Students-Centered Engagement on English Teaching Using Project-Based Learning Model

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Abstract. This research aims to investigate student engagement in Student-Centered Learning (SCL) activities. The writer focuses on four dimensions of engagement (cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and social engagement). A review of related literature suggests that those four dimensions matter in conducting English learning studies. In addition, student engagement plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process. A qualitative descriptive research had used to observe 35 students. The research utilized a semi-structured interview with four students to give a brief explanation. The data analysis of this research presents four dimensions of engagement in the implementation of Project Based Learning (*PjBL*) as one of SCL in an English Language research. The result show that they engaged actively with the *PjBL* model. SCL's approach took part in their desire to adhere to learning activities. Furthermore, teachers as a facilitator make the learning process run dynamically. Accordingly, the findings of this research support the premise that student engagement optimizes learning and maximizes the learning outcome.
Keywords: *Student Engagement, Student-Centered Learning, Project-Based Learning.*

Introduction

Student engagement is a psychological aspect that needs to be considered by teachers at school. Student engagement is one of the aspects that has influenced success in learning. Even though the student follows learning from the beginning until the end of the lesson, the teacher still struggles to lead students willing to participate and be active during the learning process. Therefore, teachers can find strategies to increase student engagement in a lesson. People may think that Student Engagement is similar to motivation in the learning activity. But actually, the two things are different. Student engagement represents the behavior, mood,

and thoughts of students' connection in learning activities while motivation is the energy or willingness to do something (Bond et al., 2020). It becomes important when teachers want to apply learning based on the 21st-century educational paradigm. The learning paradigm emphasizes the development of 4C skills (Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, and Creativity and Innovation)(Bytyqi, 2021).

According to the previous research, Student-Centered Learning (SCL) is one of the approaches that can improve the 4C skills. Some learning models, such as Cooperative Learning and Project Based Learning (*PjBL*), are often familiar when teachers want to implement SCL in the classroom. *PjBL* is a learning model that focuses on giving assignments to students as a step to make them experience an exploratory process in building understanding based on the context of the student environment. During practice, *PjBL* requires students to seek information and build understanding independently of the material (Nurcahya & Sugesti, 2020). Students should be actively involvedin completing their assignments because it can increase their ability to think critically, creatively, and innovatively.

PjBL implementation has three stages of learning: Planning, Implementation, and Reporting. There are five schemes in the Planning Stage. It begins with choosing project topics, pre-communicative activities, asking essential questions, designing project plans, and creating project timelines. And then implementation, which is the process of finishing the project. And the last one is Reporting. There are those which consist of assessing and evaluating the project results and also the learning activity. But before running the learning activity, the teacher may obtain an agreement with the student to make sure that the learning activity could run effectively (Lazarides et al., 2020).

Along with implementing SCL, the teacher monitors student learning progress by providing reinforcement and feedback based on their performance. Teachers must recognize Student characteristics and their learning needs to provide appropriate treatment. The significance of teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management is crucial for both positive and negative aspects of their reported classroom management behaviour (Lazarides et al., 2020). Usually, teachers carry out diagnostic tests to get the student's needs. Moreover, the teacher must make students actively engaged during the learning process (Bytyqi, 2021).

This research focuses on the student engagement in writing advertisement text using Project-Based Learning as the model to teach as well as how the teacher rules to deal with the situation. Writing activities contain a learning process to make a communication model into a written form. Besides the independent construction, students are free to utilize their smartphone or other digital tools. The use of digital technology is the school policy to facilitate students in improving their 21st-century skills. The integration of technology has massively increased in the past two decades. Moreover, there are many up-to-date platforms that are suitable with the Educational background. Students can use those online platforms to make their creative written project more attractive.

Many scholars have researched how to increase student engagement in English learning, Meanwhile, the social dimension had not included in that research. Some experts stated that knowledge acquired from the modeling process and interaction outcome. It means that the social aspect has a prominent part of learning. In this article, the researcher includes the social dimension of student

engagement in the project-based learning model. Several previous research showed how *PjBL* could improve student engagement in teaching writing (Bytyqi, 2021);(Lu, 2021);(Nurcahya & Sugesti, 2020);(Zen et al., 2022);(Argawati & Suryani, 2020). Therefore, the writer formulated engagement indicators from one of the expert opinions, which stated that four aspects must be considered, including behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social engagement (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Several expert sources have various specifications regarding the sections included in the student engagement indicator (Fraysier et al., 2020). Eventually, this paper presents how students were involved in Student-Centered learning activities to give rapid information on the importance of student engagement in English Teaching.

Research Method

The study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design, which focuses on understanding qualitative phenomena related to quality or kind. Qualitative research plays a crucial role in the behavioral sciences, especially in comprehending the underlying causes of human behavior. In this research, classroom observation and interviews were conducted in a tenth-grade class at SMA Negeri 14 Semarang during the 2022/2023 academic year. The researcher used field note and list of question for the interview. The research aimed to comprehensively describe student engagement and the teaching and learning model employed to address how students engage with the Student-Centered Learning activities in writing Advertisement Text.

During the classroom sessions, the researcher observed the Student Engagement and the teaching and learning activities, where the teacher employed guided instruction and teaching methods to cater to the student's needs in writing Advertisement text. Additionally, interviews were conducted to obtain specific insights into how the teacher maintains the students' engagement in the learning process. The research involved 38 participants consisting of 35 students and three English teacher (one main teacher and two assistants).

Data Analysis

According to (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994), the data analysis involved *data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing*. Data analysis entails systematically finding and organizing data obtained from notes, interviews, and collected materials with the aim of presenting it effectively. It consists of summarizing, selecting and focusing on important data that emerge from observational guide, field notes and transcriptions. The following is a detail of the steps in analyzing data:

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of identifying information by choosing, and focusing on significant data extracted from the observation, field notes, and transcriptions. In this case, the writer will reduce the data to streamline and minimize the amount of data necessary for analysis.

2. Data Display

Data display involves presenting the reduced findings to aid the writer in comprehending the data. This presentation takes the form of description of the collected and identified data. The data display was done in the form of narration,

flowchart, chart, etc. The data display presents and describe student engagement in the implementation of Project-Based Learning Model.

    3.   Conclusion Drawing

The conclusion drawing or verification is the last step from data that have been analyzed. The conclusion is in the form of a description of student engagement with the English Language writing using Project-Based Learning model. Here is the figure of the detail steps on analyzing data.
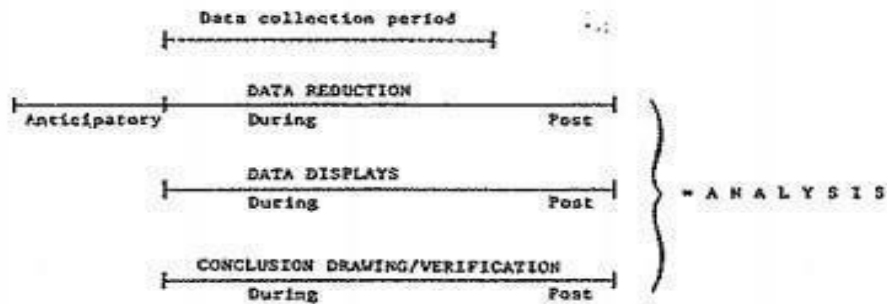

Figure 1. Steps of Data Analysis

Findings and Discussion

        The data of this research were obtained from observation and interview related to student's engagement in the English language learning activities using *PjBL* Model. Those findings are explained in following:

1. **The Implementation of PjBL in a Language Learning Activity**

        Based on the observational research, the learning sequence was obtained with six stages of activities. Those activities are; **choosing the topic.** The teacher started Project-Based Learning (*PjBL*) in language learning with determining the topic according to Basic Competence (KD). Continued with stimulating students through pictures, videos, and stories related to the discussion. And then, determined the topic that relates to students' real life. In this teaching stage, the teacher presented the example of advertisements, pictures, and videos taken from students' daily life. **Pre-communicative Activities.** At this stage, the teacher explained linguistic elements and new vocabulary related to the learning material. And then, **Ask Essential Questions.** The next step was asking the essential question. The teacher gives some questions based on the previous video/picture to stimulate student focus and determination during the learning process. **Designing Project Plan.** At this stage, the teacher played as a facilitator and ensures students have a clear direction in responding to their task. Students carried out an inquiry process that started with determining the project. Then arranged activities to complete the project and work on it in groups. **Creating Project Timeline.** This stage aims to train students in time management, self-management, and teamwork. The form is in the form of notes containing activities, the person in charge, and deadlines. Because of the limit of time, the learning was continued to the next meeting.

In this second meeting, the learning began with **finishing the project.** This stage is the core of the whole project creation. The goal was to develop the ability to process data and information, solve problems, and increase self-confidence, cooperation, and communication skills between group members and all those involved in the project. The steps started from carried out inquiry activities to finishing the project. The next stage is **assessing the project results.** Assessing the project results aims to ensure that all students were actively engaged and have a valuable role in completing the project. The teacher also conducted a formative assessment to measure the project process and the results in the rubric. **Evaluating the Project.** In the last activity, the teacher gave feedbacks on the project result as a reflection on their learning activities. This stage aims to make students share their obstacles during their learning process.

2. The Student Engagement in the Student-Centered Learning Activity

According to the project-based learning model, the activity consists of planning, implementation, and reporting. The breakdown of activities begins with the first meeting was planning, which consists of determining the topic, setting up pre-communicative activities, presenting essential questions, designing the project plan, and creating a project timeline. Then, the second meeting was implementation and reporting, which consists of; completing the project, assessing project results, and evaluating the project.

The findings are obtained from observation toward student's engagement in a language learning process that has been held using the principle of engagement by (Philp & Duchesne, 2016) regarding the classroom model and some social context theories of education related to the discussion. In this current research, the topic discus about student engagement in writing activity using *PjB* Model. However, there are four dimensions which heighten the learning outcomes. Here is the following interpretation of those components in accordance with the research data:

a. Cognitive Engagement

From the observation result, the learning activity has implemented a Student-Centered strategy by implementing Project-based Learning in teaching writing. During selecting the topic, there were two students who were absent from learning. It means 6% student cognitively disengaged in the first meeting. Besides, almost all of students were engage with the learning where 37% of them they were highly engaged with the learning. Students who were cognitively engaged with the learning process willing to identify visual objects presented by the teacher, such as pictures, videos, and stories. The objective is to choose a subject that connects to students' real-life experiences. For instance, when teaching writing, the teacher presented advertisements, pictures, and videos drawn from students' everyday lives.

They also gave responses to the teacher's explanation as long as the pre-communicative activity. When the teacher gave some types of advertisement, the students were able to distinguish between the commercial and non-commercials by asking the difference between the two. Furthermore, the teacher tried to encourage students how important the

advertisement is in the company. The teacher asked an essential question of what should students do to boost their sales or what is your marketing strategy. However, the students already know that they should make an interesting and eye-catching advertisement product.

The next step is designing the project. In this part the writer found that cognitive engagement occurs when the student has courage to decide the project types in group and brainstorm the concept from a dealing process. Moreover, the student also arranged the project timeline which consists of activities, person in charge, and deadline.
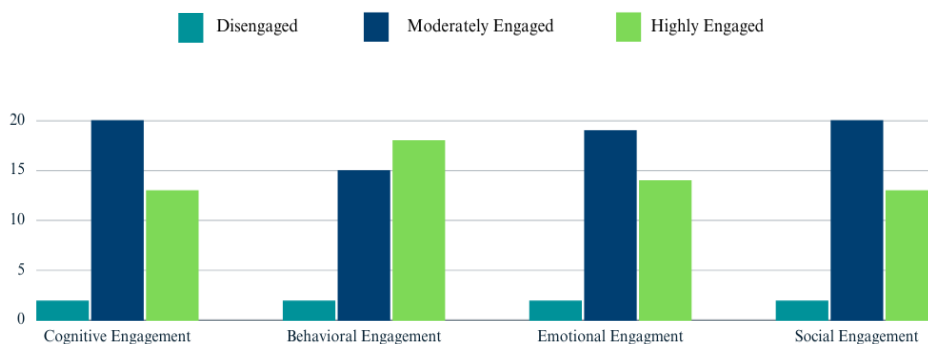

Figure 2 Student Engagement in the First Meeting

Second meeting. In this stage, the student should complete their project. Generally, the writer found that most of them participate in the process of creating advertisement products. Only a few students seem to be passive. They claimed that there is a sequence and procedure that cannot be messed up and they had handled each part with full responsibility.

Assistant teachers got to monitor students' performance by giving scaffolding and feedback on their work. They also have a responsibility to keep the good atmosphere. The role is quite similar to the main teacher. To unify voices and focus attention, sometimes the main teacher takes the role of instructing learning needs. Yet, all teachers were a facilitator responsible for monitoring the student work in their learning process. The writer saw it as a dynamic learning where the student revealed their challenge and wanted feedback to gain information about something they did not know to the teacher.

b. Behavior Engagement

The writer got a resume that students engaged behaviorally with the learning activities. They had joined the class from the beginning until the end of the learning process. They also contribute to each activity, such as arranging the student's seats, acting behave, and helping each other to do the project. In the beginning, the teacher gave instructions to the student and made a contract they dealt with during the learning process. In this phase, the student is involved in arranging the contract. Hence, it may help the teacher

to plant awareness that makes students more respectful and participate in learning actively. However, the teacher still found that few students acted passively. Therefore, teachers fostered in giving reinforcement and motivation to make them involved in the learning activity. At least they were willing to do some minor project to keep their-selves connected with the learning.

The writer saw around 94% have behaviorally engaged in the first learning. In group work, some students were in charge when writing the project concept through brainstorming. Students were willing to design their project using an online platform, while the rest were willing to explore the reference of the advertisement example on social media or the internet. Therefore, the amount of student behavior engagement was quite similar in both meetings. Only two students were disengaged because they did not attended both the first and the second meeting.

c. Social Engagement

Through the observation, we recognized that most students have a good social engagement inside the class. Based on the data collected, there were only two students who had no social engagement during the learning. Even the reason is because they were absent that day. In this stance writer calculated that there are 57% of students were courage to made a contact or communication either with the teacher or to their teammates. Even more, around 37% were confidence to share the knowledge they have got to their members group. They often made a good discussion with the main or teacher assistant in order to make their progress still in line with the learning goal.

During the learning process, 13 students were working in group to finish their project in both meetings. The interaction was noticed from the beginning since the teacher asked about essential question. Some students responded a question about advertisement they ever found. Here is the following response that writer notes from the interview:

"Have you ever found any advertisement from your social media or billboard?!" Teacher asked.
*"Yes, Sir. Mixue…!"* Participant 1 responded.
"Shopee!" Participant 2 responded.

The first participant found the advertisement from a billboard she saw on the street while the second participant said that he found it on his social media account. The learning activities indeed optimizing digital media to help them designing advertisement text and searched any inspiration or information about the topic.

During the project timeline stage, students coordinate to divide the tasks of creating an advertisement design. Each group consists of 11-12 members, with some assigned to create the ad design, some to handle copywriting, and others to ensure the project aligns with the materials taught. Upon completing the project, students also collaborate and commit to fulfilling their tasks in creating the advertising product.

During the project assessment phase, students share their advertising creations with the community to make them aware of the product they are selling. They provide detailed information about their products through presentation sessions in front of the class. Other students act as the audience, capable of raising objections or asking questions related to the presented materials. Afterward, the learning process concludes with a project evaluation session. Students receive feedback and suggestions from the teacher for improving their projects. In the end, students finalized their project and finished their advertisement task.

Figure 3 Student Engagement in the Second Meeting

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
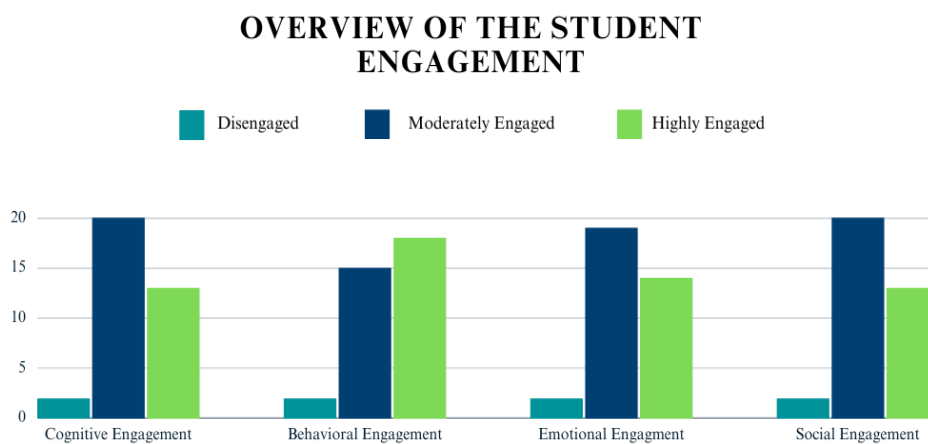
d. Emotional Engagement

Based on the observation result, the students were enjoying their time during writing advertisement text because the teacher was giving them freedom to take any inspiration from their preferences. Their emotional engagement might be represented by the outcome of their advertisement product. The teacher found some humorous name from their product ads, such as; *"Chicken Crush-Crush"* (getting inspired from someone who they admire the most), Kedai Terserah (based on young age restlessness), and *"Es buah Wirawan* (represents the word of *Wirausahawan* or in English means entrepreneurship).

Upon interview, writer asked students on how they feel during learning. Here is the following response:

> *"So exiting, we can use Canva as a tool to create our design. It contains so many features and template to give us inspiration in making our advertisement design."* Participant 3 responded.

The student said that they use digital platform in making their project. An online platform such as Canva.com helped them to make a wonderful design for their advertisement product. Eventually, that is a good emotion that the writer found through the learning activity.

Discussion

The present discussion has extended previous research in a necessary way, by adding social engagement as focus discussion of several dimension of student engagement. Engagement as a construct is a collective concept that has been built

upon by the contributions of various scholars. Student engagement is a comprehensive concept that many scholars agreed, it consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Behavioral engagement pertains to action such as attendance, physical effort, and obeying school rules (Appleton, 2012). In the other hand, Cognitive engagement pertains to cognitive effort invested during in the school. Meanwhile, affective or emotional engagement refers to a sense of belonging and identification with school, often indicated by affection such as; enjoyment and disaffection such as boredom (Skinner et al., 2009).

From the present research, we could see that in the part of cognitive engagement, students have shown their willingness to use their skills and competence toward learning activities. The student were actively engage with some evidences, such as; discuss the material, giving opinions, and managing their project. And then, they also shown their behavior engagement by attending the class, searching information through internet, participate in learning activities, and give some efforts to completing the project. As well as their emotional engagement, they were positively engage by showing their response during learning. Most of them enjoyed and enthusiast during learning process which is played important part to make them actively involved in the learning activities.

Furthermore, this research recognizes the importance of social engagement in language education. Based on the theory of social constructivism, the use of conversation, interaction with others, and the practical application of knowledge are essential components for achieving learning objectives. Meanwhile, student engagement is influenced by the social and collaborative nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). It means when students actively participate in social interactions with peers and more knowledgeable individuals, they can engage in higher-order thinking processes and advance their cognitive abilities.

Vygotsky's emphasis on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that students are most engaged when they are challenged with tasks that are just beyond their current level of understanding but achievable with support. By providing appropriate scaffolding or support (Bru et al., 2021), and facilitating collaborative learning environments, the teacher can promote student engagement and foster cognitive growth.

According to (Albert Bandura, 1977), individuals learn by observing and imitating others, particularly through the process of modelling. He suggests that learning occurs not only through direct experiences but also through the observation of others' behaviors and the consequences they face, leading to the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Students engaged in the learning process by observing and modelling the behaviors of others. When they witness their peers or teachers actively participating, demonstrating enthusiasm, and achieving positive outcomes, it can influence their motivation and engagement. Bandura's theory highlights the importance of social influences and their role in shaping student engagement and learning. It is related to the previous research conducted by (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2020) that social-emotional skill encourage positive and engaging learning environment. Educators can leverage social learning principles to enhance student engagement and promote effective learning outcomes.

(Lave & Wenger, 1991) states that learning takes place through engagement in meaningful activities within these communities, where novices gradually

become more skilled and knowledgeable through their participation. The theory suggests that learning is a social and collaborative process that occurs through active participation, social interactions, and the development of shared meanings within a community. It emphasizes the role of context, social relationships, and the construction of knowledge through everyday practices (Wenger, 1998).

Concerning student engagement, the theory highlights the significance of creating learning environments that foster active participation and the development of communities of practice. By promoting collaboration, authentic tasks, and the integration of real-world contexts, educators can enhance student engagement and facilitate meaningful learning experiences. The writer believes that *PjBL* is in line with the theory of social constructivism and can foster student engagement in the classroom (Blumenfeld et al., 1991)**.** Project-based learning is a holistic approach of learning that fosters active student engagement by immersing them in the authentic exploration and resolution of real-life issues. (Bell, 2010) sees it as a progressive teaching approach with many essential strategies for success in the twenty-first century.

However, based on the research findings, the student involved in learning by showing their social engagement. They have shown meaningful interaction through group discussion, work in group, reflection, and presentation. Those activities led them to obtain knowledge and run the active learning. It is in line with the previous research (Bytyqi, 2021);(Lu, 2021);(Zen et al., 2022), that showed how *PjBL* could improve student engagement in teaching writing.

Conclusion

Student Engagement is a meta-construct that needs to be proven by research and empirical evidence, the writer tried to provide the empirical evidence through observations made in a language class as it is. The writer did not make modifications or special treatment to change the behavior or results of the subjects studied. Meanwhile, this research provides empirical evidence for what the previous theory said.

Student engagement with learning activities has several implications for the learning process and overall educational outcomes. Here are some key implications:

1. Enhanced Learning: When students are engaged in learning activities, they are more likely to actively participate, pay attention, and be mentally invested in the material. This active involvement enhances their understanding, retention, and application of knowledge and skills.
2. Increased Motivation: Engagement fuels motivation. When students find learning activities interesting, relevant, and meaningful, they become more motivated to learn. Their intrinsic motivation is increasing, willing to exert effort, persist through challenges, and seek mastery.
3. Improved Retention and Transfer: Engaged learning experiences often involve deep processing and connections to prior knowledge. It promotes better retention of information and could enhance students' ability to transfer their learning to new contexts and real-life situations.
4. Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills: Engage with learning activities stimulates students' critical thinking and problem-solving

skills. They are more likely to analyze information, evaluate options, and apply their knowledge to solve complex problems.

5. Positive Attitudes towards Learning: Engaged students tend to develop positive attitudes and perceptions about the learning process and subject matter. They may enrich a sense of curiosity, enjoyment, and confidence in their abilities, leading to a more positive and productive learning experience.

6. Social and Emotional Benefits: Engagement in collaborative learning activities can foster social interaction, teamwork, and communication skills. It also contributes to a positive classroom climate, where students feel supported, connected, and valued, improving social-emotional well-being.

7. Higher Achievement and Performance: Research indicates a strong correlation between student engagement and academic achievement. Engaged students could achieve higher grades, perform better on assessments, and meet learning objectives.

It is a matter for educators to create learning environments that promote student engagement, incorporating active learning strategies, authentic tasks, technology integration, and personalized approaches to cater to diverse student needs. By prioritizing student engagement, educators can optimize the learning experience and maximize the educational outcomes for their students.

It is important to note that engagement is a broad and interdisciplinary concept, and different experts may focus on different aspects or domains of engagement, such as student engagement in education, employee engagement in the workplace, or engagement in leisure activities. Therefore, understanding engagement often requires drawing from the insights and research of multiple experts in the respective fields of research. Furthermore, the writer hopes that for future research, there will be more discussion on student engagement from both the perspective of language education and educational psychology.

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