

Engagement: A Path to Better EFL Learning

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When it is said that someone is "engaged", the term is used to mean that he\she is involved at a deep level. Synonyms may include absorbed, engrossed, interested, and involved. Engagement is now at the center of mainstream education discussion and debate. It is now identified as an important precursor to student learning.

Origin of Student Engagement

The term dates back to 1930s when Dewey's notion of experiential learning appeared. Dewey emphasized that learners are actively involved in the learning process; that is, they learn by doing. Freire (1970) insisted that learners' lives and issues must always be the content of literacy instruction. Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development posited that when teachers structure learning opportunities at the appropriate level and with the right support, students become engaged in learning. Wenger (1998) described situated learning as an apprenticeship process that takes place within a community. Novice learners learn by observing others, being coached and nurtured by more expert peers, and practicing what they have learned in a supportive environment. Related work by Wenger (2006) describes communities of

practice or “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). An adult ESL classroom can be viewed as a community of practice, where teachers and students learn from one another and all participants are engaged (Taylor, Abasi, Pinsent-Johnson, & Evans, 2007; Warriner, 2010).

Definition of the term "engagement"

It is difficult to define "engagement" as it is not a simple construct. Multiple factors are at play when students fully engaged their learning. It is considered as a multidimensional construct. Harris' (2008) extensive review of student engagement explains the challenge: "While there is general agreement that student engagement produces positive outcomes, defining the concept is problematic as there is disagreement about what counts as student engagement" (p. 58). The following are some of the definitions of the term engagement:

1. Natriello (1984) defines learning engagement as a student's voluntary participation and willingness to take part in activities designed as part of the learning program which leads to better acquisition of focal knowledge or skills.
2. Nystrand & Gamoran (1991) used student engagement to refer to students' willingness to participate in routine school activities such as attending classes, submitting required work, and following teachers' directions in class.

3. Engagement versus disaffection in school refers to the intensity and emotional quality of children's involvement in initiating and carrying out learning activities ...Children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, p. 572)
4. Willms (2003) used the term engagement to refer to the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities.
5. The amount of time and effort students spend on academic as well as other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success.

Dimensions and/or types of engagement

Meyer and Turner (2006) explored the concept of engagement and also added **emotional engagement** to the equation when they suggest "engaging students in learning requires positive emotional experiences, which contribute to a classroom climate that forms the foundation for teacher-student relationships and interactions necessary for motivation to learn" (p. 377).

Dunleavy (2008) defines three combined types of student engagement:

Behavioral: value of schooling outcomes, participation in extracurricular and non-academic school activities, attendance .

Academic-Cognitive: time-on-task, homework completion, response to challenges in learning, effort directed toward learning, cognition and strategic learning.

Social-Psychological: sense of belonging, relationships, perception of capacity for success/sense of competence, motivation, interest, need for choice and autonomy (p. 23).

Harris (2008) defined engagement in two hierarchical categories – **Procedural and Substantive**. Procedural engagement loosely correlates to behavioral engagement, occurring when students complete class activities and homework. Substantive engagement describes aspects of psychological and cognitive engagement, happening when students commit to academic study.

Willms, Friesen, Milton (2009, p. 7) added other dimensions of engagement:

Social Engagement – a sense of belonging and participation in school life

Academic Engagement: participation in the formal requirements of schooling

Intellectual Engagement: a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher order thinking skills (such as analysis and evaluation), to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge.

According to Harris (2011), student engagement is often presented within academic literature as a meta-construct with two to four dimensions. Constructs frequently draw on **behavioral**, **academic**, **psychological**, and **cognitive** dimensions of engagement, each of which is described in turn.

Much research focuses almost exclusively on **behavioral** engagement, typically used to measure student involvement in school. It is often quantified by examining pupils' attendance, compliance with school rules, and active participation in classroom and extracurricular activities. **Academic** engagement is evidenced by time spent doing schoolwork in school or at home, academic credits accrued, and homework completed. The final two dimensions, psychological and cognitive engagement, are more abstract and difficult to quantify, which is perhaps why they are examined less frequently in research. Some prefer to use the less theoretically laden term **emotional** engagement instead of **psychological** engagement to describe affective factors like interest, enjoyment, support, belonging, and attitudes towards school, learning, teachers, and peers. **Cognitive** engagement relates to

students' personal investment in learning, including goal-setting, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, commitment to mastery learning, and use of learning strategies.

Cognitive or meta-cognitive engagement is yet another factor. Chapman (2003) shares Pintrich & De Groot's (1990) and Pintrich & Schrauben's (1992) definitions, which hint at a hierarchical nature to engagement as they associated engagement levels with students' use of cognitive, meta-cognitive, and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide their learning processes. In this view, student engagement is viewed as motivated behavior that can be indexed by the kinds of cognitive strategies students choose to use simple or "surface" processing strategies such as rehearsal versus "deeper" processing strategies such as elaboration and by their willingness to persist with difficult tasks by regulating their own learning behavior.

Debate exists over whether all dimensions of engagement should be investigated simultaneously as each relates to a unique aspect of student experience or if some are more worthy of investigation than others in relation to specific outcomes. Glanville and Wildhagen (2007) argue that while one dimension might help prevent early school leaving, another may lead to improved achievement scores. Their perspective appears plausible in relation to commonly cited goals

for student engagement: positive social outcomes and student learning.

Importance of Engagement

Student engagement is generally considered to be among the better predictors of learning and personal development. The premise is deceptively simple, perhaps self-evident: The more students study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their writing, analyzing, or problem solving, the more adept they should become (Kuh, 2003). The very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development (Shulman, 2002). It is clearly indicated that student engagement contributes to more favorable outcomes for college students.

A review of related literature and studies reveals that engagement has various positive effects and outcomes. Engagement is positively correlated with:

1. Learning effectiveness and satisfaction (Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 2003)
2. Improved academic achievement (Finn & Rock, 1997; Marks, 2000; Fredricks et al, 2004; Greenwood et al., 2002)

3. Higher school completion rates (Finn, 1989)
4. Increased student sense of belonging in schools and other social institutions. (Willms, 2003)
5. Better academic performance (Burrows, 2010),
6. Improved knowledge acquisition(Chen et al., 2010),
7. Motivation (Scott & Walczak, 2009)

Learners who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotions during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest. The opposite of engagement is disaffection. Disaffected learners are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges. They can be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates. (Skinner & Belmont, 1993)

Effective learning requires students to engage proactively in learning activities. According to the experiential learning theory (Kolb, Rubin, Osland, 1990), people learn by doing; that is, by engaging in learning activities, students internalize what they learn and can absorb and reflect on the learning experience.

Students engage more in learning activities when they are active learners and take charge of their learning, which leads to favorable learning outcomes. By deeply engaging in learning, students undertake more effort to meet the learning requirements and accomplish the learning goal by acquiring focal knowledge or skills. In light of engagement theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998), learning engagement is essential for effective learning; as a result, students who proactively engage in learning activities are more likely to consider their learning effective than those not engaging in such activities, regard-less of the medium.

Several studies (Akey, 2006; Carini et al., 2006 ; Christenson et al., 2012; Orji, 2011; Taylor et al., 2011) have described students' involvement in the learning process and its relation to academic achievement and attitude. They used the term "student engagement" to connote not only students' attention in class but also their cognitive, psychological and social involvement or efforts/pursuits in learning task. Akey (2006) explored the influence of student engagement and perceived academic competence on achievement in reading and mathematics. He found that both engagement in school and students' perception of their own academic competence positively influenced achievement in mathematics for high school students. Similarly, Carini et al. (2006) found many measures of student engagement positively (though weakly, correlated with such desirable learning outcomes as

critical thinking and grades. Student engagement does not only prevent dropout but improves learning outcomes (Christenson et al., 2012). Thus ‘according to Taylor et al. (2011), we need to change how we teach and what we teach in order to encourage student engagement.

Indicators of Engagement

Encouraging or fostering student engagement is predicated upon the understanding and operationalization of student engagement. While referring to students' engagement as their mental and social participation in learning tasks, Orji (2011) operationalized it with **sociological factors** of feeling, belonging, cooperation and group work; **psychological factors** of interest, personality and motivation; and situational factor (institutional classroom variables). This was based on the assertion that human is made up of cognition, that is, has cognitive ability, and is a social being (Piaget, 1978; Knowles, 1978). **Sociological indicators** of student engagement include cooperation, „involvement“, „participation‘ taking-part-in“ and „attendance“ in an organized social activity, influenced by the need to be part of an activity (pressure from peers, expectations and values) (Cangelosi, 1993; Courtney, 1989 in Orji, 2011). Other studies (Appleton et al., 2006 & 2008) focused on **psychological indicators** (interest personality, motivation (such as „interest“, „personality“, „motivation“ „involvement“, „attentiveness“, „student initiative „curiosity“, and „enthusiasm“. There are also

studies (Cangelosi, 2008 ;Smith et al., 2005) that focused on **ecological, situational or institutional** explanation of student engagement. They highlighted the importance of a conducive classroom climate and instructional management procedures for the promotion of students' task engagement.

Greenwood, Horton and Utley (2002) identified engagement behaviors in students as participating in a task, talking about academics, and asking and answering questions. Also, these behaviors lend themselves to social engagement like participation in the classroom community and cooperative learning.

Language-related engagement

Language-related engagement is a kind of engagement that has been discussed in the sociocultural literature. As Ohta (2001) argued, engagement can be with the language itself. Evidence for language-related engagement is noted in individual learners' speech activity, in which they repeat to themselves or respond vicariously to others' questions and statements about "pieces of linguistic data." For example, verb endings, grammatical particles, or lexical items that are of current concern or interest are selected by the individual learner. In this case, learners can be more or less committed as a function of how much discursive work they display. Similarly, Donato (1994) found that his students, working in groups to plan a scenario, frequently attended to linguistic form as they planned what to say, while Swain and Lapkin (2000) found

learners similarly engaged with language in their dictagloss tasks. These researchers also found evidence for development of the linguistic system associated with their learners' work on that system.

Concerning the relationship between engagement and EFL learning, many studies have shown the importance of engagement in language acquisition (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002 ; Leow, 1997; Qi & Lapkin; 2001; Schmidt, 1993; Storch, 2008). Weldin (2011) confirmed that English language learners lack engagement toward academic content. Even with services such as pull-out ESL, ELLs are lacking in engagement during their time in the general education classroom.

EFL Reading Engagement (Engaged Reading)

Reading engagement refers to the joint functioning of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction during literacy activities (Guthrie & Anderson, 1990). This means that reading involves more than cognitive skills. Baker, Dreher, Guthrie (2000) indicated that the engagement perspective is appealing because it integrates cognitive, motivational, and social dimensions of reading and reading instruction. Students are engaged readers when they read frequently for interest, enjoyment, and learning. The heart of engagement is the desire to gain new knowledge of a topic, to follow the excitement of a narrative, to expand one's experience through print. Engaged readers can find books of personal significance

and make time for reading them. Engaged readers draw on knowledge gained from previous experiences to construct new understandings, and they use cognitive strategies to regulate comprehension so that goals are met and interests are satisfied. Benefits to readers may also occur through their satisfaction in possessing valued information about a topic that plays a central role in their sense of self. Engaged readers are curious and involved in a literate lifestyle.

To promote engaged reading, instructional contexts must be well-designed: "In an engaged classroom, reading lessons are designed to develop long-term motivation, knowledge, social competence, and reading skill." (Guthrie & Anderson, 1990:37).

Guthrie and Knowles (2001) confirmed that motivation and engagement are necessary components in the reading process and the development of students' ESL reading skills and argue that there are "several dimensions" that need to be addressed in order to enhance motivation and engagement with reading texts and tasks. These include providing students with "(a) conceptual themes, (b) real-world interactions, (c) support for self-direction, (d) using interesting texts, (e) cognitive strategy instruction, (f) social collaboration, and (g) supporting students' self-expression".

EFL learners will therefore be engaged with the reading texts and tasks if teachers provide opportuni-

ties for assimilation and accommodation of new information with prior schemata, make real-world connections between the text, tasks and the learners' world, provide explicit instruction in strategy use, allow students to collaborate with others, allow learners to take responsibility for their own learning and provide opportunities for learners to engage in self-expression and reflection regarding the texts. This is supported by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) as they emphasize that engaged reading, which leads to engaged learning, is defined as “a collaborative learning process in which the instructor and learner are partners in building the knowledge” (p. ix), which means that when learning is interactive, “learners are actively engaged in a variety of activities, and along with peers and the teacher, they are co-constructors of knowledge” (p. 3).

This type of learning and co-construction of knowledge occurs, as Neal and Miller (2006) state, when students are “meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others on relevant and authentic tasks requiring cognitive processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision making, and evaluation” (p.337) A few characteristics of engaged learning, identified by Conrad and Donaldson (2004) include that (i) engaged learning is focused on the learner; (ii) that each learner's knowledge and actions contribute to both individual and community knowledge and (iii) that learners have to be active participants in the learning situation (p.5-7) .

Engaged reading, leading to engaged learning described above, also include as Guthrie & Knowles (2001) mention, “the fusion of cognitive strategies, conceptual knowledge, and motivational goals during reading” (p. 159). This means that engaged readers can also be characterized as being "intrinsically motivated to read for the knowledge and enjoyment it provides while employing various reading strategies" in order to facilitate reading comprehension (Guthrie & Cox, 2001, p. 284). The teaching of reading skills and strategies can, as such, then not successfully occur without finding a way to increase students' engagement level with the reading texts and tasks and to a certain extent, this can be addressed by creating a learning environment and presenting reading related tasks that cater to initiating and maintaining increased engagement levels.

Guthrie and Cox (2001) emphasize the importance of creating a learning context that would facilitate and sustain these higher levels of engagement as well, and suggest that it could be done through : (a) identifying a knowledge goal and announcing it; (b) providing a brief real-world experience related to the learning goal; (c) making trade books and multiple resources available; (d) giving students some choice about the subtopics and texts for learning; (e) teaching cognitive strategies that empower students to succeed in reading these texts; (f) assuring social collaboration for learning; and (g) aligning evaluation of student work with the context (e.g., grading students for progress towards the learning and knowledge goals) (p. 299-300).

EFL Writing Engagement

Dořnyei (2001) pointed out that engagement is an essential element of successful language acquisition and is a dynamic process subject to continuous flux. Lo & Hyland (2007) indicated that one way of enhancing students' motivation and engagement to write in EFL is to provide opportunities for them to engage at a more meaningful level with the language through refocusing their writing classes to make them relevant to their social and cultural context as well as designing writing tasks which have meaning and interest to them and offer opportunities for social interaction and self-expression.

Williams and Burden (1997) suggest that each individual L2 learner's motivation and engagement is influenced by both external factors related to the socio-cultural and contextual background of the learner and internal factors related to the individual learner. Internal factors include the learners' attitudes towards the activity, its intrinsic interest, and the perceived relevance and value of the activity. Motivation and engagement are also influenced by learners' sense of agency and feelings of mastery and control over the learning activity and their interest in it. According to Noels (2001), three psychological needs have to be met in order to enhance motivation and engagement: "(1) a sense of competency achieved through seeking out and overcoming challenges; (2) autonomy; (3) relatedness—being connected to and esteemed by others belonging

to a larger social whole" (p. 54). To increase intrinsic EFL motivation and engagement, Oldfather and West (1999) argue that "a sense of self-worth and self-determination are essential, and learners need to be given ample opportunities for social interaction and self-expression" (p. 16). Richards (1993) also mentions "personal causation", "interest," and "enjoyment" as indispensable factors.

Many researches confirmed that engagement is highly correlated with positive EFL learning outcomes, especially the writing skill. For example, Weldin (2011) observed the relationship between students' level of engagement and the quality of their EFL written work, attending to the teacher, following directions, participation in the learning tasks, and completing the tasks.

Engagement at the level of EFL syntax

Ansarin & Mohamadi (2013) investigated language related engagement on the basis of metatalk; talk about the language, and task typology. They indicated that task-based instruction is considered as the one of the most effective way to learn a language, it is oversimplified on various grounds especially in teachers' implementation of the approach in practical terms. Different variables may affect how students are engaged with the language and also with the task. Eighty EFL intermediate participants were assigned to four homogeneous groups on the basis of their proficiency level. The groups were given four different

types of the tasks namely; jigsaw, dictogloss, test reconstruction, and translation in order to examine the role of metatalk and task-typology in the creation of language engagement opportunity. Participants' language related engagement was measured by evaluating syntactic devices used in language related episodes in their performances. The statistical analysis revealed that there were significant differences across groups. Specifically, the translation task had the most potential for creating language engagement opportunity and jigsaw task created the least language engagement opportunity. It is concluded that task implementation and task design affect learners' language engagement at the level of syntax.

Some Engagement Instructional Approaches and Methods

According to Miller (2010, pp.2-6), instruction, when planned according to learners' needs and goals in mind, should enable students to learn from one another, tap into their life experiences, and challenge their varying levels. To achieve this end, teachers should use engagement-raising approaches and methods. Examples are task-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, literature circles, and classroom-based assessment. These approaches and/or methods will be discussed below in the following section.

Task-Based Learning

Task has been defined in various ways in the language learning literature (Ellis, 2003), yet there is

agreement among researchers that tasks that promote language learning (Ellis, 2000):

1. Involve a real-world problem;
2. Are authentic; that is, “designed to instigate the same kind of interactional processes, such as the negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, inferencing, and monitoring, that arise in naturally occurring language use” (Ellis, 2009, p. 227);
3. Are cognitively complex; that is, “are context-free (in the sense that the task does not provide context and support for communication) and involve considerable detail” (Ellis, 2000, p. 8)
4. Require a two-way exchange of information, rather than a one-way exchange (i.e., both participants in the task seek, give, and receive information);
5. Require interactive communication rather than simple description; and
6. Lead to a specific outcome (e.g., a product is made by one student following the instructions of another).

Tasks can be structured for an entire class, small groups, or pairs and can focus on listening, speaking, reading, writing, or an integration of skills. Ellis (2009) explained that tasks can be either focused or unfocused. In a focused task, learners use specific language (e.g., prepositions of place by giving directions to a partner, who draws items in a picture; “The vase is on the coffee table”). In an unfocused task, learners use language for

general communication (e.g., interview one another to get acquainted and report back to the class).

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning focuses on learning through solving real, open-ended problems to which there are no fixed solutions (Ertmer, Lehman, Park, Cramer, & Grove, 2003). Problems can be taken from real-life news stories, generated by students themselves, and developed from realia, such as brochures about emergency preparedness, flyers advertising housing opportunities, and reports from community meetings. Students work in pairs or groups to understand the problem and then to find possible solutions to it .

Recent research reviews indicate that problem-based learning can lead to long-term learning outcomes, whereas traditional instruction leads to slightly better performance on short-term learning as measured on standardized tests (Strobel & van Barneveld, 2009; Walker & Leary, 2009). Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, and Chinn (2007) cite evidence that problem-based learning is particularly effective in increasing engagement and reducing the achievement gap among marginalized groups in K-12 settings, including English language learners. Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) caution, however, that learners new to this instructional approach require more guidance (direct instruction) than do more experienced learners. This caution should also be applied to learners with limited

English language and literacy. While there is no research on problem-based learning in adult EFL contexts, the evidence in K-12 and post-secondary education provides support for its use with adults learning English.

Problem-based learning is characterized by the following elements :

1. The focus is on real-world problems that require critical thinking skills, collaboration with others, reflection, and application of solutions if possible (Savery, 2006)
2. Students are responsible for their own involvement and learning.
3. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than knowledge providers.
- 4.

The steps in carrying out a problem-solving activity include identifying the problem, exploring what is known and what is not known about it, generating possible solutions, considering the consequences of the different solutions, and selecting the most viable one (Mathews-Aydlini, 2006).

Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning focuses on real-world problems, issues, and contexts (Alan & Stoller, 2005); promotes use of all four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); and may include explicit focus on form. It is similar to problem-based learning in that it engages learners in authentic

communication with team members and is learner-centered and teacher-facilitated. Completion of projects typically requires learners to use language in a variety of ways to collaborate on a plan, negotiate tasks, contribute ideas and constructive criticism, assess progress, and achieve consensus on various issues that are important to the learners' lives. Unlike problem-based learning, which focuses on discussing and solving a problem, project-based learning focuses on developing a product, such as a group presentation, class newspaper, or cookbook of recipes from each student's native culture (Starr, 2005). Other projects to use with adults learning English might include creating oral histories; designing books for children in the family; writing short plays, skits, or poetry; surveying students in the program about an issue of interest or concern, analyzing the survey, displaying the data and using it for next steps; listing tips on how to apply to a local college or training program; or producing mock TV news broadcasts or talk shows, complete with commercials, focused on issues of personal significance or of significance in the community.

When a project is designed for students to produce and practice English in ways they need to outside the classroom (e.g., participating on a team, repairing communication break-downs), it provides a bridge to real-world communication (Bas, 2008).

Literature Circles

Literature circles provide a venue for students to engage with one another while also interacting with

texts of interest and importance to their lives. Originally developed by Harvey Daniels (1994), literature circles are similar to a book club, where readers can engage in lively discussions about what they have read.

A recent experimental design study showed that literature circles can have an impact on English language learners' reading comprehension as measured on standardized tests (McElvain, 2010). While this study was conducted with children, it seems likely that literature circles can be adapted for high-intermediate and advanced adults learning English. In McElvain's version of literature circles, groups of four to six students were formed based on the level of text they were reading. Students read silently in class for 15 minutes and spent the next 15 minutes responding to the text in a reading response log. During the final 15 minutes, students either participated in student-led book clubs by sharing from their reading response logs, or they worked on a collaborative book project. McElvain suggests that the most important aspect of literature circles is the "collaborative talk" about the reading that takes place among students throughout the activity as well as with the teacher, creating a "classroom literacy community" (p. 182). An additional finding from this study was that both teachers and learners reported increased engagement in reading and improved confidence to participate in class discussions.

Classroom-Based Assessment

Students who are learning are engaged in monitoring their learning progress, as are their teachers. Formative assessment, also called assessment for learning (Dainton, 2010), is an ongoing process that provides teachers and learners with details about what students have and have not yet learned from instruction. Involving learners in setting personal goals for learning and monitoring their progress are essential components in formative assessment (Looney, 2007). Evidence from research in K–12 settings indicates significant learning outcomes when students were engaged in tracking their own progress (Marzano, 2009). Formative assessment can show students that teachers want to understand what and how they think rather than whether they know the correct answers. As a result, students may become empowered to think for themselves and take control of their own learning (Brookhart, Moss, & Long, 2008).

Whereas formative assessment is an ongoing process that engages learners, is part of instruction, and lets learners monitor their progress, summative assessment reports on the outcomes of learning. Summative assessments often take the form of standardized tests that are used for accountability purposes. According to research in K–12 settings, when formative assessments are aligned with standards, teachers structure the assessments effectively, and students clearly understand the evaluation criteria and

are engaged in monitoring their own progress, learners can perform well on summative assessments as well (Leahy & Wiliam, 2009).

Teacher's role in engagement-based classroom

“To teach is to engage students in learning.” This quote, from *Education for Judgment* by Christensen et al. (1991), captures the essence of the state of the art and practice of pedagogies of engagement. This book is intended to emphasize that engaging students in learning is principally the responsibility of the teacher, who becomes less an imparter of knowledge and more a designer and facilitator of learning experiences and opportunities. In other words, the real challenge in teaching is not covering the material for the students; it is uncovering the material with the students.

The most common model of the classroom-based teaching and learning process used in education in the past fifty years (and maybe currently!!) is the presentational model. According to it, the information passes from the notes of the professor to the notes of the students without passing through the mind of either one. An alternative to the “pour it in” model is the “keep it flowing around” model in which the information passes not only from teacher to student, but also from students to teacher and among the students. This model of teaching and learning emphasizes that the simultaneous presence of interdependence and accountability are essential to

learning, and their presence is at the heart of a student-engaged instructional approach.

The research findings on pedagogies of engagement underscore former University of Michigan President James Duderstadt's (1999) call for action: "It could well be that faculty members of the twenty-first century college or university will find it necessary to set aside their roles as teachers and instead become designers of learning experiences, processes, and environments." (p. 7)

Sarder (2014) mentioned some other roles of the teacher inside engagement-based classrooms. First, the teacher should keep good learning relationships with his\her students because this is an ideal way to facilitate a highly engaged classroom environment. Second, good teachers pay attention to the physical learning environment, keep it well-designed, organized, and maintained, and do not make changes to that environment that could become obstacles to student learning. Third, an established system of rewards and incentives should be implemented carefully so that instructors use rewards and incentives to build a stronger student perspective on intrinsic motivation as an incentive for student work and learning. A fourth role in a highly engaging classroom environment is the identification and establishment of habits within the classroom where instructors are able to improve the classroom experience and stimulate higher levels of

student engagement by focusing on appropriate procedures and having students practice those procedures until they become habitual.

In addition to the above mentioned teacher's roles, Sarder (2014) mentioned several key aspects of pedagogy that teachers and professors are able to emphasize in order to facilitate student course engagement. The first key for the successful pedagogy is *course design for rigorous and relevant instruction*, as relevance can facilitate the motivation and conditions necessary for students to investment the time and energy necessary for a rigorous curriculum or optimal learning. The bottom line is that student are willing to work more and harder if the information they are presented with is relevant to what they already know.

The second aspect of pedagogy that professors should focus on in course design is *personalized learning*. No two students learn the same way and come from identical backgrounds. Therefore, each student, when treated as an individual, will have a unique learning requirement. Professors must acknowledge this and design this assumption into a course syllabus. Student will learn in different ways, at different speeds and respond differently to course material. Teachers can create improved classroom environments and higher levels of student engagement if they focus on appropriate procedures and have students practice those procedures until they become habits.

The third aspect of pedagogy that results in an actively engaged student is *active learning strategies*. Teachers and professors must seek out new and different ways of stimulating interest in classroom material and discussion. A video lecture, a recorded short lecture, and e-textbooks are inherently isolating for the student and result in a mind-numbing rather than mind-engaging learning experience. Professors and teachers should emphasize comprehension strategies that focus on pre-reading and summarization that provide the opportunity for students to be more engaged in readings. Reading is a primary focus for student engagement because reading is a cornerstone of any education endeavor.

Engagement and Technology

Learning engagement generally has positive effects on learning effectiveness and satisfaction in both technology-mediated and face-to-face learning environments and this depends basically on the learning medium designed. The combined results of several studies suggest that learning engagement is an important mediator for determining learning outcomes in technology-mediated learning.

The strategies used for engaging students in a conventional in-class setting have been developed over a long period of time and their implementation does not necessarily equal successfully engaging students. The increased use of distance learning as a means of granting students access to higher education has not

enjoyed the same long term evaluative development process. It was not until recently that researchers realized that solely giving access to course digital materials does not necessarily equate to student engagement in those same materials. According to Martin & Oslen (2010), there are two primary fundamental of student engagement: (a) the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and educationally purposeful activities, and (b) the way an institution uses its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage student participation.

Current research has formulated a number of strategies for engaging students in this online digital format. Martin and Olsen (2010) conclude that utilizing *online social networking* as a medium for student interaction is a promising strategy for improving student engagement. This strategy reflects the philosophy that the most effective means of communicating with students is through their preferred means of communication. According to Madden et al (2011), 71% of all internet using adults are members of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. It is logical for instructors to pursue social networking media as a teaching tool because students use the technology in which they are interested. If students are interested in a particular technology, then they are far more likely to show higher levels of motivation and engagement in course materials.

Coertze (2011) investigated EFL students' reading engagement and language output in selected online environments. She confirmed that teaching the integration and application of CMC environments in second language teaching and learning became a necessity because technology plays a prominent role in our daily lives and even more so for learners of the 21st century. With students spending several hours reading and writing online, life on the screen is an everyday, natural practice – they know no other way of being.

Sarder (2014) indicated that research has suggested that making efforts to establish a *sense of community* within an online course is an effective way to engage students. Community, in the online sense, can be defined as an environment which is enabled through the interaction and collaboration of its members using various technology and mixed media methods. Interaction is the essential building block of any community. If members of a community are not able to interact in some form or fashion, then it does not exist. The Education Development Centre at Carleton University suggested a number of techniques to foster a sense a sense of community in an online classroom .These techniques include :

1. Use inclusive language when lecturing. Instructors note the importance of building a community through inclusive language such as “us” and “we” as it generates a sense of unity for both face-to-face and distance students .

2. Build rapport with your students. Consider posting a welcome video, podcast, or presentation to introduce yourself and your course. This is a way for students to see and hear you, so you are not perceived as a virtual instructor .
3. Have a positive attitude. Be enthusiastic and market your course to your students as a way to promote community .
4. Use your voice and be honest. Write all content and instructions using your own voice which comes across as more open and genuine with your students .
5. Set online office hours. Schedule regular, online office hours or group discussions where you and the students can connect on a weekly basis .
6. Establish an online presence. One instructor noted that by establishing a strong sense of being there and being present by creating a personal website, blog, or by tweeting can naturally improve classroom management in an online classroom.

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