

combined with advanced technology (e.g., 3D) can help disengaged students reengage in language learning (Chen & Kent, 2020). Therefore, future research can explore ways to reengage disengaged students in online language learning, so that more pedagogical implications can be offered.

Besides, teachers also play a significant role in student engagement in the course, which is congruent with findings from prior studies (Fryer & Bovee, 2016; Pineda-Báez et al., 2019). Prior studies have revealed that students' perceived teacher support contributes to their academic success and prevents them from harmful behaviors and depression. Likewise, in Allan's case, his "foreign" teacher frequently praised him with an exaggerated tone and facial expression, therefore stimulating his emotional reaction and motivating him to participate in the course (i.e., emotional and behavioral engagement). All these findings point to the significance of teacher support in both traditional face-to-face classrooms and the online learning context.

What is new in the present study, however, is that there may be no or weak relationship between teacher support and student engagement when students do not attach importance to the support. In Carrie's case, since she held assumptions, based on her own experience, that "foreign" teachers gave praise like *a matter of routine* regardless of students' performance, she did not highly value the online teacher's compliments and therefore displayed little emotional engagement when being praised. This interesting finding suggests that students' valuation of teacher support, engendered by cultural stereotypes towards "foreign" teachers, may mediate the relationship between perceived teacher support and student engagement. Future research can be done to further substantiate our understanding of the relationship among these three variables.

Furthermore, the case of Allan indicates that parent involvement could influence student engagement as well. The existing literature has merely revealed the indirect relationship between these two variables: children's perceived authoritarian parenting contributes to their performance goal orientation (Chan & Chan, 2005), and performance goal orientation is associated with misbehaving in class and avoiding seeking help (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). What has not been found is that parent involvement can directly influence student engagement in online courses. This difference could be explained by the fact that participants of prior research were predominantly adults (Hiver et al., 2021), who are

likely to obtain enough autonomy and attend classes without parent involvement. In Allan's case, however, since he is only nine years old and lacks self-discipline, his mother is highly involved in his online learning, taking three roles, namely, to supervise Allan, guide him, and complement the online teacher. This, on the one hand, promoted Allan's behavioral engagement, such as obeying the class rules and answering questions actively. On the other hand, it might hinder his agentic engagement. Due to his fear of his mother's authority, he was afraid to speak too much beyond the topic in class, which probably means that he seldom mentioned his interest in history or expressed his personal opinions. It should also be noted that parent involvement may have no obvious influence on cognitive engagement: Allan sometimes pretended to understand the teacher's instruction without processing the information in his mind, as the cognitive process was not visible to his mother. Such findings, taken together, suggest that there may be a threefold impact of parent involvement on student engagement.

Nonetheless, the above findings may be specific to cases in which the parent is equipped with knowledge of English language teaching. Allan's mother is an English teacher, equipped with certain expertise in English language teaching. She, therefore, knows whether the learning materials and the instructions used in class are appropriate to Allan and how to teach him in a readily comprehensible way. Accordingly, she guided Allan and complemented the online teacher when necessary. Nevertheless, the majority of parents are not experts in English teaching and may not know how to effectively promote their children's engagement apart from supervising them during the online classes. Since research in this area is still lacking, additional research is vitally needed to examine the relationship between student engagement in online courses and parent involvement, with a particular focus on young learners.

Lastly, it is important to note that the quality of the platforms, including the teacher's qualifications and teaching approach, did not stand out as key themes for influencing student engagement. Both mothers had positive feedback (no complaint) towards the platforms, which shows that average institutions are able to hire qualified TESOL teachers with enough funding. They have also developed a systematic curriculum by consulting experts to ensure the quality of the online EFL courses. Carrie also remarked in her report that the content of the online course was interesting and novel, closer to life, which was absent in the

English learning at school that focused on textbooks and exams. The teaching approach on the platform was also more interactive and she was able to speak more.

Taken together, the above findings imply that student engagement is a complex construct which can be affected by a series of factors including learner-internal ones (e.g., motivation and goal orientation), teacher support, and parent involvement. In line with the existing literature (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), the findings also show the possible influence of cultural contexts on the agentic dimension of engagement (see Excerpt 1 as an example).

Conclusion

The present study investigated students' emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and agentic engagement in online EFL courses for young learners on two platforms and the influencing factors in student engagement. The two cases demonstrated that 1) the two young learners engaged in the online course at different levels with a comparatively lower level of agentic engagement, that 2) a complex relationship existed among the four dimensions of engagement, especially regarding the one between behavioral and cognitive engagement, and that 3) students' motivation and goal orientation, teachers' praise, and parent involvement played important roles in student engagement in the online course. Furthermore, the findings offer insights into the influence of students' assumptions towards "foreign" teachers on their engagement, especially the emotional dimension, as well as the threefold effect of parent involvement on student engagement.

It is also crucial to point out the limitations of this study. First, as it only focused on two cases, the findings cannot be representative of students in other contexts. Second, the present study adopted a four-dimension construct of engagement. Due to the one-on-one nature of the two online platforms examined in the study, the social dimension proposed by Egbert et al. (2021) was not taken into consideration. In order to capture a more holistic picture of student engagement in the online language learning context, future research can investigate all five dimensions (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, agentic, and social engagement). Third, the scales used in the study are adapted from previously validated ones based on the actual situation of the participants' learning on the platforms, and their reliability and validity

have not been analyzed, due to the exploratory nature of the study and the extremely few (only two) participants involved. Since the questionnaire merely served as the preliminary step to gain basic information of their engagement and aid the subsequent interviews, the absence of reliability and validity analysis should not become a fatal limitation.

Taken together, this study offers valuable implications. For online course teachers, especially the “foreign” ones, although praise could somehow promote student engagement, they should not consider it as a mere routine, but praise the students sincerely by acknowledging their target behavior in detail. They should also offer students suggestions for improvement. For parents, they need to be cautious about the roles they take in the online course. It is unwise to blindly sign children up for courses without considering their interests. If children themselves are not interested in the course, to some extent, they would be forced to engage behaviorally under the supervision of their parents, but not cognitively or agentically. For researchers, more studies can be done within online EFL courses for young learners on different platforms to further substantiate our understanding of this area, as well as to promote the development of emerging online EFL courses.

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Appendix A. Class Observation Protocol

Class Observation Protocol (With sample field notes of Carrie)

Date: December 6, 2019

Time: 21:30–21:55

Name of the course: English speech for kids

Topic of the lesson: My favorite pet

- **General pattern of engagement in this lesson:** attentive with eyes focusing on the screen; 95% of the time Carrie was able to provide the right answers that the teacher was looking for.
- **Outstanding and notable moments**

What is happening? (outstanding and notable moment)	Teacher's behavior	Student's behavior	Engagement dimension (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, agentic)
21:36:45 Presentation of the passage (the learning material of today's lesson)	The teacher presented part of the passage where the opinion that "dogs are humans' friends" was included and asked Carrie whether she agreed or not.	Carrie said "yes" but did not give further explanation. (She said lots of "yes" in this class without elaborations.)	Behavioral engagement
21:38:30 Reading aloud the passage	The teacher asked Carrie to read the passage aloud and demonstrated the pronunciation of "unique" for her.	Carrie asked the teacher, " <i>I don't know the third word ("unique"). How to read it?</i> " After the teacher told her the pronunciation, she murmured the word for several times. Then she read aloud the passage quite fluently, but still stuck on the word "unique".	Agentic engagement & behavioral engagement

What is happening? (outstanding and notable moment)	Teacher's behavior	Student's behavior	Engagement dimension (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, agentic)
21:42:30 Free discussion about the passage	The teacher said, <i>"Dogs are very friendly and they have their own way of saying 'thank you'. They will wag their tails."</i> Then she immediately moved to another idea that appeared in the passage.	Carrie nodded her head and said a few words (can't hear clearly) but was interrupted by the teacher. She remained silent after that.	Agentic engagement (but quickly hindered by the teacher)
21:46:45 Presentation of the new words and expressions	The teacher explained the new words one by one, followed by a sample sentence containing each new word.	Carrie remained silent with her eyes focusing on the screen. For some words, she took notes on her notebook.	Behavioral engagement (cognitive engagement to be checked via stimulated recall)
21:50:00 Detailed analysis of the text	The teacher first explained the newly learned words and analyzed their relevant language features in detail. Then she asked Carrie to paraphrase the sentences or to do some exercises on these words and language features. Sometimes she paused and let Carrie answer while sometimes she presented the model answers directly without giving Carrie the opportunity to do it independently.	Carrie answered correctly when the teacher asked her to answer. However, she remained silent with her eyes focusing on the screen if the teacher didn't let her answer. Sometimes she nodded her head after the teacher presented the model answers (to show that she understood?).	Behavioral engagement (cognitive engagement to be checked via stimulated recall)

What is happening? (outstanding and notable moment)	Teacher's behavior	Student's behavior	Engagement dimension (behavioral, cognitive, emotional, agentic)
21:54:30 Free discussion beyond the passage	The teacher asked several questions based on the topic of today's lesson, " <i>Do you like keeping dogs as pets? Why or why not? What's your favorite pet?</i> "	Carrie thought for around half a minute and replied, " <i>I like dogs. They are very cute. My uncle have (should be 'has') a dog and I often play with it at the weekend.... My favorite pet is a cat. My mum buy (should be 'bought') it for me. I will play with it when I finish my homework. I like it very much.</i> " (with a smile on her face)	Behavioral engagement & emotional engagement (cognitive engagement to be checked via stimulated recall)
21:56:00 Summary and feedback	The teacher kept praising Carrie for a whole minute (e.g., " <i>I am very proud of you</i> ", " <i>You always participate during the lesson and you are very attentive</i> ", " <i>Great job</i> ", " <i>I love you</i> ", etc) and offered feedback on today's performance (e.g., " <i>You mispronounced the word 'unique'. Practice reading this word more after class.</i> "). Then, she ended the class.	Carrie remained silent when the teacher praised her. She murmured " <i>okay</i> " after the teacher gave feedback and said " <i>bye bye</i> " in the end.	No sign of any dimension of engagement

Notes.

1. Most of the notes taken during the class observation are about behavioral engagement, since other dimensions can hardly be seen through observation. Other dimensions of engagement were investigated by means of stimulated recalls and interviews.
2. Words in italics are original words said by the teacher/Carrie, but repetition, redundancy (e.g., well, hmm) and pauses between words were removed.

Appendix B. Prompts for Stimulated Recalls

(a) For Carrie

Note: The lesson we chose took place on December 6, 2019, the topic of which was “my favorite pet.”

(06:45 The teacher presented part of a passage where the opinion that dogs are humans’ friends was included and asked whether Carrie agreed or not.) Did you really agree with the opinion? Why didn’t you say much about it in that class except “yes”?

(08:30 Carrie asked the teacher how to read the word “unique” and then read the passage out loud.) Did you know the meaning of “unique”? When you were reading, did you try to understand the meaning of the whole passage?

(16:45 The teacher explained the new words.) Did you memorize these new words at that time? How did you memorize their pronunciation, meaning, and spelling?

(20:45 The teacher presented the model answers without giving Carrie the opportunity to answer on her own.) Did you ponder over how to answer the questions after the teacher posted them?

(26:00 The teacher kept praising Carrie for a whole minute and offered feedback as well.) How did you feel after hearing the teacher’s praise? What about suggestions from the teacher? How did you feel about that?

(b) For Allan

Note: The lesson we chose took place on November 25, 2019, the topic of which was “now and then (the contrast of life between the past and the present).”

(01:30 The teacher greeted Allan by saying “How are you?” and Allan answered with “Fine.”) If you had answered in Chinese, would you have said more?

(16:35 The teacher explained the difference between “cook” and “bake”.) Did you understand what the teacher said at that time?

(20:00 After learning the new word “how,” Allan was asked to complete a sentence by filling in with “how” and he answered correctly.) How did you know that “how” was the answer?

(25:30 The teacher explained the new word “same.”) Without the Chinese meaning of “same” shown on the screen, how did you know its meaning? How did you memorize its pronunciation, meaning, and spelling?

Appendix C. Questionnaire

Student Engagement Survey

Dear student,

Thank you for taking the survey. Its purpose is to understand student engagement in online EFL (English as a Foreign Language) courses for young learners in China. It includes two sections: basic information and scales about your engagement containing 20 items. There is no right or wrong answer. The collected data are only for academic research and will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation!

I. Personal information

1. Age: _____
2. Grade: _____
3. The platform where you take the online course: _____
4. The name and the main contents of the course:

5. Duration of each lesson: _____
6. Lesson arrangement: _____ (e.g., once a week)

II. Scales

(Note: The “course”/“class” mentioned in the following items only refers to the online EFL course/class for young learners that you take. Please tick the box according to your actual situation.)

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I listen carefully in class.					
2	I complete my homework on time.					
3	I follow the class rules (e.g., log in on the platform on time, not quit before the class ends).					
4	I actively answer questions raised by my teacher in class.					
5	I sit nicely with my eyes focusing on the screen during class.					

No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
6	I like taking the course.					
7	I am interested in the learning contents in the course.					
8	I feel happy when taking the course.					
9	The online classroom is a fun place to be.					
10	I feel excited when I complete a task in class.					
No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
11	I talk with my parents and/or classmates about what I am learning in class.					
12	I preview and/or review the contents learned in class.					
13	I take notes of the important points mentioned in class.					
14	After class, I read extra materials to gain more information about what has been taught in class.					
15	If I fail to understand something in class, I re-watch the recorded video and learn again.					
No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
16	I predict what the teacher is going to teach before class.					
17	I ask the teacher to clarify what I do not understand in class.					
18	I let the teacher know what I am interested in.					
19	I express my opinions in class.					
20	I put forward suggestions for the improvement of the course.					

Appendix D. Semi-structured Interview Guide

(Note: the following questions do not include all the probing questions that we added on the spot or emerged based on the participants' responses during our conversations.)

(a) Questions for Carrie

1. Are you interested in the course? Why?
2. Why do you take the course? Did you set goals for yourself in the course?
3. Is the course helpful? What have you gained in the course?
4. What do you think of your teacher?
5. What do you do to get yourself ready for the class? During the class, do you think you listened attentively? Do you spend time on the completed lesson after class? Why?
6. Why did you use QQ to attend classes before? Which medium do you prefer, the platform or QQ? Why?
7. Compared to English classes at school, what do you think of the course online?
8. If you have the opportunity to put forward some suggestions to improve the course (including the platform, the course contents, and the teachers), what would you like to say?

(b) Questions for Carrie's mother

1. How is Carrie's performance in English at school? At what level is her English proficiency?
2. Why did you choose this course and this platform for Carrie?
3. Are you aware of how she is engaged in the online course?

(c) Questions for Allan

1. Are you interested in the course? Why?
2. Why do you take the course? Did you set goals for yourself in the course?
3. Is the course helpful? What have you gained in the course?
4. What do you think of your teacher?

5. What do you do to get yourself ready for the class? During the class, do you think you listened attentively? Do you spend time on the completed lessons after class? Why?
6. Do you want your mother to sit beside you when you have a class? Why or why not?
7. If you have the opportunity to put forward some suggestions to improve the course (including the platform, the course contents, and the teachers), what would you like to say?

(d) Questions for Allan's mother

1. How is Allan's performance in English at school? At what level is his English proficiency?
2. Why did you choose this course and this platform for Allan?
3. Why do you sit beside Allan every time when he has a class?
4. Do you want Allan to continue with the course? Why or why not?

Appendix E. An Example of Coding and Themes Generation (Interview with Allan's Mother)

High-level theme	Codes	Excerpts (Original data)
Multiple roles taken by Allan's mother	Different role orientation at the workplace versus at home	<p><i>Although I am an English teacher, I seldom teach him (Allan) English.</i></p> <p><i>Anyway, I hardly put my mind upon teaching English to Allan.</i></p> <p><i>I need to look after the younger brother. He is just one year old.</i></p> <p><i>I have lots of chores to do at home, preparing for meals, cleaning the house, etc. I am really busy with these.</i></p>
	Supervise Allan	<p><i>I always sit beside him. Sometimes he does not perform well, and I need to urge him to re-concentrate on the lesson.</i></p> <p><i>I need to supervise him because he is not that well-behaved.</i></p>
	Guide Allan	<p><i>I gave him hints, like, 'What is the first word? The word starting with letter w.'</i></p> <p><i>It is hard for him to say much... I need to guide him, asking extra questions.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes I help him say a few words.</i></p>
	Complement the online teacher	<p><i>This teacher sometimes says something that he fails to understand. ... and I needed to explain it to him.</i></p>