

Language learners' engagement in hybrid classroom settings: A systematic review

Asfar Arif Nurharjanto

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author. Email: asfararif@uny.ac.id

Abstract

Students' engagement has been seen as a crucial part of learning as it determines their success in getting the most out of the learning process. The present study aims to identify the trends and to evaluate the main findings of a number of articles on students' engagement concerning the hybrid classroom settings. This study started with employing some keywords to select articles from several databases to review. A systematic review following the PRISMA framework was employed as the research method. The articles were then analyzed by means of content analysis. The findings suggest that most articles involved university students as the main participants, with the sample size ranging from 100 to 500 students. In terms of methods, most studies used quantitative measures by employing surveys in comparison with the less observed qualitative or mixed methods. The findings show that the selected articles focused on improving students' engagement, developing tools for measuring engagement, and determining factors affecting engagement in relation to technology. Further suggestions regarding the implications and future research are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Students' engagement is always taken as a pivotal aspect determining students' success in the classroom. Students have to be engaged in order to get the most out of their learning. Ideally, students should not only be present in the classroom but also listen to the teacher, do the task, and discuss with their peers. Students should be involved in learning not only physically but also mentally and affectively. To be engaged is sometimes perceived as focusing attention on or doing something totally. However, within classroom contexts, engagement should be taken further than that. Reschly & Christenson (2022) states that actions are what signify students' engagement through which students' active involvement led to learning. Similarly, Mercer & Dörnyei (2020) also believes that engagement ties motives and actions altogether in which when students are engaged, they can turn their motivation into tangible actions despite facing challenges and distractions. In language learning especially, students' engagement takes a special place. The current approach where communicative paradigm and constructivism become the core of learning put students' language use and interaction as mandatory for language development. This signifies students' involvement and action in building their language which also shows engagement as an integral part of students' success.

Researchers define students' engagement in various ways. Current studies such as (Reschly & Christenson, 2022b) characterize it as students' active participation in both academic and school-related programs and also to the learning goals. Marks (2000) conceives of student engagement as a psychological process, particularly the focus, interest, investment, and effort students put into their academic work. While Newmann et al (1992) defines engagement as derived attention, dedication,

and active involvement in contrast to meaningless involvement, boredom, and lack of interest. For this current study, however, engagement is taken as an action students put within their learning to be successful.

In order to improve low academic attainment, classroom boredom, alienation, and high dropout rates, both educators and researchers emphasize the need for student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). In a similar line, Garwood (2013) claims that one of the best predictors of excellent student academic accomplishment and learning is the level of student engagement in classroom learning activities. The more engaged and attentive the children are in class, the more probable it is that they will learn, remember what they have been taught, and like school. Regarding the correlation between increased student participation and better desired outcomes, including greater critical thinking, several academics have come to a consensus.

Engagement among students boosts their creativity in addition to their academic performance. Engaged students, particularly teens, "have a huge capacity to learn, a big potential for creativity, and a passionate devotion to topics which interest them," according to Harmer (2001). Contrarily, disengaged students, according to (Newmann, 1992) show evidence of disruption in a class by frequently skipping class, submitting unfinished work, and even when they do complete their classwork, doing so without much enthusiasm or devotion. According to Newmann (1992), the issue in education is not pupils' low achievement but rather their lack of interest. Overall, it is clear that increasing student involvement is essential to achieving the desired learning results.

Study on students' engagement is getting numerous attention lately given their importance in the classroom. Hiver et al., (2021) conducted a systematic review of student engagement across multiple contexts and fields. Their study concluded that future research should create a clear boundary for the engagement construct and use obvious indicators. As of the Covid-19 pandemic, the learning process has shifted to online learning to ensure students learn uninterrupted. The situation, however, is now getting better as schools start to open and students are coming to a classroom. Some schools though still are having the classroom both online and offline and this now becomes mundane. It comes with some challenges in regard to maintaining the students' engagement. Students' engagement in nature is context dependent in that could vary from one particular task to another or from time to time hence it is dynamic and malleable (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). In this regard, changes from online to the offline classroom and vice versa could inherently change the state of students' engagement. Students' and teachers' choices of technology to use in the classroom determine the level of engagement. Therefore, it is noteworthy to see what previous researchers have done on student's engagement taking into account of the technology. This study hopefully can share some light regarding what previously has been done in this field and can deepen understanding about how students' engagement coexists with technology. To do so, two research questions are employed.

1. What are the current condition of student engagement research in regard to the hybrid classroom setting in the selected studies?
2. What are the trends of student engagement research in regard to the hybrid classroom setting in the selected studies?

RESEARCH METHOD

This present study employed a systematic review to investigate several trends in the students' engagement in regard to the hybrid classroom settings. This study specifically used a PRISMA systematic review from Cochrane (Higgins et.al, 2019). A systematic review is chosen as it can systematically draw previous research findings to check their generalizability and consistency across different studies or fields (Mulrow, 1994). To further scrutinize the idea, two research questions are employed.

The data collection started on 1 November 2022 taking Scopus taken from Publish and Perish as the primary data source and to enrich the database. However, it seemed that a single database was too limited to provide comprehensive results therefore Publish and Perish were employed. The databases were chosen due to their eligibility of the index in providing relevant studies for the field as well as in supplying sufficient amounts of articles needed. The search process in the database employed the following keywords "students' engagement", "engagement", "language learning",

”online classroom”. From the results, studies from 2015 to 2022 in the form of the article were chosen and excluded non-research article items. Aside from that, to specify the result, the screening employed filters in the screening process such as limiting the articles only in the education, language learning and also linguistic fields.

From the database, 329 articles were found and then went into duplicates check to result in taking all the found articles on to the next step. As screened by title and abstract, 298 articles needed to be removed as they were off-topic leaving only 34 items containing the word engagement in the title. The selected 31 items then were checked through a screening abstract to make sure that the studies are talking about students’ engagement and also language learning. In turn, some of the articles were outside the current discussion as they are talking about topics outside of language learning or not taking engagement as the article’s main focus. At the end, there were 9 articles left as the main data source for this study.

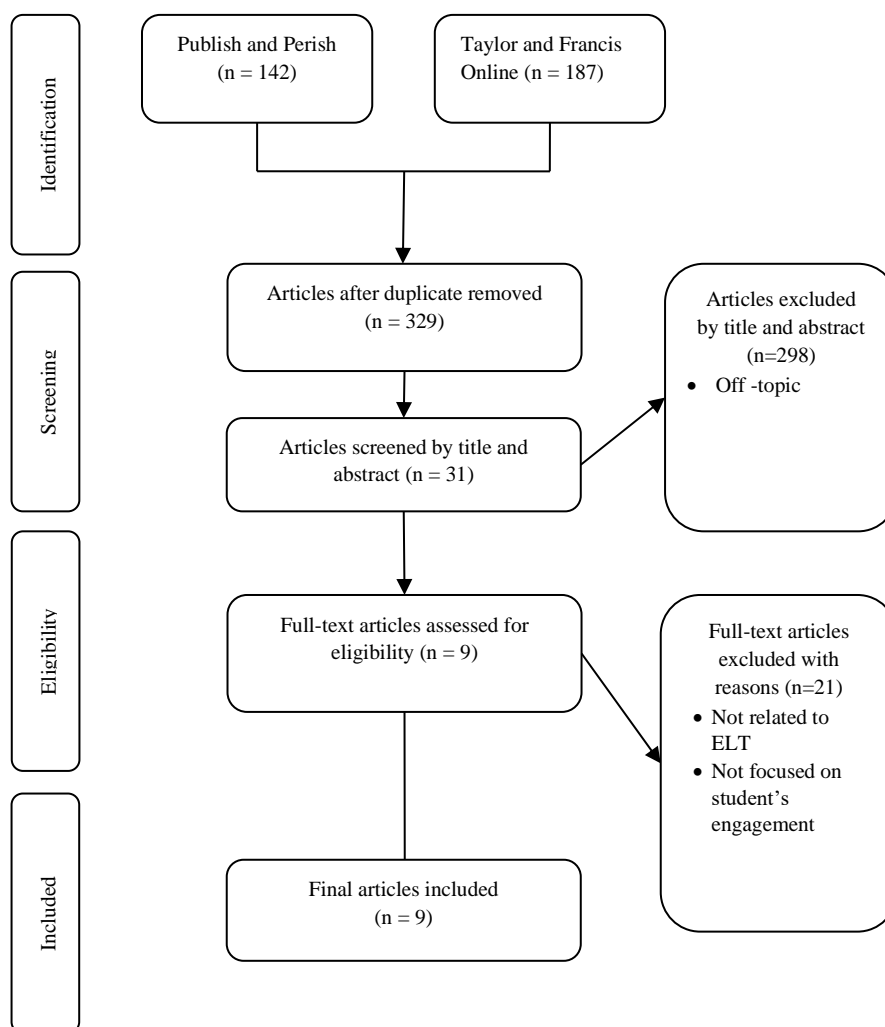


Figure 1. Systematic Review Process

FINDINGS

Current Research in Students’ Engagement in Hybrid Classroom Setting

There are several characteristics from the selected articles that help answer the first research question, those are research design, sample size and characteristics, and year of the study. The following will present the mentioned characteristics in more detail.

Starting with the sample size, table 1 shows that the majority of the articles were taking a sample size of more than 50 participants with one exception from (Wei, 2021) as the research design

was a review that use no sampling. Several others used sample sizes between 1 to 50 (11%), 51 to 100 (22%), 101 to 500 (33%), and 501 to 1000 (22%) leaving one article with an unclear participant (11%). Meanwhile, some of the articles also featured multi-sampling. In term of participants' age, the selected studies mostly involved university students (44%). Articles involving participants at young ages and elementary school were not found and the rest took high school (11%), Adults (11%) and Mixed groups (22%).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	n	Article
Sample size:		
N < 50	1	Pasaribu and Wulandari (2022)
51 < N < 100	2	Kusuma et al. (2021), Rojabi et al. (2022)
101 < N < 500	3	Dixson et al. (2017), Mohammad Hosseini et al. (2022), Bonner et al. (2022)
501 < N 1000	2	Mihai et al. (2022), d'Souza et al. (2021)
Unclear	1	Wei (2021)
Age:		
Young children (< 7)	0	
Elementary School (7-12)	0	
High School (12-18)	1	Kusuma et al. (2021)
University (18+)	4	Pasaribu and Wulandari (2022), Mihai et al. (2022), Mohammad Hosseini et al. (2022), Rojabi et al. (2022)
Adults (25+)	1	Bonner et al. (2022)
Mixed Group ()	2	Dixson et al. (2017), d'Souza et al. (2021)
No Participants	1	Wei (2021)

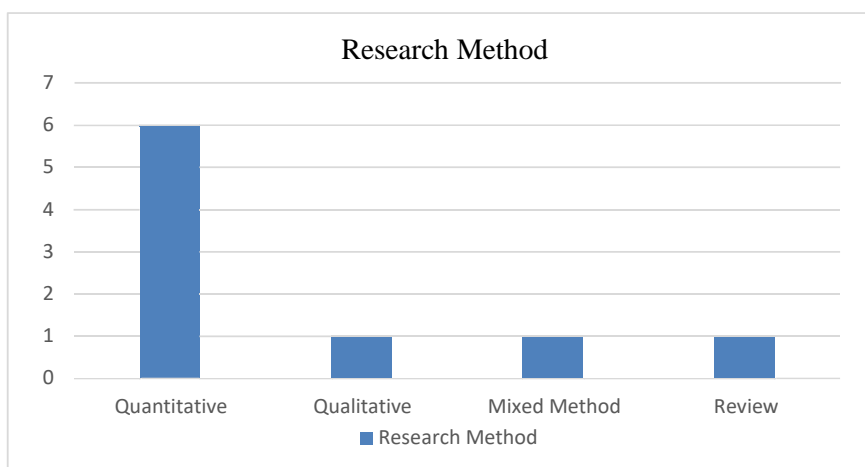


Figure 2. Common Approaches Used

Moreover, in the design as in figure 2, most articles employed quantitative research (66%), while the others share the same number: qualitative research (11%), mixed method (11%), and review (11%). The article using review was still included in the calculation because it also projected some research in engagements that were still related with the use of technology. In the articles that used quantitative, most of them employ a survey as the main research design which utilized a questionnaire to collect the data. Meanwhile, from the quantitative, a case study was chosen. The mixed method combined both a questionnaire and an interview. The last, in which review was employed, the article collected several previous related studies on the subject and developed the literature review.

The samples taken in this study clearly shown that most students’ engagement research in regard to technology largely employed on big sample size in which the samples taken were mostly more than 100 respondents counting up to 1000 respondents on some articles. Meanwhile, articles employed less than 100 respondents were less than the counterparts. This certainly affected the methodology used in the articles in which quantitative research was dominant compared to the others. This implies that the research in the students’ engagement within the domain of technology tended to be more quantitative.

Advantages of Using the Hybrid Classroom to Students’ Engagement

The selected articles represent diverse findings covering many aspects related to students’ engagement. To answer the second question, findings are divided into some subcategories to better understand the pattern and impact the articles have. The details are as follows.

Table 2. Findings on Students' Engagement and Hybrid Classroom Settings

Main Aspects	n	Article
Advantages:		
Improving students’ engagement	4	Kusuma et al. (2021), Pasaribu and Wulandari (2022), Rojabi et al. (2022), Wei (2021)
Tools to measure engagement	1	Bonner et al. (2022)
Factor affecting students’ engagement	4	Dixson et al. (2017), Mihai et al. (2022), Mohammad Hosseini et al. (2022), d’Souza et al. (2021)

Most of the current research about students’ engagement in regard to hybrid classroom settings, as shown in Table 2, show that most of the studies are either focusing on improving students’ engagement (44%) or exploring factors affecting students’ engagement (44%). Besides, one study focused on creating innovative tools to measure engagement (11%).

The findings here imply that listed articles focused mainly on improving students’ engagement in the teaching learning process. Some also directed their articles focused on factors affecting the student’s engagement in the classroom. It can be said the articles centered predominantly on how technology can improve or affect their engagement. Meanwhile, only one study tried to develop a tool to measure engagement.

DISCUSSION

This present study involved 9 selected articles to illustrate the trends and major findings in students’ engagement and its relation to hybrid classroom settings. As described above, the articles provide current, valuable, and enlightening insights into the topics discussed. They were categorized into several characteristics to answer the stated research questions that are explained in the following parts.

Prominent Topics Regarding Engagement in Hybrid Classroom Settings Research

This study tried to look at the general approach the selected article utilized as it is shown above (figure 2). The selected articles generally utilized the quantitative, it is divided equally between mixed approach, qualitative and review. The study with a quantitative approach generally utilized a survey as its main design to gather the students’ engagement as well as to measure other constructs such as online responsiveness and feedback Dixson et al. (2017).

The trends from the selected studies in terms of the approaches is the use of a survey to measure the student’s engagement and the other construct being the focus of the study. This could target the multidimensional aspects of the engagement considering factors that are possibly affecting it. Through survey, the respondents need to fill in or check not only what they do (behavioral engagement) but also what they feel (affective engagement) and what they think (cognitive engagement). By doing so, studies can provide a more valuable understanding of engagement and thus give a better picture of how engagement contributes to students learning (Hiver et al.,2021a). Zhou & Wei (2018) believe that studies typically do not rely on a single type of data or use just

indirect (i.e., self-report) measures of engagement, which is a distinguishing asset that future work should build on by continuing to supplement indirect measures with direct assessments of the pertinent domains of L2 engagement. In addition, the selected studies might in the future also address the dynamics of engagements as it is malleable (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) and it could give significant insight into how the changes in engagement occur (Hiver et al., 2021b). However, it is also noteworthy to do qualitative study more in the engagement as it might provide different views as those of quantitative.

The next is about the sample size and characteristics. The collected studies highlighted that most of them involved university students as the main target participants followed by the mixed group, the rest are just the same. University students were taken as the main participants in most studies might be because of the trend of using the survey to collect which requires participants to submit their responses and this might be a bit difficult to do in the elementary as well as young children level. This implied that research design and the researcher's belief might have an impact on the choice of participants. Universities student might also be seen as more familiar with the technology. However, the selected articles, none of them involved young children and elementary school students as the main data source. Exploring young children and elementary school students' engagement regarding technology might share some insight into the nature of engagement in young students. Moreover, studies based on review can possibly share some improved practices for improving students' engagement despite lacking real practice leaving room for future research to implement the idea.

The Main Findings in Students' Engagement in Hybrid Classroom Settings

To address the second question, this study revealed several patterns showing the implications of the studies on the nature of engagement. Since students' engagement is taken as a pivotal part of their success, it is noteworthy to further explore what the current studies might already know about engagement in order to improve the present practice and to help teachers create a more engaging class for students. The selected studies highlighted mostly improving students' engagement through using technology in the classroom. Most of the studies focused on implementing flipped classrooms in which the activity within the flipped classroom arguably can promote students' engagement (Li, 2022). What makes language learning engaging for students both inside and outside of the classroom, what factors make for engaging language learning tasks, and how these differ across groups of culturally and linguistically diverse learners with varied levels and learning objectives are all issues that must be addressed in language instruction (Nakamura et al., 2021) This also emphasized the importance of task characteristics to ensure students engagement in the classroom (Lambert & Zhang, 2019).

Besides, some articles also focused on exploring factors affecting students' engagement in the classroom. This for example is reflected in students' anxiety when having an online classroom and foreign language enjoyment. This emphasizes the nature of engagement which is multidimensional that requires teachers to take into account several factors possibly affecting students' engagement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). The last is the innovation in the measurement of students' engagement for example the Classmoto project (Bonner et al., 2022). The need to have an accurate assessment of the student's engagement is also crucial taking into account how flexible it is and how crucial for the student's success (Hiver et al., 2021a).

CONCLUSION

Engagement is a dynamic, multidimensional construct comprising situated notions of cognition, affect, and behaviors – including social interactions – in which action is a requisite component and is always seen as an important aspect of student's success in learning the language. This present study aimed to look at what the past 5 years articles about students' engagement in regard to the hybrid classroom setting had done and to get insight on how students' engagement correlates with the surrounding context. Thus, this study aimed to look at the trends and what findings the articles have. This study concludes that the selected articles were mostly focused on university students as their main participants. It indicates that the need to conduct more studies on other possible

participants is required to know more about how the nature of engagement from other participants. Moreover, this study suggests future research to employ non-survey design to explore more about students' engagement as this design can potentially share new light due to different methodological approach. The future researcher is welcome to address more about students' engagement in relation to technology as potentials within this domain are still wide open for further work.

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