

Investigating the Role of Different Student Interaction Types on Student Engagement in EFL Classroom: A Case Study

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Abstract

This qualitative case study investigates the role of different types of student interaction in shaping student engagement in an EFL classroom. The study was conducted in a private senior high school in Surakarta, involving one class of 36 students for classroom observations and five selected students for interviews. The research aimed to identify the types of student interactions and explore how each type influenced behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. The findings revealed the presence of three main interaction types: learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content. Learner-instructor interaction was the most dominant and contributed significantly to students' focus, motivation, and understanding through teacher guidance and feedback. Learner-learner interaction encouraged collaboration and comfort among peers, although not all students actively participated. Learner-content interaction supported independent learning, especially when students engaged with digital materials they found enjoyable. These interactions played a vital role in shaping student engagement: behavioral engagement was influenced by the quality of peer and teacher interactions; cognitive engagement was supported by all three interaction types depending on student habits and task interactivity; emotional engagement was mainly shaped by interpersonal connections with teachers and peers. Overall, the study highlights the importance of diverse student interactions in fostering engagement in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: Student Interaction; Student Engagement; EFL Classroom; Case Study; Qualitative Research

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement in the learning process is a key issue in education, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Engagement involves not

only students' active participation but also emotional and cognitive involvement that supports learning. In Indonesia, engaging students in EFL classrooms remains a challenge, particularly because English is not commonly used in daily communication. Interaction has been identified as one of the most significant factors influencing student engagement. When students actively interact—with peers, with the teacher, or with learning materials—they are more likely to feel involved and motivated in the classroom (Panhwar & Bell, 2022). Therefore, understanding the role of interaction in shaping student engagement is essential for improving language learning outcomes.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of interaction in the learning process. Muzammil et al. (2020) found that student-student, student-teacher, and student-content interactions all contribute positively to engagement. However, classroom observations in Indonesian schools reveal that many students remain passive during lessons, showing limited verbal or non-verbal participation (Busa, 2023). Some students sit quietly without contributing, while others even appear disengaged or fall asleep. This low level of engagement is a concern, as it can negatively impact students' academic performance. In addition, research by Thornberg et al. (2020) highlights that students tend to be more engaged when they experience positive and supportive interactions with their teachers. Although this shows the value of interaction, most existing studies still focus broadly on its benefits, without clearly examining what kinds of interactions actually occur in the classroom and how frequently they happen.

There is a lack of research that identifies the specific types and frequencies of student interaction in EFL classrooms, especially within the Indonesian context. Most studies emphasize general strategies to promote engagement but do not deeply analyze the classroom interaction patterns that may influence it. This study seeks to address that gap by analyzing classroom interaction using Moore's (1989) theory, which classifies interaction into three categories: learner-teacher, learner-learner, and learner-content. By applying this framework, the study explores not only how often these interactions occur but also how they impact student engagement. Furthermore, the research includes teachers' perspectives to understand their views on the role and importance of interaction in fostering engagement.

This research aims to answer two research questions. The aims of the study are (1) to identify the specific types of student interactions observed in the EFL classroom, and (2) to examine how these interactions shape students' engagement in the classroom. In this study, the researcher explores classroom interaction among students in an Indonesian EFL context and its connection to student engagement. Understanding these interactions is essential to gain deeper insights into students' learning experiences and classroom dynamics. The findings are expected to provide insight into real classroom practices and contribute to more effective, interactive teaching strategies in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Student Interaction in EFL Classroom

Student interaction in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms refers to the ways learners engage with peers, teachers, and learning materials through communication, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. This interaction is essential because it supports language development, builds social relationships, and enhances overall engagement in learning (Garrison et al., 1999). In EFL contexts like Indonesia, student interaction allows learners to practice using the target language in meaningful situations, which is critical for improving fluency and confidence. Moore (1989) emphasizes that interaction plays a key role in shaping a learning community and encouraging critical thinking. Tinto (1997) also highlights that collaborative and communicative learning activities are strongly linked to student engagement and academic success, especially in language learning environments where social interaction can support both linguistic and emotional growth.

Moore's (1989) framework identifies three main types of interaction: learner-teacher, learner-learner, and learner-content. These types are applicable not only in distance learning but also in face-to-face classrooms, including EFL settings. Learner-teacher interaction includes asking and answering questions, receiving feedback, and following instructions—activities that help maintain motivation and clarify understanding. Learner-learner interaction takes place during group or pair work and encourages learners to use English actively while developing confidence and cooperation. Learner-content interaction, on the other hand, involves students engaging independently with materials such as texts, videos, or tasks, helping them build vocabulary and comprehension. These three types of interaction work together to support students' language acquisition and foster engagement at multiple levels—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Conduit et al., 2016; Murray et al., 2013).

The impact of interaction is clearly seen in student engagement and learning outcomes. Shelton et al. (2017) emphasize that positive and consistent interaction fosters connection and motivation. Frequent teacher-student communication improves understanding and participation (Han, 2021). Peer interaction encourages real communication, reducing anxiety and increasing fluency, while collaborative tasks boost motivation and peer support (Hu et al., 2020; Saeed et al., 2016). Although teacher guidance is essential, peer interaction and content engagement are equally important for building an effective and interactive EFL classroom (Selamat & Melji, 2022; Xing et al., 2019).

B. Student Engagement in EFL Classroom

Student engagement has become a central topic in educational research due to its strong influence on learning quality and student success. In general, engagement refers to the active involvement of students in academic tasks and educational experiences (Liang et al., 2018). Trowler (2010) explains engagement as the time, energy, and resources that students and institutions commit to

achieving meaningful educational goals. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), engagement is especially critical, as language acquisition requires continuous practice, interaction, and sustained motivation. According to Trowler et al. (2021), student engagement emerges from a mutual effort between learners and institutions to build supportive and high-quality learning environments. In EFL classrooms, such engagement is often supported through communicative activities, peer collaboration, and meaningful interactions that not only enhance language skills but also boost learner confidence and participation.

Some experts like Fredricks et al. (2004) explain that student engagement has three parts: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Behavioral engagement means students are active in class—for example, they come to class, join discussions, and finish their assignments. Emotional engagement relates to students' feelings about learning, such as feeling excited, happy, or even anxious (Meibert et al., 2020). Cognitive engagement shows how much effort students put into understanding the lesson deeply. According to Liang et al. (2018), these three aspects are connected and help us better understand how students experience learning. Seeing engagement as a combination of these three parts is very important in EFL classrooms, because learning a language needs not only participation, but also strong motivation, emotional support, and focus.

Several factors can influence student engagement in EFL classrooms, both at the individual and institutional levels. Nguyen et al. (2016) distinguish between passive behavioral engagement—such as listening attentively—and active engagement, which involves actions like asking questions and expressing opinions. Both forms play important roles in language learning: passive engagement supports comprehension, while active engagement strengthens productive skills such as speaking and writing. Self-efficacy, or a learner's confidence in their ability to succeed, is another key internal factor that affects engagement. This is especially significant in EFL contexts where students may struggle with fluency or fear of making mistakes. On the institutional side, teaching methods also play a vital role. As noted by Panhwar and Bell (2022), engagement can be enhanced through strategies that maximize time-on-task and promote deeper learning, such as problem-solving tasks, discussions, and interactive activities. These factors collectively shape the depth and quality of student engagement in EFL learning environments.

C. Student Interaction and Student Engagement in EFL Classroom

Previous studies have consistently highlighted the significant role of student interaction in promoting engagement within EFL classrooms. Vaidya et al. (2017) found that project-based learning encourages active student involvement by fostering deeper interaction between learners and teachers. Collaborative tasks allow students to take shared responsibility, communicate meaningfully, and build their understanding together—processes that support both cognitive and

behavioral engagement. In blended learning contexts, structured peer interaction also plays a critical role. Heilporn et al. (2021) observed that when supported by digital tools and guided frameworks, student interaction not only boosts participation but also nurtures emotional engagement by maintaining motivation and connectedness throughout the learning process.

Further reinforcing this view, Panhwar and Bell (2022) emphasize that frequent and meaningful interactions—particularly among students and between students and teachers—are key to sustaining engagement. They note that limited interaction, especially among quiet or less confident students, often results in disengagement. To overcome this, the use of inclusive and varied interactional strategies is essential. Similarly, Amerstorfer and Freiin von Münster-Kistner (2021) argue that positive student-teacher relationships, characterized by supportive feedback and clear communication, significantly enhance student motivation and learning outcomes. Taken together, these findings suggest that fostering interactive and communicative classroom environments is vital in EFL education, especially in settings where language anxiety or low self-confidence may reduce student participation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the role of different types of student interaction in shaping engagement in an EFL classroom. The participants were 36 tenth-grade students from a senior high school in Surakarta. Data were collected through classroom observations involving the whole class and semi-structured interviews with five selected students based on specific criteria. The classroom observations aimed to identify the types and patterns of student interaction during learning activities, while the interviews provided deeper insights into students' engagement experiences. The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive approach through Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS

This section outlines the findings related to the types of student interactions observed in the EFL classroom and how these interactions contributed to student engagement. The data were obtained through two primary instruments: classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. These methods were employed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the forms of interaction that emerged in the classroom and their influence on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of student engagement. The classroom observations involved all students in the class, while follow-up interviews were conducted with 5 selected participants using pseudonyms AA, CP, HT, GD, and LJ to protect their identities.

1. Types of Student Interaction Observed in the EFL Classroom

The first research question aimed to explore the specific types of student interaction that occurred in the classroom. This section presents findings from classroom observation and interviews, focusing on three types of interactions adapted from Moore's (1989) framework of interaction in distance education: (1) Learner-Instructor Interaction, (2) Learner-Learner Interaction, (3) Learner-Content Interaction. These categories help capture how students interact with their teacher, peers, and learning materials during EFL learning. The results showed in Table 1:

Table 1

Summary of Findings on Types of Student Interaction Observed in the EFL Classroom

Source	Learner-Instructor Interaction	Learner-Learner Interaction	Learner-Content Interaction
Observation	The teacher actively gave instructions, asked questions, and provided feedback. Students responded actively and followed explanations through slides.	Appeared during group activities, discussions, and class games. Students exchanged ideas, but participation was not equal across groups.	Students paid attention to slides and took notes. They preferred using online materials (e.g., videos) rather than textbooks for learning content.
Student AA	Frequently responds to teacher's questions and sometimes asks questions. Appreciates teacher feedback such as praise and encouragement.	Participates in group discussions. Shares ideas and helps peers, but prefers asking the teacher when confused.	Uses films and internet more than textbooks. Records new vocabulary and searches the meaning online. Uses books only for exercises.
Student CP	Similar to AA. Responds actively to teacher and occasionally asks questions. Feels supported by positive feedback from teacher.	Actively works in group, but prefers clarification directly from the teacher.	Uses films more than books. Prefers teacher explanations. Uses textbook only for exercises.
Student PR	Rarely interacts with the teacher due to shyness. Asks questions only when truly confused. Feels less included in direct interaction.	Interacts mainly with desk mates. Occasionally exchanges ideas but not regularly engaged in group academic discussions.	Uses books and slides. Highlights important content. Learns better through teacher's explanation.
Student GD	Rarely asks questions. Mostly responds when asked. Teacher sometimes gives advice like studying more, but student-initiated talk is minimal.	Limited discussion with peers unless assigned. Prefers talking casually. Participates in tasks but mixes it with off-topic talk.	Occasionally uses slides and notes. Rarely uses textbook. Learns better through direct teacher instruction.

Student LJ	Avoids asking questions in class due to shyness but responds occasionally when prompted. Recognizes teacher feedback and encouragement.	Frequently discusses with peers, especially when confused. Engages actively in group work and shares responsibilities.	Uses textbook, internet, and PPT. Highlights key information. Understands material better through teacher's explanation.
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a. Learner-Instructor Interaction

The findings revealed that learner-instructor interaction was the most visible type of interaction in the observed EFL classroom. The teacher played an active role in initiating communication, especially through giving instructions, asking questions, and providing feedback. During the lesson on advertisements, the teacher used slides and frequently asked questions such as, "What do you think about this picture?" to keep students engaged. Most students responded positively and were observed taking notes. As confirmed during the interviews, students generally perceived the teacher's interaction as helpful. One student, AA, stated:

"I sometimes like to ask the teacher questions, but more often it's the teacher who asks me. The teacher also explains things clearly, so I can understand better." (20/6/2025-AA-Int)

Although most students were responsive, the level of interaction varied. Some students, like HT, admitted to being less active in classroom exchanges. He mentioned:

"I rarely ask the teacher questions... Maybe it's because I'm a shy person and tend to be less active in class." (20/6/2025-HT-Int)

Despite this, students still appreciated the teacher's guidance, especially when feedback or clarification was given. In summary, learner-instructor interaction was shaped by strong teacher involvement, but student participation depended on individual confidence and classroom comfort.

b. Learner-Learner Interaction

Learner-learner interaction was also found in the EFL classroom, especially during group work, pair activities, and casual peer discussions. Based on observations, this type of interaction usually occurred during structured tasks such as games, group discussions, and presentations. In these moments, students worked together to complete worksheets or solve problems. Some groups showed good teamwork and active communication, while others were quieter and less involved. As noted in the fieldnotes,

"During the group discussion session, positive interaction was seen among students, although participation was uneven. Some pairs actively discussed, while others appeared passive and waited for their friends to lead." (20/5/2025-Obs)

Interview responses showed similar patterns. Several students shared that they liked working with their friends, especially when the teacher asked them to. CP mentioned:

"I often work with my friends, have discussions, and ask them about the material. I feel more comfortable discussing and asking questions with my friends than with the teacher."
(20/6/2025-CP-Int)

CP's experience reflects how peer interaction can support learning in a way that feels less formal and more comfortable. Peer work helped CP better understand the material through shared discussion and task-sharing in group assignments.

However, peer interaction was not always self-initiated. GD, for example, said:

"I only work in groups when the teacher tells us to. If the teacher doesn't ask us to, then I don't usually work in groups." (20/6/2025-GD-Int-LL.1)

This shows that for some students, interaction with peers happened mostly during teacher-assigned group tasks. In general, student-student interaction was helpful when guided by the teacher, but its frequency and quality still depended on the task type and the students' willingness to participate.

c. Learner-Content

Learner-content interaction refers to how students engage with learning materials such as textbooks, slides, and online resources. In the observed classroom, this type of interaction mostly happened when the teacher used presentation slides. Students paid attention, took notes, and sometimes asked questions during explanations. The textbook was used occasionally, mainly for grammar or vocabulary exercises. Based on observation, students seemed more engaged when the material was presented visually or interactively through slides. One moment captured this clearly when a group of students leaned forward to follow the explanation on a slide about language features, jotting down examples in their notebooks.

In the interviews, students shared that they didn't always rely on textbooks and preferred materials that felt more dynamic. For instance, AA said:

"I often use books just for doing exercises. I learn new vocabulary more often from movies. Usually, when I find a difficult or new word, I write it down and then look up the meaning on the internet." (20/6/2025-AA-Int).

Another student, CP, added:

"I usually study using books for exercises and a bit of the material in them, but I use the teacher's PowerPoint slides and the internet more often." (20/6/2025-CP-Int).

These responses suggest that while printed materials were still helpful, many students preferred digital sources that allowed more flexibility and helped them understand better. Overall, learner-content interaction was shaped by both what the teacher provided and how students took initiative in exploring materials that matched their learning preferences.

2. The Role of Student Interaction in Shaping Student Engagement

The second research question explored how various student interactions: teacher, peer, and content, supported behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in

the EFL classroom. The findings are based on classroom observations and student interviews. The results showed in Table 2:

Table 2

Role of Student Interaction on Student Engagement in EFL Classroom

Type of Interaction	Aspect of Engagement	Findings from Observation	Findings from Interview	Role of Interaction
Student – Teacher	Behavioral	Students were more focused when the teacher gave clear instructions or asked questions.	Students said teacher prompts helped them stay on task.	Helped students stay attentive and follow the lesson, though mostly teacher-led.
	Cognitive	Teacher-led questions encouraged students to pause and think before answering.	Students liked to prepare answers and write down new words.	Helped students think, organize ideas, and reflect on their answers.
	Emotional	Teacher used a warm tone and positive feedback, creating a safe classroom mood.	Students felt supported and unafraid to try even if they made mistakes.	Reduced fear and built confidence through positive teacher responses.
Student – Student	Behavioral	Students were more active during group tasks and often helped each other.	Students enjoyed working with peers and shared tasks.	Encouraged participation, persistence, and shared responsibility.
	Cognitive	Group work led to planning, organizing roles, and solving tasks together.	Students said they discussed and divided tasks strategically.	Helped students plan, think together, and clarify content.
	Emotional	Students smiled, laughed, and looked relaxed during peer-based activities.	Students felt comfortable, happy, and confident with friends.	Built emotional safety, joy, and a sense of belonging.
Student – Content	Behavioral	Students interacted with slides, underlined texts, and took notes.	Some students preferred reading or using online tools over teacher talk.	Supported focus and effort through self-paced learning.

Cognitive	Some students looked up meanings, made notes, and reviewed materials.	Showed signs of self-regulation, though not all students did this.	Helped with understanding and memory, especially for independent learners.
Emotional	Most materials didn't seem to spark strong emotions or interest.	Students didn't talk much about materials being enjoyable.	Played a small role emotionally, since materials lacked engaging content.

a. Behavioral Engagement

The data from classroom observation and student interviews indicate that interaction whether with the teacher, peers, or learning materials significantly influenced students' behavioral engagement in the EFL classroom.

1) Learner-Instructor Interaction: Maintaining Focus, Attention, and Increasing Participation through Teacher Support

Teacher interaction helped sustain students' focus and participation. Students were more attentive when the teacher asked direct questions and gave clear guidance.

"I was able to maintain focus during the lesson because the teacher actively asked questions, which helped sustain student attention and engagement." (20/6/2025-AA-Int)

This shows how teacher prompts helped AA stay alert during class, suggesting that regular questioning supported behavioral engagement.

Classroom observation also revealed that when some students began to lose focus, the teacher actively redirected their attention by asking them to take notes and by posing occasional questions to check their understanding. This illustrates the teacher's effort to maintain students' concentration and promote involvement in the learning process through continuous support.

2) Learner-Learner Interaction: Encouraging Active Participation and Teamwork

Peer interaction promoted collaboration and task persistence. Students felt more motivated and engaged when working with friends.

"...When working in a group with friends, we usually helped each other and divided the tasks. If something was difficult, we discussed it together or asked the teacher directly." (20/6/2025-LJ-Int)

LJ's experience reflects how teamwork helped him stay engaged and overcome difficulties, showing that peers supported behavioral effort.

Observations further confirmed that students generally maintained good behavior and worked collaboratively with their peers. They followed classroom rules, engaged actively in group tasks, and supported one another, creating a

positive and productive learning environment that reinforced behavioral engagement.

3) Learner-Content Interaction: Helping Students Focus and Learn on their own.

Interaction with materials (slides, textbooks, and online sources) helped students stay focused, especially when they preferred self-paced learning.

"I sometimes find it hard to focus when the teacher is explaining. I can concentrate better when I read it myself from the PowerPoint slides or the textbook." (20/6/2025-CP-Int)

CP's comment shows that content-based interaction offered a more effective engagement route for some students who struggled to focus during lectures.

This was also supported by classroom observation, where several students were seen actively engaging with learning materials by taking notes and underlining key points. These behaviors indicate that students were mentally involved in processing the content independently, suggesting that materials played a role in sustaining behavioral engagement for certain learners.

b. Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement in this study refers to the degree to which students invest mentally in the learning process of how they think, plan, regulate their understanding, and reflect during classroom activities.

1) Learner-Instructor Interaction: Stimulating Students' Thinking through Questioning.

Teacher interaction helped stimulate students' thinking through reflective questions and clear explanations. This guided students to reflect, plan, and organize their responses before participating.

"I usually think first before answering. Sometimes I also wonder why the answer is like that, so I look into it further afterwards." (20/6/2025-AA-Int)

AA's response indicates how teacher prompts supported deeper thinking and self-reflection during class discussions.

During classroom observation, the teacher posed reflective questions about the advertisement content presented by students. Before answering, students briefly discussed the questions among themselves to decide on a response. (22/5/2025-Obs) This illustrates that teacher-led questioning encouraged students to pause, think, and justify their responses, promoting cognitive engagement

2) Learner-Learner Interaction: Encouraging Peer Collaboration to Support Understanding

Collaboration with peers supported students' cognitive efforts by allowing them to exchange ideas, clarify doubts, and plan group tasks together.

"...when we get group assignments, we always divide the tasks and discuss them together." (20/6/2025-CP-Int)

CP's statement shows that working in groups required planning and discussion, which helped foster active mental engagement.

This was supported by observation, where several student groups were seen immediately discussing which product to advertise. They exchanged ideas and delegated tasks to each member. Such scenes reflect that peer interaction facilitated shared thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

3) Learner-Content Interaction: Promoting Independent Thinking

Students interacted with learning materials by highlighting, note-taking, and searching for information, which supported independent thinking and understanding.

"I also take notes during class. When I use the textbook, I usually highlight the important parts." (20/6/2025-HT-Int)

HT's comment highlights how material-based interaction promoted self-regulation and reflection outside direct instruction.

Similarly, observation data showed that some students underlined key points in their textbooks and took notes while following the lesson. (20/5/2025 – Obs) This suggests that learning materials encouraged students to focus their thinking and process information independently, contributing to cognitive engagement.

c. Emotional Engagement

Through observation and interview data, it became clear that emotional engagement was not only about how students felt in general, but how those feelings were shaped by who they were interacting with whether it was the teacher, their classmates, or the learning materials.

1) Learner-Instructor Interaction: Building Comfort and Confidence through a Supportive Atmosphere.

Teacher interaction created an emotionally safe environment that made students feel supported, confident, and more willing to participate despite their insecurities.

"I don't talk that much, but the teacher still encourages me to join in, even when I stay quiet or can't answer questions the teacher never gets angry." (20/6/2025-LJ-Int)

LJ's statement highlights how the teacher's patience reduced fear of failure and made students feel emotionally secure.

This was evident during observation when the teacher initiated an ice-breaking session. The teacher gave instructions for a game that was met with cheerful enthusiasm from the students. This warm and inclusive approach helped create a joyful and relaxed classroom atmosphere, supporting students' emotional comfort and willingness to engage.

2) Learner-Learner Interaction: Creating a Sense of Belonging through Peer Support.

Peer interaction strongly influenced emotional engagement by fostering enjoyment, comfort, pride, and a sense of belonging during learning activities.

"I enjoy English lessons when there are games, so it doesn't feel tense. It's fun and I can do it together with my friends." (20/6/2025-LJ-Int)

LJ's experience shows that learning with friends made lessons feel less stressful and more enjoyable, enhancing her emotional connection to learning.

Observation supported this, as students actively and enthusiastically participated in a game with their tablemates. Everyone was involved, and the activity fostered a sense of group cohesion. This shows how peer-based activities can generate excitement and strengthen a sense of unity, helping students feel emotionally engaged and connected.

3) **Learner-Content Interaction: Generating Interest and Enjoyment through Engaging Materials.**

Compared to other interactions, student-content interaction had minimal influence on emotional engagement. Although students used books, slides, and worksheets, these materials rarely sparked excitement or emotional connection. The materials were mostly used to complete tasks, not to inspire interest or enjoyment.

This may be because the materials lacked interactivity or emotional appeal—focusing mainly on reading and writing without engaging visuals or personal elements. As a result, emotional engagement was more effectively built through interactions with teachers and peers rather than with the content itself.

DISCUSSION

1. Types of Student Interactions Observed in the EFL Classroom

This study identified three main types of student interaction occurring in the EFL classroom: learner-teacher, learner-learner, and learner-content interaction, as classified by Moore (1989). Learner-teacher interaction was frequently observed when students responded to teacher questions, received clarification, followed instructions, or sought help during classroom activities. This interaction helped facilitate understanding and guided students through the learning process. Learner-learner interaction appeared during group and pair work, where students shared ideas, discussed answers, and supported one another in completing tasks. This form of peer collaboration not only enhanced comprehension but also encouraged active participation. The third type, learner-content interaction, took place when students engaged directly with learning materials such as texts, worksheets, videos, or digital resources. Through these materials, students constructed meaning independently and deepened their understanding of the content. These three interaction types were consistently present across various classroom situations and closely reflect the patterns reported by earlier studies (e.g., Heilporn et al., 2021; Thornberg et al., 2020), confirming that interaction with teachers, peers, and content forms the foundation of learning processes in EFL classrooms.

2. The Role of Student Interaction in Shaping Student Engagement

This study highlights the significant role of student interaction in shaping engagement within the EFL classroom. The findings show that three types of interaction, learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content, contributed to different dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive

(Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement was reflected in active participation and attentiveness, emotional engagement appeared in students' interest and confidence, while cognitive engagement involved mental effort and deeper thinking (Mebert et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2018). These aspects are especially important in language learning, where communication and motivation are key.

Learner-instructor interaction was found to play an important role in encouraging student engagement, especially emotionally and behaviorally. When the teacher gave clear instructions, responded to questions, or provided praise, students felt more confident and motivated to participate. This supports Moore's (1989) idea that teacher support helps students stay engaged and reduces anxiety, as also found by Han (2021) and Fredricks et al. (2004). In this study, students often looked to the teacher for guidance, and positive interactions made them more active in class.

Learner-learner interaction also contributed greatly to engagement, particularly during group work and peer discussions. Students helped each other understand the material and felt more comfortable speaking in front of their peers. This aligns with Moore (1989) and Garrison et al. (1999), who highlight the value of peer collaboration in language learning. In this study, many students said they were less afraid of making mistakes when working with friends, which increased both their participation and motivation.

Learner-content interaction was mostly linked to cognitive engagement. When students worked with materials like worksheets, videos, or texts, they showed signs of focused thinking and independent learning. Moore (1989) describes this as direct interaction with learning materials, and in this study, it helped students understand better and stay mentally active. These findings are in line with Liang et al. (2018) and Panhwar & Bell (2022), who emphasize that meaningful tasks and content support deeper learning in EFL settings.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the types of student interaction in an EFL classroom and how each contributed to student engagement. Through classroom observations and student interviews, three interaction types emerged: learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content. Learner-instructor interaction was the most dominant, fostering focus, understanding, and motivation through teacher support. Learner-learner interaction promoted collaboration and emotional comfort, though not all students engaged actively. Learner-content interaction encouraged independent learning, particularly when students interacted with preferred digital materials. However, the study is limited by its small sample size and single context, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research should involve multiple classrooms and investigate how technology and task design can further support meaningful student interaction and engagement.

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