

A Case Study of Student Engagement in Online EFL Courses for Young Learners in China

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Student engagement has received considerable attention in the traditional classroom context for the purpose of good academic achievement and low dropout rates. The emerging and popular online EFL context, especially for young learners, also needs to be examined. Therefore, the present study investigated student engagement in online EFL courses for young learners on two platforms, based on an integrated framework that features emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and agentic engagement. A case study approach was adopted to look at two nine-year-old learners' engagement in online EFL courses and the multi-dimensional reasons underlying such engagement. Data were collected from four different sources, including interviews with the learners and their mothers, a questionnaire, class videos, and stimulated recalls. The major findings include: 1) the two young learners with distinctively different levels of engagement in this study both showed a low level of agentic engagement; 2) a complex relationship existed across the four aspects of engagement and one case showed that behavioral engagement may not be able to predict cognitive engagement; 3) students' motivation and goal orientation, teachers' praise, and parent involvement play crucial roles in student engagement in online EFL courses. Furthermore, the findings offer insights into the potential influence of students' assumptions towards non-Chinese teachers on their engagement, especially the emotional dimension, as well as the three-fold effect of parent involvement on student engagement.