Innovations

Non-English Majors' Online English Learning Engagement

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Abstract: Students' online English learning engagement has a significant impact on English learning. Analyzing the factors of college students' online English learning engagement is essential in improving the effect of college students' English learning. This study focuses on the present situation of online English learning engagement among non-English majors, with a particular emphasis on factors such as individual, teacher, and peer aspects, using the online English learning engagement scale for college students and the questionnaire. Based on the data of 325 non-English major undergraduates in a university in China, it is found that the overall level of college students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement in English online learning is low. A significant positive correlation exists between individual learners, teachers, peers, and all dimensions of learning engagement. In contrast, the correlation between source and environment and all dimensions of learning engagement does not reach a significant level. This study suggests how to promote the level of college students' online English learning engagement from the perspectives of both learners and teachers.

Keywords: non-English majors, online learning, learning engagement, English learning, factors

1. Introduction

Along with the development of the Internet and educational information technology, online learning has become a vital learning style for contemporary college students (Nassoura, 2020). This mode of education serves as a way to meet personalized learning needs in a blended learning environment and as an alternative to offline learning that cannot be carried out correctly (Wang, 2023). In particular, online education offers students more readily available, effective, complete, and extensive information (Mooney & Bligh, 1997; Chen & Lai, 2022). Moreover, it is clear from the COVID-19 outbreak that technological advancements have the potential to break down geographical borders and enhance both primary and university education (Wu & Lambenicio, 2022).

Learning engagement is a crucial variable affecting the quality of online learning (Kop, 2011), and it can reflect the actual learning state of students, measure the quality of students' learning process and predict their academic achievement (Zhang, 2012; Wang, Cao, et al., 2022). In the information age, online learning has become essential for college students to learn English (Alakrash & Abdul, 2021). Learners can only reap good results if they are fully engaged in the process of English learning (Xu & Fan, 2019; Mokhtarzadeh, 2021).

In 2019, the Implementation Guidelines on the Construction of First-Class Undergraduate Programs issued by the Chinese Ministry of Educationmade a clear proposal to improve student participation in the learning process, which is a clear indication of the significance of student engagement (Wang, Hui, et al., 2022). The Guide to College English Teaching (2020) also encourages teachers to use online teaching platforms to provide students with online and offline autonomous learning paths and rich autonomous learning resources that combine classroom teaching with modern information technology. In addition, the study by Atmojo and Nugroho

(2020) suggests that the government is trying to introduce a new policy change in curricular instruction that emphasizes online learning. A phenomenon like this could affect the general sustainability of our country (Anis & Anwar, 2020).

In sum, online learning has become an essential way for college students to learn (Wang, 2023), and online learning engagement is a crucial factor that affects the generation and persistence of students' online learning and an important index to evaluate the quality of online education (Hu et al., 2020). Therefore, this study explores Chinese college students' online engagement in English learning.

Statement of the Problem

English language instruction for college students increasingly depends on online learning (Vang, 2022). Conducting in-depth studies on online learning engagement is vital from a practical point of view because it motivates students to focus on their English language learning and improves their grades. (Wang, 2023). So, this study attempts to explore the following questions:

- 1. How engaged are non-English majors in learning English online?
- 2. What are the factors that influence non-English majors' online learning engagement in English learning?

2. Literature Review

Online Learning Engagement

The term "engagement" first appeared in the theory of management and organizational behavior (Ge, 2021). Astin (1984) defines engagement as the mental and physical effort students devote to their academic pursuits. According to Newmann (1992), learning engagement is the most critical part of students' engagement, which should include direct behavioral participation through their behavioral experience. It lies in the psychological participation of students. Reid et al. (2008) regard engagement as a form of intervention. For learners, participation is an intervention in their learning.

Morrison (2021) emphasizes that engagement is measured by how actively and successfully students participate in a learning activity. Liu et al.(2018) state that online learning engagement primarily measures learners' utilization of online systems to improve learning outcomes. Khlaif et al. (2021) expand the definition of engagement to include students' participation in traditional classroom settings as well as virtual ones.

Guo (2020) pointed out that students' learning engagement in the online environment generally refers to their active participation in the content provided by the school during online teaching. Throughout this process, they take pride in achieving good academic results as a measure of success and find satisfaction in incorporating or internalizing the online learning content into their daily lives.

Factors Affecting Online Learning Engagement

Scholars have researched the factors that affect learners' online learning engagement. Littlewood (1992) explores how learners' learning preferences, needs, and classroom environment also affect students' learning participation. In addition, some scholars believe that learning motivation and other emotional factors will significantly impact learners' learning participation (Brown, 2001). Others point out that gender also influences the level of learners' learning participation, and girls are more engaged than boys in learning (Martin, 2007).

Milligan et al. (2013) observed students' learning engagement in MOOCs. They found that students' learning motivation, learning experience, and self-confidence would affect their participation in online learning, indicating that their self-efficacy and learning needs would play a role in their participation in online education. Kyei-Blankson et al. (2016) point out that learning style and cultural differences also affect students' online learning participation when studying online course participation.

Ge (2019) categorized, analyzed, and researched all potential factors influencing students' engagement in online learning across three dimensions: students, teachers, and the learning environment. The author identified methods for developing teaching plans and organizing practical activities at the teacher level. Factors such as trust and the learning atmosphere in the environmental group, as well as learner interaction, perceived effectiveness, outcome expectation, and self-efficacy at the student level, all exert a certain degree of influence on learners' participation in online learning.

According to Guo (2020), student engagement is related to students' attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion while learning. He also believes that student's motivation to learn is the most important thing that affects student engagement. Jing(2020) finds that online learning engagement varies with policy requirements, resource architecture, and learner motivation.

Furthermore, if the online infrastructure, course design, and interaction are all high-quality, students will be more invested in their online learning and more likely to participate (Su &Guo, 2021). Studies also indicate that greater levels of student satisfaction are associated with increased involvement in online learning, whereas post-qualification experience is associated with decreased engagement. These findings imply that this tool may help evaluate practices in higher education (Chan et al., 2021).

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative methodology was employed in the research endeavor to gather the necessary data. It is defined as providing an explanation of a problem or phenomenon by the collection and analysis of numerical data using mathematical approaches, specifically statistics (Aliaga &Gunderson, 2005; Apuke, 2017). The procedure involved the distribution of online questionnaires to the students at the university in China. By analyzing the data, this study aims to understand the current situation and influencing factors of online English learning input of non-English majors and provide a basis for improving learning quality.

Participants

This study focuses on non-English primary university students from a higher education institution in Pingdingshan, China. The majors of 325 surveyed students, aged between 18 and 20 years old, are distributed in chemistry, mathematics, architecture, computer science, law, art, management, and other disciplines. Among them, 135 students are freshmen, and 190 are sophomores, including 221 male and 104 female students. They completed the designated English learning tasks on online learning platforms such as U Campus or We Learn (digital learning platforms that are compatible with the textbook) or innovative teaching platforms based on mobile terminals such as Chaoxing Learning Platform, and often interacted with their teachers and classmates through social media platforms (e.g., WeChat, QQ, etc.).

Instruments of the Study

Online English Learning Engagement Scale for College Students: Based on the representative Dixson Online Learning Engagement Scale (OSE) (Dixson, 2015) and the English learning engagement questionnaire compiled by Zuo (2018) and Xie (2018), this study compiled the Online English Learning Engagement Scale for College Students (5 items). The scale consists of four dimensions: behavioral engagement (5 items), cognitive engagement (5 items), and emotional engagement (5 items). The scale adopts a 5-point Likert scale; "1" means completely inconsistent, and "5" means entirely consistent. The higher the score, the higher the online learners' English learning engagement (Álvarez & Montes, 2021).

Questionnaire on factors of college students' online English learning engagement: The influencing factors of online English learning engagement mainly include learners' factors, social support, and environmental factors. There are a total of 30 items. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale, with "1" indicating complete disagreement and "5" indicating entire agreement.

Procedure

To ensure the credibility of the questionnaire, one hundred students outside the sample were pre-surveyed to test the credibility of the questionnaire's results before the formal survey. The three dimensions of behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement, as well as the overall internal consistency reliability of the entire scale, had Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.828, 0.840, 0.834, and 0.880, respectively, indicating good questionnaire reliability. The validity test of the questionnaire showed that the overall KMO value of the questionnaire was 0.815, and the Bartlett spherical test value was 0.000, which was less than 0.05, indicating good validity of the questionnaire.

After conducting the pilot test of the questionnaire, an online questionnaire was created using Questionnaire Star. Then, the researcher herself and the university English teachers commissioned for this task distributed the questionnaire within the QQ groups of the classes they taught. Subsequently, SPSS 22.0 was used for data analysis.

4. Results

The Level of Online English Learning Engagement of Non-English Majors

According to the statistics of non-English majors' online English learning engagement (as shown in Table 1), the average scores of their online English learning behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement, respectively, are 3.50, 3.90, and 3.69. In general, non-English majors' online English learning (M=3.70) is above average, with the highest level of emotional engagement (M=3.90), indicating they can actively engage in online English learning activities. The lowest level of behavioral engagement means their knowledge of online English learning disagrees with their actions. Although they agree that online English learning can satisfy their positive emotional experiences, their ability to control the interference from the Internet or entertainment needs to be improved. At the same time, the standard deviations of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement were 0.80, 0.71, and 0.72, which showed that behavioral investment had the most considerable difference and the most prominent performance.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Online English Learning Engagement

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioral Engagement	325	3.50	0.80
Emotional Engagement	325	3.90	0.71
Cognitive Engagement	325	3.69	0.72

Regarding behavioral engagement, learners scored the highest, 4.13, for "I will try to figure out problems I do not understand," followed by "I will carry out English tasks with questions," with an average of 3.52. The average "I will actively participate in English group discussion in an online learning environment" score is 3.31. At the same time, "I will express different opinions and opinions in English learning in an online learning environment" has the lowest score of 3.15. It can be seen that non-English majors in online learning environments can complete learning tasks within the specified time. However, they still lack the mastery of learning skills and methods in modules such as teacher-student interaction and learning feedback.

In emotional engagement, the highest score is "I am happy to be part of an English group," with 4.19 points, followed by "I have a sense of fulfillment in searching English learning materials online," with 3.94 points. The two lowest scores are "When I encounter problems in academic English that I do not understand, I insist on understanding them" and "I enjoy the process of participating in online English learning activities," with scores of 3.76 and 3.73, respectively. The above data show that non-English majors in the online learning environment have higher

expectations for the organizer's instructional design and teaching process and have a strong sense of learning satisfaction and belonging. However, in the online learning environment, emotional factors are uncontrollable, restricted by multiple factors, and lacking communication and support between teachers and peers, so they do not have a strong sense of satisfaction and fulfillment after completing the course learning tasks. When one hand is frustrated, all aspects will be affected. It is difficult to adjust, and learning with an upward learning mentality is impossible, affecting the learning effect.

In terms of cognitive engagement, learners got the highest score of 3.99 in "The purpose of my participation in online English learning activities is apparent," followed by the average score of 3.89 in "I will use organizational strategies in English learning activities (such as making Outlines and drawing mind maps, etc.)." The average value of "I will reflect on and adjust my English learning (study plan, study method, etc.)" is 3.37, and the average value of "I will pay attention and study with problems" is 3.35, which is the lowest. The above results show that non-English majors in the online learning environment have clear learning goals and an intense thirst for new knowledge. They try to maximize their benefits and concentrate on learning in the learning process. However, due to the lack of guidance between teachers and classmates and various external factors, it isn't easy to reasonably allocate learning time to consult materials.

Influential Factors on the Online English Learning Engagement of Non-English Majors

As can be seen from Table 2, the average score for individual factors is 3.96, reaching an above-medium level. It can be seen that learners' self-efficacy, learning dynamics, autonomous learning ability, and perceived usefulness have essential effects on learners' online learning engagement. The mean of teacher and peer factors is 4.12, the highest among the three influencing factors. This indicates that the interaction of teachers' teaching skills, teachers' participation, teaching activity design, and peer support are the most important factors affecting students' online English learning. The mean of resource and environment factors reached 4.09, indicating that learners' online learning engagement, such as platform function design and resource presentation form, also had a relatively substantial impact.

Table 2
Influential Factors on the Online English Learning Engagement of Non-English Majors

		Mean	Std. Deviation
	Individual	3.96	0.69
Factors	Teachers and Peers	4.12	0.65
	Resources and Environment	4.09	0.68

A bivariate correlation analysis is conducted on the individual factors, teacher and peer factors, resource and environment factors, and behavioral, emotional, and cognitive levels of online learning for non-English majors, and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Correlation Analysis Between Non-English Majors' Online Learning Engagement and Factors

	Behavioral	Emotional	Cognitive
	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Individual	0.162**	0.862**	0.816**
Teachers and Peers	0.153**	0.789**	0.736**
Resources and Environment	0.151**	0.756**	0.720**

As can be seen from Table 3, correlation analysis shows that each dimension of the factors influencing non-English majors' online English learning engagement has a high degree of positive correlation with each dimension of learning engagement (p = 0.000 < 0.001). In other words, there is a significant positive correlation between individual factors, teacher and peer factors, resource and environment factors, and the level of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in online learning, which indicates that the higher the level of individual, teacher and peer, resource and

environment of non-English majors' online learning, the higher the level of online learning engagement.

5. Findings and Discussion

The study shows that the average level of non-English majors' online English learning engagement is higher than the theoretical average, and the overall level is above average. Meanwhile, learners' emotional engagement in online English learning is higher than behavioral and cognitive engagement. This study result is inconsistent with Gao's (2016) conclusion that college students' cognitive engagement in online learning is higher than their emotional and behavioral engagement, which reflects the characteristics of teachers' whole-process online guidance during the epidemic, such as solid activity, good interaction and timely feedback in online learning. Effective stimulation of online learners' emotional and social engagement and the lowest level of behavioral engagement also indicate that college students' self-regulation ability is not high in online English learning, which requires teachers' timely guidance and supervision (Vang, 2022).

The study also finds that the individual, teacher, and peer factors of non-English majors' online English learning engagement significantly correlate with learners' online English learning engagement. First of all, learners with high self-efficacy, strong learning motivation, and high selflearning ability will have higher online learning engagement, in contrast to the findings of the selfefficacy research conducted by Gao Jie (2016), perhaps because of different subjects, self-efficacy affects the choice of English learning strategies and the autonomy of learning. Secondly, the influence of teachers on college students' online English learning is mainly reflected in the design of teaching activities, the selection of teaching methods, teacher participation and feedback, etc. Teachers participate in students' learning activities and guide and help students, and timely feedback can improve students' online learning engagement (Suharti et al., 2020; Hariadi et al., 2023). Finally, the influence of peer factors on students' online English learning mainly reflects peer support, peer evaluation, and peer relationships. Peer encouragement, support, and positive evaluation can promote college students' engagement in online English learning, which is consistent with the findings of Fredricks et al. (2004). That is, peer support is highly correlated with students' engagement in learning, and peer relationships may promote or hinder college students' engagement in online English learning. A high level of peer engagement will promote learners' engagement in learning; otherwise, it will impair learners' engagement. However, there is no significant relationship between resource and environmental factors and college students' online English engagement. This may be related to abundant MOOC resources and full-featured online teaching platforms.

The level of non-English majors' online English engagement is mainly affected by individual factors of learners, teachers, and peers. Aiming at the problems and deficiencies in their online English engagement, this paper puts forward suggestions from two dimensions: learners and

The first aspect is related to the learners. It is necessary to foster the independent learning ability of English learners and support online learning engagement. English teachers should assist learners in developing online learning plans, guide them to manage their time scientifically and record and summarize their learning tracks, and revise scientific and reasonable learning time management models to avoid the temptation of the Internet and entertainment. In addition, to develop personalized learning strategies to improve learners' self-efficacy and provide cognitive and emotional support for students' online learning engagement. The teachers create an online learning incentive mechanism to encourage students to actively participate in online English learning and stimulate their learning motivation.

The second aspect is related to the teachers. The flexibility and relevance of online courses and learning activity design should be improved. English teachers should design different challenging, diversified, exciting, and interactive learning tasks according to the learning level, learning style, and primary and gender characteristics of each module of English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation to stimulate the interest of students and enhance the interaction among peers.

Furthermore, the teachers provide timely guidance and support and even regard themselves as part of the students actively participating in online learning activities, which can promote deep relationships among learners in the online foreign language learning process.

6. Conclusion

This study uses the online English learning engagement scale for college students and the questionnaire on the factors of non-English majors' online English learning engagement to explore the current situation of college students' online English learning engagement and its influencing factors. In the future, the research in this field can be deepened in two aspects. First, expand the scope of research. This study focuses on non-English majors' online learning engagement but does not include offline learning engagement in the research scope. Considering that the blended teaching mode combining online and offline is essential for universities to improve the teaching effect and quality, there is ample space for research comparing online and offline learning engagement of college students in English and its implications for teaching design. Second, we should enrich research methods. This study uses the quantitative approach to explore the element composition and path relationship of non-English majors' online learning engagement. Future studies can combine quantitative analysis with qualitative interpretation and add qualitative methods such as interviews and observations to capture and extract more details reflecting the actual situation of college students' online learning engagement. In conclusion, with the further integration and innovation of information technology and foreign language courses, college students' online learning engagement will show new structure and relationship characteristics and relevant research will be constantly updated and improved to promote the development of college students' online learning research and application practice.

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Innovations, Number 75 December 2023

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