skills considerably. One participant explained:

In the beginning when I used to write, I used to make many mistakes either in grammar or in other aspects of writing... After a while, I felt that my writing improved a lot and I even made fewer mistakes than in the beginning. (AAF2.8)

Another participant added: “I felt my level in writing improved... how to write, how to summarise, how to understand. I learned many things which I didn’t know before” (AMF2.9). These comments align well with the researcher’s observation of students’ performance in class, especially in terms of essay writing. Most students who initially struggled with the various aspects of writing demonstrated remarkable progress towards the end of the course which was

reflected not only in their participation, but also in the number and quality of essays they wrote. The following comment made by one of the interviewees illustrates this: “Personally, my level in writing isn’t very good. This is why I used to see a lot of mistakes and green colour in my essays. However, the green colour reduced as time passed... I am surprised with my progress” (ASF7.36).

4.4.3 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students’ Emotional Engagement

Flipped instruction seems to have influenced students’ emotional engagement in academic writing in two different ways depending on the course phase. The analysis of students’ answers highlighted four contradictory themes. Two themes have a negative aspect, i.e. anger and anxiety, and were mostly associated with the first two weeks of the course. The other two themes, contentment and increased interest, have a positive dimension and were associated with the rest of the course.

4.4.3.1 Anger

The theme of anger refers to the feeling of dissatisfaction which participants in the flipped writing course experienced. What is remarkable is that initially, participants, especially those studying part-time, reported feeling angry as they believed that flipped teaching was a difficult method to cope with since it entailed an increased workload and a reduced teacher presence. The participants’ anger was reflected in the observed constant complaints in class. This was accompanied by a few students’ refusal to complete the pre-class tasks and insistence on going through the content of the learning materials and completing quizzes in class. Despite the

briefing they had before enrolling in the course, those students complained about the teaching method to the Head of Department and other teachers in the CFS and demanded to be taught using the traditional method. They reported being under pressure which was caused by the increased workload. One of the interviewees said: “Honestly, there is a lot of pressure, especially as part-time students, since we are busy throughout the day and all the time” and added “Part-time students are here to learn; however, the pressure they face is the main problem” (SAM8.42). In fact, the researcher observed an increased stress level in a few students, specifically those who missed the first few introductory classes, who continued to struggle with the format of the course beyond the first two weeks. Those students had to come for one-to-one consultation in the teacher’s office to resolve a variety of issues, for example, technical matters such as downloading the LMS and other applications we used during the course. There was also frustration among some other students who realised that this method was quite different and required hard work, with which they were not familiar. One of the participants complained about this instructional model, saying:

The problem I faced is that I am not used to working hard. Honestly, I am not used to working this way... that I need to have a computer, prepare before class and after class you do something else. That didn’t exist for me before. I used to do everything inside the class... using a computer is something new for me. (AMM1.3)

Furthermore, the fact that completing the tasks in the various lesson phases was compulsory caused anger in some students, and as one participant pointed out: “This is obligatory. Obligatory things are difficult” (FKF4.18).

4.4.3.2 Frustration

Frustration is the second theme that was developed in relation to students' emotional engagement. It describes the feeling of worry which students in the flipped writing class experienced. More than half of the study participants claimed that they were scared of being taught in the flipped method as it was new for them and, consequently, they were not sure whether they were ready to accept it, especially at the beginning of the course. One informant expressed this concern in her comment: "Honestly, when I learned about the method and when we downloaded the LMS I felt scared, but my friend encouraged me, so we continued" (WAF7.39). Furthermore, since this teaching-learning approach was considered new by the study participants, as they described it in the interviews, there was a feeling of apprehension on the part of many of them regarding whether they would be able to cope with its demands and grasp the course content. This concern was voiced by one interviewee, who said: "There was fear of being unable to understand the video and to apply the information I get from it in practice or apply it in the wrong way" (HIF4.21). Most importantly, many participants reported that a lack of preparation triggered a feeling of anxiety and discomfort in them. For example, one of the interviewees described how she felt when she came to class unprepared, saying: "I used to feel lost, confused and disappointed because I could not participate in class..." (MAF5.25). To explain this, another interviewee added: "I feel scared of being asked a question in class and not being able to answer it" (KHF4.20). The question here is whether this kind of feeling is considered to be negative or an incentive for participants to work harder and complete their homework on time.

4.4.3.3 Contentment

Researchers such as Mason, Shuman and Cook (2013) observe that students in a flipped classroom initially struggle with this format but experience greater satisfaction as they adapt to it. Participants in this study were no exception. Along with the supposedly negative feelings of anger and anxiety which the students reported they had when the course started, they also reported feeling content and interested in the writing class as they got used to the flipped classroom format. The theme of contentment describes the participants' feeling of enjoyment and happiness which they believed they experienced during the course.

While expressing their contentment regarding being taught using the flipped instructional model, students constantly compared it to the more traditional teaching method they were used to in previous levels. One of the participants commented: "If there was no flipping, the class would be boring because the course is so dense... there is a lot of content to be covered" (SHF5.26). What some students seemed to enjoy most was the utilisation of technology in the teaching-learning process. One participant commented: "See Ms, if we just use papers, I feel this will be quite boring but you made changes. We don't use the book a lot, we use worksheets and technology, which develops our capacities" (FAF3.15). The participants also commented that integrating technology into modern teaching and learning is advisable considering the proliferation of technological tools and expansion of the Internet. One interviewee even recommended utilising flipped instruction in schools, saying:

If this method is applied in schools, because now all kids use mobile phones and iPads..., they will enjoy more and benefit more because I feel papers and books are no longer interesting... phones and online studying is more attractive to people. (ADF2.12)

Many interviewees also expressed their satisfaction regarding the increased student-student and student-teacher communication opportunities provided by flipped teaching. According to them, the flipped classroom design increased their learning opportunities as they received assistance any time they needed it. Other participants enjoyed flipped instruction as it seemed to suit their learning styles. Brown (2000) uses the term ‘learning style’ to refer to the individual traits which indicate how a learner conceives of, interacts with, and reacts to a particular learning atmosphere. Among the learning styles Brown (2000) discusses are the ‘visual’ and ‘auditory’ styles, where learners show a preference for visual or auditory input. The flipped classroom seems to suit students who have a visual and auditory learning style. One informant commented: “When you see someone explaining... in most of the videos there were people explaining... I am the kind of person who understands by listening rather than reading...” (ASF7.36).

Brown (2000) also distinguishes between ‘left-brain-’ and ‘right-brain-dominant’ learners who prefer ‘deductive’ and ‘inductive’ learning environments respectively. A left-brain-dominant language learner is usually better at “gathering the specifics of language, carrying out sequences of operations, and dealing with abstraction, classification, labelling, and reorganization” (Brown, 2000, p. 118). The flipped classroom seems to have met the needs of these types of learners as well. One participant explained her preference for the pre-class video-watching and quiz-taking activities as follows:

The quizzes because they tested students’ understanding of the information in the videos. It was nice, I feel I understand better when I am asked questions. Even when I revise other subjects, I often ask questions about each section in the learning materials and try to answer them. Similarly, the video is in fact recorded information and my

mind does not grasp it. So I need questions to understand what I am watching.
(FKF4.18)

The deductive approach this student appreciated in the flipped classroom design was highlighted by another participant, who added: “In Level 2, we used to go to class with no idea about what we would study in either grammar or writing. Here, you used to tell us exactly what to do, so we came to class prepared...” (AMF2.11).

Despite these comments, the researcher’s observation of students’ pre-class task-completion rates and performance in class showed that not all students responded to the learning materials in the same manner. For instance, the researcher observed that a few students preferred to do tasks such as watching the videos but not complete the related online quizzes. Some students attributed this to technical issues, as solving the quiz was only possible on a computer, and to their discomfort regarding quiz-taking in general. A few other students who could be described as visual learners used to take printouts of the recorded presentations and use them during class discussions rather than listen to the recording and take notes. Such practices showed that flipping caters for students with various learning styles and abilities.

4.4.3.4. Students’ Increased Interest in the Course

Students’ contentment with the flipped writing course was accompanied by an increase in their interest in the subject. This theme describes the shift in participants’ attitudes to being taught using the flipped method and being a member of this class.

Firstly, many participants claimed that despite the challenges they faced initially, they gradually became familiar with the flipped instructional approach and unconsciously started to like it as the course progressed. One of the interviewees explained this change, saying:

There was a lot of pressure, but in fact there was a general acceptance of this method. Frankly, the idea was good. It's true we used to complain all the time about the workload and pressure, but deep inside us we accepted and liked this style. I have seen this with all my classmates. They accepted this teaching method but they are used to complaining. This is normal among students. (SAM7.34)

The change from resistance to acceptance was reflected in the increase in students' task-completion rates recorded in the LMS (see Appendix XV), the decrease in the number of complaints both in and outside class, and students' active participation in the discussion forums and in the 15-minute question-and-answer sessions at the beginning of each lesson. The teacher's observations were confirmed by some of the interviewees' answers to the question about the changes they had undergone in the flipped class. One participant explained: "We felt more interested in the writing module and we gave it a lot of attention" (ASF7.36). Another student summarised the change, saying:

My interest in the subject increased... Yes, teacher. I hated writing before this class. I used to feel scared when I see the 250-word limit in the instructions. I used to feel dizzy. In the beginning, I used to count every single word I wrote, but now I got used to writing and I don't feel it's hard to write 250 words or even more because I got trained to do it". (FAF3.15)

Students' increased interest in the course was associated with a change in their behaviours. Students reported caring more about their studies. One of them admitted: "What has changed is carelessness... I am in the last level of the foundation program. I know that in the future I have to depend largely on myself not on the teacher" (AMM1.3). The participants also reported experiencing greater interest in the quality of their work. One interviewee made a significant claim: "Now, I feel more excited to write. In the beginning, I used to write just to please you, but now I care about the quality of my work. I think about whether the reader will enjoy my writing and understand my ideas" (ASF7.36). Furthermore, other interviewees claimed that they experienced a feeling of guilt when they failed to complete the assigned tasks, and expressed an augmented interest in the writing subject as a whole.

To sum up, most participants in the flipped writing class initially experienced anger and anxiety and contentment and an increase in their interest in the flipped approach and writing subject as they got used to the teaching method.

4.4.4 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Agentic Engagement

The qualitative data analysis also focused on the impact of flipped instruction on students' agentic engagement. The following themes developed from the analysis of this impact: question-asking, increased student autonomy, and expressing opinions.

4.4.4.1 Question-Asking

Question-asking describes the number and quality of questions which participants asked both inside and outside the class, either face-to-face or through the available means of communication, including emails and chat forums. The researcher's observation of individual students before and after the mid-term examinations showed that as students' interest and involvement in class increased, they asked more questions, especially about the learning materials they reviewed before the class.

When the course started, it was observed that very few students, mainly those who completed the pre-class learning activities, were involved in the 15-minute review sessions. Soon after, more students watched the videos, completed the quizzes and took notes about the difficult content. More students, therefore, enquired about difficult and ambiguous content in class as they could establish a connection between the pre- and in-class tasks. Although it was observed that some participants asked questions neither during the class nor after it, they reported that they had established a support system which included seniors, roommates and relatives to clarify ambiguities in the learning materials. Some questions the participants asked concerned the theoretical aspect of academic writing, such as the essay format and writing mechanics, which the learning materials covered.

4.4.4.2 Increased Student Autonomy

Increased student autonomy is the second theme that emerged from the analysis of the impact of flipped instruction on students' agentic engagement. It describes the participants' ability to be in charge of their own learning and to make their own decisions in the course (Holec as cited in

Little, 2007). Although students in the flipped class were not given an opportunity to decide on the design of the learning tasks and activities, the lesson format encouraged them to be self-dependent and autonomous. Many students admitted that the flipped classroom design required them to depend primarily on themselves to be able to grasp the subject matter, and as one interviewee explained: “Now... we learn on our own. Before, the teacher gives us all the important information and we just memorise it” (FKF4.18).

Furthermore, many interviewees claimed that coping with the design of the writing class required them to ameliorate several skills. Firstly, developing their listening skills was essential. One participant observed: “The skill of listening was developed. We don’t listen to English very often outside class. We were forced to watch a video and listen to English, learn how to pronounce some words” (GHF4.19). Another participant stated that her technology skills advanced in the flipped writing class, saying: “How to use technology... before, everything was done on paper. Here we use technology to do them. This is a new skill we developed in class” (ZAF3.17). Other participants explained that they used emails more often and that typing essays on the computer improved their typing skills in English. Participants in the flipped writing class therefore believed that they were responsible for their learning and the development of self-study skills throughout the course.

4.4.4.3 Expressing Opinions

This theme refers to students’ opinions about the flipped class design and their suggestions to improve it. During the discussions, the interviewees offered both procedural and technical suggestions to improve the flipped writing class. First and foremost, participants complained that

the briefing which they received before enrolling in the class was insufficient and that some practical training was needed before the semester commenced so that they could “understand the idea” and “be ready for this new system”, as two participants put it. The students also stated that they did not benefit much during the first week of teaching since they spent much of their time familiarising themselves with the technical aspect of the course. Moreover, since the class flip involved a great deal of pair and group work, some participants suggested creating a more competitive spirit in class by including more competitions involving individual students to encourage them to do their best. Furthermore, despite explaining to students that showing the video and completing the quizzes in class was not in line with the flipped class format, four students wanted to fall back into the traditional method and suggested completing the supposedly pre-class tasks in the class. The participants also suggested that an alternative LMS should be available in case Edmodo fails to operate properly, especially since they believed that it required high-speed Internet connectivity, which was not accessible for some of them. Moreover, some interviewees suggested adding sound effects to the videos and presentations, especially the long ones, to make them more entertaining. The researcher observed that students mostly preferred the recorded presentations because of the familiarity with the teacher’s accent, the uncomplicated language used, and the more focused and tailored content which facilitated understanding.

4.5 Summary

The findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis summarised in this chapter showed that the flipped instructional approach had a positive influence on the four aspects of students’ engagement in the academic writing course. At the behavioural level, students reported several indicators of engagement, including an increase in the effort they put into the course,

their concentration, and their persistence levels. Students also reported an improvement in their communication and collaboration patterns and a shift in their attitude to attending writing classes. Students' behavioural engagement was accompanied by cognitive and emotional engagement. At the cognitive level, the study participants reported experiencing cognitive growth, development in the self-regulation strategies they employed in the course, along with awareness of their learning process and academic growth. Indicators of students' emotional engagement, however, ranged from negative emotions such as anger and frustration, which were experienced at the beginning of the course, to more positive emotions such as contentment and increased interest, which were experienced after students adapted to the teaching approach. Flipped instruction influenced students' agentic engagement as well. Students learned to ask questions and express their opinions, and became more autonomous learners in this learning environment. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the impact of flipped instruction on students' engagement did not correlate with their gender and age, but rather correlated with their English language proficiency and technology skills. A more positive impact was reported by students whose linguistic abilities and technology skills were better than those of their counterparts. The following chapter will build on these findings, discuss and interpret them in more detail, and link them to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

The current practice-based study utilised self-reports, student observation, and group interviews as data collection methods. The quantitative data was analysed using several statistical tests to measure students' perceptions of their engagement in the flipped writing class and to assess the variations that existed in those perceptions according to gender, age, English language proficiency and technology skills. The qualitative data was analysed thematically to obtain further insights into the perceptions of individual students of the way the utilisation of flipped instruction influenced their engagement in the writing class and the reasons for variations in those impressions. The quantitative and qualitative data complemented each other and helped to show convergence and/or divergence in students' perceptions. This discussion chapter draws on the findings from these sources and results from previous research studies to provide a deep understanding of the impact of flipping on students' engagement in the writing course in the current educational context.

5.2 Significance of the Study

This exploratory study set out to examine the effect of flipped instruction on the engagement of 57 EFL students enrolled in a writing course in foundation Level 3 in a private HEI in Oman. According to Robson (2011), real-world research addresses problems of immediate relevance to

people and provides suggestions for dealing with them. The current study is practice-based research which investigated the problem of students' lack of engagement in academic writing and presented flipping as an alternative instructional model which helps to address this issue in the context of GFPs in Oman. The discussion is therefore particularly valuable for EFL educators and researchers in our context. Lack of engagement in writing has been a concern for several EFL educators and researchers operating in similar educational settings such as the UAE (Ismail, 2011) and the KSA (Al-Mansour, 2015; Alnufaie & Grenfell, 2012). Therefore, the discussion is useful for them as well. The discussion is equally significant for policymakers and decision-makers in various HEIs in Oman considering the impact flipping has on students' engagement.

Furthermore, the discussion is important for teacher trainers and prospective teachers in Oman. Prior to this study, flipping was not utilised in EFL instruction in HEIs in Oman. The discussion will therefore benefit EFL teacher trainers and prospective teachers operating in this context. The study suggests that flipping could be integrated into teacher-training programs as an alternative model of instruction which enhances students' engagement in writing courses and possibly other courses as well.

Moreover, the aim of practice-based research is to improve practice (Burton & Bartlett, 2005). The literature review showed that although flipping was utilised in foreign EFL educational settings, a specific model to flip writing and other EFL courses does not exist. The current study proposes a task-based flipped writing course model which is grounded in cognitivist and constructivist learning theories and structured following Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domains. The writing course model offered could be a useful substitute for traditional models which are dominant in Oman or in other educational settings.

Furthermore, the current study is the first study to investigate the four aspects of student engagement in an EFL course. Despite the recognition of engagement as a facilitator of students' learning and academic success in various foreign educational settings, this aspect of learning has not, to date, been given importance in the EFL field in Oman. Consequently, the study helps to initiate discussions about this concept and the possible ways to enhance it in ways which may benefit both educators and researchers.

5.3 How does Flipped Instruction Impact on Students' Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional and Agentic Engagement in EFL Academic Writing Classes?

The literature review demonstrated that student engagement is of paramount importance for student learning and academic progress (Reeve, 2013). This four-dimensional construct is malleable and responds to classroom dynamics, particularly the instructional approach the teacher adopts. According to Entwistle (2000), teaching in higher education affects the quality of students' learning and engagement in the course. Several reports, including those written by Aronson, Intern and Arfstrom (2013), Clark (2015), Gross, Hoffman and Burke (2015), McCarthy (2016) and Mortensen and Nicholson (2015), indicate that overall, the flipped teaching approach impacts positively on student engagement. The current study showed that flipping had an immediate and significant influence on students' behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement and to a lesser degree on their agentic engagement in the writing class. This part of the discussion will be divided into four major sections, with each section discussing the impact of flipped instruction on one aspect of student engagement in order to ensure the clarity and flow of the analysis.

5.3.1 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Behavioural Engagement

The study's findings showed that flipping academic writing instruction influenced four major aspects of students' behavioural engagement, namely, the effort students invested in their learning, their concentration and attention while learning, collaboration and communication patterns, and class attendance patterns.

5.3.1.1 Student Effort

The findings from students' reports, group discussion contributions and observations converged in the sense that they all highlighted the effort that the study participants devoted to their learning in the flipped classroom, which resulted in increased student participation in all the lesson stages. This is considered one of the immediate impacts of implementing flipped instruction, as indicated in the literature. According to Jamaludin and Osman (2014), flipped instruction enhanced students' behavioural engagement, which was reflected in students' attempts to do well and to contribute more to class activities. Similarly, Basal (2015, p. 6) points out that among other benefits, flipped classrooms increased student preparation and helped to increase in-class participation. He explained this, saying: "Because of the advance preparation of the students to the videos before coming to the lesson, such preparation helped to increase the student participation in the classroom activities". These findings are also congruent with results from Sahin, Cavlazoglu and Zeytuncu (2015), who found that unlike being taught in the traditional method, the flipped model changed students' preparation habits and intensified efforts. Hung (2015) attributes the increased effort among students in the flipped class to their desire to improve their in-class participation.

As indicated in students' reports, 49 per cent of the study participants declared that they spent between one and five hours per week, on average, preparing for the writing classes, while 26 per cent indicated that they spent between 6 and 10 hours, and 13 per cent indicated that they spent between 11 and 15 hours on their preparations. About 9 per cent of the participants indicated that they spent more than 15 hours preparing for class, while 3 per cent indicated that they did not prepare at all. Students' preparation before class helped them to adopt a more dynamic role and become more active participants in lesson activities. Most importantly, this study showed that flipping reduced the pressure usually experienced in a traditional classroom design and facilitated students' learning. In a comparison of the flipped class and the traditional class, one of the students commented:

If we compare the flipped writing classroom to another non-flipped class in Level 3, there will be a lot of pressure in the non-flipped class because the teacher will have to explain first, then practise writing the essay. In the flipped class, we come ready and we know the main idea. The two-hour class in Level 2 is not the same as in Level 3. There was a lot of tension in class. Here, we are more relaxed, we take more time to write the essay. We don't focus much on understanding in class because we already understand the information before class, and in class we just add information which the teacher likes us to focus on. But in a non-flipped class, the students will start from scratch and move step by step. That causes a lot more pressure in class. (GHF4.19)

It must be noted here, however, that despite the observed improved in-class participation which resulted from the augmented preparation, students complained about the increased workload, especially about the fact that the number of contact hours was not reduced as a consequence of using the flipped classroom design. My own experience as the instructor showed

that preparing the teaching-learning materials in this classroom design was also time-consuming. Therefore, the increased workload appears to be a major weakness in this instructional approach for both students and teachers. Strayer (2012) conducted a comparative study on the perceptions of Introductory Statistics Course students in a flipped class and a traditional class and found that learners in the flipped class were dissatisfied with the classroom structure and challenged by its requirements. Consequently, they favoured the traditional class.

Flipping is considered a novel teaching approach in the Omani traditional educational setting. This study was the first to explore the implementation and impact of flipped instruction on Omani EFL learners in general and on their engagement in a writing course in particular. Therefore, the study's findings constitute a valuable contribution to practice in this field. They indicate that although adopting a flipped instructional approach in an EFL writing course could yield positive results and help to enhance student engagement, it is essential that the transition to a flipped interactive learning environment in a traditional context such as Oman is smooth to guarantee that students buy in to the approach. One way this could be achieved is through the initial use of a partial flip instead of flipping the whole course, as advocated by Clark, Kaw and Besterfield-Sacre (2016) and Lax, Morris and Kolber (2016).

5.3.1.2 Students' Concentration and Attention

The study demonstrated that students' increased effort and participation in their learning was accompanied by improved attention and concentration while completing the assigned tasks. These learning activities were structured following Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains, where the pre-class tasks dealt with remembering and understanding, while the in-class activities

dealt with application, analysis, evaluation and creation. For instance, students reported that initially, low concentration negatively affected their understanding of the recorded materials. Consequently, they associated better understanding with better concentration and acted accordingly. Therefore, students reported pausing and/or rewinding the audio and video materials at least twice to grasp essential information. Furthermore, students exhibited positive behaviours such as note-taking and summarising and engaged actively in discussions about their learning in class, which indicated high concentration levels.

Similarly, students paid attention when they completed the quizzes outside class. As shown in the interview results, students attributed great value to obtaining correct answers in the online quizzes and considered the quiz results an indication of their level of understanding. They indicated that when they obtained below-average results, they watched the video again and/or reviewed their notes to guarantee better results in other attempts. This is confirmed through observations, as there were instances when students requested a quiz re-submission to ensure that their results, and implicitly their lesson comprehension, improved. It was observed that except for the instances when some did not prepare for the lesson, students were actively involved in the learning tasks in class to the extent that they sometimes engaged in heated debates about the way certain tasks should be completed.

The study's findings are in line with those obtained by researchers such as Clark (2015) and Jamaludin and Osman (2014). The researchers found that regardless of the educational context, students' study level, and/or courses taught, flipped instruction improves students' concentration. Clark (2015, p. 104) argues, for instance, that students in his algebra course offered in an American state university felt advantaged since flipping provided them with the opportunity to replay the videos as many times as they wanted before class, "when they did not have a

complete, thorough understanding of the problem-solving process”, until they fully grasped the content the recorded materials demonstrated. Likewise, Jamaludin and Osman (2014) state that their undergraduate TESOL students in a Malaysian university listened carefully, paid attention, and tried hard to understand in class. Flipping therefore enabled students to adopt a ‘deep’ rather than ‘surface’ learning approach where the concern was to understand the subject matter thoroughly rather than just complete the assigned tasks.

On the other hand, the current study showed that this course format could be challenging for certain students in our educational context, specifically adults studying part-time. For example, one student reported reviewing the audio materials while driving to college due to time constraints caused by personal and work commitments, which could negatively affect concentration. This finding has a direct implication for practice, as ample time should be given to these students to review the learning materials to enhance engagement.

5.3.1.3 Student Collaboration and Interaction with Peers and Teacher

In addition to the enhanced student effort, participation and concentration, students in the flipped writing course engaged in several in-class and out-of-class collaborative tasks, including contributing to discussion forums throughout the week, writing group essays in class, and engaging in debates about different topics. This entailed increased student-student communication. This aspect of student engagement was also demonstrated by the questions asked and comments on students’ contributions posted on the LMS (see Appendix XVI), and the observed classroom dynamics, which indicated more intra- and inter-group discussions and collaborations during classes. Research conducted by Clark (2015) and Muldrow (2013) supports

the current study's findings. Clark's (2015) study revealed that students' involvement in his course was attributed to several factors, including the augmented utilisation of group work, shared daily assistance and collaboration by peers, and the active role they played in classroom dynamics. These factors interacted in a non-linear manner to build students' confidence and self-esteem and, consequently, to improve their understanding and learning. Nonetheless, it should be indicated that this type of student collaboration is very rare in traditional classrooms, especially in conservative cultures such as Oman, where communication between males and females is limited and even discouraged. Nevertheless, flipped instruction appears to have facilitated this type of student interaction in the current study, as demonstrated in students' interview comments and confirmed by the observation data.

The interviews and researcher observations also revealed that unlike traditional classrooms, student-teacher interaction increased considerably inside and outside the flipped writing class. The teacher and students interacted for a variety of purposes, which included receiving updates about the course materials, following up with the assigned pre- and post-class tasks, clarifying ambiguous content, and providing/receiving feedback about performance. Several researchers emphasise the value of student-student and student-teacher interaction. For instance, a study conducted by Love, Hodge, Grandgenett and Swift (2014) found that students appreciated the collaboration opportunity flipped instruction provided. This is attributed to the fact that collaboration and communication helped students to develop positive relationships (Jones, 2012) and to feel more comfortable and emotionally engaged in the course. Muldrow (2013) explains that teacher-student interaction increases in flipped classes as the lesson's theoretical part is removed and much of the class time is freed for one-to-one interaction, which optimises students' individualised attention and intervention. Sinclair, Christenson, Lehr and Anderson

(2003) believe that such individualised attention enhances students' engagement in the course and influences their educational trajectory. Furthermore, Dixson (2010, p. 1) emphasises the value of communication in enhancing student engagement when she states: "Multiple communication channels may be related to higher engagement and that student-student and instructor-student communication are clearly strongly correlated with higher student engagement with the course in general". This finding is particularly useful in our educational setting, where academic writing teachers have a heavy workload and the conservative nature of the learning environment restricts contact among students and between teachers and students. Flipping could boost this type of interaction in the Omani context.

5.3.1.4 Student Attendance

The flipped classroom design adopted in the writing course helped to address the issue of students' absenteeism. Despite the flexibility of this design, in the sense that students accessed the learning materials any time they wished and were able to learn at their own pace (Basal, 2015; Gilboy, Heinerichs & Pazzaglia, 2015), students attributed great value to attending face-to-face lessons. Classroom observations indicated that most of the students (85 per cent) attended more than 80 per cent of the course as they felt compelled to attend classes regularly to comprehend the course content. This matches observations made in earlier studies by Deslauriers et al. (2011) and McLaughlin et al. (2014).

It is important to note that the flipped classroom model adopted in the current study contributed significantly to the reduced absenteeism. The pre- and in-class activities were well-integrated. While the pre-class tasks mainly addressed the theoretical aspects of writing, the in-

class activities enabled students to put into practice the knowledge they absorbed from the recorded lectures (Aronson et al., 2013). This model also increased time for in-class knowledge application (Harvey, 2014; Wong & Chu, 2014) and facilitated the integration of interactive tasks. Consequently, this classroom design meant that adopting an either/or approach to completing tasks was impractical. According to Khanova et al. (2015) and Knight and Wood (2005), the success of flipping is attributed to the successful alignment of all the learning activities. Consequently, these findings have implications for practice as they suggest that EFL educators should pay considerable attention to this aspect of flipping to increase its efficacy. Furthermore, the task-based writing course model the study offered constitutes an important contribution to EFL practice in Oman and similar educational contexts as it could be an effective substitute for traditional approaches utilised in writing instruction.

5.3.2 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Cognitive Engagement

The current study indicated that the flipped instructional model had an indirect impact on various aspects of students' cognitive engagement, such as their cognitive development, self-regulation strategies and meta-cognitive awareness. Most importantly, the results indicated that a strong positive correlation exists between students' behavioural and cognitive engagement, which has direct implications for practice in the current educational setting.

5.3.2.1 Student Cognitive Growth

Similar to other studies conducted by Alsowat (2016), Al-Zahrani (2015), Khanova et al. (2015) and Webb, Doman and Pusey (2014), the current study found that students' cognitive abilities in

the flipped writing course developed considerably. The flipped teaching model encouraged students to utilise lower-order thinking skills such as understanding and remembering before class, and higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation and creation in class. This led to students' cognitive growth, which was reflected in their improved performance in essay writing, as indicated through the classroom observation. These findings align with those of Alsowat (2016), who conducted a study in a similar educational context to Oman, specifically, Taif University in the KSA, to investigate the effect of flipped instruction on 67 female EFL learners' higher-order thinking skills, involvement and satisfaction and concluded that the flipped classroom model increased learners' foreign language higher-order thinking ability.

Cothran and Ennis (2000) and Sherab (2013) argue that providing students with active learning opportunities, as is the case in the flipped classroom, enhances both cognitive and behavioural engagement. Students in the flipped writing classroom were able to recognise the transition from one lesson phase to another and actually appreciated it. This was demonstrated in a comment made by one of the interviewees, who said that the way the flipped lesson was structured helped her understand better as she progressed from easy to more complex tasks. She explained this, saying: "First of all, the good thing in the tasks was that you used to give them to us in order. I mean you start with easy stuff and then move to more difficult tasks. That helped us understand things" (AMF2.9).

Students' cognitive development could also be attributed to another aspect of the classroom dynamics, which is the teacher's questioning patterns. Despite its importance, this aspect was not emphasised in previous studies which focused on flipped instruction. Some study participants, especially those studying part-time, indicated that the teacher's questions forced them to reflect on their assumptions deeply and to reconstruct their knowledge accordingly which led to better

understanding. In fact, Smart and Marshall (2013) found that a correlation exists between classroom discourse, including a teacher's level of complex questioning, and students' cognitive engagement. Smart and Marshall (2013, p. 265) argue that "teachers have the unique opportunity to facilitate higher cognitive levels in their students by the questions they ask during instruction and the communication pattern they establish in their classroom". Barr (2014) and Chin (2007) also emphasise the value teacher questioning has in scaffolding students' thinking and engaging them cognitively. In the flipped writing classroom, students were required to not only respond to the teacher's 'why' and 'how' questions, which necessitated a deep level of thinking, but also to help each other to understand and complete in-class tasks which involved reflecting on their own understanding and improving it.

Despite the fact that authors such as McMahon and Portelli (2004) argue that aspects of student engagement may not be equally valuable and therefore may not contribute equally to student learning, the current study showed that a strong positive correlation exists between various dimensions of student engagement, especially between students' behavioural and cognitive engagement, which constitutes a valuable contribution to knowledge about student engagement in EFL courses in Oman and elsewhere. Students' enhanced behavioural engagement in the current study was associated with an improvement in their cognitive engagement. As students participated more in the various lesson phases, interacted with their peers and teacher, collaborated to complete various tasks, focused and concentrated more on the tasks they completed, and attended more classes, they experienced improved cognitive engagement. This finding has immediate implications for practice since educators should not consider students' observed behaviour as the only indicator of their engagement. Private, non-

observable practices also indicate how engaged a student is at the cognitive level (Gourlay, 2015).

5.3.2.2 Student Self-Regulation

In this practice-based study, flipped instruction was also associated with students' adoption of self-regulatory strategies. The results from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis showed that contrary to what passive learners in a traditional classroom usually do, participants in the flipped writing class adopted self-regulation strategies such as planning their study time, keeping a record of the recorded lectures notes and monitoring them regularly, reflecting on their learning and evaluating their progress, seeking information, structuring their learning environment, and soliciting help from various sources.

Students in the flipped writing class realised that inadequate self-regulation would hamper their learning and impede their academic progress. They reported that the fear of not being able to understand compelled them to participate actively in the various lesson stages and to take responsibility for their learning by controlling their learning time and place and the ways they learned (Alsowat, 2016). Obviously, students in the flipped class learned at their own pace and were in control of the time, place and learning approach. In a study conducted in a post-secondary educational setting in the USA to explore the impact of flipped teaching on students' self-regulated learning, perceptions and achievement, Sletten (2015) observed an increase in student participation, especially the frequency of video-viewing among the self-regulated learners. Furthermore, the participants who demonstrated using self-regulation strategies perceived flipping more positively. The observed correlation between self-regulation, students'

positive perceptions of flipping, and their participation confirms Evseeva and Solozhenko's (2015) observation that flipping impacts positively on students' self-discipline and self-directedness, which are indispensable for their success.

The current study demonstrated that the study participants developed the abovementioned self-regulation strategies and trained themselves to use them over time. Although the structure of the flipped classroom was explained to students at the beginning of the course and the pre-class tasks involved only understanding and remembering information, most students initially approached the course with limited evidence of being self-regulated. They reported feeling 'lost' and unsure of how to cope with the course demands. This was demonstrated in students' comments during the interviews and observed in their ongoing complaints at the beginning of the course. This finding is considered an important contribution to practice in our educational context. Unlike students in Western settings, who are accustomed to using self-regulatory strategies, Omani students, who are used to traditional teaching methods which encourage memorisation and rote learning, should be taught to use the self-regulatory strategies required to succeed in a flipped classroom. Zimmerman (1990) argues that this helps students to approach learning more effectively.

5.3.2.3 Student Metacognitive Awareness

The third important finding of this study with respect to the impact of flipped instruction on students' cognitive engagement is the improvement in students' meta-cognitive awareness. The quantitative data analysis showed that the study participants considered developing new skills one of the biggest gains from being a member of the flipped writing class. They also reported

several positive results during the interviews. These included an enriched learning experience, enhanced understanding, better information retention, and improved writing skills. Some students highlighted this aspect of their learning when they stated that the number of mistakes they made (i.e. grammar, punctuation, word order, spelling, vocabulary, etc.) reduced significantly as they progressed in the course, which made them feel more confident about their learning. One interviewee commented: “Flipped writing helps us retain information. Before, information was not retained. In fact, there was no information to retain” (ETF3.16). Moreover, classroom observations indicated a great deal of improvement in students’ writing style and understanding of the mechanics of writing. In fact, several other studies, including those conducted by Harvey (2014) and McCarthy (2016), also reported enhancement of students’ comprehension, information retention, and learning in the flipped classes they taught. Deslauriers et al. (2011) state that learning in the flipped preparatory undergraduate physics courses they taught was more than twice the learning in the traditional course. Similarly, McLaughlin et al. (2014) and Moravec, Williams, Aguitar-Roca and O’Dowd (2010) found that learning increased among their students when the flipped instructional model was implemented in their respective courses.

One possible explanation for students’ improved meta-cognitive awareness is that being grounded in constructivist learning theories, flipping enables students to participate actively in their learning process and develop their cognitive schemas through knowledge construction and reconstruction while interacting with their learning environment. Perkins (2006, p. 35) argues that students’ active engagement in their learning, which could be achieved as mentioned above through self-regulation, leads to “better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge”.

Another reason could be that removing the lecture aspect of the lesson created room for more in-class writing practice, which is considered a means through which learning occurs (Weibell, 2011). This also enabled all students to receive both instant oral feedback and later written feedback on their performance and learning progress, along with individualised assistance when needed in class. Based on the observation data, a minimum of two essays were written weekly and about eight essays were written for each essay type. Furthermore, a first draft was written in class for each essay, checked thoroughly by the teacher after class, and given back to students with detailed feedback to consider while writing the second draft. This enabled students to practise more, which helped them to develop their writing skills. This would not be possible in a traditional learning environment. In fact, many students highlighted this idea during the interviews, as they considered writing the first and second draft in light of the teacher's comments the most valued task that immediately influenced their writing skills positively. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006) and Mohrweis and Shinham (2015), constructive feedback and individualised assistance enhance students' learning. Similarly, Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) and Epstein et al. (2002) argue that immediate feedback increases students' engagement and promotes retention, which ultimately results in significant improvement in learning outcomes.

What is important in the current study, however, is that the reported learning gains were attributed to students' development of the self-regulation strategies discussed above. Zimmerman and Pons (1986) point out that high-achieving students are often more self-regulated than their non-self-regulated counterparts. Moreover, Entwistle (2000) explains that knowledge is learned deeply when it is self-regulated. Therefore, students who were able to self-regulate their learning in the flipped writing class experienced the abovementioned learning gains. This emphasises the

implication for practice discussed in the previous section, which is that students in the Omani context should be trained to utilise self-regulatory strategies to experience learning gains and succeed in a flipped classroom.

5.3.3 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Emotional Engagement

The study's results also indicated that students' emotional engagement was significantly influenced in the flipped writing class. Contrary to earlier findings, which emphasised either students' positive perceptions and feelings (Evseeva & Solozhenko, 2015; Pierce, Fox & Dunn, 2012) or their negative attitudes and emotions (Strayer, 2012) in the flipped class, the current study's findings indicated that students experienced both negative emotions such as anger and anxiety at the beginning of the course, and positive feelings such as contentment and interest as they became more familiar with the course design around two weeks later.

Similar to the findings from other research studies conducted by Marlowe (2012) and Sahin et al. (2015), which indicated that their students' stress and anxiety levels decreased in the flipped classes, both the students' survey responses and the interview accounts showed that the flipped design initially triggered feelings of frustration and apprehension in the current study's participants. The compulsory pre-class preparation, increased workload and effort, and reduced teacher presence in the lecture part and the increase in students' responsibility were the reasons that students offered for feeling frustrated with the flipped instructional model. Simultaneously, students felt anxious about not being able to cope with this teaching approach, failing to understand the subject matter, and consequently failing to progress academically. This was observed in students' complaints and initial low participation rates in the pre-class activities,

which increased as students noticed the benefits associated with the pre-class preparation as they got used to the new teaching-learning model. This was particularly relevant with part-time students, who complained about being overburdened by the course requirements considering their work and family commitments. After two weeks had passed, however, students' anxiety and frustration decreased. Students completed the assigned tasks more regularly and participated actively in class discussions. As they progressed in the course, students experienced more positive feelings, including contentment and increased interest in the teaching method and the writing subject. This was observed in particular after the mid-term examination which took place in the seventh week of study. The positive examination results which students obtained probably reduced their anxiety and fear of failing the module and indirectly affected their perceptions of flipped instruction. Furthermore, the interview data indicated that the participants compared the traditional classroom design and the new teaching model they were exposed to constantly. This led them to acknowledge the benefits associated with flipping. One participant in the group discussions (SHF5.26) admitted that delivering the writing course using a different method to flipping would be boring considering its dense content. Students particularly appreciated the opportunity they were given to be ready for class, to be involved in interactive learning activities, to be engaged in writing practice, and to reflect on their learning and to evaluate it, which helped them to learn better. Most importantly, the tangible benefits students perceived in their essay writing performance made them feel quite content.

This finding has a direct implication for practice in our context. As a Western instructional approach, flipping would initially be highly resisted by students in the traditional Omani educational context due to cultural conflicts and mismatches (Lane-Kelso, 2014; Nguyena, Terlouw & Pilot, 2006). Therefore, it is essential to identify ways to reduce students' initial

feelings of anxiety to facilitate learning. This could be achieved by thoroughly explaining the expected learning outcomes and benefits of this teaching-learning method to students before implementing it (Garver & Roberts, 2013).

The current study's results also revealed that a strong positive correlation exists between students' emotional, behavioural and cognitive engagement in the flipped classroom. Students experience improved behavioural and cognitive engagement as their emotional engagement is enhanced. This is not a claim that a causal relationship exists between the different engagement dimensions, but rather an emphasis that these dimensions are equally important and none of them should be ignored when evaluating students' engagement in a flipped EFL course. The current study's qualitative data showed that initially, most students found adjusting to the flipped teaching approach quite difficult. Completing the pre-class tasks became habitual behaviour after they got used to this class design, however, especially after they became familiar with the technological tools utilised, such as the LMS and other tools such as Padlet and Socrative. This suggests that the technology employed in the flipped class constituted a challenge for some students and could actually be one of the reasons for students' initial negative feelings. Garver and Roberts (2013) argue that any new teaching-learning pattern becomes more enjoyable as students get used to it, which leads to change in their emotions. This is also emphasised by Crouch and Mazur (2001, p. 974), whose study led them to conclude that "students often require a period of adjustment to new methods of instruction before their learning improves".

According to Strayer (2012), adjusting to the flipped teaching approach lasts for a couple of weeks. However, making adjustments in the flipped classroom could be a constant process for some students in our setting. Therefore, educators in the Omani context should not be discouraged by students' initial negative reactions and emotions. Explicit instruction and guided

practice would help to pave the way for more positive emotions and ultimately enhance behavioural and cognitive engagement.

5.3.4 Impact of Flipped Instruction on Students' Agentic Engagement

Another significant finding of this study is that students were, to a certain extent, engaged agentially in the flipped writing class in the sense that they developed autonomy and resilience in the course.

5.3.4.1 Student Autonomy

During the interviews, the study participants reported experiencing increased autonomy in the form of self-dependence and development of the capacity to ask questions and to offer recommendations to improve the current flipped writing classroom model. Sinclair (as cited in Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012, p. 5) argues that developing autonomy “requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision making”. As discussed in the previous sections, students in the current study developed meta-cognitive awareness and self-regulation strategies, which suggests that as students' cognitive engagement is enhanced, they become more autonomous learners. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) claim that Omani EFL learners have limited experience of independent learning, rely considerably on their teachers, and are unable to exploit available learning resources. The current study's findings demonstrated, however, that flipped instruction helps to address these flaws in Omani students' learning approaches, which is considered a valuable contribution to practice in this context.

The present study also showed that although a few students utilised additional resources to improve their understanding outside class, overall, students did not contribute their own learning materials or tasks in class. This could be attributed to the novelty of the flipped teaching approach, which means that students would probably be able to contribute more actively if flipping was used over a longer period or in more than one course, as suggested by Jamaludin and Osman (2014). It is also possible that Omani students who are used to traditional teaching methods depend heavily on teachers as knowledge providers rather than coaches and are unable to criticise the choices teachers make (Fook & Askeland, 2007). One important finding of this study which has implications for the design of flipped EFL courses in our context and elsewhere, however, is that the inflexible nature of the flipped writing class, in the sense that all tasks and activities were clearly structured and carefully integrated, did not provide an opportunity for students to contribute their own resources in class. This point is, therefore, worthy of consideration when implementing flipping in one's courses.

5.3.4.2 Student Resilience

According to Peach and Matthews (2011) and Richards, Sweet and Billett (2013), agentic engagement requires students to be resilient and capable of dealing with new and challenging situations confidently. Richards et al. (2013, p. 260) argue that resilience is an individual approach a student adopts and involves “behaviours, thoughts and actions to develop strategies to succeed, dependent on individuals’ disposition and experience”. The authors add that relationships which support, encourage and reassure students are key factors in resilience.

The data analysis showed that participants in the flipped writing class adopted several strategies and behaviours which helped them cope with the course demands. For instance, in addition to the discussion forums and emails used for student-student and student-teacher communication, the study participants formed groups on the WhatsApp application and used them to discuss module-related issues and to assist each other outside class. In class, it was observed that students formed small communities of practice which collaborated to share information, explain difficult concepts and clarify ambiguous information. This enabled students to overcome the challenges they faced with the course content and to succeed.

Three students, however, were not successful in adopting this useful approach and continued to resist the change brought by flipping throughout the course. During the discussions, those students explained that the issue lay with them rather than with the teaching approach adopted. One student said: “Time was not a barrier for me. I am the one who put time as a barrier because I had a lot of free time but I didn’t use it to study” (AMM1.3). Another participant explained that he was reserved and disliked mixing with people. This is why he did not ask for support from any of his peers. Thus, the benefit of flipped instruction for introvert students may be limited. Another participant had health problems and spent a lot of time in hospital, which made having a network of people to assist her difficult. This suggests that flipped instruction is not the only means for enhancing all students’ engagement (Alsowat, 2016). This approach could face strong opposition from some students, not to mention teachers and administrators, since it challenges the status quo. Therefore, its successful implementation in a particular context may require a “shift in learning culture” (Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight & Arfstrom, 2013, p. 5).

To summarise, this part of the chapter discussed the findings related to the first research question and demonstrated that flipped instruction influenced several aspects of students’

behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement. The next part will discuss the findings related to the second research question, i.e. the variation in male and female students' engagement in the flipped writing course.

5.4 To What Extent does Male and Female Students' Engagement in flipped Writing Classes Vary?

The second research question aimed to investigate whether there was variation in male and female students' engagement in the flipped academic writing class. Contrary to expectations, this study did not identify any significant difference between the behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement of the two student groups. Despite previous research results which indicated that Omani female students were more academically engaged than their male counterparts (Mathew et al., 2013), the quantitative and qualitative findings showed that both student groups were engaged in the flipped writing class in the same manner. Males and females exhibited similar behaviours such as increased effort and more concentration while learning, employed similar cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to ensure understanding and academic progress, experienced similar negative and positive feelings, and were autonomous and resilient in their learning. The study's findings are in part similar to those of Radwan (2011), who found that no relationship existed between gender and students' utilisation of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies in EFL learning in the context of Oman.

Both male and female participants emphasised that they were overwhelmed by the demands of the flipped classroom design and that they found completing all of the assigned pre- and post-class tasks in the teacher's absence quite challenging. Both groups also reported experiencing

similar negative feelings such as frustration and anxiety at the beginning of the course. The class observations also showed that these two student groups expressed the same concerns about the way they should prepare for the writing class. Similarly, the gains which male and female students reported they had obtained were comparable. For instance, both male and female students reported an improvement in their writing skills which was confirmed by their mid-term and final examination results. Similar to male students, females highlighted the fact that the flipped classroom design prepared them well for their future undergraduate studies, as it taught them to be self-reliant and autonomous learners instead of teacher-dependent.

The absence of variation in male and female students' engagement in the current flipped writing class could be attributed to the 'wow' factor of the new teaching-learning approach. According to Murray and Barnes (1998, p. 250), "the 'wow' factor encompasses both extremely positive and extremely negative initial reactions". The flipped teaching model, which involved reversing the order of learning activities and systematically integrating digital technologies into the various lesson stages, constituted a new experience for all the participants regardless of their gender. Therefore, it initially triggered negative reactions among all learners. The way male and female students engaged with it depended more on their individual ability to deal with a novel instructional approach and the learning skills and strategies which they had developed in previous classes than on their gender differences (McCarthy, 2016). These findings have an immediate impact on practice, as they suggest that no special consideration of gender differences is required to design and implement flipping in the teaching of EFL writing skills successfully in this educational context.

To conclude, this section discussed the variation in the impact of flipped instruction on male and female students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement. The study failed

to identify any significant difference in the engagement of students of different genders in the flipped writing course. The next section will discuss the study's findings in relation to the third research question, i.e. the variation in students' engagement in the flipped writing class according to age.

5.5 To What Extent does Student Engagement in Flipped Writing Classes Vary According to Age?

The practice-based study addressed whether the engagement of students who belonged to different age groups in the flipped writing classroom varied. The quantitative study findings showed that there was no relationship between students' cognitive and emotional engagement in the flipped writing class and their age. In this sense, the study's findings differ from those of Richardson (1994; 1995) and Richardson et al. (1999), who found that the older students were the more cognitively engaged they became and the more they used deep and strategic learning approaches. These findings also differ from those of Sindi (2010), who found in her study sample that older students' ability to reflect was higher. Furthermore, this study's results are different from those of McCarthy (2016), who explored the efficacy of the flipped approach in the teaching of first-year students enrolled in a three-dimensional animation course in an Australian HEI compared to the traditional teaching approach. The study's findings demonstrated that 55 per cent of the students who were aged 17 and 18 preferred the standard lecture format, while 75 per cent of those aged 19 and over showed a clear preference for the flipped lesson format. The preference for traditional lecture format lessons among the younger student group signifies a lower level of emotional engagement among this group, which the current study failed to demonstrate.

The results suggested that like their younger counterparts, older students who join writing courses in the current institution have little evidence of being self-regulated. This could be due to the long time these students take to enter higher education after they graduate from school. For this reason, they also face similar challenges and experience similar negative emotions when they experience flipped learning for the first time. This suggests that both groups of students should be provided with the same support mechanisms to help them adjust to this learning model and cope with its demands.

The self-report data, however, indicated that a slightly significant difference existed in students' behavioural engagement in favour of the older student population, as they invested additional effort in learning and participated more in all the writing lessons' stages. Moreover, although both young and adult students completed all in-class learning tasks successfully, it was observed that the adult group's participation was superior in terms of cooperation, collaboration and interaction with the teacher inside and outside the class. One of the observations in the younger students' group discussions highlighted the issue of the absence of cooperation and collaboration among a few students who often preferred individual work (SHF5.26). These results are in line with those of Rose et al. (2013), who found through the re-analysis of data obtained from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) that adult students' behavioural engagement was higher, as demonstrated by the amount of effort they put into their academic studies and the level of persistence they exhibited.

Furthermore, the researcher's observation showed that older students were more agentially engaged in classroom dynamics than their younger counterparts. They asked more questions and got involved in debates about various aspects of the lessons. The quantitative data demonstrated, however, that this difference was statistically insignificant in relation to the survey.

5.6 Do Other Factors, Specifically Students' Language Proficiency and Technology Skills, Affect their Behavioural, Cognitive, Emotional and Agentic Engagement in Flipped Writing Classes?

One unanticipated finding of this study was that students' engagement in the flipped writing class varied among students with different language proficiency. In other words, students who perceived their English language skills as excellent and/or good in the self-report questionnaire showed higher behavioural, emotional, cognitive and agentic engagement than their counterparts who reported having average or poor linguistic skills.

This result is partly in line with Moran's (2014) research findings. Moran (2014) conducted a doctoral level study which involved 183 students enrolled in an English language Arts course in an American school and aimed to evaluate student engagement and teacher pedagogical practice in the flipped course. The results indicated a decrease in students' engagement in the flipped unit of the course compared to the traditional class in terms of behaviour regulation. Moran (2014) explains that students who excelled in the course she taught were capable of navigating the flipped unit more easily than students who were less successful in English language skills. Those learners considered the self-paced and self-directed nature of flipping quite frustrating and, as a result, their behavioural engagement decreased.

An immediate implication of these findings is that employing flipped instruction in beginner writing courses in our context could be challenging. Consequently, both the design and the learning materials should be tailored to suit the students' level. For instance, researchers such as Clark et al. (2016) suggest the utilisation of semi-flipped instead of fully-flipped instruction to address similar problems.

Another unexpected result was that students' engagement, specifically their behavioural engagement, was influenced by their reported level of technology expertise. The study revealed that students who had better technology skills, according to the questionnaire data, reported higher behavioural engagement than their counterparts. This was observed in this group's active participation and high task-completion rates, especially when the course commenced. In contrast, students who reported having average and/or poor technology skills were less behaviourally engaged due to the complexity associated with the technologies integrated into the lessons. Furthermore, about 5 per cent of students who reported having limited access to good Internet connectivity during the interviews reported facing challenges with regard to being behaviourally engaged, especially before class. It could therefore be concluded that although technology integration is a great facilitator and its expansion is a motive for the adoption of flipped teaching (Han & Finkelstein, 2013; Lane-Kelso, 2015; Lock, 2015), it could have negative effects if students' access to it in our context is limited and/or the students' skills are poor (Hamdan et al., 2013; Loucky, 2017). One direct implication of this finding for practice is ensuring that students are familiar with the technologies to be integrated in the various flipped lessons' stages and that those technologies are accessible to them (Kim et al., 2014). Conducting pre-course practical sessions is highly recommended in order to achieve these objectives.

5.6 Why do Variations Between the Engagement of Male and Female Students and Students Belonging to Different Age Groups Exist?

Firstly, the current research findings indicated that male and female students engaged in the flipped writing course in the same manner. The two student groups exhibited similar behavioural involvement, such as increased effort, concentration and collaboration, and cognitive

involvement, such as growth in their cognitive capacities, development in their use of self-regulatory strategies, and advancement in their meta-cognitive awareness. Similarly, both male and female students experienced comparable emotional and agentic engagement in the various phases of the course. This is attributed to the novelty of the approach for both student groups regardless of gender differences.

Secondly, although the study did not identify any variation in students' cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement age-wise, it indicated that older students were more behaviourally engaged than younger students. The data collected from the interviews indicated that one reason for this difference was that older students were more extrinsically motivated by personal goals (Merriam & Bierema, 2013), since completing their studies entailed both social and financial benefits. Other participants linked the benefits they gained from being in the flipped class with the impact this would have on their future academic progress. It should be noted here that all participants in the adult cohort were either public or private sector employees and, unlike their younger counterparts, they were not sponsored by the government. Therefore, studying was not only an investment for this group of students, but also a second chance for them to enhance their knowledge. Moreover, adult students attributed great value to learning, understanding, and passing the course, which influenced their motivation. Consequently, they invested a great deal of effort in their learning inside and outside the class.

Despite their complaints about the heavy workload associated with flipped instruction (Mason et al., 2013; Zainuddin & Attaran, 2015), the adult students cohort were able to manage their time well and to complete the assigned tasks more regularly than the younger group. The difference between young and adult students' behavioural engagement was attributed to the fact that adult students were used to working hard, collaborating with each other, and showing

acceptable concentration levels in their respective jobs when they joined the course, unlike the younger group, who had either just completed their secondary school studies or been taught in the traditional method when they joined the course.

5.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the main findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Several aspects of students' engagement in writing were found to be influenced by the flipped classroom design. It was also found that independent factors, including gender and age, did not correlate with student engagement, while a positive correlation was identified between students' language proficiency and technology skills and their engagement in the flipped writing classroom. The findings discussed in this chapter constitute a valuable contribution to the knowledge about student engagement and to EFL practice in the Omani context and, consequently, have pedagogical and institutional implications and implications for practice and future research in the field. These will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The current practitioner research is an investigation into the impact of flipped instruction on the engagement of EFL learners in an academic writing course at an HEI in Oman. The concluding chapter of this study links back to the research questions and provides a summary of the main findings. It also discusses the study's pedagogical implications and its implications for practice and for the institution as well as its limitations. The chapter concludes by providing suggestions for further research and reflections on my learning experience.

6.2 Summary of the Main Findings

The current study explored the impact of flipped instruction on student engagement in EFL writing. Student engagement is conceptualised as a four-dimensional construct which involves behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic dimensions. The first research question the study posed (How does flipped instruction impact on student behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in EFL writing classes?) investigated the way flipping influenced the four student engagement dimensions. The study revealed that this teaching approach enhanced the four aspects of student engagement. This finding constitutes a valuable contribution to practice in the EFL field as it proposes flipping as a novel instructional model which could help to address the issue of students' lack of engagement in an indispensable skill for their success in HEIs in

Oman. Moreover, the study contributes valuable knowledge to the discussion of student engagement in writing courses. Unlike other arguments which emphasise the fact that the four engagement dimensions are not equally valuable and do not contribute equally to student learning, this study demonstrated that a strong positive correlation exists between the four dimensions of student engagement.

At the behavioural engagement level, flipping writing instruction boosted students' effort in terms of both quantity and quality. In terms of quantity, it was associated with increased and intensified learning effort (Hung, 2015), thus increasing not only students' preparation time (Sahin et al., 2015), but also their class attendance (McLaughlin et al., 2014; Gilboy et al., 2015) and participation level in the various lesson stages (Basal, 2015). Simultaneously, students displayed better concentration and attention in learning (Clark, 2015; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014). Most importantly, the study revealed that flipped instruction encouraged student-student collaboration and interaction and student-teacher communication (Muldrow, 2013). This is considered a valuable contribution to EFL pedagogy in the Omani context, where cultural barriers often limit this type of interaction.

This study also indicated that students' cognitive engagement was enhanced in the flipped writing classroom. More specifically, students experienced cognitive growth (Al-Zahrani, 2015; Khanova et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2014) and meta-cognitive awareness (Harvey, 2014; McCarthy, 2016; Moravec et al., 2010), and developed essential self-regulation strategies such as goal-setting, record-keeping and monitoring, information-seeking, and self-reflection and evaluation (Alsowat, 2016; Sletten, 2015). This cognitive engagement had a positive impact on students' overall performance. Furthermore, the study revealed a strong correlation between students' behavioural and cognitive engagement in the flipped class. In other words, the

enhancement of students' behavioural engagement was associated with an improvement in students' cognitive engagement. This means that although engagement resides within the individual student, contextual factors such as the teaching approach adopted could either enhance or impede engagement (Krause, 2005b).

Although studies conducted in other educational settings by scholars such as Banitt, Theis and van Leeuwe (2013) and Granito and Chernobilsky (2012) found that flipping increased students' motivation and engagement, the current study's findings indicated that flipped teaching initially provoked negative emotions such as anger and frustration in learners, while more positive feelings such as contentment and increased interest in the course were experienced when students became accustomed to the flipped instructional model. Negative emotions are likely to occur in traditional learning environments such as Oman, where flipping could challenge the status quo and utilising it would necessitate a shift in the learning culture (Hamdan et al., 2013; Lane-Kelso, 2014; Nguyena et al., 2006).

Flipped teaching appeared to have a limited influence on students' agentic engagement. Despite the results which were suggestive of increased student autonomy (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014) and resilience (Alsowat, 2016), there was no evidence that students' capacity to contribute their own learning materials and tasks evolved in the flipped writing course. The findings suggest that Omani students lack self-dependence (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). Therefore, a period of adjustment would be required for students to get more comfortable with this teaching-learning approach and consequently contribute more actively to their own learning.

The second research question (To what extent does male and female students' engagement in flipped writing classes vary?) covered the variation in learners' engagement in terms of gender. The findings of previous research studies conducted in similar educational settings in Oman

showed that a difference exists in the behavioural and emotional involvement of Omani male and female students in favour of females (Mathew et al., 2013), and in their cognitive engagement, specifically their use of social strategies, in favour of males (Radwan, 2011). The current study indicated, however, that no difference existed between male and female participants in the flipped class. The absence of variation is due to the novelty of the teaching approach for both groups of students.

The third research question (To what extent does student engagement in flipped writing classes differ according to age?) dealt with the variation in students' engagement age-wise. The results of research conducted in different educational backgrounds, including Australia (McCarthy, 2016), the UK (Richardson, 1995) and the Middle East, specifically the KSA (Sindi, 2010), showed that adults are more emotionally and cognitively engaged than their younger counterparts. Although observations showed a slight behavioural engagement difference among older students who invested more effort, participated more actively and collaborated more with each other to improve their learning, the current study revealed that age did not correlate with students' cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in the flipped writing class.

The fourth research question (Why do variations between the engagement of male and female students and students belonging to different age groups exist?) focused on the reasons behind the variations identified. The study revealed that the slight variation in the behavioural engagement of older students was attributed to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation they had for learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2013) and to the fact that they were used to working hard in their respective jobs. Consequently, they found the flipped writing class requirements easy to complete.

The last question the study addressed (Do other factors, specifically students' language proficiency and technology skills, influence students' behavioural, cognitive, emotional and agentic engagement in the flipped writing classes?) focused on other factors that influenced learners' engagement in this class. It appeared that both students' linguistic proficiency (Moran, 2014) and technology skills (Hamdan et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2014; Loucky, 2017) had an impact on several aspects of students' engagement. More specifically, students who perceived their English language proficiency to be excellent and/or good exhibited higher levels of behavioural, emotional, cognitive and agentic engagement than students with average and/or poor linguistic skills. Moreover, it was indicated that students whose technology skills were better than those of their counterparts demonstrated higher levels of behavioural engagement. These findings have a direct implication for practice in the current educational setting. Flipped instruction could be counterproductive if implemented in beginner EFL classes and with students who have poor technology skills. Limited access to technology could also have negative effects.

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

The current study constitutes a significant contribution to practice in the EFL field. Flipping could potentially be adopted as an instructional model in HEIs in Oman and in similar educational settings such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, where educators' concern is to motivate their students' interest in different courses, engage them actively in the learning process, and enhance their learning outcomes. Firstly, the study provides a holistic understanding of the way flipped writing instruction boosts students' four engagement dimensions. At the behavioural level, students' effort, concentration, persistence, communication and collaboration, and attitude to class attendance improved. Students also experienced cognitive

growth and developed self-regulation learning strategies and meta-cognitive awareness. Similarly, flipped instruction influenced students' emotional engagement, as it triggered positive emotions such as contentment and increased interest in the subject. Furthermore, flipping affected students' agentic engagement, as their questioning ability, autonomy and capacity to express their opinions evolved. This holistic understanding helps educators to make informed instructional decisions that consider these four aspects of engagement rather than focus solely on students' observed behaviours.

Secondly, the literature review indicated that a design model for a flipped writing classroom does not exist. Therefore, this study contributes practicable and transferable knowledge to similar educational settings. It provides EFL instructors with a task-based flipped classroom model which is grounded in cognitivist and constructivist learning theories (Ahmed, 2016; Bishop & Verleger, 2013; Brame, 2013), inspired by Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains, and supported by instructional technologies that facilitate cooperative learning and learner-centred pedagogies (Graham, 2006; Graham & Dziuban, 2008). This instructional model challenges test-centred curricula which encourage rote-teaching instead of developing students' higher cognitive capacities (Ahlquist, 2003; Wasserberg & Rottman, 2016). Consequently, the findings are particularly relevant to educators who embrace similar theories and adopt similar pedagogical choices in their classes.

Conversely, Nguyena et al. (2006) argue that educators should implement Western pedagogies with great caution, since cultural clashes and incongruities might arise due to their incompatibility with the host culture. Lane-Kelso (2014) points out that flipping could provide a bridge to unfamiliar teaching strategies for traditional conservative educational environments such as Oman. At the same time, however, there could be a high level of resistance to this

Western teaching approach in Oman, where students lack the self-dependence flipped learning requires, as Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) indicate. This has implications for teachers operating in such educational contexts. According to Muldrow (2013), those teachers should provide students with an incentive to engage their cooperation and guarantee their compliance with the method. Incentives increase students' motivation and consequently affect their emotional engagement positively. Moreover, educators should allow students a period of adjustment to this teaching approach and not be discouraged by students' initial resistance.

Thirdly, although previous studies conducted by Khalil (2005) and Mathew et al. (2013) in the context of Oman indicated that male and female students engaged in EFL courses differently, this study's findings were different. It was revealed that engagement in the flipped class was dependent on individual students' capacities and the study skills they had developed prior to the flipped learning experience rather than on their gender. This suggests that educators operating in co-educational and single-sex environments could adopt flipping as a model of instruction while ensuring that their students are engaged fairly in the course. This is particularly relevant in Oman, where male-female interaction is limited and utilising a large amount of group work that involves members from different genders, as is the case in a flipped class, could be problematic.

It should also be noted that educators, either in Oman or in similar contexts, should be aware of the correlation between age and students' behavioural engagement. Compared to their younger counterparts, adult students could be more behaviourally engaged due to their high level of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning, as Okuniewski (2014), Pfenninger and Singleton (2016) and Xu and Rod (2015) indicate. Merriam and Bierema (2013) argue that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation boost students' behavioural engagement. Thus, the findings have implications for the teaching of adult learners who could benefit from being taught in a flipped

class by being more behaviourally engaged; however, the findings also have implications for the teaching of younger students. It is important for instructors to explain the potential benefits of the flipped instructional model to students and to provide them with a motive to comply with its rules and requirements.

Furthermore, there are two major factors which educators should consider carefully before applying this novel instructional approach in the Omani context, especially in GFP courses. Firstly, the study revealed a lower level of engagement among students whose linguistic skills are average and/or poor. This has implications for the implementation of flipping with beginner and elementary level students, who could experience challenges in coping with this course design. With the existing difficulties that students face in a writing course, flipping could be counterproductive and could lead to disengagement (Moran, 2014). Caution should also be exercised when teaching mixed-ability classes since low-performing students could be disadvantaged in a flipped classroom. Secondly, it is important for EFL educators to take into account students' knowledge of and access to technology before deciding to integrate flipping in their writing classes. Lock (2015) and Loucky (2017) warn that the utilisation of complex, unfamiliar and inaccessible technological tools could be unfavourable to some students. Consequently, the study's findings have direct implications for flipped writing course design, particularly for the learning tools instructors employ. Such tools should be familiar, user-friendly and, most importantly, accessible, given that most GFP students in Oman live in university dormitories which may not be equipped with the required technological facilities to complete the pre-class learning tasks.

Finally, although the study focused on a standalone flipped EFL writing course, the study also has implications for integrated skills courses. Partial flipping could be utilised to teach the

writing portion of an integrated lesson while still taking the abovementioned success factors into consideration.

6.4 Implications for Practice

According to Bassey (2003), disciplinary research in the education field is a critical and systematic form of inquiry which aims to inform researchers' understanding of a particular phenomenon with the purpose of improving action. Furthermore, Lester (2004) argues that practitioner research contributes significantly to the researcher's practice.

Being the researcher and course instructor, the study provides me with a theoretical framework for the application of flipped instruction in the Omani educational context. This will inform my future decisions and judgements about the application of this novel teaching approach in writing classes and other EFL courses as well. Furthermore, the study contributed to my understanding of a vital aspect of students' learning, i.e. engagement, its four-dimensional nature and the impact of my instruction on each of these dimensions. The study suggests that flipped instruction could contribute to solving the issue of Omani students' disengagement in writing courses. In addressing this issue, however, it is important to consider the following student-related factors to ensure the success of a flipped course:

- linguistic proficiency
- technology skills
- access to hardware and software
- access to the Internet
- familiarity with the mobile phone applications utilised

- familiarity with the flipped teaching approach.

Along with the abovementioned factors, it is equally important for me to identify practical ways to reduce students' initial anxiety and frustration. Emotional engagement is considered a prerequisite for learning (Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), and in the presence of negative feelings, student engagement and learning could be hampered. It would be possible to reduce students' anxiety by allowing them a minimum of a one-week period of adjustment in which they would receive practical training and guidance on the use of the various technological tools adopted in the flipped class (Crouch & Mazur, 2001; Garver & Roberts, 2013). One-to-one discussions and individual support could also reduce students' anxiety and speed up the transition process.

6.5 Implications for the Institution

According to Field (2011), policy planning and implementation could benefit more from some forms of evidence than others. Evidence derived from practitioner research is invaluable for decision-making. This study's findings suggest that flipping could address the problem of students' lack of academic engagement in the current context. Therefore, the institution should undergo several changes in order to integrate this novel teaching approach successfully (see Figure 6.1).

Firstly, in order to optimise the efficiency of flipped teaching, the current organisational technology infrastructure should be revamped to provide good-quality software, hardware and Internet access to all students inside and outside the campus. This will ensure that no student is disadvantaged by being taught in the flipped model. Moreover, IT personnel in the institution

should be available to provide assistance to teachers and students when required (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).

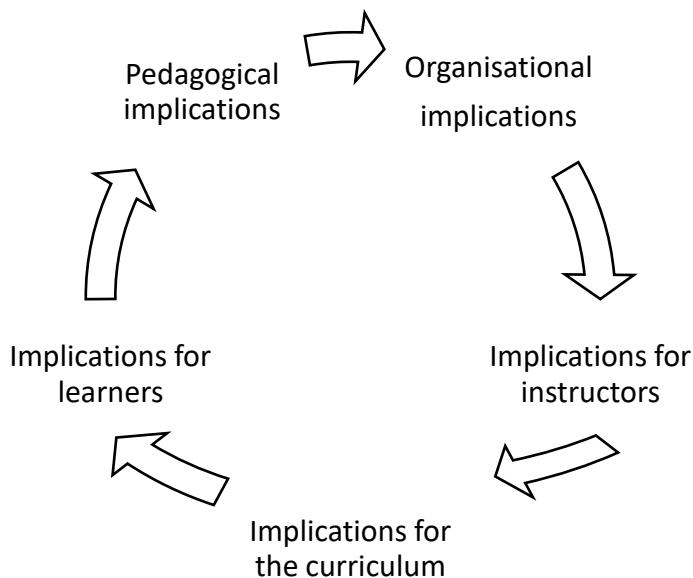


Figure 6.1 Institutional Implications of the Study

According to Kim et al. (2014) and Velegol et al. (2015), the successful implementation of flipped instruction may require the institution to provide opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge of this instructional approach, the flipped lesson design principles, and the technologies that support this teaching model. This is required in the current context and could be achieved through workshops and practical training prior to its implementation in actual classes. This would improve the flipped lessons that teachers deliver to their students.

Thirdly, the study has implications for the curriculum and for learners. Flipped instruction does not encourage rote-learning (Entwistle, 1991; Garver & Roberts, 2013). For this reason, the institution should review the current curricula accordingly and integrate more learning activities that target students' higher-order thinking skills. Simultaneously, learners should be ready to adopt new learning strategies to cope with such curricula and the teaching techniques utilised,

which might require a shift in students' learning culture, as Hamdan et al. (2013) rightly point out.

Finally, the study encourages discussion about alternative teaching models which could be useful for instructors of other courses, and the institution should discuss the integration of innovative teaching practices that are grounded in and supported by research evidence. Such discussions have an immediate positive influence on instructors' practices, and an indirect positive impact on students' learning and organisational advancement.

6.6 Limitations

This research aimed to contribute to ongoing discussions about student engagement and flipped English language instruction. Before suggesting any future research implications, however, it is necessary to address the study's limitations. Firstly, the current study has methodological limitations. It was conducted in two classes where students were studying either full-time or part-time and involved 57 students of the 180 students enrolled in Level 3 of the GFP at the time. Therefore, it is not possible to generalise the findings to other contexts due to the specificity of each educational environment. Nonetheless, educators and other stakeholders can recognise similarities with their own educational setting and identify the relevance of the study's findings and conclusions.

Another limitation relates to the data collection tools. Despite being the most widely used (Chapman, 2003) and the most useful tool to collect data about student engagement in a school subject (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Robson, 2002) and to establish relationships between variables (Cohen et al., 2011; Scott & Usher, 2011), self-report questionnaires had several

drawbacks. There are four issues which are pertinent to this particular study and which could have affected the quality of the data obtained. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010, pp. 8-9) refer to these issues as “social desirability”, “self-deception”, “acquiescence bias” and the “halo effect”. The first two issues are closely related in the sense that they refer to the participants’ conscious and unconscious readiness to provide true answers about what they believe. The respondents may not provide authentic perceptions and may respond with what is socially desirable and/or expected instead. Acquiescence bias is used to describe the tendency among respondents to agree with all statements when their feelings and attitudes are ambivalent and uncertain. The fourth issue, i.e. the halo effect, refers to the participants’ tendency to overgeneralise positive and/or negative impressions of a topic, which leads them to respond to related questionnaire items accordingly.

Social desirability and self-deception may have influenced some respondents’ answers in this study. Since the data collected was centred on students’ engagement in the flipped writing classes, there may have been a tendency among some students to overestimate their engagement and to provide inaccurate answers about their actual involvement, especially at the behavioural level. This problem may have been partially overcome by administering the questionnaire twice during the study. Acquiescence bias may also have influenced the data quality. Considering the fact that retrospection constitutes the basis for students’ responses, some of them may have failed to remember and/or assess their engagement, specifically their cognitive engagement (Chapman, 2003), and consequently agreed with all positive statements. Moreover, the challenges that some students faced initially could have resulted in a cognitive bias, which led them to give negative responses when they evaluated their emotional engagement in the course. These concerns have been partially addressed in this study through the triangulation of data collection methods, which Flick (2009, pp. 26-27) considers as “the complementary compensation of the weakness and

blind spots of each single method". Allowing students to look again at my interpretation of the data, however, could have further reduced the negative effect of acquiescence and cognitive bias.

The group interviews also had certain limitations. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) argue that the creation of an environment where the interviewees feel free to express their opinions openly without feeling threatened and/or evaluated is essential to obtain accurate interview data. In this study, a good rapport was maintained with the participants throughout the duration of the study and during the interviews, which felt more like informal conversations. The questions asked could have raised another issue in the interviews. According to Robson (2002), double-barrelled and/or leading questions affect the quality of data obtained and should be avoided. The pilot study helped to overcome this issue, as irrelevant questions in the original interview were replaced with more relevant ones and ambiguous questions were rephrased and translated. Sub-questions were also added where required.

6.7 Future Research

Limited research has been conducted on Omani EFL students' engagement in language skills such as writing and on the way this multidimensional construct is influenced by teachers' instructional approaches. Based on the data analysed in this study, the flipped classroom emerges as a potentially novel teaching model which is worthy of further investigation. More practice-based research studies are required to demonstrate how the various language skills could be taught using the flipped approach. It is equally important to conduct research to investigate the impact of flipped teaching on the engagement of students in other language skills, specifically reading, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, it is necessary to explore

other aspects of students' learning in relation to flipped instruction, including examination pass rates and academic achievement.

At the methodological level, this study was conducted in two classes and involved students enrolled in Level 3 of the GFP. To gain a better understanding of how flipped instruction influences students' engagement, more studies involving larger samples should be conducted in different contexts to identify the factors that could interact with this instructional method to influence students' engagement. The study also showed that the duration of the study influenced some aspects of students' engagement, including their emotional engagement and their ability to contribute their own learning materials and tasks. Consequently, studies of a more longitudinal nature are needed to identify whether students' engagement increases or decreases according to the duration of the flipped course. The study also indicated that a lack of clarity exists in the conceptualisation and design principles of flipped EFL instruction. Therefore, conducting studies that help to frame the main design principles of a flipped EFL course will be required in the future to help develop a framework for the implementation of flipping in English language classes.

6.8 Reflections on my Doctoral Journey

Despite the challenges I faced, my doctoral study at the University of Liverpool was a turning point in my life. It was a journey of academic, intellectual, personal and spiritual growth which exemplifies what Taylor (2007, p. 173) refers to as “transformative learning”.

Prior to this doctoral program, I was oblivious to basic research concepts and skills, which restricted the opportunities available to me to disseminate my ideas and hampered my academic

growth. This doctoral program helped me to overcome these limitations. I have acquired and mastered several research skills which marked my migration into the publication culture (Hartley, 2008). I was therefore able to publish a chapter in an edited book and an article in the *Arab World English Journal*. I was also invited to present papers at two international conferences in Oman and the UAE and to give demonstration lessons to my department faculty members to familiarise them with the flipped instructional model. According to Brockbank and McGill (2007), Brookfield (1998) and Cottrell (2005), critical reflection, critical analysis and critical thinking result in educational, personal and professional growth. The use of these skills throughout the program has influenced these aspects of my life considerably and transformed my world view.

This doctoral journey has also been an excellent opportunity for me to question pre-established assumptions about several aspects of my academic life, including concepts that relate to higher education. More specifically, the thesis phase led me to question long-held beliefs about the nature of learning and of students' engagement. What I previously considered the main indicator of students' engagement in my courses turned out to be only one of its four aspects. In other words, students' behavioural engagement says nothing about their emotional, cognitive and agentic engagement since it is only one dimension of this important construct. Consequently, my instruction in the future should target the four engagement dimensions to maximise EFL students' learning.

Finally, I have been happy with the topic I chose for my dissertation because of the value it could add to the EFL knowledge base in Oman and similar educational contexts. The project was an opportunity for me to experiment with a novel teaching method. It was conducted in my workplace and was therefore a type of "meta-practice" or "a practice-changing practice", as

Kemmis (2009, p. 467) refers to it. Therefore, my research may contribute to a foundation for the establishment of an alternative EFL teaching approach and could also provide a practical solution for many teachers in HEIs in Oman and similar contexts who are constantly challenged by the realities of the EFL classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix I: The Student Engagement Questionnaire

I, Afaf Ahmed Gasmi, am conducting this survey to understand how Level 3 students engage in flipped writing classes. I would like to ask you to help me by answering the following questions.

This is not a test so there is no “right” or “wrong” answers and you don’t have to write your name on it. This questionnaire has 6 parts. Please read the instructions carefully and give your answers honestly. Your responses are strictly confidential and will be used for the research purposes only.

Thank you very much for your help.

Part I

In this section, I would like you to tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Circle one number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any of the items.

Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
6	5	4	3	2	1

Agentic Engagement	
1. I asked questions about the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	
2. I expressed my opinions about the learning materials I reviewed outside class to the teacher.	
3. I told the teacher what I liked about the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	
4. I let my teacher know what I found interesting in the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	
5. I expressed my preferences about the learning materials I reviewed outside class to the teacher.	
6. I asked questions about the tasks I completed outside class.	
7. I expressed my opinions about the tasks I completed outside class to the teacher.	
8. I told the teacher what I liked about the tasks I completed outside class.	
9. I gave the teacher suggestions about how to make the learning materials better.	
10. I gave the teacher suggestions about how to make the out-of-class tasks better.	

Part II

Behavioural Engagement	
1. I completed all the short quizzes on Edmodo.	
2. I tried very hard to answer the questions in the short quizzes correctly.	
3. I read the texts assigned to me outside class carefully.	
4. I read what my classmates wrote on PADLET carefully.	
5. I participated in the discussion forums on Edmodo.	
6. I searched the internet for information whenever needed.	
7. I watched all the educational videos available on Edmodo.	

8. I participated when the new learning materials were discussed in class.
9. If I did not understand a new concept in the learning materials I went over it again and again until I understood it.
10. I was careful when I reviewed the new learning materials before class.
11. I reviewed the information in the presentations carefully.
12. If I came across a new concept that I did not understand in the learning materials I skipped it.
13. I worked hard to understand the new learning materials.
14. If I could not understand a new idea in the learning materials right the first time I kept trying.
15. If the learning materials were difficult to understand, I just stopped reviewing them.

Part III

Cognitive Engagement
1. I reviewed the learning materials before class.
2. I planned how I would review the learning materials before class.
3. It was difficult for me to find time to review the learning materials before class.
4. I found it difficult to organize the time to review the learning materials effectively.
5. When I was reviewing the learning materials I kept track of how much I understood.
6. When I was reviewing the learning materials I took note of the information I did not understand.
7. When I was reviewing the learning materials before class, I was only concerned with finishing them all not understanding.
8. I used my own words to summarize the learning materials I reviewed before class.
9. While learning new concepts in the learning materials, I tried to think of how to put them in practice in class.
10. When I was reviewing the learning materials before class, I tried to relate the new materials to what I already knew.
11. I searched for other sources to help me understand the information presented in the learning materials.
12. I compared different concepts introduced in the learning materials I reviewed before class.
13. When I did not understand something in the learning materials I reviewed outside class, I asked questions to understand them.
14. I tried to combine the different ideas presented in the learning materials into some order that made sense to me.
15. I evaluated the usefulness of the ideas presented in the learning materials I reviewed outside class.

Part IV

Emotional Engagement
1. I enjoyed reviewing the learning materials before class.
2. When I completed the short quizzes before class I felt interested.
3. I enjoyed participating in the discussion forums before class.
4. When I reviewed the new learning materials before class I felt interested.
5. When I participated in the discussion forums before class I felt interested.
6. Reviewing the learning materials before class in fun.
7. I enjoyed doing the short quizzes before class.
8. Reviewing the new learning materials before class made me feel unhappy.
9. Completing the short quizzes before class made me feel unhappy.
10. Participating in the discussions on PADLET before class made me feel unhappy.
11. When I review the learning materials before class, I feel scared.
12. When I complete the short quizzes before class, I feel scared.
13. When I participate in the discussion forums on PADLET before class, I feel scared.

Part V

These are new questions but answer them in the same way as you did before. Circle one number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any of the items.

Very much	Quite a lot	A little	So-so	Not so much	Not at al
6	5	4	3	2	1

The biggest gain from reviewing the learning materials and doing the other tasks before class in this course was...
1. I learned to ask questions.
2. I learned to express my opinions about what I did before class.
3. I learned to tell the teacher what I liked about the learning materials.
4. I learned to give the teacher suggestions about how to make the learning materials better.
5. It helped me to develop new skills.
6. I was able to identify what I did not understand before class and to focus on it.
7. I learned to plan my time to prepare for the module before class.
8. I learned to put what I learned from the materials I reviewed outside class in practice inside class.
9. I learned to persevere when I didn't understand.
10. I learned to work hard to understand the new learning materials.
11. I learned to be careful when reviewing the new learning materials.
12. I learned to participate in discussions of the new learning materials.

13. I learned that reviewing materials before class is fun.

14. I developed interest in the writing module.

Part VI

In this part, I would like you to provide the following information by ticking (✓) the boxes.

1. **Gender** Male Female
2. **Age** 18-23 24-29 30-35
 35-40 40 and above
3. **Nationality** Omani Non-Omani
4. **Mode of study** Full-time Part-time
5. **Employment status** Employed Unemployed
6. **Technology skills** Excellent
 Very good
 Good
 Average
 Poor
7. **Years of learning English** _____
8. **English language proficiency** Excellent
 Very good
 Good
 Average
 Poor
9. How much time did you spend reviewing the writing materials?
- Zero (0) hours/week 1-5 hours/week
 6-10 hours/week 11-15 hours/week
 15+ hours/week 20+ hours/week

Appendix II: Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview

1. How would you describe your overall learning experience in the flipped writing class?
 - a. What benefit did you get as a student in the flipped writing course?
 - b. What challenges have you faced in the flipped writing class?
2. Could you describe how you prepare for the flipped writing class every week?
 - a. How did you manage to watch the videos and complete the other tasks (quizzes, discussions) before class?
3. How has the way you dealt with the learning materials i.e. educational videos and presentations changed during the course?
4. How has the way you dealt with the tasks i.e. quizzes and discussions changed during the course?
 - a. What study habits have changed as a result of being a student in the flipped writing class?
 - b. What new skills have you learned in the flipped writing class?
5. How did you use the tasks which you completed outside class inside the class?
6. How did you deal with the new and difficult concepts introduced in the materials before class?
7. Which task did you find the most interesting and useful in the flipped writing class and why?
8. How did flipped teaching improve your learning experience in the writing class?
9. What could be changed in the flipped writing class to make it more effective and useful?
10. At the end of this course, how would you describe your feelings as a student in the flipped writing class?
 - a. Did you experience any negative feelings in the flipped writing class?
 - b. Specifically, did you feel unhappy or scared in the flipped writing class?
 - When did you have such feeling?
 - Why did you have such feeling?
11. Has anything in you changed as a result of participating in the flipped writing class?
 - a. Have your views about learning and about being a student changed in the flipped writing class?
 - b. Explain how your views have changed.
 - c. Why have your views changed?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix III: Observation Scheme Checklist

General Information:

1. Observed participant's name: _____
2. Observation date: _____
3. Observation number: 1st 2nd
4. Video watched: Yes No
5. Out-of-class quiz completed: Yes No
6. Posted information on PADLET: Yes No
7. Participated in the discussion forum on Edmodo: Yes No

Comments: _____

		Not at all true (1)	Not very true (2)	Sort of true (3)	Very true (4)
When we start working on the tasks related to the new materials in class this student ...					
Behavioural Engagement	1. Participates in discussions				
	2. Works as hard as he/she can				
	3. Listens carefully				
	4. Does more than required (e.g. brings extra materials to discuss in class)				
Emotional Engagement	5. Seems interested				
	6. Is enthusiastic				
	7. Appears involved				
	8. Seems to be happy				
Agentic Engagement	9. Asks questions about the tasks completed outside class				
	10. Expresses his/her opinions about the tasks completed outside class				
	11. Offers the teacher suggestions about how to improve the tasks completed outside class				
	12. Lets the teacher know what he/she found interesting in the tasks completed outside class				
Cognitive Engagement	13. Uses the concepts introduced in the learning materials in class				
	14. Relates the new materials to what he/she does in class				
	15. Keeps track of what he/she does not understand				
	16. Compares the new concepts				

Appendix IV: Participants' Information Sheet

1. Title of Study: An Investigation of the impact of flipped teaching classroom pedagogy on EFL students' engagement with writing skills: A case study of foundation students in Oman

2. Invitation Paragraph:

You are being invited to participate in a mixed methods research project. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this project is to design and implement a mixed method research study into the impact of 'flipped' classroom design on the engagement of EFL (English as Foreign Language) students enrolled in Level 3 of the general foundation program (GFP) with writing skills. The flipped classroom design entails reversing the order of classroom activities where key concepts are introduced to students outside the classroom through different means while class time is reserved mainly for practice.

The research activities intend to introduce and to familiarize the students with a novel teaching approach to enrich their learning experience and to investigate the possible impacts this approach has on their engagement with an important language skill, namely writing.

4. Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been selected to participate in this research for two main reasons. First and foremost, because you are a GFP Level 3 student. Second, as a student enrolled in this level of the GFP and soon enrolling in undergraduate courses, participation in this research introduces you to a new teaching and learning approach which enriches your experience as a student and which could be useful for you in the future..

This study involves a minimum of 30 participants and a maximum of 70, and extends over a period of 12 weeks.

5. Do I have to take part?

NO. Your participation is entirely voluntary and even if you begin participation, you are free and have the right to withdraw anytime without explanation or penalty. Your rights will not be affected as a result of your withdrawal. If you choose not to participate, no data related to you or your work will be used or reported in the research study unless your permission is obtained

6. What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to take part, the data gathered during this research project will be used to write a thesis report in the fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctor of Education (EdD) in a program run by University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. The research data is primary, qualitative as well as quantitative in nature. Some potential sources of primary data include interviews, surveys, and observations.

- Surveys of the participants (to guarantee confidentiality and privacy participants will take a paper-based survey which will not take more than 30 minutes to complete during under the supervision of a colleague during week 13/last week of the academic semester and the data collection phase)
- Classroom observations and field notes of the researcher (each participant will be observed twice at distant intervals for duration of 2 hours i.e. a total of 4 hours during data collection). Observations will be non-obtrusive and will not have any effect on the participants' studies.
- Focus group interviews (approximately one hour long, audio-recorded with your permission, conducted, if you agree, in the audio-visual room to be booked in advance for the purpose and where participants will not be disrupted and/or identified by a third party). If you are not comfortable with the suggested location of the interview, we will agree on another location where your privacy and identity will be protected. You will be asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement before the interview starts to ensure the content of the discussion will not be disclosed to any third party.

All data will be gathered prior to August 30, 2016 and participation in the study will end then (i.e. no data will be gathered after August 30, 2016).

7. Expenses and / or payments

The research will be conducted within the institution (Middle East College), so no expenses are required. Similarly, a reimbursement for taking part in the study is not expected.

8. Are there any risks in taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will experience any risks, harm or expenses from participating in this research study. However, it is expected that participants will be committed and some may feel they have to work harder to cope with the flipped model of learning. The research process specifically the classroom observations will take place during the weekly 7-hour writing classes, which are taken by all Level 3 students every semester. Although the researcher plays a dual role (researcher-teacher) her two roles do not interfere and are completely separated throughout the project. Participants in the study will also not be disadvantaged in any way. First, the same course materials (Level 3 syllabus) will be covered within the same time period (12 weeks excluding the Mid-Term and Final-Exam weeks). What differs in the participants' case is the method of presentation only. Second, bias will be avoided since the exams that participants take are not designed by the researcher. Moreover, participants' writing scripts (produced in both exams) will be assessed by other faculty members in the department, as per the college regulations.

The main benefit of participating in this study will be the exposure to a different EFL teaching-learning approach and therefore learning experience.

9. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by contacting my first supervisor Dr. Michael Thomas at michael.thomas@online.liverpool.ac.uk and/or my second supervisor Dr. Peter Kahn at peter.kahn@liverpool.ac.uk If you are unhappy then you can contact me Afef Gasmi at afef.gasmi@online.liverpool.ac.uk and I will try to help. If you still

remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with then you should contact the Research Participant Advocate (USA number 001-612-312-1210 or email address liverpoolethics@ohcampus.com). When contacting the Research Participant Advocate please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

You can also contact Dr. Kiran, Head of the Teaching and Learning Department in the college at kirangr@mec.edu.om if you have any concerns.

10. Will my participation be kept confidential?

Any data that is generated through participation in this research project will be kept confidential during and after the research process. All the electronic files will be encrypted and saved in my password protected personal computer which accessed only by me. All the research hard copies and recordings will be placed in my private cabinet which is secured and under lock and key. Anonymous data generated from participants in this study will be stored for a maximum of five years after which all data will be destroyed.

Participants will not be made recognizable at any stage of the research. Anonymity will be maintained during the data collection, analysis and reporting stages through the use of a coding system. During the focus group interviews all participants will have to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that what is discussed is not disclosed outside the group. Names are not needed in this research and therefore no names shall be used to refer to any participant during the discussion.

11. What will happen to the results of the study?

As soon as the thesis is completed around January 2016, the anonymous results of your participation will be made available to you through your email if you wish.

The anonymous results will be compiled and reported within the University of Liverpool to fulfil the requirements of the EdD program, and shared within the Centre for Foundation Studies in MEC in order to improve practice. Participants' data will be made unidentifiable. Both names and potentially identifying characteristics and demographic information will be removed from any shared data.

12. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You may withdraw anytime without explanation or penalty. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise, you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them.

13. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

My contact details are: Afef Ahmed Gasmi

Mobile Number: 95099255 Email Address: afef.gasmi@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Work Address: Middle East College, Knowledge Oasis Muscat, The Sultanate of Oman

POB 79 P.C 124

Appendix V: Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: An investigation of the impact of flipped teaching classroom pedagogy on EFL students' engagement with writing skills: A case study of foundation students in Oman

Researcher: Afaf Gasmi

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet [dated 22/09/2015] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications and that codes will be used during the various phases of the research process.
5. I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for data analysis and reporting purposes.
6. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Principal Investigator: Afef Gasmi

Date: 24/1/2016

Work Address: Middle East College, Centre for Foundation Studies
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Appendix VI

Nvivo Coding (Keywords and Phrases)

The screenshot displays the Nvivo software interface with a list of nodes. The nodes are organized into hierarchical groups, and each node is associated with a specific number of sources and references. The interface includes a menu bar at the top, a search bar, and a sidebar on the left with navigation options like Sources, Nodes, Classifications, Collections, Queries, and Folders. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the system clock as 6:20 PM on 4/2/2017.

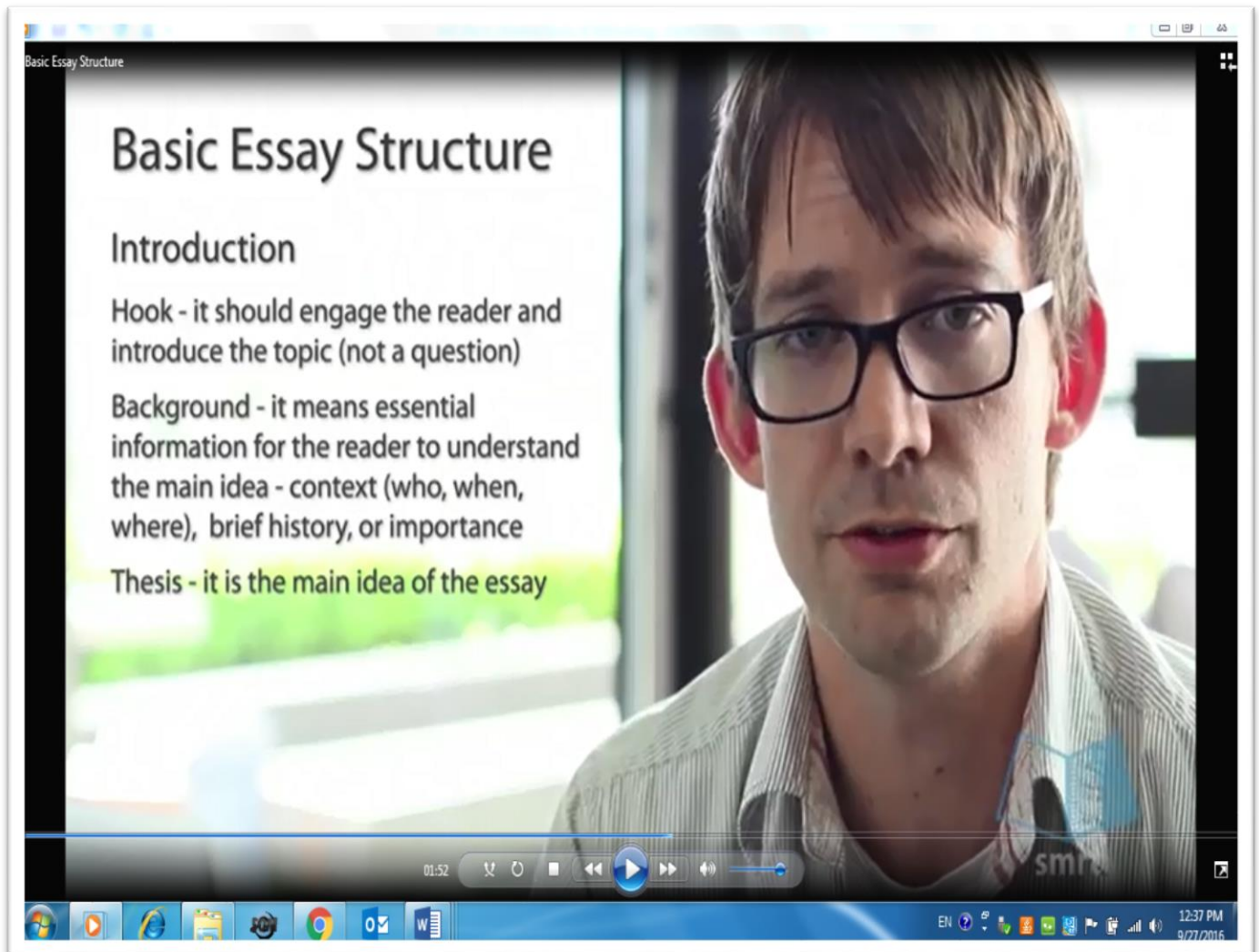
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Behavioral Engagement	8	149	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF	6/19/2016 10:21 PM	AF
Increased effort	0	0	8/20/2016 9:34 PM	AF	8/20/2016 9:34 PM	AF
Lethargy	1	2	6/20/2016 8:58 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:30 AM	AF
change of attitude towards attendance class attendance	5	9	6/19/2016 11:47 PM	AF	8/22/2016 7:32 PM	AF
Improved communication	7	25	6/19/2016 10:54 PM	AF	8/21/2016 10:06 AM	AF
Increase preparation time for the skill	8	44	6/11/2016 12:03 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:30 AM	AF
Increased attention	8	28	6/11/2016 12:14 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:30 AM	AF
Learned to persist and persevere	8	40	6/20/2016 8:55 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:30 AM	AF
Student Agency	8	68	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF	6/21/2016 11:21 PM	AF
Express opinion	3	3	6/17/2016 11:56 PM	AF	6/22/2016 10:42 PM	AF
teacher is not the only source of information	4	9	6/20/2016 11:13 PM	AF	8/26/2016 7:38 PM	AF
Increased student autonomy	8	55	6/11/2016 12:29 PM	AF	8/27/2016 11:44 AM	AF
Cognitive Engagement	8	266	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF
Adopt new learning strategies	5	18	6/19/2016 11:15 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:30 AM	AF
Learn and use new skills	7	31	6/17/2016 11:32 PM	AF	8/21/2016 9:47 AM	AF
Cognitive development	7	20	6/21/2016 8:56 PM	AF	8/20/2016 10:29 PM	AF
Awareness of one's learning process	7	93	6/21/2016 11:38 PM	AF	8/26/2016 11:05 AM	AF
Development of self-regulatory strategies	8	104	8/20/2016 10:17 PM	AF	8/25/2016 12:16 PM	AF
Emotional Engagement	8	167	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF	6/11/2016 11:08 AM	AF
Shift in attitude toward FT	5	11	6/19/2016 10:30 PM	AF	8/26/2016 7:38 PM	AF
Anxiety	6	31	6/20/2016 8:50 PM	AF	8/26/2016 12:38 PM	AF
Anger	6	29	8/21/2016 9:51 AM	AF	8/26/2016 12:37 PM	AF

Appendix VII: Writing Course Weekly Outline

Week No	Pre-Class	In-Class
(1) Basic Essay Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch 'Basic Essay Format' video 2. Complete the 'Basic Essay Format' quiz 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback on the materials reviewed 2. Rearrange parts of a sample essay 3. De-construct an essay 4. Identify different basic essay parts
(2) Basic Essay Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch 'How to Write a Thesis Statement' video 2. Do the 'Thesis statement' Quiz 3. Read the common problems of the thesis statement Microsoft document 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback on the materials reviewed 2. Rearrange parts of an introduction 3. Analyse thesis statements for mistakes 4. Choose the best thesis statement 5. Complete thesis statements
(3) Basic Essay Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch 'Paragraph Structure Video' 2. Complete the 'Basic Paragraph Structure' quiz 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback on the materials reviewed 2. Rearrange parts of a paragraph 3. Identify topic sentences in paragraphs 4. Insert topic sentences in a text 5. Write topic sentences 6. Analyse concluding sentences 7. Write concluding sentences to paragraphs
(4) Comparison & Contrast Essay	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch the 'Comparison and Contrast Essay' video 2. Do the 'Comparison and Contrast Essay' quiz 3. Participate in the discussion forum (Which is better school or college?) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback on the materials reviewed 2. Deconstruct a sample comparison and contrast essay 3. Complete a gapped text 4. Discuss the main similarities and differences between school and college 5. Write a comparison and contrast essay (School vs College)
(5) Conjunctions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch a narrated PPT (Linking Words & Phrases) 2. Review the list of linking words and phrases in the Microsoft document 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feedback on the materials reviewed 2. Analyse conjunctions 3. Complete a paragraph using contrast transitions 4. Complete a paragraph using similarity transitions

<p>(6) Comparison & Contrast Essay</p>	<p>1. Post 2 ideas to PADLET (Life in the City versus Life in the Village) http://padlet.com/AfafGasmi/zj52xzybgpce</p>	<p>1. Discuss the similarities and differences between life in the city and life in the village using the ideas on PADLET 2. Select arguments 3. Arrange arguments 4. Group arguments into similarities and differences 5. Add supporting sentences 6. Write an essay comparing and contrasting city and village life</p>
<p>(7) Exam</p>		
<p>(8) Active versus Passive</p>	<p>1. Watch the ‘Active versus Passive Voice’ narrated PPT. 2. Do the Active versus Passive Voice quiz.</p>	<p>1. Feedback on the materials reviewed & Socratic Quiz 2. Rearrange words to form passive or active sentence 3. Analyse sentences, tick the correct sentences and correct the wrong ones 4. Form passive sentences</p>
<p>(9) Evaluation Essay</p>	<p>1. Watch the ‘Evaluation Essay’ narrated PPT 2. Complete a quiz about the major constituents of an evaluation essay 3. Contribute to a discussion about the importance of tourism in Oman</p>	<p>1. Check understanding of the materials: group discussion 2. Adopt a process writing approach to write the first draft evaluation essay 3. Construct and de-construct an evaluation essay and use it for comparison with specific focus on the use of cohesive devices 4. Write the second draft of the essay</p>
<p>(10) Chart Description</p>	<p>1. Watch ‘Bar Chart’ and ‘Line Chart’ description’ YouTube videos 2. Complete the Chart Description quiz</p>	<p>1. Check understanding: question/answer & name trends 2. Study a line chart to get general information 3. Analyze a chart description for coherence and cohesion 4. Collaborate to write a chart description</p>

Appendix VIII: Screenshot of a YouTube Video_ Basic essay structure
(Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P4fzbzwwAg>)



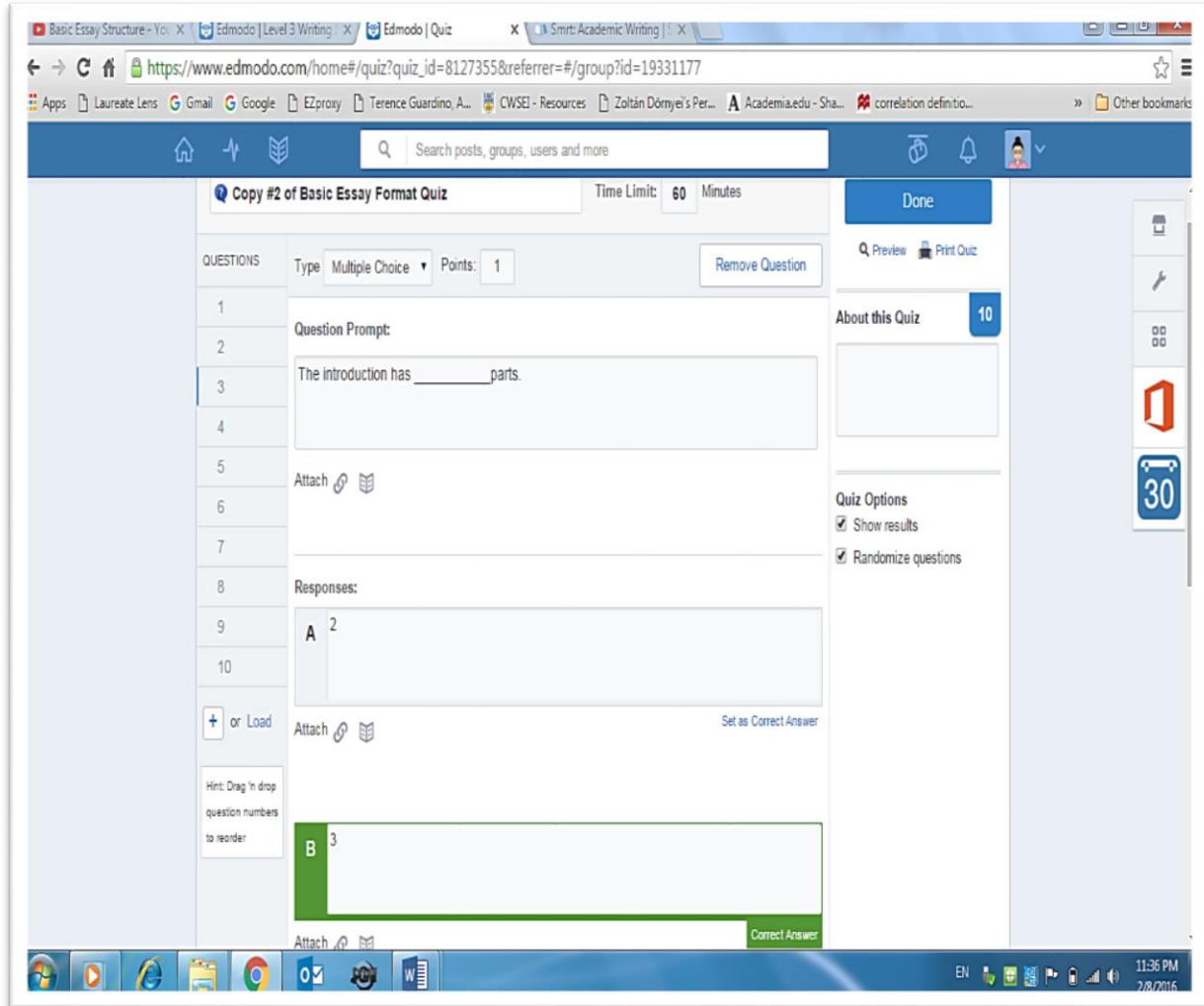
Appendix IX: Screenshot of a Narrated PowerPoint Presentation

The screenshot shows a PowerPoint slide titled "Active versus Passive Voice" in the top left corner. The main heading is "a. Steps of changing a sentence from active to passive" in orange text, preceded by an orange arrow. Below this, the slide is divided into two phases:

- Phase 1**
 1. Underline the subject in the active sentence
 2. Underline the object in the active sentence
 3. Underline the verb and identify its tense (i.e. present simple, past simple, past continuous...)
- Phase 2**
 1. Change the places of the subject and object (i.e. the subject becomes object and the object becomes a subject)
 2. Add 'by' before the object in the passive sentence (Note: sometimes it is not necessary to add 'by')

The slide is displayed within a video player interface. The player shows a timestamp of 07:36 and includes standard playback controls. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 8:44 PM on 2/29/2016, with various application icons and system tray icons.

Appendix X: Screenshot of a Weekly Short Quiz



Appendix XI: Screenshot of a Brainstorming Page

Life in the City and Life in the Village. Session B

Use This page to state your ideas about the similarities and differences between city and village life.

Cities get expanded and more opportunities are made available for the people flooding in. New ventures, experiments and socializing happen in cities.

The life in a city is almost equal to heaven and wonderful and enjoyable.

In my opinion city better than life in the village difference between life in city. For example, in city has a lot of job and it has a big of buildings

life in the village difference between life in city. For example, in city has a lot of job and it has a big of buildings

Cities provide great facilities for education, medical treatments and job opportunities.

The people are more considerate and know each other in the village.

life in the village differs totally from that in the city. they differ at the level of many things such as

- simplicity (versus complexity)
- fresh air (versus crowd and pollution)

In my opinion city better than for couple of reasons: 1. easy access to utilities like medical centers, universities, find job faster and easier

I think there are two major differences between life in the village and the city life:

- 1- Lifestyle
- 2- Facilities

Living in the capital better because all colleges and hospitals are widely available but in the village there is calm and relaxing

in my opinion city better than village for many reasons: First: its more opportunities to find job second: easy access to medical centers, universities, third: find more places for purchasing of home appliances and etc...

the life in a city is so different than a village

most people prefer life in the city because there are all the modern ways of life such as education, hospitals, transportation and other services

in the village most of people know each other

Villages and cities have a water supply and electricity. people who live in a city and a village have customs and traditions.

in the city there is traffic in every where in the city there are a lot of colleges and schools

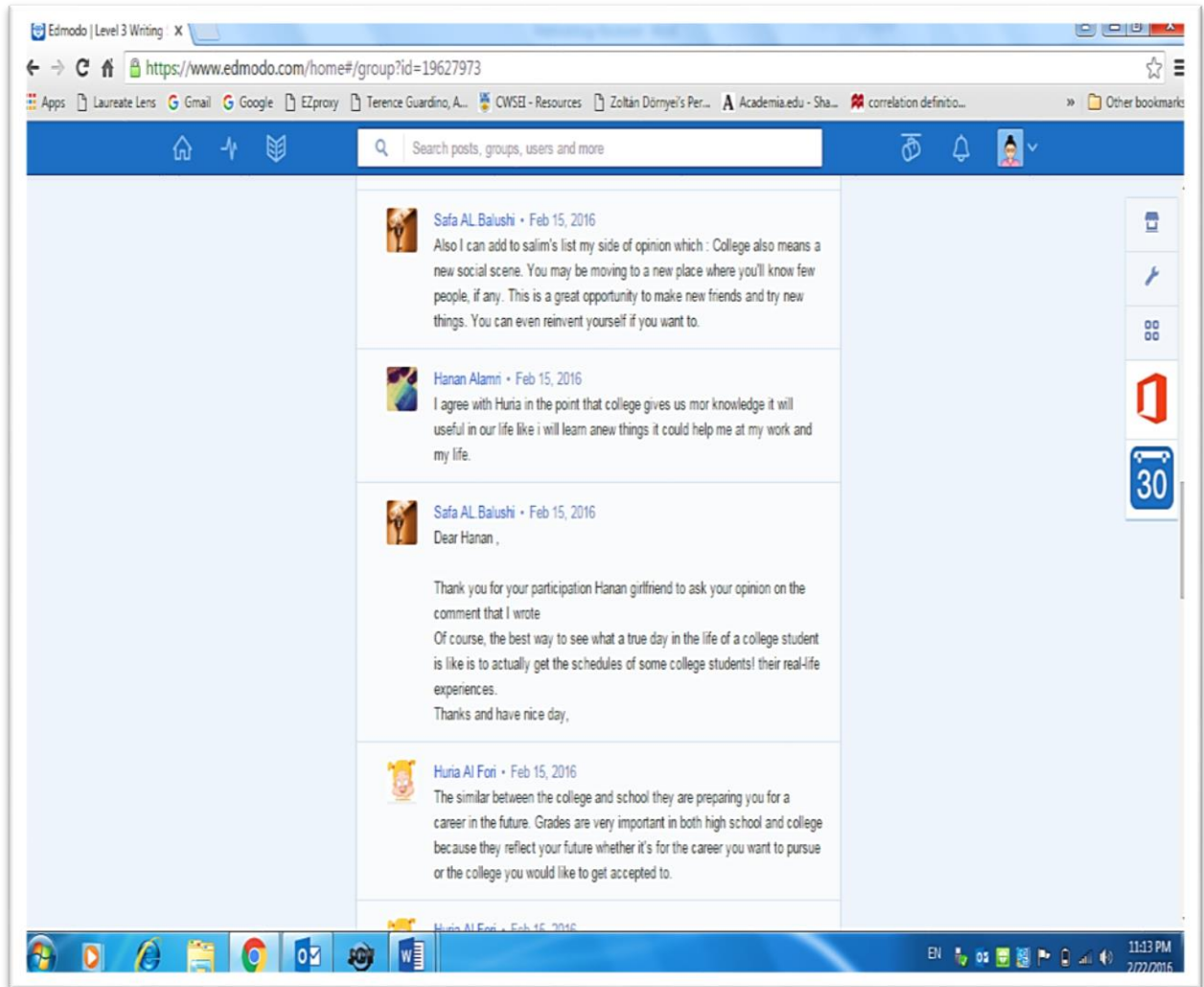
In the city, they have a lot of buildings and markets. However, in the village they have little houses and small markets. people who live in the village have farms but, in the city, they don't have farms.

Ha
Life in city better than village because in city you can find everything you need it but in villages you can not find everything.

in my opinion I think village better than city because less crowding and noise. Also the air is pure you can walk any time between the farms because the air is pure. further more there are strong relationships between the neighbours.

People prefer to live in cities because in cities there are many things which is not available in village

Appendix XII: Screenshot of a Discussion Forum
(Topic: Which is better school or college life?)



Appendix XIII: Screenshot of a Live Socrative Quiz

Passive or active? Session B

Show Names
 Show Answers

Name	Progress	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
*****	100% ✓	A	B	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	A
*****	100% ✓	B	B	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A
*****	100% ✓	A	A	B	A	B	A	A	A	B	B
*****	20% ✓	A	B								
*****	100% ✓	A	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	B	B
*****	100% ✓	A	B	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	B
*****	100% ✓	B	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	B
*****	100% ✓	A	B	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A
*****	90% ✓	A	B	A		A	A	B	A	A	A
*****	100% ✓	A	B	A	A	A	B	B	A	B	A
*****	100% ✓	A	B	B	A	A	A	B	B	B	B
*****	100% ✓	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	B	A	A

Appendix XIV: Item Means and Standard Deviations

Item means and standard deviations for the SEQ

Scale Name and Items	n	Mean	SD
Agentic Engagement			
I asked questions about the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	57	4.26	1.303
I expressed my opinions about the learning materials I reviewed outside class to the teacher.	57	3.89	1.496
I told the teacher what I liked about the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	57	3.74	1.653
I let my teacher know what I found interesting in the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	57	3.60	1.591
I expressed my preferences about the learning materials I reviewed outside class to the teacher.	57	3.53	1.627
I asked questions about the tasks I completed outside class.	57	3.86	1.575
I expressed my opinions about the tasks I completed outside class to the teacher.	57	3.74	1.737
I told the teacher what I liked about the tasks I completed outside class.	57	3.65	1.506
I gave the teacher suggestions about how to make the learning materials better.	57	3.02	1.564
I gave the teacher suggestions about how to make the out-of-class tasks better.	57	3.04	1.679
Behavioural Engagement			
I completed all the short quizzes on Edmodo.	57	4.79	1.359
I tried very hard to answer the questions in the short quizzes correctly.	57	5.09	1.057
I read the texts assigned to me outside class carefully.	57	4.65	1.302
I read what my classmates wrote on PADLET carefully.	57	4.54	1.351
I participated in the discussion forums on Edmodo.	57	4.09	1.714
I searched the internet for information whenever needed.	57	5.23	.887
I watched all the educational videos available on Edmodo.	57	4.96	1.322
I participated when the new learning materials were discussed in class.	57	4.23	1.389
If I did not understand a new concept in the learning materials I went over it again and again until I understood it.	57	4.75	1.286
I was careful when I reviewed the new learning materials before class.	57	4.30	1.210
I reviewed the information in the presentations carefully.	57	4.39	1.236
If I came across a new concept that I did not understand in the learning materials I skipped it. *	57	3.96	1.581
I worked hard to understand the new learning materials.	57	4.91	1.023
If I could not understand a new idea in the learning materials right the first time I kept trying.	56	5.13	1.113
If the learning materials were difficult to understand, I just stopped reviewing them. *	57	4.56	1.476
Cognitive Engagement			
I reviewed the learning materials before class.	57	4.32	1.212
I planned how I would review the learning materials before class.	57	4.23	1.165
It was difficult for me to find time to review the learning materials before class. *	57	2.74	1.433
I found it difficult to organize the time to review the learning materials effectively. *	57	2.61	1.346
When I was reviewing the learning materials I kept track of how much I understood.	55	4.29	1.315
When I was reviewing the learning materials I took note of the information I did not understand.	57	4.18	1.325
When I was reviewing the learning materials before class, I was only concerned with finishing them all not understanding. *	57	4.58	1.535
I used my own words to summarize the learning materials I reviewed before class.	57	4.35	1.302
While learning new concepts in the learning materials, I tried to think of how to put them in practice in class.	57	4.44	1.018
When I was reviewing the learning materials before class, I tried to relate the new materials to what I already knew.	57	4.35	1.044
I searched for other sources to help me understand the information presented in the learning materials.	57	4.63	1.472
I compared different concepts introduced in the learning materials I reviewed before class.	57	4.09	1.074

When I did not understand something in the learning materials I reviewed outside class, I asked questions to understand them.	57	4.58	1.149
I tried to combine the different ideas presented in the learning materials into some order that made sense to me.	57	4.42	1.101
I evaluated the usefulness of the ideas presented in the learning materials I reviewed outside class.	57	4.12	1.119
Emotional Engagement			
I enjoyed reviewing the learning materials before class.	57	4.11	1.472
When I completed the short quizzes before class I felt interested.	57	4.63	1.144
I enjoyed participating in the discussion forums before class.	57	3.98	1.408
When I reviewed the new learning materials before class I felt interested.	57	4.44	1.180
When I participated in the discussion forums before class I felt interested.	57	4.09	1.467
Reviewing the learning materials before class in fun.	57	4.61	1.360
I enjoyed doing the short quizzes before class.	57	4.40	1.178
Reviewing the new learning materials before class made me feel unhappy. *	57	4.04	1.792
Completing the short quizzes before class made me feel unhappy. *	57	4.26	1.737
Participating in the discussions on PADLET before class made me feel unhappy. *	57	4.49	1.428
When I review the learning materials before class, I feel scared. *	57	4.60	1.668
When I complete the short quizzes before class, I feel scared. *	57	4.35	1.768
When I participate in the discussion forums on PADLET before class, I feel scared. *	57	4.56	1.722
The Biggest Gain from Flipping the Writing Class			
I learned to ask questions.	55	4.33	1.334
I learned to express my opinions about what I did before class.	56	4.21	1.385
I learned to tell the teacher what I liked about the learning materials.	57	3.98	1.458
I learned to give the teacher suggestions about how to make the learning materials better.	57	3.30	1.636
It helped me to develop new skills.	56	4.66	1.339
I was able to identify what I did not understand before class and to focus on it.	57	4.46	1.415
I learned to plan my time to prepare for the module before class.	57	4.02	1.395
I learned to put what I learned from the materials I reviewed outside class in practice inside class.	57	4.30	1.295
I learned to persevere when I didn't understand.	57	4.93	1.193
I learned to work hard to understand the new learning materials.	56	4.96	1.206
I learned to be careful when reviewing the new learning materials.	57	4.88	1.135
I learned to participate in discussions of the new learning materials.	57	4.56	1.310
I learned that reviewing materials before class is fun.	57	4.53	1.324
I developed interest in the writing module.	56	4.30	1.662

* Reverse scored items

Appendix XV: Screenshot of Edmodo Progress Gradebook

The screenshot displays the Edmodo Progress Gradebook interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a search bar and user profile. Below this is a banner for a new Gradebook version. The main content area is titled "Progress / Level 3 Writing Session E" and includes an "Export" link. A table shows student progress across various assignments. The table has columns for "Student", "Total", and several assignment titles. The data is as follows:

Student	Total	The importance of Social Media	The importance of conserving the past	How to Describe a Bar Chart	Evaluation Essay Quiz	City versus Village	Collocations	Active versus Passive Quiz	Max versus King Restaurant Comparison and Contrast Quiz	College versus School Essay	Comparison and Contrast Essay Quiz
Hamid Alhamami	70%	Turned In	Turned In	7/11	9/10	Turned In	5/7	-	2.5/5	3/5	7/9
Salim AlHarthy	82%	Turned In	Turned In	10/11	/	4.5/5	5/7	13/13	4.5/5	4.5/5	8/9
salham alhinai	78%	Turned In	Turned In	11/11	7/10	4.5/5	-	8/13	4.5/5	4.5/5	8/9
Asma Almawaali	88%	Turned In	Turned In	9/11	10/10	4.25/5	6/7	-	4.5/5	4/5	8/9
Sultan Alnabhani	63%	Turned In	Turned In	8/11	/	4/5	6/7	4/13	4/5	3.5/5	6/9
said alrahbi	59%	Turned In	Turned In	5/11	5/10	4/5	-	7/13	4/5	3.75/5	-
AbdulsalamSultan ...	51%	-	-	-	3/10	4.5/5	7/7	7/13	3.5/5	4/5	2/9

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying the time as 10:41 AM on 10/8/2016.

Appendix XVI: Screenshot of Teacher-Student and Student-Student Communication

