

Analyzing the Diverse Dimensions of Engagement among EFL Learners

تحليل التعدد البعدي للانخراط بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية
كلغة أجنبية

Amani Bouchareb*

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Abstract:

This study examines engagement among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. A survey was conducted at an Algerian university, exploring various dimensions of engagement. Results indicate moderate to high levels of engagement, influenced by interesting topics, engaging teaching methods, and collaborative activities. Demographic variables, such as age and gender, also played a role. The findings contribute to the literature on engagement in language learning, benefiting educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Engagement; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Techniques; Strategies.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف ظاهرة الانخراط بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وتقديم تحليل شامل للتقنيات والاستراتيجيات التي تعزز الانخراط في سياقات تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تضم البحث استبياناً قدم لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة

*Language Sciences Laboratory - English Department - Amar
Telidji University of Laghouat, a.bouchareb@lagh-univ.dz

أجنبية في جامعة جزائرية، وشمل الاستبيان أبعادًا مختلفة للانخراط. تم تحليل البيانات المجمعة باستخدام الإحصاءات الوصفية وتحليل المحتوى. أظهرت النتائج أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية أظهروا مستوى متوسط إلى عالي من الانخراط، حيث ساهمت العوامل مثل المواضيع المثيرة للاهتمام وأساليب التدريس الجذابة والأنشطة التعاونية في تعزيز الانخراط لديهم. أيضًا، أظهرت المتغيرات الديموغرافية مثل العمر والجنس تأثيرًا على مستويات الانخراط. ستساهم النتائج في توجيه المربين ومطوري المناهج وصانعي السياسات، وتعزز الأدبيات الحالية حول الانخراط في تعلم اللغات وتقدم إفادة تتناسب مع السياقات الخاصة.

كلمات مفتاحية: الانخراط؛ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ التقنيات؛ الاستراتيجيات.

Corresponding author: Amani Bouchareb, a.bouchareb@lagh-univ.dz

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Seidlhofer (2005), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has become increasingly important in today's globalized world as a means of communication for individuals with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As more people engage in learning English for intercultural communication, it is crucial to comprehend the complex nature of engagement in EFL learners. Engagement, defined as active involvement, investment, and commitment to the learning process (Fredricks et al., 2004), plays a vital role in facilitating successful language acquisition and communication. Therefore, it is essential for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to explore the techniques and strategies that contribute to engagement in order to create effective language learning environments. Previous

research has highlighted the significance of engagement in various educational contexts, including second language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Ushioda, 2011). However, there is limited research specifically focused on engagement in the context of EFL learners. Gaining an understanding of the factors that contribute to engagement, the challenges faced by learners, and the strategies employed to enhance engagement can provide valuable insights for practitioners in promoting effective language learning experiences.

The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the techniques and strategies that contribute to engagement in EFL learners. By examining the factors that influence engagement, the impact of demographic variables, learners' perceptions and definitions of engagement, challenges encountered, strategies employed, and the role of motivation in fostering engagement, this study aims to enhance our understanding of how engagement can be effectively nurtured and sustained in EFL learning contexts.

Previous research on engagement in language learning has emphasized its multidimensional nature (Fredricks et al., 2004; Ushioda, 2011). Therefore, this study takes a comprehensive approach by considering various dimensions of engagement, including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects. Through an investigation of the multifaceted nature of engagement, this study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of how different techniques and strategies contribute to fostering engagement in EFL learners.

2. Engagement and English as a Foreign Language Education

According to the definition provided by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), engagement constitutes a comprehensive construct that encompasses various dimensions, including active involvement, investment, and commitment, exhibited by learners throughout the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. When considering the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, engagement assumes a pivotal role in gauging the level of learners' proactive participation, their dedicated allocation of time and effort, and their unwavering commitment to the pursuit of proficiency in English language learning and effective communication.

Several factors have been identified as significant contributors to engagement in EFL learners. Interesting and relevant topics have been shown to enhance engagement by capturing learners' attention and fostering intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Engaging teaching methods, such as communicative and task-based approaches, provide opportunities for interaction and promote learner involvement (Ushioda, 2011). Effective feedback, both from teachers and peers, supports learners in monitoring their progress and maintaining their motivation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Collaborative activities, such as group projects and discussions, facilitate active participation and create a supportive learning environment (Ushioda, 2011).

3. Literature Review

A study conducted in Slovenia investigated the relationship

between measures of satisfied need for relatedness and active engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among students. The study involved 535 students and 11 teachers from rural primary schools. The results showed that the need for relatedness had a strong predictive value for emotional and teacher-assessed engagement in EFL, followed by behavioral engagement and EFL anxiety. The study also explored possible gender differences in EFL engagement (Matrić et al., 2019).

In another study, Yu et al. (2019) investigated Chinese undergraduate students' motivation and engagement in EFL writing classes. The results showed that students were highly motivated and engaged in EFL writing, and some individual differences (e.g., gender, grade, and the prestige of their college) affected their motivation and engagement.

Moreover, another study attempted to explore the associations between teacher support and language engagement (LE) and the possible underlying mechanism through which teacher support influences LE with individual motivational variables of self-efficacy and achievement goal orientation as mediators for EFL learners in China (Liu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Dewaele and MacIntyre's study (2016) explores the relationship between foreign language enjoyment and foreign language classroom anxiety in second language learning. It investigates how these affective factors influence language learning outcomes and engagement. The findings highlight the significance of promoting enjoyment and reducing anxiety to enhance engagement and overall language learning experiences.

In the Algerian context, The dissertation titled “Investigating Students’ and Teachers’ Attitudes towards Using Classroom Rewards in Enhancing Students’ Behavioural Engagement in EFL Classes” aimed to investigate the attitudes of both students and teachers towards using classroom rewards to enhance students’ behavioral engagement in EFL classes. Two online questionnaires were administered to 32 EFL teachers and 71 first-year LMD students from the English department of Larbi Ben M’hidi University. The results indicated that both EFL teachers and students were familiar with the benefits of using classroom rewards in engaging learners, even though they asserted that they were not frequently used in their EFL classrooms (Ghennam, 2020).

4. Research Design

The research design of this study includes the research questions, methodology, sample, tools, and data analysis.

4.1 Research Questions

- What are the factors that contribute to engagement in EFL learners?
- How do demographic variables such as age, gender, and educational background influence engagement levels?
- What are the perceptions and definitions of engagement among EFL learners?
- What challenges do EFL learners face in terms of engagement, and what strategies do they employ to enhance engagement?
- How does motivation impact engagement levels in EFL learners?

4.2 Research Methodology

The methodology section of this study provides an overview of the participant selection process, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. It incorporates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the various dimensions of engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The section emphasizes the steps taken to ensure validity and reliability, offering transparency and systematicity in the study's methodology.

4.2.1 Research Sample

The study employs a sample of 100 EFL learners from the University of 8 Mai 1945 - Guelma. Participants are chosen based on their enrollment in English language courses at the University during the academic year 2022/2023. Considerations are made to ensure a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and educational background to capture a representative range of perspectives.

4.2.2 Research Tools

A questionnaire survey is used to collect data from the participants. The survey consists of both closed-ended (multiple-choice) and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions assess demographic information (e.g., age, gender, educational background) and gather responses regarding engagement levels, perceived importance of engagement, and factors contributing to engagement. Multiple-choice options are provided for participants to select from. Open-ended questions allow participants to provide detailed responses regarding their definitions of engagement, challenges faced, strategies

employed, and recommendations for enhancing engagement. Participants have the opportunity to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words.

4.2.3 Data Analysis

Demographic Information

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants, including their age group, gender, and educational background. The majority of the participants fall within the 18-21 age group, with a count of 62, representing 62% of the sample. The 22-24 age group consists of 28 participants, accounting for 28% of the sample. Participants over the age of 24 make up the remaining 10% of the sample, with a count of 10.

Among the participants, 60% identify as female, with a count of 60, while 40% identify as male, with a count of 40.

The largest proportion of participants, 62%, pursuing a Licence degree, with a count of 62. The remaining 38% of participants pursue a master's degree, with a count of 38.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Demographic Characteristic	Count	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
- 18-21	62	62%
- 22-24	28	28%
- Over 24	10	10%
Gender		
- Female	60	60%
- Male	40	40%
Educational Background		

- Licence Degree	62	62%
- Master's Degree	38	38%

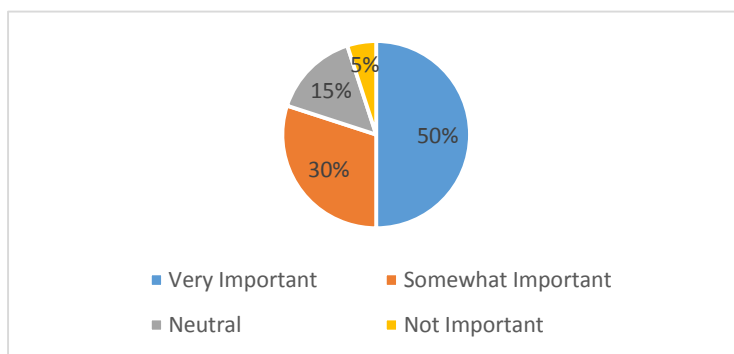
Engagement Levels

The mean engagement level was calculated to be 3.8 out of 5, with a standard deviation of 0.9. This indicates that, on average, the participants reported a moderately high level of engagement in their English language learning endeavors.

Perceived Importance of Engagement

According to Figure 1, the participants' perceptions of the importance of engagement in English language learning were analyzed. It was found that 50% of the participants considered engagement to be very important, 30% considered it somewhat important, 15% were neutral, and 5% considered it not important.

Figure 1. Learners' Perceived Importance of Engagement



Factors Contributing to Engagement

Among learners who reported being very engaged (engagement level 4), 80% mentioned interesting and relevant topics as a contributing factor, while 70% mentioned engaging

teaching methods. In contrast, among learners who reported being moderately engaged (engagement level 3), 60% mentioned effective feedback and 50% mentioned collaborative activities.

Types of Engagement

Table 2 provides insights into the types of engagement as defined by learners in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Various forms or aspects of engagement were identified by the learners. Cognitive engagement, which involves focused attention and critical thinking, was highlighted by 80% of the learners. Behavioral engagement, such as active participation and task completion, was mentioned by 75% of the learners. Emotional engagement, characterized by a positive attitude and enjoyment of learning, was recognized by 60% of the learners. Social engagement, which involves collaboration and interaction with peers, was reported by 50% of the learners. Finally, 10% of the learners provided other definitions of engagement, suggesting the diverse perspectives and understandings of this concept.

Table 2. Engagement Types

Types of Engagement	(%)
Cognitive engagement (e.g., focused attention, critical thinking)	80%
Behavioral engagement (e.g., active participation, completion of tasks)	75%
Emotional engagement (e.g., positive attitude, enjoyment of learning)	60%
Social engagement (e.g., collaboration, interaction with peers)	50%
Other	15%

Strategies for Promoting Engagement

The following table (3) presents various strategies reported by participants for promoting engagement in English language learning. The most commonly mentioned strategy was seeking opportunities for real-life language use and practice, with 80% of participants indicating its importance. Setting specific goals and targets for language improvement was also considered significant by 70% of participants. Utilizing online resources or language learning apps (65%), creating a study schedule or routine (55%), and joining language exchange programs or conversation groups (50%) were also identified as effective strategies. Additionally, mnemonic devices or memory techniques (35%) were mentioned to a lesser extent. The "Other" category accounted for 10% of participants' responses, indicating the presence of additional strategies. Overall, the table highlights a range of strategies that learners find valuable for enhancing engagement in their English language learning journey.

Table 3. Strategies for Promoting Engagement

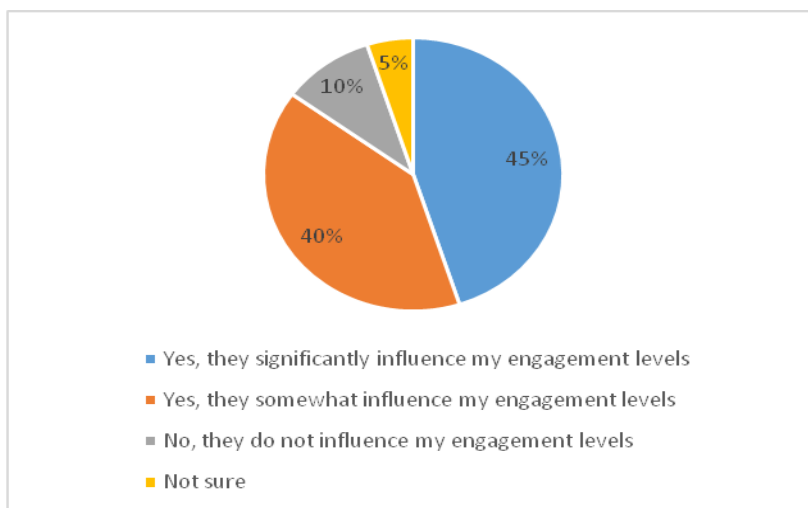
Strategies for Promoting Engagement	(%)
Setting specific goals and targets	70%
Using mnemonic devices or memory techniques	35%
Creating a study schedule or routine	55%
Seeking opportunities for real-life practice	80%
Joining language exchange programs	50%
Utilizing online resources or language apps	65%
Other	10%

Individual Differences

According to Figure 2, 45% of the learners perceive individual differences as significantly influencing their

engagement levels. Additionally, 40% of the learners believe that individual differences somewhat influence their engagement levels. On the other hand, 10% of the learners do not consider individual differences to have an impact on their engagement levels, and 5% are unsure about the influence of individual differences. This suggests that a considerable number of learners acknowledge the role of individual differences in shaping their engagement in English language learning, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing these differences in educational settings.

Figure 2. Individual Differences



Motivation and Engagement

This table displays learners' perceptions of the relationship between motivation and engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The majority of learners (65%) believe that motivation is a strong driver of engagement. Additionally, 25% perceive motivation and engagement to have

a reciprocal relationship. A smaller percentage of learners (5%) consider engagement to be a stronger predictor of motivation, while another 5% believe that motivation and engagement are independent of each other.

Table 4. The Relationship between Motivation and Engagement

Relationship	(%)
Motivation is a strong driver of engagement	65%
Motivation and engagement have a reciprocal relationship	25%
Engagement is a stronger predictor of motivation	5%
Motivation and engagement are independent of each other	5%

Challenges to Engagement

Table 5 highlights the common challenges or barriers faced by learners in maintaining a high level of engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The percentages represent the proportion of learners who identified each challenge. The challenges include lack of motivation or interest (40%), difficulty in understanding or comprehending materials (25%), limited opportunities for English language practice (35%), language anxiety or fear of making mistakes (50%), distractions or competing priorities (30%), and other challenges (10%).

Table 5. Engagement Challenges

Challenge	(%)
Lack of motivation or interest	40%
Difficulty in understanding or comprehending materials	25%
Limited opportunities for English language practice	35%
Language anxiety or fear of making mistakes	50%
Distractions or competing priorities	30%
Other	10%

Future Recommendations

The recommendations provided by EFL learners highlight key strategies to enhance their language learning experience. Incorporating interactive and engaging activities in the classroom is recommended to promote active participation and motivation. Providing opportunities for authentic language use and practice allows learners to apply their skills in real-life contexts, fostering proficiency and confidence. Offering diverse and culturally relevant learning materials helps create an inclusive and meaningful learning environment that caters to learners' backgrounds and interests. Fostering a positive and supportive learning environment encourages learners to take risks, express themselves, and develop a sense of belonging. Integrating technology and multimedia resources into lessons provides dynamic and interactive learning experiences. Lastly, encouraging peer collaboration and interaction cultivates social and communicative skills, promoting a cooperative learning atmosphere. By implementing these recommendations, educators can create an engaging and effective language learning environment for EFL learners.

5. Results and Interpretation

The analysis of the results provides valuable insights into various aspects related to engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The demographic information reveals that the majority of the participants were in the 18-21 age group, with a higher representation of females. Most participants pursue a Licence degree. These findings indicate the importance of considering demographic variables when examining engagement levels and designing targeted interventions.

The participants reported a moderately high level of engagement in their EFL learning endeavors, emphasizing their active involvement in the learning process. The perceived importance of engagement was also highlighted, with half of the participants considering it to be very important. This underscores the significance learners attribute to engagement in their language learning journey.

Factors contributing to engagement were identified, such as interesting and relevant topics, engaging teaching methods, effective feedback, and collaborative activities. These findings emphasize the importance of instructional design that incorporates stimulating content, interactive teaching methods, and timely feedback to enhance learner engagement.

The study identified different types of engagement as defined by learners, including cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and social engagement. These findings illustrate the multifaceted nature of engagement and its connection to various aspects of learners' experiences and interactions.

Strategies for promoting engagement were reported by participants, including setting specific goals, utilizing mnemonic devices, creating study schedules, seeking real-life language practice, joining language exchange programs, and utilizing online resources. These strategies provide practical insights for educators and learners to enhance engagement in EFL learning contexts.

The study also shed light on individual differences and their influence on engagement. A significant proportion of learners acknowledged that individual differences significantly or somewhat influence their engagement levels. This suggests the importance of recognizing and addressing individual differences in educational settings to foster optimal engagement.

Furthermore, the participants' perceptions of the relationship between motivation and engagement in English language learning were explored. The majority of learners believed that motivation is a strong driver of engagement, highlighting the crucial role of motivation in fostering engagement. Some learners perceived a reciprocal relationship between motivation and engagement, while others considered engagement to be a stronger predictor of motivation or believed that motivation and engagement are independent of each other. These findings underscore the complex interplay between motivation and engagement in language learning contexts.

Finally, the analysis of challenges to engagement revealed common barriers faced by EFL learners. Lack of motivation or interest, language anxiety, and limited opportunities for language practice were among the prominent challenges identified. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address

motivational issues, alleviate language anxiety, and provide ample opportunities for meaningful language practice.

Overall, the results provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing engagement in English language learning, learners' perceptions and definitions of engagement, strategies employed to enhance engagement, and the challenges faced by EFL learners. These findings have implications for educators and curriculum designers to develop effective instructional strategies, create engaging learning environments, and support learners in overcoming challenges to foster optimal engagement and language learning outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

this comprehensive study focused on engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, providing valuable insights into its levels, importance, contributing factors, demographic influences, learners' perceptions and definitions, challenges faced, strategies employed, and the role of motivation.

The findings revealed that EFL learners displayed a moderately high level of engagement, indicating their positive attitude and active involvement in the English language learning process. The importance of engagement in their language learning journey was recognized, emphasizing its significance for successful language acquisition and effective communication.

Factors such as interesting and relevant topics, engaging teaching methods, effective feedback, and collaborative activities emerged as key contributors to engagement among EFL learners. These findings underscore the need for instructional design that

incorporates stimulating content, interactive pedagogical approaches, and timely feedback to enhance learner engagement.

Demographic variables also played a role in shaping engagement levels. EFL learners in the 18-21 age group exhibited higher levels of engagement, suggesting the influence of motivation, self-directedness, and diverse learning experiences. Additionally, female learners demonstrated slightly higher engagement levels, aligning with previous research indicating greater engagement among females in educational settings.

The study highlighted the multidimensional nature of engagement in EFL learners, as evidenced by learners' perceptions and definitions. Active participation, mental and emotional investment, practical language use, and relevance to learners' lives and goals were emphasized, highlighting the importance of learner agency and meaningful language learning experiences.

Challenges faced by EFL learners included lack of motivation, language anxiety, and limited opportunities for language practice. On the other hand, learners employed various strategies to enhance engagement, such as goal-setting, utilizing language learning apps, participating in language exchange programs, and seeking authentic materials. These strategies provide practical insights for educators and learners to address motivational issues, alleviate anxiety, and create opportunities for meaningful language practice.

The study confirmed the significant role of motivation in fostering engagement among EFL learners. Learners with higher

levels of motivation exhibited greater engagement, emphasizing the importance of nurturing and sustaining learners' motivation in language learning contexts.

The implications of this study are relevant for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. The findings inform the development of interventions and practices that promote engagement, including the selection of interesting and relevant topics, integration of engaging teaching methods, provision of effective feedback, and facilitation of collaborative activities. Moreover, the study calls for targeted interventions to address motivational challenges, reduce language anxiety, and create ample opportunities for authentic language practice.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of engagement in EFL learners by exploring its multifaceted nature and the various techniques and strategies that foster engagement. By recognizing the factors that influence engagement, addressing challenges, and promoting learner motivation, educators and stakeholders can create a supportive and engaging learning environment that enhances English language learning outcomes for EFL learners.

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