

Boredom in the Omani EFL Context: A Study of Grade 12 Students' Experiences and Perceptions

Ayman Abd El-Tawab Attia Aly

MOE, Sultanate of Oman, Faculty of Languages Studies, Arab Open University, Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Background: Boredom is a negative academic emotion that can significantly hinder language learning. While international research has explored boredom in various EFL contexts, limited attention has been given to the Omani secondary school setting, particularly among students with weaker English skills and low motivation.

Purpose: This study investigates the experiences and perceptions of boredom among Omani Grade 12 EFL students at the beginning of their second semester of the academic year 2025/2026. It seeks to identify the curriculum-related antecedents of boredom and explore how students perceive its impact on their engagement and learning.

Methodology: A qualitative case study approach was adopted. Participants were 30 male Grade 12 students from the literary section at Hafs bin Rashed School (Grades 10-12) in AL Seeb, Muscat. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was used to analyse the data.

Theoretical Framework: The study is grounded in Pekrun's Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions, which explains how students' appraisals of control and value in learning activities influence their emotional experiences, including boredom.

Findings: Analysis reveals that students experience boredom due to several curriculum-related factors: the repetitive nature of textbook activities, perceived irrelevance of themes to their lives, difficulty of language tasks, lack of variety in classroom procedures, and a mismatch between curriculum expectations and their low proficiency levels. These factors map directly onto low control and low value appraisals as theorized by Pekrun.

Conclusion: The study highlights the need for curriculum differentiation and more engaging pedagogical approaches tailored to the needs of less motivated, lower-proficiency learners in Omani secondary schools. The findings also demonstrate the applicability of Control-Value Theory to understanding boredom in the Arab EFL context.

Keywords: Boredom, EFL learners, Omani students, Grade 12, literary section, curriculum, Control-Value Theory, qualitative case study

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English language proficiency is increasingly recognized as a vital skill for success in higher education and the global workforce. In the Sultanate of Oman, English occupies a unique position as the primary foreign language taught in public schools, introduced from Grade 1 and continuing through Grade 12 (1, 2). The Omani education system follows a centralized curriculum, with the Ministry of Education prescribing textbooks, assessment frameworks, and instructional guidelines that all public schools must adhere to. This

centralized structure ensures consistency across the country but also limits teachers' flexibility to adapt materials to local student needs.

By Grade 12, students are expected to have developed a range of language skills to prepare them for post-secondary opportunities, whether in higher education or the workforce. The Ministry of Education has made significant efforts to develop English language curricula that align with international standards while preserving Omani cultural identity. The *Engage with English* textbooks for Grade 12, Semester B, reflect these efforts, covering four main themes: News and the Media, Work and Careers, Health and Safety, and Citizenship (3). These textbooks are designed to be used across all secondary schools in Oman, regardless of students' academic streams or proficiency levels.

However, the reality of English language instruction in Omani classrooms often diverges from curricular intentions. Research consistently documents a disconnect between curriculum goals and actual classroom practices (2). Teachers frequently report feeling constrained by the need to cover prescribed content within limited timeframes, leaving little room for differentiation or student-centered activities. Classroom observations in Omani secondary schools have revealed instructional patterns that prioritize textbook completion over meaningful engagement, with teacher-centered approaches dominating (4, 5). This contextual reality is particularly significant for understanding student boredom, as it shapes the learning experiences students encounter daily.

Moreover, many Omani students continue to face challenges in learning English despite years of formal instruction. Research has documented difficulties in various language skills, including speaking (6, 7), pronunciation (8, 9), and writing (10, 11). These challenges are often more pronounced among students in the literary section, who may have weaker English skills and lower motivation compared to their peers in science streams. The literary section, a distinct academic track in Omani secondary education, enrolls students who typically demonstrate stronger aptitude in Arabic, humanities, and social sciences but often struggle with mathematics and science subjects. Consequently, many of these students enter Grade 12 English classes with accumulated gaps in their language knowledge and diminished confidence in their ability to succeed.

1.2 The Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the role that emotions play in language learning. Boredom, in particular, has emerged as a pervasive and debilitating academic emotion that can negatively impact students' engagement, motivation, and achievement (12-14). Research has shown that boredom in the classroom can lead to attention lapses, reduced effort, and even dropout from learning activities (15, 16).

While studies have explored boredom in various EFL contexts, including Saudi Arabia (17, 18) and China (19, 20), limited research has been conducted in Oman. Furthermore, most existing studies have focused on university students or general EFL populations, with little attention given to secondary school students, particularly those with weaker English skills and low motivation. At Hafsa bin Rashed School in AL Seeb, Muscat, Grade 12 students in the literary section begin their second semester with the *Engage With English 12B* textbook. Given their low proficiency and motivation levels, these students may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing boredom in their English classes. However, the specific antecedents of boredom related to their interaction with the curriculum remain unexplored.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of boredom among Omani Grade 12 EFL students at the beginning of their second semester. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the curriculum-related antecedents of boredom as perceived by students.
2. Explore how students perceive the impact of boredom on their engagement and learning.
3. Understand how students interact with the four themes of the *Engage With English 12B* textbook.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

Main Research Question: What are the experiences and perceptions of boredom among Omani Grade 12 EFL students in the literary section as they begin their second semester?

Sub-Questions:

1. What curriculum-related factors do students identify as antecedents of boredom in their English classes?
2. How do students perceive the impact of boredom on their engagement and learning?
3. How do students interact with the four themes of the *Engage With English* 12B textbook (News and the Media, Work and Careers, Health and Safety, Citizenship)?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a gap in the literature by exploring boredom in the under-researched Omani secondary school context. Second, it focuses specifically on students in the literary section who have weaker English skills and low motivation, a population that is often overlooked in educational research. Third, by examining students' interactions with the actual curriculum they study, the study provides practical insights for curriculum developers, textbook writers, and classroom teachers. Finally, the findings may inform pedagogical strategies to reduce boredom and enhance engagement among similar student populations in Oman and beyond.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to 30 male Grade 12 students from the literary section at Hafsa bin Rashed School (10-12) in AL Seeb, Muscat. Data collection occurs at the beginning of Semester 2 in the academic year 2025/2026, focusing on students' initial interactions with the *Engage With English* 12B textbook. The study employs qualitative methods, which provide rich, in-depth data but limit generalizability to other contexts. The focus is primarily on curriculum-related antecedents of boredom, although other factors (e.g., teacher characteristics, classroom environment) may also be discussed as they emerge from the data.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

- **Boredom:** A negative academic emotion characterized by a lack of interest, difficulty concentrating, and a perception that time is passing slowly (15, 14).
- **EFL (English as a Foreign Language):** The teaching and learning of English in contexts where English is not the primary language of communication.
- **Antecedents:** Factors or conditions that give rise to an emotion or experience (14).
- **Literary Section:** A stream in Omani secondary education where students focus on arts, humanities, and literary subjects, often with less emphasis on science and mathematics.
- **Control-Value Theory:** A theoretical framework proposed by Pekrun (14) that explains how students' appraisals of control and value influence their achievement emotions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews the relevant literature on boredom in educational contexts, with a specific focus on language learning. It begins by defining boredom and discussing its dimensions. It then presents the theoretical framework guiding this study, Pekrun's Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions. Following this, the literature reviews empirical studies on the antecedents and consequences of boredom in EFL contexts. Finally, it examines the Omani EFL context, including challenges faced by students and the nature of the Grade 12 curriculum.

2.2 The Concept of Boredom

Boredom is a complex and multifaceted emotion that has been defined in various ways across disciplines. In educational psychology, boredom is generally understood as a negative achievement emotion characterized by a lack of interest, difficulty concentrating, and a subjective experience of time slowing down (15, 21, 14). Eastwood et al. (15) conceptualized boredom as "the aversive experience of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity" (p. 482). This definition highlights the motivational dimension of boredom—the desire to engage coupled with the inability to do so.

Researchers have distinguished between different types of boredom. Goetz et al. (21) identified five types based on levels of arousal and valence: indifferent boredom, calibrating boredom, searching boredom, reactant boredom, and apathetic boredom. These distinctions suggest that boredom is not a uniform experience but can manifest in different ways depending on context and individual characteristics.

In the context of language learning, boredom has been described as a pervasive yet under-researched emotion that can significantly impact learners' engagement and achievement (12, 19). Unlike anxiety, which has received extensive attention in SLA research, boredom has only recently begun to attract scholarly interest (22).

2.3 Theoretical Framework: Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions

This study is grounded in Pekrun's (14) Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the antecedents and effects of emotions in academic settings. According to this theory, achievement emotions are elicited by two primary appraisals: control and value.

Control appraisals refer to students' perceptions of their ability to influence academic activities and outcomes. Students who believe they have control over their learning (e.g., through effort, strategy use) are more likely to experience positive emotions such as enjoyment and pride. Conversely, students who perceive a lack of control may experience negative emotions such as anxiety, hopelessness, or boredom.

Value appraisals refer to students' perceptions of the importance or usefulness of academic activities and outcomes. When students find an activity personally meaningful or valuable, they are more likely to experience positive emotions. When they perceive an activity as lacking value, boredom may ensue.

In the context of EFL learning, boredom arises when students perceive that learning activities are neither within their control nor valuable to them. For example, a student who finds a textbook theme irrelevant to their life (low value) and struggles with the language tasks (low control) is likely to experience boredom.

Control-Value Theory also posits that emotions influence learning and achievement through their effects on cognitive resources, motivation, and strategy use. Boredom, in particular, can lead to attention lapses, reduced effort, and superficial processing of information (14).

In applying Control-Value Theory to the Omani context, several contextual factors merit consideration. First, the centralized nature of Omani curriculum delivery means that students have limited opportunities to exercise control over their learning—a structural reality that may systematically diminish their sense of agency. When

students perceive that neither the content nor the pace of instruction is responsive to their needs, their control appraisals are likely to be low, predisposing them to boredom. Second, the perceived value of English language learning in Oman is shaped by complex socio-economic factors. While English is positioned as a gateway to higher education and employment, students in the literary section often pursue career paths where English is perceived as less immediately useful (e.g., government administration, education, religious studies). This perceived mismatch between curricular content and future life trajectories may undermine value appraisals in ways specific to this population.

Thus, the application of Control-Value Theory in this study is not merely a theoretical overlay but a framework that illuminates how the structural features of Omani schooling intersect with students' individual characteristics to produce emotional experiences. By examining how students articulate their control and value appraisals in relation to the *Engage With English* 12B curriculum, this study aims to make these theoretical mechanisms empirically visible within the Omani context.

2.4 Antecedents of Boredom in EFL Contexts

Research has identified multiple antecedents of boredom in language learning classrooms. These can be categorized into instructional factors, task-related factors, and learner-related factors.

2.4.1 Instructional Factors

Teacher characteristics and teaching practices play a significant role in shaping students' emotional experiences. Cui et al. (23) found that teacher enthusiasm was negatively associated with students' boredom in Chinese EFL classrooms. Similarly, Dewaele and Li (24) reported that teacher enthusiasm predicted lower levels of boredom and higher levels of enjoyment among Chinese university students.

Teaching methods and classroom procedures also influence boredom. Daschmann et al. (25) identified several instructional antecedents of boredom, including lack of variety in teaching methods, repetitive activities, and teacher-centered instruction. In the EFL context, Kruk et al. (26) found that students attributed their boredom to monotonous classroom routines and lack of interaction.

2.4.2 Task-Related Factors

The nature of learning tasks can contribute to boredom. Tasks that are too easy or too difficult, repetitive, or perceived as irrelevant can trigger boredom (25). In language learning, specific skill areas may be more prone to boredom than others. For example, Jean and Simard (27) found that grammar instruction was often perceived as boring by L2 learners.

Textbook content and design also matter. Kruk and Zawodniak (12) reported that students in Polish EFL classrooms found some textbook activities boring due to their predictability and lack of authenticity. The themes, topics, and types of activities presented in textbooks can influence students' engagement and emotional responses.

2.4.3 Learner-Related Factors

Individual differences among learners can affect their susceptibility to boredom. Boredom proneness, a personality trait characterized by a tendency to experience boredom frequently, has been associated with lower engagement and achievement (28, 29).

Language proficiency is another important factor. Students with lower proficiency may experience boredom because they struggle to understand or complete tasks, leading to frustration and disengagement (30). Conversely, highly proficient students may become bored if tasks are not sufficiently challenging.

Motivation and interest also play crucial roles. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn a language are less likely to experience boredom (31). When students see the relevance of language learning to their lives and future goals, they are more likely to remain engaged.

2.5 Boredom in the Arab/Gulf Context

Research on boredom in EFL contexts has begun to emerge in Arab countries, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Alrajhi (17) investigated the antecedents of boredom in formal English language learning among Saudi university students, identifying factors such as teacher characteristics, task monotony, and lack of perceived relevance. Deen (18) explored students' boredom in English language classes in Saudi Arabia, finding that boredom was prevalent and negatively associated with achievement.

In Oman, while research specifically on boredom is limited, studies have documented various challenges that may contribute to student boredom. These include difficulties in speaking (7), pronunciation (9), and writing (10), as well as socio-cultural factors affecting language learning (32). Students in the literary section, who often have weaker English skills and lower motivation, may be particularly vulnerable to boredom.

2.6 The Omani EFL Context: Grade 12 Curriculum

The *Engage With English* textbooks for Grade 12, Semester B, are designed to develop students' language skills through four main themes:

1. **Theme 1: News and the Media** - Focuses on reading comprehension, vocabulary related to media, direct and reported speech, and narrative writing.
2. **Theme 2: Work and Careers** - Emphasizes reading speed, vocabulary related to personality types and jobs, modals of obligation, and job application skills.
3. **Theme 3: Health and Safety** - Covers vocabulary related to health, natural disasters, infinitives and gerunds, and evaluative essay writing.
4. **Theme 4: Citizenship** - Explores concepts of citizenship, NGOs, model citizens, and informative essay writing.

Each theme includes reading passages, grammar activities, vocabulary exercises, listening and speaking tasks, and writing assignments. The Workbook provides additional practice activities and exercises.

At the beginning of Semester 2 of the academic year 2025/2026, students are introduced to these themes. For students in the literary section with weaker English skills and low motivation, this initial interaction with the curriculum may be particularly challenging. The difficulty of tasks, perceived relevance of themes, and repetitive nature of activities may contribute to boredom.

2.7 Summary and Research Gap

The literature review has shown that boredom is a significant emotion in educational contexts, with important implications for language learning. Control-Value Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how students' appraisals of control and value influence their emotional experiences. Research has identified multiple antecedents of boredom, including instructional factors, task-related factors, and learner-related factors.

However, there is a clear gap in the literature. Few studies have explored boredom in the Omani secondary school context, particularly among students in the literary section who have weaker English skills and low motivation. Furthermore, no studies have examined how students interact with the specific curriculum they study (*Engage With English 12B*) and how this interaction relates to their experiences of boredom. This study aims to address this gap.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This part presents the research methodology employed in this study. It describes the research design, research setting and participants, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. According to Creswell (33), a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (a case) over time through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information. This design is appropriate for this study because it allows for a rich, contextualized understanding of students' experiences and perceptions of boredom.

The case is bounded by:

- **Time:** Beginning of Semester 2 of the academic year 2025/2026
- **Place:** Hafs bin Rashed School (10-12) for boys, AL Seeb Sector, Muscat
- **Participants:** 30 male Grade 12 students from the literary section
- **Context:** Interaction with the *Engage With English 12B* curriculum

3.3 Research Setting and Participants

The study is conducted at Hafs bin Rashed School, a boys' school located in the AL Seeb region of Muscat, the capital city of Oman. The school follows the Omani national curriculum and serves students from diverse backgrounds within the community.

Participants are 30 male Grade 12 students from the literary section. They are selected through purposive sampling, which involves deliberately choosing participants based on specific characteristics (34). The inclusion criteria are:

- Male students in Grade 12
- Enrolled in the literary section
- Present at the beginning of Semester 2
- Willing to participate in the study

The literary section students are characterized by weaker English skills and lower motivation compared to their peers in the science section, according to teacher reports and previous academic performance. This makes them an appropriate population for investigating boredom in relation to curriculum interaction.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data are collected through two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These methods are chosen to capture students' experiences and perceptions in depth.

3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with 10 students selected from the larger participant group. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (35), semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility while ensuring that key topics are covered. The interview guide includes questions about:

- Students' general feelings about English classes
- Specific experiences with each theme of the textbook
- Perceptions of boredom and its causes
- Views on the relevance and difficulty of curriculum materials
- Suggestions for making classes more engaging

Each interview lasts approximately 30-45 minutes and is conducted in Arabic to ensure students can express themselves freely. Interviews are audio-recorded with participants' consent.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

Four focus group discussions are conducted, with 5-6 students in each group. Focus groups are useful for generating interactive data and identifying shared experiences (34). The focus group prompts cover similar topics to the interviews but allow for discussion and interaction among participants.

Each focus group session lasts approximately 60 minutes and is conducted in Arabic. Sessions are audio-recorded and moderated by the researcher to ensure all participants have opportunities to contribute.

3.4.3 Document Analysis

In addition to interviews and focus groups, the *Engage With English* 12B Coursebook and Workbook are analysed to understand the nature of the curriculum students interact with. This document analysis provides context for interpreting students' responses.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis follows the thematic analysis approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (36). This involves six phases:

1. **Familiarization with the data:** Audio recordings are transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Transcripts are read multiple times to gain familiarity.
2. **Generating initial codes:** Interesting features of the data are coded systematically. Codes capture specific ideas related to boredom, curriculum interaction, and student perceptions.
3. **Searching for themes:** Codes are collated into potential themes that address the research questions. Themes represent patterns of meaning across the dataset.
4. **Reviewing themes:** Themes are checked against coded extracts and the entire dataset to ensure they accurately represent the data.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** Each theme is clearly defined and named.
6. **Producing the report:** The analysis is written up, with vivid examples and quotes from participants to support each theme.

To ensure rigor, several strategies are employed: member checking (returning to some participants to verify interpretations), peer debriefing (discussing findings with colleagues), and maintaining an audit trail of analytical decisions (37).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Key ethical considerations

include:

- **Informed consent:** Participants and their parents/guardians are informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, and their rights. Written consent is obtained.
- **Anonymity and confidentiality:** Participants' names are replaced with pseudonyms in all transcripts and reports. Data are stored securely and accessible only to the researcher.
- **Right to withdraw:** Participants are informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.
- **Minimizing harm:** The study is designed to minimize any potential discomfort or harm. Participants are assured that their responses will not affect their grades or relationship with teachers.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (37, 38). This study addresses these criteria through:

- **Credibility:** Prolonged engagement with participants, triangulation of data sources (interviews, focus groups, documents), and member checking.
- **Transferability:** Thick description of the context, participants, and findings to allow readers to assess applicability to other settings.
- **Dependability:** Detailed documentation of research procedures and an audit trail.
- **Confirmability:** Reflexivity through keeping a research journal and acknowledging the researcher's position.

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This segment presents the findings from the analysis of interview and focus group data. The findings are organized according to the research questions, with themes emerging from the data presented under each question. Quotes from participants (identified by pseudonyms) are used to illustrate and support the themes.

4.2 Participant Profile

The 30 participants are all male Grade 12 students in the literary section at Hafs bin Rashed School. Their ages range from 17 to 18 years. According to school records and teacher reports, their English proficiency levels are generally low, with most students scoring below 60% on previous English assessments. During interviews and focus groups, many students expressed low motivation for learning English, citing reasons such as difficulty, lack of interest, and perceived irrelevance to their future plans.

4.3 Research Question 1: What curriculum-related factors do students identify as antecedents of boredom in their English classes?

Analysis of the data revealed four main themes related to curriculum-related antecedents of boredom: (1) Repetitive and Predictable Activities, (2) Mismatch Between Task Difficulty and Student Proficiency, (3) Perceived Irrelevance of Themes, and (4) Lack of Variety and Choice.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Repetitive and Predictable Activities

Students frequently mentioned that the activities in the textbook are repetitive and predictable, leading to

boredom. They described going through the same types of exercises week after week without variation.

Ahmed (Interview): "Every unit is the same. First, we read a text, then we answer questions about it. Then we do some grammar exercises. Then vocabulary matching. Then listening. It's always the same pattern. By the second week of the semester, I already know what's coming."

Khalid (Focus Group 1): "The workbook activities are especially boring. It's just fill in the blanks, match the words, choose the correct answer. After doing this for years, I'm tired of it. My mind just switches off."

Mazen (Interview): "Even when we finish one theme and move to the next, the activities are basically the same. Theme 1 has reading, grammar, vocabulary. Theme 2 has the same. Theme 3, same. There's no surprise. Nothing new."

This repetition appears to reduce students' engagement and make it difficult for them to sustain attention during lessons.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Mismatch Between Task Difficulty and Student Proficiency

Many students reported that the textbook tasks are either too difficult or, occasionally, too easy. The mismatch between task demands and their proficiency levels contributes to boredom.

Salim (Focus Group 2): "The reading texts are very difficult for us. There are so many new words. I spend more time looking in the dictionary than actually reading. After a while, I just give up. It's boring because I don't understand what's happening."

Nasser (Interview): "Some grammar exercises are impossible for us. Like reported speech. We studied it before but I still don't understand when to change the tense. When the teacher explains, I try to listen, but after five minutes I lose focus. It's too hard, so my brain just switches off."

Younis (Focus Group 3): "Sometimes the tasks are too easy, like matching words with pictures. That's for little kids. We're in Grade 12. It feels like a waste of time. I feel bored and also a bit insulted."

This finding suggests that the "one-size-fits-all" nature of the textbook does not accommodate the varying proficiency levels of students, particularly those in the literary section with weaker English skills.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Perceived Irrelevance of Themes

Students expressed that many of the themes and topics in the textbook feel disconnected from their lives, interests, and future plans. This perceived lack of relevance reduces their motivation and contributes to boredom.

Ali (Interview): "Theme 2 is about Work and Careers. It talks about CVs, job interviews, different professions. But many of us in the literary section will not work in international companies. We might work in government jobs or family businesses. This material doesn't feel useful for us."

Hamed (Focus Group 1): "Theme 1 is about News and Media. Paparazzi, journalists, TV presenters. These are not things I think about. I don't read English newspapers. I don't watch English news. Why do I need to learn vocabulary about paparazzi?"

Musab (Focus Group 4): "Theme 4 is about Citizenship. It talks about NGOs, global citizenship, volunteering. Maybe this is important, but it feels like something for rich countries. In our community, we help our neighbors directly. We don't need to read about it in English."

Fatih (Interview): "The Reading for Pleasure sections have stories about famous Omanis like Ali Al Habsi and Sharifa Al Barami. Those are okay because we know them. But most of the other readings are about foreign people and places. I don't care about them."

When students cannot see the connection between what they are learning and their own lives, they struggle to find meaning in the activities, leading to disengagement and boredom.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Lack of Variety and Choice

Students reported that the curriculum offers few opportunities for choice or variation in how they engage with the material. The prescribed nature of the textbook limits their autonomy and contributes to boredom.

Sulaiman (Focus Group 2): "We always have to do what the book says. Read page 10, do exercise 2, then exercise 3. There's no chance to choose something we're interested in, or to work on a project we like. It's just following orders."

Rashid (Interview): "Sometimes I wish we could do different things. Maybe watch a video about a topic, then discuss it. Or work in groups on a presentation. But the teacher has to finish the book, so we just do the book."

Talal (Focus Group 3): "Even when we finish a unit, we can't move on to something we want. We have to do the Across Cultures section, then Reading for Pleasure, then the Workbook. Everything is decided for us."

The lack of choice and variety appears to reduce students' sense of ownership over their learning, making the experience feel imposed rather than engaging.

4.4 Research Question 2: How do students perceive the impact of boredom on their engagement and learning?

Students described several ways in which boredom affects their engagement and learning. Three main themes emerged: (1) Attention Lapses and Disengagement, (2) Reduced Effort and Participation, and (3) Negative Emotional and Motivational Consequences.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Attention Lapses and Disengagement

Students consistently reported that when they are bored, they have difficulty paying attention and often disengage from the lesson.

Mohamed (Focus Group 2): "When I'm bored, I just stop listening. My mind wanders. I think about other things. Sometimes I don't even realize the teacher has moved to a new activity."

Samir (Interview): "I look at my phone under the desk. Or I talk to my friend. Or I just stare out the window. The teacher thinks I'm listening but I'm not. I'm just waiting for the bell."

Bader (Focus Group 1): "After the first 15 minutes of class, if it's boring, I'm gone. My body is in the chair but my mind is somewhere else. I don't even hear what the teacher is saying."

This disengagement means that students miss important instruction and practice opportunities, which can compound their learning difficulties.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Reduced Effort and Participation

Boredom leads students to put less effort into their work and participate less in class activities.

Hamdan (Interview): "If the activity is boring, I just do it quickly to finish. I don't care if the answers are right or wrong. I just want it to be over."

Nawaf (Focus Group 4): "I used to raise my hand and answer questions. Now I don't bother. What's the point? It's the same thing every day. The teacher asks, someone answers, we move on."

Yahya (Focus Group 3): "In group work, if the task is boring, I let others do the work. I just sit there and pretend to be involved. I don't learn anything."

The reduction in effort and participation means that students are not actively engaging with the material, limiting their learning and skill development.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Negative Emotional and Motivational Consequences

Boredom appears to have broader emotional and motivational effects, including frustration, resentment, and decreased desire to learn English.

Fahad (Interview): "English class makes me feel tired, even if I slept well. It's not just boring, it's exhausting. I dread coming to class."

Layth (Focus Group 1): "I used to think maybe I would need English for my future. Now I don't care. If it's going to be this boring for the rest of the year, I don't want to learn it."

Qasim (Focus Group 2): "Sometimes I feel angry. Like, why are we studying this? Who decided this is important for us? It makes me not want to try."

These negative emotions can create a vicious cycle: boredom leads to disengagement, which leads to poor performance, which leads to more boredom and lower motivation.

4.5 Research Question 3: How do students interact with the four themes of the Engage With English 12B textbook?

Students' interactions with each theme varied somewhat, with some themes perceived more positively than others. However, overall patterns of boredom were evident across all themes.

4.5.1 Theme 1: News and the Media

Students generally found this theme uninteresting and disconnected from their lives.

Anwar (Focus Group 3): "Theme 1 is about journalists and paparazzi. This is not something we care about. The reading about the Titanic was okay because it's a famous story, but the rest was boring."

Thamir (Interview): "We had to learn about direct and reported speech. The teacher explained many times but I still don't get it. It's complicated and boring."

4.5.2 Theme 2: Work and Careers

This theme received mixed responses. Some students found parts of it potentially useful, but many still found it boring.

Zahir (Focus Group 1): "Writing a CV might be useful one day. But the way we do it in the book, it's just filling in a form. Not interesting."

Walid (Interview): "The personality types were a little interesting because we could think about ourselves. But then we had to do more grammar and vocabulary exercises. It got boring quickly."

4.5.3 Theme 3: Health and Safety

Students reported slightly more engagement with this theme, particularly topics related to natural disasters in Oman.

Yusuf (Focus Group 4): "The reading about Cyclone Gonu was interesting because it happened in Oman. We remember it. That made me want to read."

Ibrahim (Interview): "Health topics like exercise and diet are okay. But the grammar parts—infinitives and gerunds—are still boring. Why do we need to know this?"

4.5.4 Theme 4: Citizenship

This theme was generally perceived as abstract and irrelevant to students' immediate concerns.

Mahmoud (Focus Group 2): "Citizenship is about laws and responsibilities. It feels like a social studies class, not English. I don't see the connection."

Across all themes, students consistently reported that grammar instruction and workbook exercises were the most boring parts of the curriculum. Reading passages about familiar Omani topics (e.g., Cyclone Gonu, Ali Al Habsi) generated slightly more interest, but this interest was often short-lived when followed by comprehension questions and grammar exercises.

4.6 Summary of Findings in Relation to Control-Value Theory

Before proceeding to the discussion, it is useful to summarize how the emergent themes reflect the theoretical mechanisms of control and value appraisals. This summary serves as a bridge between the raw findings and their theoretical interpretation.

Table 1: Mapping Themes to Control-Value Theory Appraisals

Theme	Appraisal Type	Manifestation in Data
Repetitive and Predictable Activities	Low Control	Students describe feeling powerless to alter instructional patterns; activities follow a fixed sequence regardless of student response or interest
Mismatch Between Task Difficulty and Proficiency	Low Control	Tasks perceived as too difficult exceed students' perceived capacity; overly easy tasks offer no sense of mastery or accomplishment
Perceived Irrelevance of Themes	Low Value	Students articulate that themes do not connect to their lives, interests, or anticipated futures; the curriculum feels disconnected from their realities
Lack of Variety and Choice	Low Control (Autonomy)	The prescribed nature of textbook use eliminates opportunities for student input; learning is experienced as something done <i>to</i> rather than <i>with</i> students
Grammar Instruction	Both Low Control and Low Value	Grammar is perceived as decontextualized and difficult (low control) while also lacking perceived usefulness (low value)

As Table 1 illustrates, the antecedents of boredom identified in this study align with two distinct but interrelated appraisal patterns. Themes of repetition, mismatch, and lack of choice primarily reflect students' perceptions of low control—a sense that they cannot influence what happens in their English classes or that the demands of tasks exceed their capacities. The theme of irrelevance, by contrast, reflects low value appraisals—a perception that the content of the curriculum lacks personal meaning or future utility. Grammar instruction, notably, elicited both types of appraisals simultaneously, suggesting that certain curriculum elements may be particularly potent sources of boredom because they undermine both control and value.

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the findings presented in part 4 in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature. It interprets the meaning of the findings and considers their implications.

5.2 Discussion of Findings in Relation to Control-Value Theory

The findings of this study are consistent with Pekrun's (14) Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions. According to this theory, boredom arises when students perceive learning activities as lacking both control and value. The data from this study provide strong support for this framework.

5.2.1 Low Control Appraisals

Students in the present study consistently reported low control over their learning. The repetitive and predictable nature of activities (Theme 1) left them feeling that they had no autonomy or choice in how they engaged with the material. The mismatch between task difficulty and their proficiency (Theme 2) meant that many tasks felt beyond their control—either too difficult to complete successfully or too easy to feel any sense of mastery. As Control-Value Theory predicts, this lack of control contributed to their experience of boredom.

This finding aligns with research by Daschmann et al. (25) and Kruk et al. (26), who found that lack of control over learning activities is a significant antecedent of boredom. For the literary section students in this study, with their weaker English skills, the sense of not being able to control or successfully complete tasks was particularly pronounced.

5.2.2 Low Value Appraisals

Students also reported low value for much of the curriculum. The perceived irrelevance of themes (Theme 3) meant that students could not see the personal meaning or usefulness of what they were learning. Topics like paparazzi, international journalism, and global citizenship felt disconnected from their lives and futures. Even when topics were potentially relevant (e.g., CV writing for careers), the way they were presented through decontextualized exercises failed to convey their value.

This finding is consistent with research on value appraisals and boredom (19, 14). When students cannot see the point of what they are learning, they struggle to invest attention and effort, leading to boredom and disengagement.

5.2.3 The Interaction of Control and Value

The findings also illustrate how control and value appraisals interact, a dynamic that Control-Value Theory posits but that is often difficult to capture empirically. In this study, several patterns of interaction emerged that shed light on the complexity of students' emotional experiences.

First, when students found a topic somewhat interesting (e.g., Cyclone Gonu in Theme 3), their initial value appraisal was relatively positive. However, this interest was quickly undermined by difficult or repetitive tasks that followed. As one student noted, the topic initially captured his attention, but the subsequent comprehension questions and grammar exercises "ruined it." This pattern suggests that value appraisals, even when present, may be fragile if not supported by corresponding opportunities for control.

Second, students occasionally reported that tasks were manageable in terms of difficulty (high control) but still boring because the topics felt irrelevant (low value). For instance, students acknowledged that CV writing exercises were "easy enough" but questioned why they needed to learn this skill in English when they anticipated working in Arabic-speaking environments. This pattern indicates that control alone cannot sustain engagement when value is absent.

Third, a more complex pattern emerged around grammar instruction, which students consistently reported as both difficult (low control) and pointless (low value). Grammar represented a "double deficit" where both appraisals were negative. This likely explains why grammar activities were singled out as the most boring element across all four themes—students experienced them as tasks they could not successfully complete for purposes they could not understand.

These interaction patterns have important implications for intervention. Simply making tasks easier (addressing control) will not fully address boredom if students do not see the point of those tasks. Similarly, explaining the importance of topics (addressing value) will not help if students cannot successfully engage

with the materials. Effective strategies for reducing boredom must address both appraisal types simultaneously.

5.2.4 Contextual Factors in the Omani Setting

The application of Control-Value Theory in this study also reveals contextual factors specific to the Omani educational setting that shape students' appraisals. Three contextual features merit attention.

First, the **centralized curriculum structure** of Omani education significantly limits students' control appraisals. Unlike educational systems where teachers have autonomy to modify curriculum materials, Omani teachers are expected to cover prescribed textbooks in a specified sequence. Students are aware of this constraint; as one participant noted, "The teacher has to finish the book, so we just do the book." This structural feature means that students' sense of low control is not merely a perception but an accurate reflection of educational realities.

Second, the **streaming system** that separates students into literary and science sections shapes value appraisals in specific ways. Students in the literary section, who are tracked toward humanities and social science careers, perceive English as less relevant to their anticipated life paths. Several participants explicitly contrasted their future plans (e.g., working in government, family businesses) with the corporate and international contexts depicted in the textbook. This suggests that the value of English may be constructed differently across academic streams, with literary section students more likely to view English as peripheral to their futures.

Third, the **cultural context** of Oman influences both control and value appraisals. Students expressed stronger engagement with reading passages that featured familiar Omani content, such as Cyclone Gonu or Omani celebrities. This finding suggests that culturally relevant content can enhance value appraisals, at least temporarily. However, students also noted that the textbook's predominant focus on foreign people, places, and contexts created a sense of distance that undermined both interest and perceived relevance.

Taken together, these contextual factors suggest that boredom in Omani EFL classrooms is not simply a matter of individual student characteristics but is shaped by structural, curricular, and cultural features of the educational system. Addressing boredom therefore requires attention not only to teaching practices but also to curriculum design and educational policy.

5.3 Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study both confirm and extend previous research on boredom in EFL contexts.

5.3.1 Confirming Previous Findings

The antecedents of boredom identified in this study—repetitive activities, mismatch between task difficulty and proficiency, perceived irrelevance, and lack of variety—have been documented in other contexts. For example, Daschmann et al. (25) found similar factors in German classrooms, and Kruk and Zawodniak (12) reported comparable findings in Polish EFL settings. This suggests that certain features of language instruction may be universally boring across contexts.

The impact of boredom on attention, effort, and motivation found in this study also aligns with previous research (15, 16). Students' descriptions of their minds wandering, reducing effort, and experiencing negative emotions mirror findings from studies in other educational settings.

5.3.2 Extending Previous Research

This investigation extends previous research in several ways. First, it provides evidence from the Omani context, which has been under-researched in the boredom literature. Second, it focuses specifically on students in the literary section with weaker English skills and low motivation—a population that has received little attention in emotion research. Third, by examining students' interactions with their actual curriculum (*Engage With English* 12B), the study provides context-specific insights that can inform local practice.

The finding that topics related to Oman (e.g., Cyclone Gonu, Omani celebrities) generated slightly more interest is noteworthy. This suggests that culturally relevant content may enhance value appraisals, at least temporarily. However, the persistence of boredom even with these topics highlights that relevance alone is insufficient if tasks remain repetitive or mismatched to proficiency.

5.4 Implications for Practice

The findings of this current study have several implications for English language teaching in Omani secondary schools, particularly for students in the literary section.

5.4.1 Implications for the Omani Educational System

The findings of this study have implications beyond individual classroom practice, extending to curriculum policy and teacher education within the Omani educational system.

For **curriculum policymakers**, the study suggests a need to reconsider the "one-size-fits-all" approach to textbook design. While centralized curricula ensure consistency, they may inadvertently disengage students whose proficiency levels, interests, or career aspirations differ from the assumed norm. Differentiated curriculum materials that offer alternative pathways through the same content—simplified versions of reading texts, optional extension activities, or theme-based choices—could better accommodate the diversity of students in Omani secondary schools.

For **textbook developers**, the findings highlight the importance of cultural relevance and task variety. Students' stronger engagement with Omani content suggests that incorporating more local examples, places, and personalities could enhance value appraisals. Additionally, breaking the predictable pattern of reading-grammar-vocabulary-listening across themes would introduce novelty and reduce the monotony that students identified as a primary source of boredom.

For **school leaders**, the study underscores the importance of supporting teacher autonomy. Teachers who feel constrained to follow textbooks page-by-page may be less able to respond to student boredom. School policies that encourage pedagogical experimentation, provide time for collaborative planning, and recognize efforts to adapt materials could create conditions more conducive to student engagement.

For **teacher education programs**, the findings suggest that pre-service training should include explicit attention to student emotions. While teacher candidates learn about lesson planning and classroom management, they receive less preparation in recognizing and responding to academic emotions like boredom. Incorporating modules on emotional engagement, differentiated instruction, and strategies for adapting curriculum materials could better equip future teachers to address the needs of students like those in this study.

5.4.2 Classroom-Level Strategies

In addition to systemic changes, several classroom-level strategies may help reduce boredom.

Curriculum Differentiation: The mismatch between task difficulty and student proficiency suggests a need for curriculum differentiation. Teachers could adapt textbook activities to make them more accessible for weaker students (e.g., providing simplified versions of reading texts, offering more scaffolding for grammar exercises). At the same time, they could provide extension activities for students who find tasks too easy.

Enhancing Relevance: The perceived irrelevance of themes suggests a need to make connections between curriculum content and students' lives more explicit. Teachers could discuss with students how specific topics relate to their communities and futures, invite local speakers to talk about how they use English in their work, design projects that allow students to explore topics of personal interest within the theme framework, and replace some textbook examples with local examples that students can relate to.

Increasing Variety and Choice: The lack of variety and choice identified in this study suggests that teachers could introduce more diverse activities and give students more autonomy. This might include offering choices

among different tasks or topics within a unit, incorporating technology, videos, and authentic materials, using project-based learning that allows students to work on extended, meaningful tasks, and varying classroom procedures and interaction patterns (pair work, group work, individual work).

Addressing Grammar Instruction: The consistent finding that grammar instruction was particularly boring suggests a need to reconsider how grammar is taught. Rather than decontextualized exercises, teachers could integrate grammar instruction into communicative tasks where students need to use specific structures for meaningful purposes.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, it was conducted at a single school with 30 male participants from the literary section. Findings may not be generalizable to female students, students in the science section, or students in other regions of Oman. This narrow scope was intentional: the study aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of a specific population often overlooked in educational research—male literary section students with weaker English skills and low motivation. By focusing on this bounded case, the study generates rich, contextualized insights that can inform practice for similar populations, though broader generalizations require further investigation.

Second, data collection occurred at the beginning of Semester 2 of the academic year 2025/2026, capturing students' initial interactions with the curriculum. Boredom may change over the course of the semester as students become more familiar with the material or as external factors (e.g., exam pressure) influence their engagement. Longitudinal research would be needed to understand how boredom develops over time.

Third, the study relied on self-report data, which may be subject to social desirability bias or limitations in students' ability to articulate their experiences. While triangulation with document analysis and focus group discussions helps mitigate this limitation, observational data would provide a complementary perspective on students' actual behaviors and engagement patterns.

Fourth, the focus was primarily on curriculum-related antecedents of boredom; other factors (e.g., teacher characteristics, classroom environment, peer dynamics) were not systematically examined. Participants occasionally mentioned teacher-related factors in passing, but a study designed to investigate these factors would require different methodological approaches.

Fifth, the study was conducted exclusively with male students, reflecting the researcher's access as a male educator in a single-sex school. Female students' experiences of boredom in Omani EFL contexts remain unexplored and represent an important direction for future research.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could address the limitations of this study and extend its findings in several ways. Longitudinal studies could track how boredom changes over the course of a semester or academic year. Comparative studies could examine differences between literary and science section students, or between male and female students. Intervention studies could test strategies for reducing boredom, such as curriculum modifications or pedagogical changes. Quantitative studies could complement qualitative findings by measuring boredom levels and their correlation with achievement. Finally, research could explore teacher perspectives on student boredom and how teachers attempt to address it.

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the Study

The present study investigated the experiences and perceptions of boredom among 30 male Grade 12 students in the literary section at Hafsa bin Rashed School in Muscat, Oman, at the beginning of Semester 2, of the

academic year 2025/2026. Using a qualitative case study approach grounded in Pekrun's Control-Value Theory, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

The findings revealed that students experience boredom due to several curriculum-related factors: repetitive and predictable activities, mismatch between task difficulty and student proficiency, perceived irrelevance of themes, and lack of variety and choice. Students reported that boredom leads to attention lapses, reduced effort and participation, and negative emotional and motivational consequences. While some themes generated slightly more interest than others, particularly when they included familiar Omani content, boredom was evident across all four themes of the *Engage With English 12B* textbook. The findings were systematically mapped onto control and value appraisals, demonstrating the applicability of Control-Value Theory to the Omani context.

6.2 Contribution of the Study

This research makes several contributions to the field. First, it addresses a gap in the literature by exploring boredom in the Omani secondary school context, which has been under-researched. In doing so, it provides empirical evidence from a context where curriculum structures, streaming practices, and cultural factors shape students' emotional experiences in ways distinct from previously studied settings.

Second, it focuses specifically on students in the literary section with weaker English skills and low motivation—a population that is often overlooked in educational research. By examining boredom from the perspective of these students, the study brings into focus a group whose experiences are frequently marginalized in discussions of language education.

Third, by examining students' interactions with their actual curriculum (*Engage With English 12B*), the study offers context-specific findings that can inform local practice. The identification of specific themes, activities, and patterns that trigger boredom provides actionable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

Fourth, it demonstrates the applicability of Control-Value Theory to understanding boredom in an Arab EFL context, extending the theoretical framework to a new setting. More importantly, the study shows how the theory's mechanisms operate in relation to specific contextual features—centralized curriculum, academic streaming, cultural content—thereby enriching the theoretical framework with contextual specificity.

Fifth, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating how qualitative case study approaches can capture the nuanced ways students articulate control and value appraisals in relation to specific curriculum materials. This methodological contribution may inform future research on academic emotions in educational settings.

While the narrow scope of the study limits generalizability, it enables a depth of analysis that would be difficult to achieve in larger-scale studies. The rich, contextualized findings provide a foundation for future research that can test the transferability of these insights to other populations and settings.

6.3 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of the research have implications for multiple stakeholders in Omani education.

For **curriculum developers**, the findings suggest a need to review the Grade 12 English curriculum to ensure it is appropriately challenging and relevant for students in the literary section. This might involve incorporating more culturally familiar content, providing differentiated materials for different proficiency levels, and designing more varied and engaging activities.

For **textbook writers**, the findings highlight the importance of considering learner diversity when designing materials. Activities that are repetitive or decontextualized are unlikely to engage students with weaker skills and low motivation. Including more choices, authentic tasks, and opportunities for personalization could enhance engagement.

For **teachers**, the findings underscore the importance of adapting textbook materials to meet the needs of their specific students. Teachers can supplement the textbook with additional activities, make connections to students' lives explicit, vary classroom procedures, and provide appropriate scaffolding for weaker students.

For **teacher educators**, the findings suggest a need to prepare teachers to recognize and address student boredom. Pre-service and in-service training could include modules on emotional engagement, differentiated instruction, and strategies for adapting curriculum materials.

6.4 Final Reflections

Boredom is not merely a minor inconvenience in the classroom; it is a significant emotional experience that can undermine learning and motivation. For students in the literary section who already struggle with English and have low motivation, boredom compounds their difficulties and may push them further away from language learning. Addressing boredom requires attention to both what students learn and how they learn it. Curriculum materials must be relevant and appropriately challenging; pedagogical approaches must be varied and responsive to student needs; and students must have opportunities to exercise autonomy and see the value in what they are learning.

This study provides a starting point for understanding boredom in the Omani secondary school context. It is hoped that the findings will stimulate further research and, more importantly, contribute to creating more engaging and emotionally supportive learning environments for all Omani students.

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