Students' Optimal Engagement in EFL Large Classes: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study in East Nusa Tenggara

Yohanis Nurak Siwa
Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira and Universitas Negeri Malang,
yohanis.nurak.2202219@students.um.ac.id

Yazid Basthomi
Universitas Negeri Malang, ybasthomi@um.ac.id

Students' Optimal Engagement in EFL Large Classes: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study in East Nusa Tenggara

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in researching students' engagement in English as foreign language (EFL) classes as students' language learning achievement is shaped by their engagement in class. Yet, the study of students' engagement in EFL large classes has received relatively little empirical attention. This qualitative phenomenological study aims at exploring how teachers perceive the factors boosting students' optimal engagement and what strategies they use to boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Ten university teachers with adequate experience of teaching EFL large classes in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia participated in this study. Semi structured interviews were used to elicit the teachers' perceptions and interpretations of students' optimal engagement. The results revealed five factors affecting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes: teaching strategies, individual motivation, student-teacher relationship, students' English proficiency, and teaching facilities. Additionally, the teachers applied instructional and affective strategies to boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Based on the study results, we offered some pedagogical implications for the teachers and their institutions.

Keywords

students' optimal engagement, EFL large classes, EFL teachers, phenomenology

Creative Commons License

Acknowledgements

Students' Optimal Engagement in EFL Large Classes: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study in East Nusa Tenggara

Yohanis Nurak Siwa[1] and Yazid Basthomi[2]
[1]Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in researching students' engagement in English as foreign language (EFL) classes as students' language learning achievement is shaped by their engagement in class. Yet, the study of students' engagement in EFL large classes has received relatively little empirical attention. This qualitative phenomenological study aims at exploring how teachers perceive the factors boosting students' optimal engagement and what strategies they use to boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Ten university teachers with adequate experience of teaching EFL large classes in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia participated in this study. Semi structured interviews were used to elicit the teachers' perceptions and interpretations of students' optimal engagement. The results revealed five factors affecting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes: teaching strategies, individual motivation, student-teacher relationship, students' English proficiency, and teaching facilities. Additionally, the teachers applied instructional and affective strategies to boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Based on the study results, we offered some pedagogical implications for the teachers and their institutions.

Keywords: students' optimal engagement, EFL large classes, EFL teachers, phenomenology

Introduction

Language teachers are challenged when they have large classes because they do not just organize the content, they must also make sure that students are engaged. When students are engaged, they accomplish more and have more noteworthy academic and social achievement (Harbour et al., 2015). Higher levels of achievement, self-efficacy, motivation, curiosity, and mastery-oriented goals are just a few of the positive educational outcomes that have been linked to high levels of students' engagement (Christenson et al., 2012). Also, other previous researchers have proved the strong connection between students' achievement and engagement (e.g., Abid & Akhtar, 2020; K. Han, 2021; Heng, 2014; Karabıyık, 2019).

In the Indonesian context, where English is learned as a foreign language, and students are not open to language learning requirements, teachers have demanding tasks. Their encouraging students to actively practice English in the classroom becomes pivotal because the students lack exposure to English outside the classroom, which is the best place for their participation in meaningful language interaction. However, in private and state universities in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia, class-size is large. Hess and Urin in Treko (2013) define a large class as 30 to 50, and the East Nusa Tenggara Universities have 40 to 50. In such a case, teachers find students need to be more engaged to participate by asking and answering questions or discussing with peers. As engagement is the primary step in the foreign language

learning process (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015), students must be actively engaged to create the language they will use. This phenomenon challenges teachers to discover ways to enhance students' engagement.

Even though various empirical research has been carried out in terms of students' engagement in EFL settings by numerous researchers (e.g., Al-Bogami, 2020; Cheng & Liu, 2022; Gan, 2021; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021; Zhang, 2022), research on the issue of students' engagement, in Indonesia, is still in its infancy. Researchers and experts have introduced students' engagement in the Indonesian EFL context. Most of the studies had focused on EFL students' engagement in online teaching and learning (Inayati & Waloyo, 2022; Suharti et al., 2021; Werang & Leba, 2022); learners' engagement and learning motivation (Imamyartha et al., 2022); students' engagement with teachers' teaching style (Rahayu, 2018); effect of gamification, mentimeter and quizizz to students' engagement (Ardi & Rianita, 2022; Munawir & Hasbi, 2021; Sari, 2021); engagement in academic reading (Yulia et al., 2020); engagement in writing (Miftah & Cahyono, 2022; Nurfaidah, 2021; Prasetyawati & Ardi, 2020; Tusino et al., 2020); analysis framework of students' learning engagement (Suherdi, 2018); and technology and engagement (Pasaribu & Wulandari, 2021). However, the theme focusing on students' engagement in EFL large class is absent. The absence of research on students' engagement in large classes seems to ignore that teachers face practical problems as class sizes rise, particularly in tertiary level institutions where the number of students is more varied, and the teachers must cope with a range of factors, such as student's academic competence, background, age, and experience (Aoumeur, 2017), which affect students' optimal engagement in class as well as the effectiveness of the learning process.

To throw light on this phenomenon, this study was conducted to investigate how teachers teaching EFL large classes deal with students' engagement. EFL teachers in these settings may have their own experiences in perceiving factors affecting students' engagement and strategies used to enhance it; thus, it is essential to carry out this study. It is in accordance with what Hiver et al. (2021a) state that engagement is the foundation of all language learning; it is crucial to comprehend if there are empirical variations in how individuals perceive engagement among diverse contexts. Such experiences are expected to be beneficial for all teachers in the possible improvement of some fruitful and appropriate methods to yield the students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes since a growing amount of research indicates that intentional interventions and particular teacher practices can increase students' engagement (Harbour et al., 2015; Shernoff, 2013).

Furthermore, most of the studies (e.g., Yulia et al., 2020) focused on assessing the four dimensions of students' engagement separately. However, it is crucial to investigate how teachers enhance the overall dimensions of students' engagement concurrently since the four dimensions are not independent and are positively interrelated (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Reeve et al., 2019). Likewise, Oga-Baldwin et al. (2017) argue that promoting the overall dimensions shows the optimal engagement of students. The ideas are in accordance with the research conducted by Conner et al. (2010) as cited in Shernoff (2013), proving that students who are indeed behaviorally engaged and receive good scores but are emotionally and cognitively disengaged display indications of elevated degrees of tension and worry which lead to poor well-being (see also, Lambert et al., 2017). Therefore, the current study is an attempt to fill the gaps and proposed the following research questions to be investigated:

1. How do university EFL teachers in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia perceive factors that boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes?
2. How do university EFL teachers in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia perceive strategies that boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes?

Related Literature

Importance of Engagement in Language Learning

Engagement can give a comprehensive picture of students' feelings, actions, and thoughts in educational contexts (Oga-Baldwin, 2019), and it is crucial to predict essential outcomes (e.g., learning, development) and reveal underlying motivation (Reeve et al., 2004). In language learning, students' engagement is related to their active participation and involvement in a particular activity or task, and meaningful language learning is likely to occur with the active involvement and commitment of engaged students (Hiver et al., 2021b).

The significance of engagement in learning is highlighted by Christenson et al. (2012), "Student engagement drives learning; requires energy and effort; is affected by multiple contextual influences; and can be achieved for all learners" (p. 817). Furthermore, high learner engagement has been associated with numerous successful educational outcomes (Hiver et al., 2021a; Lei et al., 2018; Rajabalee et al., 2020; Wara et al., 2018).

Since the challenges of maintaining students engaged and focused on their learning in the face of a variety of distractions are becoming more and more apparent to educators in language education around the world (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), investigating teachers' perspectives on factors affecting students' engagement and strategies they employ in EFL large classes become indispensable. Moreover, recognizing the importance of students' engagement, it is salient for teachers to examine how students engage in the overall teaching and learning process (Mandernach et al., 2011).

Four Dimensions of Engagement

Engagement is a multidimensional phenomenon consisting of four separate yet related aspects: behavior, emotion, cognition, and agency (Christenson et al., 2012; Reeve, 2013). Similarly, Philp, and Duchesne (2016) assert that engagement is a state of intense focus and involvement in which participation impacts not only one aspect but also the overall aspects of engagement.

According to Subramaniam and Muniandy (2017), teachers can observe the degree of student participation in a class during an activity connected to the student's behavioral, agentic, cognitive, and emotional engagement. They reproduced the following figure of the interrelated aspects of students' engagement (see Figure 1).

According to Sang and Hiver (2021), behavioral engagement is the effort put forth by students on learning tasks, the degree of their involvement, and their level of active participation in the learning process. Examples of learners' behavioral involvement in L2 learning include their voluntary speaking participation, interpersonal communication initiative, task time, the number of semantic information they produce when on activity, and resilience on task without needing support or direction (Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

Emotional engagement refers to motivated participation in learning activities in which enthusiasm, interest, and enjoyment become its main features (Skinner et al., 2009). The level at which students feel connected to or disconnected from their classroom peers, particularly those they would be working with on their tasks, is another indicator of emotional engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016).

Cognitive engagement is continuous mental effort and attention of which questioning, peer utterance completion, idea exchange, making judgmental remarks, offering information or justification, justifying an argument, defending an argument, and employing nonverbal cues become its markers in classroom settings (Helme & Clarke, 2001).

Figure 1

Four Interrelated Aspects of Students' Engagement during a Learning Activity
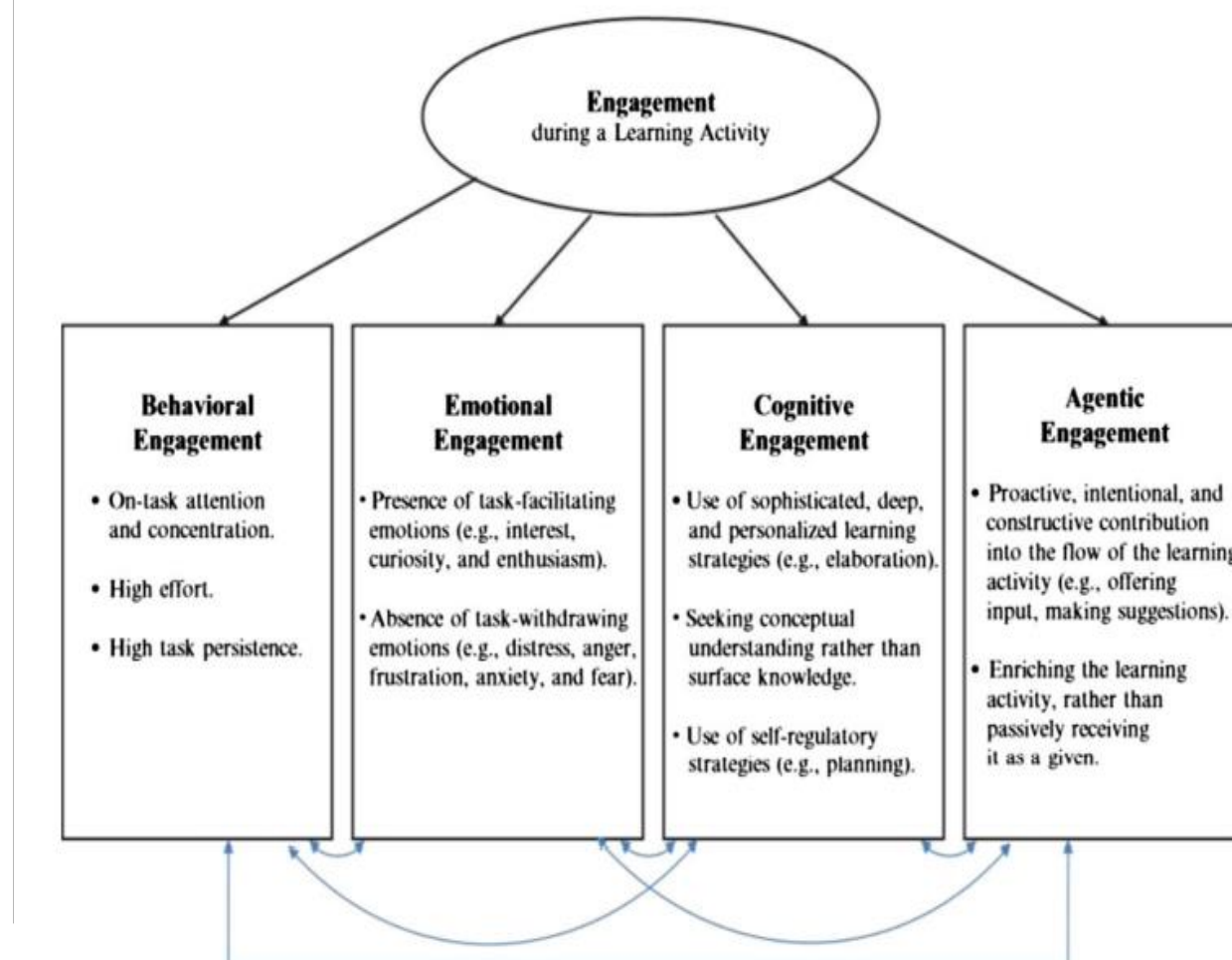
Agentic engagement is the process through which students actively contribute to the direction of the teaching they receive. Some examples of agentic engagement are students may give contributions, convey a preference, suggest a course of action, ask questions, state their thoughts and needs, suggest a course of action to be pursued, express their level of interest, request materials or learning opportunities, look for ways to add personal relevance to the lesson, request a say in how problems are to be solved, request clarification, generate options, and express likes and dislikes during instruction (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

These intercorrelated aspects are assessed concurrently in this study to ensure that students are optimally engaged in the EFL large classes.

Method

Research Design

This research used interpretive phenomenological design because we intended to portray the lived experiences of a phenomenon – people – (Hall et al., 2016). The primary focus of phenomenology is on how individuals perceive the world or things as they appear (Langdridge, 2007). This made it best to attain our goal. Interpretive phenomenological design enables the participants to narrate their stories based on their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This design also enables the investigation of experience in its terms, placed

within the context of the individual, with a complete description of each person's lived experience and the ability to extract themes to better understand the phenomena across participants (Smith et al., 2022). Thus, in the context of this study, we investigated empirical evidence of how EFL teachers teaching in EFL large classes in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia perceived factors affecting students' optimal engagement and the strategies they employed to boost students' optimal engagement. In addition, we used interpretive phenomenology design as it works best with a data collection approach that encourages participants to provide a thorough, in-depth, first-person narrative of their experiences (Noon, 2018). This study also utilized inductive analysis, where the themes or concepts in the findings are derived from the data not from earlier presumptions or models (Thomas, 2006).

The first author for this study is a faculty member at the English Department of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences in a private university in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. As one of the best private universities in this province, the number of students increased, making some classes large. The first author experienced teaching EFL large classes of more than 40 students, making the learning process more challenging. The author faced diverse students with different backgrounds, learning motivations, and English competencies and also some not conducive learning environments, including limited learning facilities, which could affect students' optimal engagement. This diversity and condition made the author try to help students engage optimally in the classroom.

This phenomenon was also experienced by the participants of the study who are working at the same university as the first author, and those working in public and other private universities in this province. Therefore, this study was done as an attempt to provide information for EFL teachers teaching large classes and university leaders to provide a supportive and conducive learning atmosphere that can boost students to optimally engage in the classroom, as learning engagement is crucial for language learners.

Participants

The most effective way of selecting participants for a phenomenological study is to select individuals who meet specific criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The criteria for selecting the participants were being a full-time faculty member in the English Department in a private or public university in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, and having at least three years of teaching English experiences in EFL large classes in their respective universities. In this regard, there were 10 (T1 – T10) EFL university teachers who had plenty of experience in teaching English courses in EFL large classes participating in the study. They included four males and six females whose teaching experiences ranged from three to 14 years.

We contacted the 10 participants via telephone and explained the project overview and the sample interview questions. They also signed the consent form to assure confidentiality of their voluntary participation.

Interview Protocol and Data Analysis

We used a semi structured interview to collect the data. The interview was conducted online using Zoom. Each online interview lasted from 30 to 40 minutes. By focusing on the overall dimension of students' engagement, predetermined questions were designed to elicit teachers' perceptions on factors affecting students' optimal engagement and strategies they used to boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. The guided questions, developed based on the literature and our professional experiences, involved items to reveal students' cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and agentic engagement. The questions are:

1. What are the impacts of large classes on students' optimal engagement (cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and agentic engagement in English lessons?
2. Did you experience facing students who were optimally engaged in the EFL large classes?
3. Did you experience facing disengaged students in the EFL large classes?
4. What factors did you experience that affect students to optimally engage in EFL large classes?
5. How did you experience boosting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes?

The participants were prompted to provide specifics of a situation in which they have experienced the phenomenon (Englander, 2012) by giving detailed information for each dimension of students' engagement. We held the interview in Bahasa Indonesia (i.e., the native language of the participants) to ensure the participants understood the questions and gave accurate responses. The interview data was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Before analyzing the data, we translated the transcription into English.

The analysis process started after all the interview data were transcribed and translated. We utilized thematic analysis using a six-phase model proposed by Clarke et al. (2015) to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is appropriate in this research because it is used to identify and interpret data related to participants' lived experiences (Clarke et al., 2015), which is in line with interpretive phenomenology, which aims to make an interpretation of participants' experiences (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015) in this case the experiences of the EFL teachers teaching in EFL large classes. In addition, thematic analysis offers accessible and systematic procedures for extracting codes and themes from the obtained data (Clarke et al., 2015). This gave us a foundational grasp of the data collected and provided us with essential insights into how EFL teachers teaching in EFL large classes perceived factors affecting students' optimal engagement and the strategies they employed to boost students' optimal engagement.

The first stage of the data analysis was familiarization. We read and reread the verbatim transcribed data analytically, so we became intimately familiar with the details of the data. After getting familiar with the data, the next stage was coding. We created initial codes related to the research questions. We ended this phase by ensuring data was thoroughly coded and the codes relevant to each data. The codes emerged during the analysis; they were not determined earlier. The third stage was theme development. We grouped the identified codes into themes and subthemes. It was followed up by reviewing and revising the themes and subthemes to make sure they were all related to the data and the research questions. The last stage was finalizing for reporting purposes.

Table 2
Samples of Coding

Theme	Subthemes	Sample codes
Teaching facilities	LCD inventory	Lack of LCD stock
	Comfortable classrooms	Need AC or fan
	Printed books in the	
	library	Too few books
Teaching strategies	Group discussion	To ask them to collaborate with their friends
	Videos	Taking videos from YouTube
	Songs	To make the class fun
		They are happy when singing song

Trustworthiness

To address trustworthiness, we applied the member checking technique by displaying the interview transcripts to the participants to ensure they appropriately reflect on their perspectives, resulting in confirmed data and interpretation (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdel, 2015).

Results

Factors Boosting Students' Optimal Engagement: Teachers' Perspectives

Based on the results of the theme construction using thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2015), we attained five themes that the participants perceived as factors that can boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. The themes are teaching strategies, individual motivation, student-teacher relationships, students' English proficiency, and teaching facilities.

Teaching Strategies

All the teachers perceived that teaching strategies they employed in the classroom could boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. However, each of our participants held their own perspective on teaching strategies they employed in EFL large classes. Some participants defined teaching strategy as the careful selection and use of specific collaborative teaching strategies that assist students in collaborating in the learning process. They believed that this strategy could enhance students' optimal engagement. In this regard, one of the teachers noted that:

> T8: To ensure that all the students in the large class pay attention, I always choose my teaching techniques carefully. I employ some strategies like group discussions or rainbow technique so students can collaborate with their friends in the discussion.

Other participants associated teaching strategy with careful consideration in choosing more engaging and relevant tasks as well as the use of learning games. They perceived that this strategy would encourage students to engage in the learning process. The following are the participants' comments:

> T3: For the students to practice the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—I select a few relevant games. Games are effective because all students could participate in the learning process.

> T6: The strategies we employ to teach them and tasks we give can occasionally affect how engaged our students are in class.

Other participants highlighted the significance of using English in the instructional process as one of their teaching strategies since they found students feel happier and more enthusiastic when the teachers speak English in the classroom when, for example, they would like to interact with students. The following is one of the participants' comments:

> T3:   Sometimes, when I use too much Indonesian in class, I notice some students look unhappy and uninterested………I think they feel more engaged when I use English as the language of instruction.

Our participants believed that the selection and use of collaborative teaching strategies, relevant learning tasks, games, and the use of English as the classroom language could boost students' engagement in EFL large classes. Rahimi and Ong (2023) state that teaching strategies and learning tasks applied in the classroom can facilitate language learners' engagement.

Individual Motivation

Individual motivation was another factor emerging from the data that could boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Some teachers perceived that students with high motivation were more engaged. In this regard, one of the teachers stated, "Students with high motivation seem to be more engaged in the learning process" (T4). In addition, some teachers noticed that some less motivated students in their classes seem disengaged in class activities. The participants provided the following comments:

> T1:   Back to the student's motivation, I observe that undermotivated students struggle to perform effectively and engage in the learning process. However, as a teacher, I approach the students in various ways to progressively boost their motivation to learn English.

> T8:   When I asked some disengaged students about their lack of active class participation, some said they did not enjoy learning English. They enrolled in the English department at their parents' request.

According to the teachers, students' motivation is central since it can drive them to participate actively and enthusiastically in every classroom activity, as motivation refers to the drive that underpins and maintains learners' behavior (Schunk et al., 2014; Sinatra, 2005). The study revealed that highly motivated students performed optimal engagement in EFL large classes, but less motivated students were disengaged in the learning process.

Student-Teacher Relationship

A positive student-teacher relationship is defined as a tender and affectionate relationship in which the teacher is aware and responsive to the needs of the students (Pianta et al., 2012). The teachers believed that the student-teacher relationship is a crucial factor that can boost students' engagement in EFL large classes:

> It is necessary to build a positive rapport with students because if they like you, they will pay attention to you, want to talk to you, and feel comfortable opening to you. We can reflect on our relationship with others. If we have good relationships with others, we may discuss and share more with them. (T5)

Also, one of the teachers stated: "Positive rapport among students and teachers can create a more positive and conducive learning atmosphere that can make students feel happy to take part in the learning process whether to ask questions or discuss with their friends" (T2). The closeness between students and teachers provides a more relaxing and conducive learning

atmosphere where students are open to share or take part in the learning process. Closeness, encouragement, and affection between teachers and students, which characterize a positive teacher-student relationship, have been linked to improved student development outcomes such as higher psychological well-being and increased charitable behavior (Lin et al., 2022; Longobardi et al., 2020). These better development outcomes play an essential role in boosting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes.

Students' English Proficiency

Another theme to emerge from our data analysis that could affect the students' engagement was students' English proficiency. The teachers shared their experiences facing students with low English proficiency in their classes. Teacher #10 experienced some students chose to sit in the back row and did not participate in the learning process because they have low English competence: "Some students with low English proficiency usually sit in the back row and seem less engaged" (10).

Another teacher experienced students who could not share their learning difficulties or problems in the classroom as they did not know how to express them in English: "Even though they did not understand my explanation, some students are reluctant to raise questions since they do not know how to do so in English" (T9). The participants perceived that students' adequate English proficiency would help them express their knowledge or ideas, ask questions, exchange ideas in group discussions, or answer teachers' questions as forms of their optimal engagement in the lesson.

Teaching Facilities

The participants believed that the availability of teaching facilities, including the LCD inventory, comfortable classrooms, and printed books in the library, were significant factors that can boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes: "We need a room with an air conditioner or at least a fan when teaching large classes so the classroom is more comfortable" (T1).

According to the participants, sufficient and supporting teaching facilities are vital to help students optimally engage in EFL large classes, as they experienced limited teaching facilities such as LCD or books would hinder teachers from conducting their lessons as planned and made students less disengaged in the classroom discussions. The teachers stated that:

> T3:   Students are more engaged when playing games or watching videos on an LCD, but occasionally I have to alter my lesson plan because we run out of LCD as other teachers are also using it at the same time.

> T5:   In our library, there are limited books related to instructional materials. Because students cannot access enough sources outside of the classroom to further their knowledge, it is occasionally difficult for us to ensure that students are engaged in the discussions.

The study conducted by Hanaysha et al. (2023) showed that the availability of facilities becomes significant predictors of students' engagement and academic performance. Similarly, Lavy and Nixon (2017) noted that providing and maintaining suitable facilities at university campuses is crucial to enhancing students' academic performance and engagement. The teachers' experiences become essential findings since university facilities can positively affect students' engagement levels (Gunuc et al., 2022).

Teachers' Strategies to Boost Students' Optimal Engagement: Teachers' Practices

Based on the results of the theme construction, we obtained two themes that the participants believed as strategy that can boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. The themes are instructional and affective strategy.

Instructional Strategy

The teachers perceived that instructional strategy is one of the most effective strategies in boosting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes, including using engaging tasks and activities, applying interactive teaching strategies, and relating course materials to students' personal experiences. The teachers recommended creating and executing engaging tasks and activities by providing tasks related to the students' interest: "I usually provide engaging activities to ensure that every student takes part in class. Students are engaged when I provide tasks with funny pictures or tasks related to their football idol" (T10). Also, the teachers perceived that utilizing interactive teaching strategies, including project-based learning, group discussion, games, songs, videos, and creative PowerPoint slides, could facilitate students to engage in EFL large classes optimally. The participants provided the following comments:

> T7: To make them enjoy the learning process, I usually begin the class by playing games related to the teaching materials.

> T1: I apply the reader-read forms strategy to engage students in reading texts.

Teacher #2 believed that relating students' personal experiences to the course material would help students boost their optimal engagement as they could actively participate in the learning process:

> I typically request students to relate their personal experiences to the course material. For instance, reading and pronunciation class discusses a text about well-known cultures and customs from other nations. I then ask them to reflect on the similarities or differences between the cultures and customs they read about in the text and their own cultures and customs. (T2)

The ideas of teachers creating and providing engaging tasks and activities in EFL large classes to boost students' optimal engagement can be an effective solution.

Affective Strategy

The study found that all the teachers perceived that the motivational support they provide for their students can boost them to optimally engage in the EFL classroom. Some teachers tried to approach disengaged students individually to help them learn: "I cannot deny that there are some disengaged students in the learning process, I usually approach them individually and ask for their problems or difficulties during the lesson" (T4). Also, the teachers believed that providing motivational talk before starting the class would help students to engage in the lessons. In this regard, one of the participants stated: "I always give a motivational talk at the beginning of my lessons to underline the value of studying English" (T7). The teachers perceived that incorporating an effective strategy into the learning process is crucial as it can

create a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes students' emotional connection and investment in their learning.

An effective strategy could be a solution to help students engage in EFL large classes as it is one the most suitable strategies to motivate students to learn a language (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has attempted to widen the discussion of students' engagements reported by previous researchers by availing of a different context, i.e., EFL large classes in which teachers experience factors affecting students' optimal engagement and strategies they employ to boost students' optimal engagement.

Factors Boosting Students' Optimal Engagement: Teachers' Perspectives

The teachers believe that teaching strategies they employ in the classroom can boost students' optimal engagement as a teaching strategy is one of the most influential factors impacting teaching quality (Nguyen et al., 2014), and the dynamic and quality of teaching and learning are seen through students' engagement on the instructional activities (Mandernach et al., 2011). In addition, one interesting finding in this study is that the use of English as the language of instruction in EFL classes can affect the students' optimal engagement, which strengthens numerous claims made regarding the importance of teachers having adequate English proficiency (e.g., Ardi et al., 2023; Elder & Kim, 2014; Nakata, 2010; Wulyani et al., 2019). This finding also confirms the outcomes reported by other research studies in the field of student engagements, proving that the design and implementation of lessons considering students' needs and conditions maximize the probability that students will be actively engaged in the learning process (e.g., Gresalfi et al., 2012; Harbour et al., 2015). So, careful consideration of tasks teachers gives to students and the strategy they use in EFL large classes becomes central. This implies that teaching strategies are significant factors contributing to four dimensions of students' engagement, i.e., behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and agentic, in EFL large classes.

The second finding shows there is a direct and obvious link between motivation and engagement, with a focus on how motivation can support or facilitate engagement (Lee & Reeve, 2012; Reeve, 2012; Skinner et al., 2008; Yin & Wang, 2016). The teachers perceive that students with high individual motivation are more engaged than those who are less motivated. A variety of student-internal factors becomes an important determiner that leads them to engage or disengage (Aubrey et al., 2020). Therefore, the teachers view that the number of students in the class does not hinder the engagement of highly motivated students since students' engagement and disengagement are linked to their personal motivation (Reeve et al., 2019).

The student-teacher relationship is connected to a positive, trusting, and encouraging relationship between teachers and their students developed in learning environments (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012), which the teachers perceive as one salient factor that has an impact on boosting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes. Most teachers believe that students' engagement is shaped by their teachers' closeness to them, which improves the learning experience (Hughes & Cao, 2018) both inside and outside the classroom. Some teachers shared their experience of creating extra outside activities, for example, watching movies or doing sports together, that aim at building bonds with their students as they believe that even if the class size is large, the bond they have made can connect them with their students who feel open and relaxed to participate in the class. The finding strengthens other researchers

who have proved that student-teacher relationships affect students' engagement (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2022; Quin, 2017; Wanders et al., 2020). Thus, the research finding implies that teachers discern the importance of establishing positive, trusting, and encouraging relationships with their students since good relationships make students more interested in learning, which affects their engagement and boosts long-term academic success and self-assurance (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020).

The students' English proficiency level is an influencing factor in their engagement (Huang et al., 2017; Suryati et al., 2013), and the teachers also perceive this as another factor that impacts students' optimal engagement in their EFL large classes. The teachers acknowledge that there are varieties of students' levels of English proficiency in their classes, and they assert that, in their EFL large classes, students with inadequate English competence usually sit in the back row and seem unwilling to engage in the instruction.

The last factor that arose from the data that can boost students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes is teaching facilities. It is essential to provide enough teaching and learning resources and facilities to ensure the success of EFL instruction in the true sense because effective teaching can take place when teachers are supported with physical school facilities (Berry et al. in Werang et al., 2022). Some teachers experience that an uncomfortable classroom with many students result in students' disengagement since the teachers are always griping about things like the heat or the size of the space. The teachers believe that the quality of their working conditions (Werang et al., 2022) has an impact on how well they perform in the classroom, particularly in their EFL lessons, which also affects students' engagement. Besides, the minimal requirement to be considered is the availability of high-quality textbooks, an ample supply of authentic materials for each student, dictionaries and reference books in the library that are accessible to both students and teachers (Madya, 2002), and some teachers experience lack of books related to their instructional materials influence the participation of students in the class.

As the first author experienced teaching EFL large classes in East Nusa Tenggara Province, he believed that the factors perceived by the participants could contribute to the optimal engagement of students in EFL large classes. However, the first author perceived peers' support as another factor that could help students engage in the classroom. The first author experienced that some students enjoyed learning English in the classroom because their classmates supported them. Also, some students were reluctant to participate in classroom activities as their friends usually made fun of their mistakes, for example, when mispronounced English words. In addition, some students preferred to study with their friends since they usually helped each other understand learning materials to engage in classroom discussions.

Teachers' Strategies to Boost Students' Optimal Engagement: Teachers' Practices

Dealing with the last research question, the strategies the teachers used are divided into two, namely instructional and affective strategies. The instructional strategy is related to creating and executing engaging tasks and activities and applying proper and interactive instruction techniques to facilitate students' optimal engagement. The finding also aligns with the ideas of Skinner and Pitzer (2012), who declare that students are more engaged, motivated to learn, and interested in learning when given intrinsically motivating, fundamentally engaging, and pleasurable assignments. The teachers find that students are optimally engaged when they find the task engaging. Additionally, some teachers claim that group discussion can increase students' engagement in their EFL large class since students can collaborate. On the other hand, the use of English as the language of instruction is seen by teachers as crucial because many students are more attentive to teachers speaking English. As a result, effective

teaching strategies that allow teachers to speak in English may not only encourage students to engage but also improve teachers' perceptions of their abilities (F. Han, 2021).

Another strategy teachers applied was an effective strategy, providing students with encouragement and motivational talks. It is important:

> The teacher explains why putting forth effort during the learning activity might be a personally useful thing for the students to do. This is especially helpful when asking students to engage in a relatively uninteresting activity, classroom procedure, or teacher request, as it helps students motivationally transform "something not worth doing" into "something worth doing" so to realize the otherwise hidden benefit identified by the teacher. (Reeve et al., 2019, p. 90)

Teachers provide students with encouraging examples showing the importance of learning certain subjects so that they will understand and realize the value of the lessons and are eager to get involved. Besides, the teachers also share their experiences of getting scholarships and studying abroad as they believe that the motivating practices, they show can affect students' optimal engagement (Van den Berghe et al., 2016).

Compared to the participants' experiences in using the strategies to boost students' engagement in EFL large classes, the first author usually employed rewarding strategies. He experienced that these strategies effectively boosted students' engagement in EFL large classes as the students felt valued for their work. For example, the first author gave chocolate to them if they answered questions or gave them a plus if they were active in classroom discussions.

Pedagogical Implications

Findings have highlighted that collaborative learning activities play a crucial role in boosting students' engagement in EFL large classes. As such, teachers are recommended to frequently implement collaborative learning strategies such as group discussion or role play in their lessons.

The findings of the study also reveal that some teachers believe they are not well prepared to deal with disengaged students in their EFL large classes. They could not join teachers' professional development programs such as training or seminars because of demanding work schedules and lack of programs suited to their needs. Thus, they are recommended conducting reform professional development such as participating in study groups or being mentored or coached (Garet et al., 2001) so they could collaborate with colleagues to share insights and ideas to stay updated on effective teaching practices and strategies for engaging EFL large classes. Additionally, teachers need to gain a better grasp of the nature of engagement and consider the four dimensions of students' engagement when planning their lessons and learning activities in the EFL large classes.

Another implication concerns the availability of sufficient university facilities. As experienced by the teachers, limited teaching facilities could also affect students' optimal engagement; university leaders must consider providing more conducive working conditions for teachers including, providing teaching and learning facilities such as air conditioners in classrooms or relevant and adequate books in the library, particularly for those who teach large classes.

Limitations

This research has some limitations related to the number of participants, of which only 10 EFL teachers participated, and was conducted only in East Nusa Tenggara-Indonesia. Future

research will, therefore, be encouraged with a larger number of participants and a wider geographic scope. Engagement in second language acquisition will need to widen its foci and degrees of granularity to understand how such engagement is enacted and experienced in various circumstances (Hiver et al., 2021a). Therefore, future research might explore the fluctuation of students' engagement in EFL large classes in a certain time scale, for example, a cross one academic year. Future research might also explore the factors affecting students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes from the perspectives of students who also experience the learning process in EFL large classes.

References

Abid, N., & Akhtar, M. (2020). Relationship between academic engagement and academic achievement: An empirical evidence of secondary school students. *Journal of Educational Research*, *23*(1), 48–61.

Al-Bogami, B. (2020). Promoting middle school students' engagement through incorporating iPad apps in EFL/ESL classes. *SAGE Open*, *10*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020926570

Aoumeur, H. (2017). The impact of class size on teaching and learning English as a foreign language: The case of the department of English at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis university. *Arab World English Journal*, *8*(2), 349–361. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no2.25

Ardi, P., Mukti, T. W. P., Basthomi, Y., & Widiati, U. (2023). Delving into Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity configuration in teaching practicum. *rEFLections, 30*(2), 223-246.

Ardi, P., & Rianita, E. (2022). Leveraging gamification into EFL grammar class to boost student engagement. *Teaching English with Technology*, *22*(2), 90–114.

Aubrey, S., King, J., & Almukhaild, H. (2020). Language learner engagement during speaking tasks: A longitudinal study. *RELC Journal 53*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220945418

Berry, B., Smylie, M., & Fuller, E. (2008). *Understanding teacher working conditions: A review and look to the future*. Center for Teaching Quality. http://www.teachingquality.org/sites/default/files/Understanding%20Teacher%20Working%20Conditions-%20A%20Review%20and%20Look%20to%20the%20Future.pdf

Cheng, X., & Liu, Y. (2022). Student engagement with teacher written feedback: Insights from low-proficiency and high-proficiency L2 learners. *System, 109*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102880

Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *The handbook of research on student engagement*. Springer Science.

Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic analysis. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd ed., pp. 222–248). Sage.

Conner, J., Pope, D. C., & Galloway, M. K. (2010). *Biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence*. Philadelphia.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Derakhshan, A., Doliński, D., Zhaleh, K., Enayat, M. J., & Fathi, J. (2022). A mixed – methods cross -cultural study of teacher care and teacher -student rapport in Iranian and Polish university students' engagement in pursuing academic goals in an L2 context. *System, 106*, 102790. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102790

Dornyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge.

Elder, C., & Kim, S. H. O. (2014). Assessing teachers' language proficiency. In A. J. Kunnan (Ed.), *The companion to language assessment* (pp. 1-17). John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Englander, M. (2012). The interview: Data collection in descriptive phenomenological human scientific research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 43*(1), 13-35.

Gan, S. (2021). The role of teacher-student relatedness and teachers' engagement on students' engagement in EFL classrooms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.745435

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., & Birman, B. F. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Research Journal, 38*(4), 915-914.

Gresalfi, M. S., Barnes, J., & Cross, D. (2012). When does an opportunity become an opportunity?: Unpacking classroom practice through the lens of ecological psychology. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 80*, 249–267.

Gunuc, S., Artun, H., Yigit, E., & Keser, H. (2022). Examining the relationship between student engagement and campus climate: A case in Turkey. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 23*(4), 1099-1119.

Hall, E., Chai, W., & Albrecht, J. A. (2016). A qualitative phenomenological exploration of teachers' experience with nutrition education. *American Journal of Health Education, 47*(3), 136-148. https://doi.org/10.1080%2F19325037.2016.1157532

Han, F. (2021). The relations between teaching strategies, students' engagement in learning, and teachers' self-concept. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *13*(9). https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095020

Han, K. (2021). Fostering students' autonomy and engagement in EFL classroom through proximal classroom factors: Autonomy-supportive behaviors and student-teacher relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.767079

Hanaysha, J. R., Shriedeh, F. B., & In'airat, M. (2023). Impact of classroom environment, teacher competency, information and communication technology resources, and university facilities on student engagement and academic performance. *International Journal of Information Management Data Insights, 3*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jjimei.2023.100188

Harbour, K. E., Evanovich, L. L., Sweigart, C. A., & Hughes, L. E. (2015). A brief review of effective teaching practices that maximize student engagement. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *59*(1), 5-13. https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2014.919136

Helme, S., & Clarke, D. (2001). Identifying cognitive engagement in the mathematics classroom. *Mathematics Education Research Journal, 13*(2), 133–153.

Heng, K. (2014). The relationships between student engagement and the academic achievement of first-year university students in Cambodia. *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *23*(2), 179–189. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-013-0095-8

Hiver, P., A., Al-Hoorie, H., Vitta, J. P., & Wu, J. (2021a). Engagement in language learning: A systematic review of 20 years of research methods and definitions. *Language Teaching Research*, 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211001289

Hiver, P., Mercer, S., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2021b). Introduction. In P. Hiver, A. H. Al-Hoorie, & S. Mercer (Eds.) *Students engagement in the language classroom* (pp. 1-16). Multilingual Matters.

Huang, Y. Y., Liu, C. C., Wang, Y., Tsai, C. C., & Lin, H. M. (2017). Student engagement in long-term collaborative EFL storytelling activities: An analysis of learners with English proficiency differences. *Educational Technology and Society*, *20*(3), 95–109.

Hughes, J. N., & Cao, Q. (2018). Trajectories of teacher-student warmth and conflict at the

transition to middle school: Effects on academic engagement and achievement. *Journal of School Psychology, 67*, 148–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j. jsp.2017.10.003

Imamyartha, D., Wahjuningsih, E., A'yunin, A., Santihastuti, A., Mitasari, Fauzie, D. L. T. A., & Andika, E. C. H. (2022). EFL learners' engagement and learning motivation in team-based mobile language learning through WhatsApp. *Teaching English with Technology*, *22*(1), 82–103.

Inayati, N., & Waloyo, A. A. (2022). The influence of quizziz-online gamification on learning engagement and outcomes in online English language teaching. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, *12*(2), 249–271. https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v12i2.3546

Karabıyık, C. (2019). The relationship between student engagement and tertiary level English language learners' achievement. *International Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, *6*(2), 281–293.

Lambert, C., Philp, J., & Nakamura, S. (2017). Learner-generated content and engagement in second language task performance. *Language Teaching Research*, *21*(6), 665–680. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168816683559

Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method.* Pearson Education Ltd.

Lavy, S., & Nixon, J. L. (2017). Applications, enrollment, attendance, and student performance in rebuilt school facilities: A case study. *International Journal of Construction Education and Research, 13*(2), 125-141.

Lee, W., & Reeve, J. (2012). Teachers' estimates of their students' motivation and engagement: Being in synch with students. *Educational Psychology, 32*(6), 727–747.

Lei, H., Cui, Y., & Zhou, W. (2018). Relationships between student engagement and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *46*(3), 517–528. https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.7054

Lin, S., Fabris, M. A., & Longobardi, C. (2022). Closeness in student-teacher relationships and students' psychological well-being: The mediating role of hope. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 30*(1)*, 44-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266211013756

Longobardi, C., Settanni, M., Lin, S., & Fabris, M. A. (2020). Student-teacher relationship quality and prosocial behavior: The mediating role of academic achievement and a positive attitude towards school. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 91*(2), 547-562. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12378

Madya, S. (2002). Developing standards for EFL in Indonesia as part of the EFL teaching reform. *TEFLIN Journal*, *13*(2), 142-151.

Mandasari, B., & Oktaviani, L. (2018). English language learning strategies: An exploratory study of management and engineering students. *Premise: Journal of English Education and Applied Linguistics, 7,* 61-78.

Mandernach, B. J., Donnelli-Sallee, E., & Dailey-Hebert, A. (2011). Assessing course student engagement. *Promoting Student Engagement*, *1*, 277-281.

Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdel, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research*. Wiley.

Miftah, M. Z., & Cahyono, B. Y. (2022). Collaborative writing assisted with English learning management system in Indonesian EFL classes: Learners' attitudes and learning engagement. *Call-Ej*, *23*(2 Special Issue), 108–131.

Munawir, A., & Hasbi, N. P. (2021). The effect of using quizizz to EFL students' engagement and learning outcome. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *10*(1), 297–308. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i1.5412

Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (2020). Teachers' accounts of learners' engagement and disaffection in the language classroom. *Language Learning Journal, 50*(3), 393–405.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2020.1800067

Nakata, Y. (2010). Improving the classroom language proficiency of non-native teachers of English: What and how? *RELC Journal, 41*(1), 76–90.

Nguyen, H. T., Fehring, H., & Warren, W. (2014). EFL teaching and learning at a Vietnamese university: What do teachers say? *English Language Teaching*, *8*(1), 31–43. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n1p31

Noon, E. J. (2018). Interpretive phenomenological analysis: An appropriate methodology for educational research. *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice, 6*(1), 75-83. https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v6i1.304

Nurfaidah, S. (2021). Focused written corrective feedback: EFL students' engagement in online asynchronous platform. *Al-Ta'dib: Jurnal Kaijian Ilmu Kependidikan*, *14*(2), 138–150.

Oga-Baldwin, W. L. (2019). Acting, thinking, feeling, making, collaborating: The engagement process in foreign language learning. *System, 86,* 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.102128

O'Mullan, C., Doherty, M., Coates, R., & Tilley, P. M. (2019). Using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to provide insight into female sexual difficulties. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 34*(1), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1386300

Pasaribu, T. A., & Wulandari, M. (2021). EFL teacher candidates' engagement in mobile-assisted flipped classroom. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *22*(3), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.961774

Philp, J., & Duchesne, S. (2016). Exploring engagement in tasks in the language classroom. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 36*, 50-72. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190515000094

Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Teacher-student relationships and engagement: Conceptualizing, measuring, and improving the capacity of classroom interactions. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 97-173). Springer Science + Business Media.

Prasetyawati, O. A., & Ardi, P. (2020). Integrating English into EFL writing to foster student engagement. *Teaching English with Technology*, *20*(3), 40–62.

Quin, D. (2017). Longitudinal and contextual associations between teacher-student relationships and student engagement: a systematic review. *Review of Educational Research, 87*, 345–387. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316669434

Rahayu, A. S. (2018). Engaging the students with styles in EFL perspectives. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, *3*(1), 15–29. https://doi.org/10.22219/celtic.v3i1.7856

Rahimi, M., & Ong, K. K. W. (2023). Exploring expert teachers' cognitions and practices of teaching English speaking and their students' experiences and engagement. *System, 115*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103064

Rajabalee, B. Y., Santally, M. I., & Rennie, F. (2020). A study of the relationship between students' engagement and their academic performances in an e-learning environment. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, *17*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753019882567

Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. Christenson, A. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 149–172). Springer.

Reeve, J. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves: The concept of agentic engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*, 579595. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032690

Reeve, J., Cheon, S. H., & Jang, H. R. (2019). A teacher-focused intervention to enhance students' classroom engagement. In J. A. Fredricks, A. L. Reschly, & S. L. Christenson (Eds.), *Handbook of student engagement interventions: Working with disengaged students* (pp. 87-102). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-813413-9.00007-3

Reeve, J., Jang, H., Carrell, D., Jeon, S., & Barch, J. (2004). Enhancing students' engagement by increasing teachers' autonomy support. *Motivation and Emotion*, *28*(2), 147–169. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:MOEM.0000032312.95499.6f

Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. M. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *36*(4), 257–267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.002

Sadoughi, M., & Hejazi, S. Y. (2021). Teacher support and academic engagement among EFL learners: The role of positive academic emotions. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 70*, 1 – 8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101060

Sang, Y., & Hiver, P. (2021). Engagement and companion constructs in language learning: Conceptualizing learners' involvement in the L2 classroom. In P. Hiver, A. H. Al-Hoorie, & S. Mercer (Eds.), S*tudent engagement in the language classroom* (pp. 17–37). Multilingual Matters.

Sari, A. B. P. (2021). The impacts of mentimeter-based activities on EFL students' engagement in Indonesia. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, *24*(1), 249–260. https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v24i1.3025

Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (2014). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Shernoff, D. J. (2013). *Optimal learning environments to promote student engagement*. Springer.

Sinatra, G. M. (2005). The "warming trend" in conceptual change research: The legacy of Paul R. Pintrich. *Educational Psychologist, 40*(2), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4002_5

Skinner, E., Furrer, C., Marchand, G., & Kindermann, T. (2008). Engagement and English in the classroom: Part of a larger motivational dynamic? *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(4), 765–781.

Skinner, E. A., Kindermann, T. A., & Furrer, C. (2009). A motivational perspective on engagement and disaffection: Conceptualization and assessment of children's behavioral and emotional participation in academic activities in the classroom. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 69*, 493–525.

Skinner, E. A., & Pitzer, J. R. (2012). Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 21–44). Springer.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2022). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method, and research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. *British Journal of Pain, 9*(1), 41–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642

Subramaniam, S. R., & Muniandy, B. (2017). The effect of flipped classroom on students' engagement. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, *24*(3), 355–372. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-017-9343-y

Suharti, D. S., Suherdi, D., & Setyarini, S. (2021). Exploring students' learning engagement in EFL online classroom. *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2020)*, *546*, 139–149. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.022

Suherdi, D. (2018). SMSLEFA: An alternative synergistic multilayered analysis of students'

learning engagement in EFL context. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *8*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v8i1.11457

Suryati, N., Chen, S., & Archer, J. (2013). Students' perceptions of classroom interaction: An Indonesian study. *The International Journal of Literacies, 19*, 181-199.

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*(2), 237-246.

Treko, N. (2013). The big challenge: Teaching large multi-level classes. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 2*(4), 243–251. https://doi.org/10.5901/ajis. 2012.v2n4p243

Tusino, T., Faridi, A., Saleh, M., & Fitriati, S. (2020). Student engagement in hybrid task-based language teaching in EFL writing class. *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Science, Education and Technology, ISET 2019.* https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.29-6-2019.2290384

Van den Berghe, L., Cardon, G., Tallir, I., Kirk, D., & Haerens, L. (2016). Dynamics of need-supportive and need-thwarting teaching behavior: The bidirectional relationship with student engagement and disengagement in the beginning of a lesson. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 21*(6), 653–670. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2015.1115008

Verschueren, K., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2012). Teacher -child relationships from an attachment perspective. *Attachment & Human Development, 14*(3), 205–211. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2012.672260

Wanders, F. H., Dijkstra, A. B., Maslowski, R., & Van der Veen, I. (2020). The effect of teacher -student and student -student relationships on the societal involvement of students. *Research Papers in Education, 35*(3), 266–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1568529

Wara, E., Aloka, P. J. O., & Odongo, B. C. (2018). Relationship between emotional engagement and academic achievement among Kenyan secondary school students. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, *7*(1), 107–118. https://doi.org/10.2478/ajis-2018-0011

Werang, B. R., & Leba, S. M. R. (2022). Factors affecting student engagement in online teaching and learning: A qualitative case study. *The Qualitative Report*, *27*(2), 555–577. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5165

Werang, B. R., Wea, D., & Wolomasi, A. K. (2022). Working conditions of Indonesian remote elementary school teachers: A qualitative case study in Southern Papua. *The Qualitative Report, 27*(11), 2446-2468. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5834

Wulyani, A. N., Elgort, I., & Coxhead, A. (2019). Exploring EFL teachers' English language proficiency: Lessons from Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 9,* 263-274. https://doi.org//10.17509/ijal.v9i2.20217

Yin, H., & Wang, W. (2016). Undergraduate students' motivation and engagement in China: An exploratory study. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *41*(4), 601-621.

Yüksel, P., & Yıldırım, S. (2015). Theoretical frameworks, methods, and procedures for conducting phenomenological studies in educational settings. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 6*(1), 1–20.

Yulia, M. F., Sulistyo, G. H., & Cahyono, B. Y. (2020). Affective engagement in academic reading: What EFL student teachers reveal. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, *9*(3), 791–798. https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i3.20635

Zhang, Z. (2022). Toward the role of teacher empathy in students' engagement in English language classes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.880935

Author Note

Yohanis Nurak Siwa is the Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) awardee batch 2022 and a faculty member at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences, Universitas Katolik Widya Mandira, Kupang, Indonesia. He is now a doctoral student in the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. Please direct correspondence to yohanisnuraksiwa@unwira.ac.id

Yazid Basthomi is a faculty member at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang,Indonesia. A Fulbrighter, he spent a stint of pre-doctoral research at the English Language Institute, University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, USA. His educational backgrounds and research interests have led him to work in applied linguistics leading to his professorship. In addition to his tenure in the alma mater, he was also once appointed Adjunct Lecturer at the University of New England, Australia, with the main job of co-supervising a Ph.D. thesis writing. In 2019, he was a visiting professor at Linnaeus University, Sweden, sponsored by ERASMUS+. Recently, he has also co-supervised two Ph.D. students at Charles Darwin University, Australia.

Article Citation

Siwa, Y. N., & Basthomi, Y. (2023). Students' optimal engagement in EFL large classes: A qualitative phenomenological study in East Nusa Tenggara. *The Qualitative Report, 28*(12), 3572-3591. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.6073