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Student Task Engagement in Remote Language Learning During the Pandemic: Perspectives and Experiences of Junior High School English Teachers

Participación estudiantil en actividades desarrolladas en la modalidad remota durante la pandemia: Perspectivas y experiencias de docentes de secundaria

Luis Enrique González Muñoz
Universidad Evangélica del Paraguay, Paraguay.
https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7126-350X

e-mail: lgonzalez@uepgutenberg.edu.py

Valentina Canese
Universidad Nacional de Asunción, Instituto Superior de Lenguas, Paraguay.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1584-7322

e-mail: vcanese@fil.una.py

ABSTRACT

The level of participation and involvement of students in their learning activities, student task engagement, is regarded as one of the essential conditions for success in language learning. The main objective of this qualitative study was to explore how junior high school English teachers approach student task engagement in a remote language learning context during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, a focus group and individual interviews were conducted with English teachers from a private school in Asunción. Results indicated that they had well-defined perspectives concerning student task engagement in language learning, and they reported using varied strategies, activities, and resources as well as facing several challenges in the design and implementation of learning tasks in their efforts to promote language task engagement in remote classes. From their statements, it can be concluded that their beliefs directed their teaching practices in times of remote instruction, but they could not avoid encountering challenges of different nature that hindered the integration of engagement facilitators into learning tasks in order to foster student task engagement.

Keywords: challenges; experiences; facilitators; language learning; perspectives; remote instruction; Student task engagement.

RESUMEN
El nivel de participación activa e involucramiento de los estudiantes en sus tareas académicas es considerada una de las condiciones esenciales para el éxito en el aprendizaje de idiomas. El objetivo principal de este estudio cualitativo fue el de explorar cómo unos profesores de inglés de secundaria abordaron el involucramiento de los alumnos en clases de inglés a distancia durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Para ello, se realizó un grupo focal y entrevistas individuales con profesores de inglés de un colegio privado de Asunción. Los resultados indicaron que ellos tenían perspectivas bien definidas con respecto a la participación de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje de idiomas, e informaron que utilizaron diversas estrategias, actividades y recursos, así como que enfrentaron varios desafíos en el diseño e implementación de actividades en sus esfuerzos por promover la participación activa de los estudiantes en clases a distancia. A partir de sus declaraciones, se puede concluir que sus ideas orientaron sus prácticas educativas en tiempos de instrucción a distancia, pero no pudieron evitar encontrar desafíos de diferente naturaleza que obstaculizaron la integración de facilitadores en actividades de aprendizaje con el fin de promover la participación activa de los estudiantes en la realización de tareas.

Palabras clave: desafíos; experiencias; facilitadores; aprendizaje de idiomas; perspectivas; enseñanza remota; participación del alumno en las tareas.

Introduction

In any school class, diverse people and several pedagogical elements are constantly interacting and shaping the learning environment. What teachers do, how they do it, and what they use for instruction in different moments necessarily cause an effect on the students, who, in turn, respond either positively or negatively and can also produce something on their own. One concept that has received much attention in the last decades is that of student task engagement, which is the students' level of participation and involvement in their learning activities. (Mercer, 2019; Philp & Duchesne, 2016)

The significance of student engagement has also been noticed by researchers in the domain of language education. (Egbert et al., 2021; Hiver, Al-Hoorie, & Mercer, 2021; Mercer, 2019) Authors highlight how necessary it is for language learners to become actively engaged in their learning since the development of effective communicative language skills in a second or foreign language requires high levels of involvement, long periods of practice, and active participation along the way. (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) Thus, in order to have a better understanding of this concept and approach it from a unified perspective, the Model of Language Task Engagement was proposed by Egbert and colleagues (2021) to examine the facilitators, task elements, indicators, and outcomes of engagement at task level in language learning settings. Egbert (2020b) highlights the importance of focusing on this framework because its assumptions are equally valid in both online and offline language learning contexts, so it gives teachers an excellent opportunity to "engage their students no matter where they are and what tools they have" (Egbert, 2020b, p. 315), which was especially useful due to the unprecedented circumstance where many schools provided online, remote, or blended instruction to their students because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

This qualitative study examined this concept from the perspectives and experiences of junior high school (7th, 8th, and 9th grade) teachers of English in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, using as a framework the Model of Language Task Engagement. Their perspectives, their teaching practices, and the challenges they experienced in their remote classes were analyzed to understand what they think about this concept and how it influenced their teaching.

Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic shaped education at all levels, it was important to observe how English teachers experienced student task engagement in remote instruction. A focus on task engagement became even more relevant when considering that, according to researchers around the world, keeping students engaged in remote instruction became a challenging endeavor in times of the pandemic. This was true for schools (De La Rosa, 2020;

Khlaif, Salha, & Kouraichi, 2021; Kingsbury, 2021) and even higher education institutions around the world. (Hill & Fitzgerald, 2020; Zhang et al., 2021) Also, the relationship between the perspective of teachers about student engagement and their teaching practices has not received much attention in academic literature; such aspects could not remain ignored since, according to researchers, the perspectives and experiences of teachers shape their decisions and can influence students' engagement. (Berry, 2019; Fredricks et al., 2016; Harris, 2011)

Therefore, this study explored the perspectives of junior high school teachers of English about student task engagement in remote language classes, their efforts to deliver engaging activities in this context, and the challenges they experienced in the process. A focus on the integration of engagement facilitators into task elements to support student task engagement in language learning, as proposed in the Model of Language Task Engagement by Egbert et al. (2021), was used as a framework to guide the research process.

Methods

A qualitative case study approach was employed to offer a detailed account of the dynamics in a specific learning scenario, thus gaining insights and a deeper understanding of the perspectives of teachers. (Lodico et al., 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) A phenomenological, in-depth interview was used to understand how teachers view and experience reality, as well as the meaning they make of these experiences. (Lodico et al., 2010; Seidman, 2006) Data was collected through a focus group discussion and individual interviews to explore participants' perceptions about the concept of student task engagement, their teaching practices in remote classes, and the challenges they experienced in the design and implementation of tasks in this learning environment. Interview guides, which were pilot tested beforehand in two interview sessions with a teacher, guaranteed that all relevant topics were addressed and that all participants were asked the same questions (Patton, 2015). Open-ended questions were adapted from the studies of Berry (2019), Egbert. et al. (2021), and Fredricks et al. (2016).

According to some researchers, it is between the middle and junior high school years that levels of student engagement begin to change and often decline. (Fredricks et al., 2019; Wang & Fredricks, 2014; Yazzie-Mintz, 2007) For this reason, three junior high school teachers of English from a private school in Asunción were purposefully selected. They have twenty-three hours of English (Language Arts) classes per week, and in each grade, students are grouped into three levels according to their level of proficiency: Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced. Due to the pandemic, classes were delivered remotely in the format of synchronous classes; however, over the course of the year, classes slowly transitioned to the hyflex format, where "each class session and learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online, and asynchronously online" (EDUCAUSE, 2020). Participants were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and also to ease the reading of the results.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Experience	Level of Students
Teacher Carol	31	F	5 years	Beginners
Teacher Robert	26	M	4 years	Intermediate
Teacher James	28	M	4 years	Advanced

Source: Primary data collected by the author, Lambaré, 2021

After gaining consent from the teachers and their institution, a focus group session and individual interviews were organized and recorded using Zoom. During these meetings, the concept and meaning of each facilitator of language task engagement (Authenticity, Social Interaction, Learning Support, Interest, Autonomy, Challenge) were examined with the teachers, and they shared the challenges concerning the design and implementation of tasks where such engagement facilitators were integrated. They provided rich and detailed data, allowing the opportunity to explore themes in depth while also probing and asking follow-up questions (Frechtling, 2002).

Once all the data had been collected, interviews were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using qualitative data analysis software. A "preliminary exploratory analysis" was performed before engaging in open and axial coding (Creswell, 2014, p. 267). Then, similar and interrelated codes were integrated under specific categories to display the key ideas in the data and locate the main themes to answer the research questions. (Creswell; 2014) A priori codes used in this study were the names of the facilitators of engagement in the Model of Language Task Engagement by Egbert et. al (2021). These codes and categories served as the basis for answering research questions and presenting the results.

Results

This section presents the analysis conducted to examine the shared beliefs and experiences of teachers in order to understand how this concept was addressed by them in remote instruction during the pandemic. The main themes include the perspectives of teachers about student task engagement in language learning, perceptions regarding this concept in remote instruction, practices to support student task engagement, indicators of student task engagement perceived in this context, and challenges in the design and implementation of tasks with engagement facilitators integrated in remote language classes.

Perspectives of teachers about student task engagement in language learning

Participants indicated what they understood by student task engagement in language learning and expressed their opinions about the factors that made it possible as well as how it is manifested. They were told in advance that they could think in terms of remote and in-person scenarios. A thorough conceptualization was given by teacher Robert, who stated that student engagement depends "on several factors, [...] one of them being the individual students, like the individuality[...] how they feel in terms of learning a language[...] and then comes the other factor, that the teacher makes the class engaging". He mentioned that a suitable combination of those elements encourages an "open space where they can share, where they can work and learn at the same time [...] where they feel like they want to learn."

Teachers acknowledge that task engagement is not solely dependent on their actions and efforts. They plan and monitor their classes to promote student engagement, and evaluate results to identify what works and what doesn't. However, students should also be motivated to learn English to experience task engagement during lessons. Teachers James and Carol believe that 50% of the effort goes to the teacher, while the other half goes to the student. They believe that students' feelings and attitudes towards learning English are equally important as the plans, activities, and efforts employed by teachers. Therefore, it is challenging for students who dislike English to engage in class.

Participants, former language learners and teachers, believe student engagement is possible under specific conditions. Their beliefs are summarized in a table, which also identifies their category of task engagement facilitators.

Table 2. Teachers' Beliefs Concerning the Necessary Conditions for Student Task Engagement in Language Learning

Facilitators	Concrete actions	Examples
Interest	Presenting lessons and activities that are related to: - Personal and academic interests of students	"I really liked the activities […] that were focused on listening tasks that included music. [...] mostly activities that were related to music because I'm interested in music." "[…] the teacher integrated biblical teaching with English, so that was very attractive for me." "[…] and also to learn about the culture in general. [Those] topics were interesting, so for me as a student that was very engaging."
Authenticity	- Authentic materials	"Use authentic materials from outside the book. Something from outside the classroom, something they want, that they like."
Learning support	- Real contexts	"Make something meaningful for them […] and apply that in real situations that are happening right now, so they can use the language in that context." "[…] make it meaningful for them so that it's not just a task, but rather something that you could apply in real contexts."
Social interaction	Working with activities where students can interact with their peers in group work	"I really enjoyed gathering with different groups, different perspectives, to know different points of view."
Challenge	Offering challenging and attainable activities	"[activities] that help the students to be, like, involved in their own learning. So, for example, with questions where they need to like do a little bit of critical thinking […]"
Social interaction	Preparing activities where learners can share their experiences	"They love to share their own experiences. […] give them time to speak about those experiences." "The fact that they can share, they can express, they can tell something that belongs to them makes it engaging."
Authenticity		"They want to share their own opinions, their own beliefs, so that's great for the classroom environment."
Learning support	Creating a comfortable, safe environment	"I also make them feel comfortable. I say 'if you make mistakes, that's OK. That's perfect. That's the way you

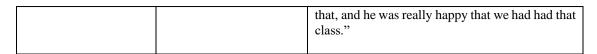| Interest / Social Interaction	Playing games and competing against each other	"Students from 12 to 15, they have some sort of engagement. It's through competition. They like to compete, like, these activities where they can be challenged and compete with others." "Well, with games sometimes, yes, you can see that all of them want to be part of those specific games."
Autonomy	Allowing students to offer suggestions or change some aspects of an activity	"If you have a specific topic [...] to write about and they don't feel connected, then you can change [it]. You can ask them: What would you like to write about? And they give you some ideas and then go ahead. Give them the opportunity to change the topic so they can feel more comfortable, more connected to what they want to write."

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Similarly, participants listed common indicators of student task engagement, which are active behaviors during learning activities. Teachers described what task engagement looks like, based on students' attitudes and reactions towards activities, teachers, and peers. Some examples could be categorized into multiple domains, highlighting the importance of understanding and addressing these dimensions in educational settings.

Table 3. Indicators of Student Task Engagement in Language Learning

Dimension(s)	Indicators of student task engagement in language learning	Examples
Cognitive / Affective / Behavioral	Enjoyment, active participation, and focused attention	"What I noticed in my students […] is that they participate actively, and they are truly focused on the topic or the lesson, and also that they enjoy the lesson."
Agentic / Social	Willingness to express their opinions, readiness to interact	"[…] when they are participating and when they are giving their opinion even though sometimes you are not looking for that opinion."
Affective / Social	Excitement, readiness to interact	"[…] they were really excited to share what they did at home."

		"They were fascinated to talk, express, and present what they wanted [...], and they enjoyed it."
Cognitive	Asking questions	"How do I know [that students are engaged]? Well, basically they start asking questions."
Social Cognitive	Communicating what was learned, providing explanations	"[…] Sometimes they are the ones that explain 'yes teacher, this is that and that'. It's like they want to show what they know, right? So, when that happens, I know that that student paid attention, that the student is engaged."
Behavioral Cognitive Affective	Striving to complete a task, effort expended, enthusiasm	"Even though they didn't know some words, they were super engaged and tried to prove their points, which is difficult, right? […] They were still trying and trying to come up with their idea […] Everybody was trying to prove their point."
Social Behavioral	Eagerness to talk, active participation	"They want to talk a lot, so you know they are engaged somehow because they are actively participating." "You clearly see the ones that enjoy the class, the classes, and they share their ideas, they speak, they discuss actively all the time."
Social Cognitive	Helping their classmates, exchanging ideas	"[…] when somebody is asking a question and the students, they are the ones who want to share the answer and they give their answers or they explain again what you already said […] that is something amazing that happens sometimes, when they help their classmates to complete some activities."
Cognitive Behavioral	Task completion, going beyond expectations	"And there were just a few who did the task perfectly, let's say, who exceeded expectations. […] They did more than they had to. So that's another very rewarding thing that you can get from students that are engaged."
Agentic	Offering suggestions or contributions, expressing preferences, communicating what they are think and need regarding a task	"They understand the task, they just want to do it differently. […] These students that suggest variations are the ones that are engaged with the activity." "It happened to me there was this topic and one of the students said: 'teacher, do we have to write about this [...]? Can I write about something else but following those instructions?'."
Affective	Expressing their satisfaction	"You can know when they are truly engaged when they express that, in the sense that they say, or they express that they are satisfied with the lesson. […] A student told me that he finally understood the grammar topic. [...] He told me

		that, and he was really happy that we had had that class."

Finally, teachers highlighted the outcomes of student task engagement in language learning. Participants stated that task engagement contributes to the process of learning and also indicated that noticing their students' engagement is meaningful and enjoyable for them.

Table 4. Outcomes of Student Task Engagement in Language Learning

Outcomes of student task engagement in language learning	Examples
Success in learning	"I see progress in the students that are truly engaged in the lesson."
Improvement of the learning experience	"[…] it could become like a very open space where they can share, where they can work and learn at the same time."
	"I would also say that the learning process would be easier for them."
Satisfaction and enjoyment for teachers	"It's a process that both of us, teacher and students, enjoy."
	"So, it was super funny to see them even though they didn't know some words, they were super engaged and tried to prove their points […] that for me was very meaningful, for them to, like, engage in that level."
	"When they go beyond what you expect […] that is something teachers love."
	"[…]because they did more than they had to. So that's another very rewarding thing that you can get from students that are engaged."
	"[…] that is something amazing that happens sometimes, when they help their classmates to complete some activities."

Teachers' perspectives and practices to support student task engagement in remote language classes

Remote teaching affects task engagement due to the impossibility of being together, lack of peer contact, and family issues. Students' cameras and microphones can hinder their participation, despite efforts to involve them. Teachers Carol and James find remote teaching more difficult than in person, while teacher Robert believes it was only the beginning. However, technology is used to support student task engagement and hopes to continue in normal settings. The use of technology in remote teaching is essential for maintaining student engagement and promoting learning.

The study reveals that remote language classes can be effectively supported by various strategies, activities, and tools. These include warm-up activities like storytelling, informal chats, and games, which engage students' attention and interest. Speaking activities, such as class discussions, debates, 30-second talks, and questions and answers, also help students engage. Teachers like Robert and Carol use videos to spark interest and involvement, while Carol encourages beginner students to write their ideas before sharing them aloud to improve confidence and task engagement.

Teachers relied on various strategies to encourage student engagement in writing tasks, such as cooperative or collective writing, inviting students to write blog entries with their preferred topics, and group work in remote classes. While some find group work challenging for beginners, others find it beneficial for advanced learners, as projects and group work improve participation, collaboration, and task engagement.

Teachers have found that online tools and resources, such as game-based learning platforms and interactive tools for presentation and practice, can improve student engagement. These tools, such as Kahoot!, Bamboozle, and Quizizz, are popular among students due to their instant enjoyment and ability to provide instant feedback. Teachers also use these tools for formative assessment and review, allowing them to provide instant feedback to students. On the other hand, learning platforms like Liveworksheets and Nearpod offer creative and interactive activities, multimedia resources, and real-time interaction tools. These resources are used in warm-ups, presentations, practice, self-evaluation activities, and even as alternatives to book exercises to introduce variety and keep students interested.

The six facilitators of language task engagement can be used to analyze the strategies, activities, and resources used by teachers in remote learning, providing a useful framework for evaluating class activities and clarifying the relationship between reported beliefs and actions to sustain language task engagement.

Table 5. Integration of Engagement Facilitators in Remote Language Classes

Facilitator	Activity/Procedure	Examples
Authenticity	Topics related to students' lives	"I prepare activities that are related to the topic and that they can relate to their daily lives, in certain situations." "One of the students told me that she is involved in a youth group that helps homeless people […] so I asked her to write about this in her blog entry and the other students were really motivated by this […]." "Most of the time I try to present an authentic activity for them so they can be really connected in all aspects with the language."
Authenticity Social Interaction	Sharing experiences and likes	"Students were really engaged in that discussion time because they wanted to share what they already do at home." "We have discussions, conversations, we talk about topics that they want. […] They quite enjoy that."

Social Interaction	Debates and group work	"I had one group presenting arguments in favor of one topic and the other group presenting arguments against. […] They were super engaged and tried to prove their points."
	Collaboration	"One activity that I remember that I use and is very engaging is cooperative or collective writing, where they can write a story together."
	Group work	"Normally we work in groups of five, or four, or even six [students]. They participate, […] collaborate […] and they focus on different topics. […] Most of them are participating, most of them are somehow engaged."
		"[…] the topic is travel. So, I told them about a trip that I had and then I asked them about trips that they had. […] or sometimes I show them videos which we will discuss."
		"I try to, sometimes, be a facilitator [...] I ask the first question and they have to go on and ask another classmate. Or sometimes they have to just answer me."
	Class discussions, sets of questions, conversations	"I include as many speaking activities as possible. And sometimes we create discussion activities, and they are motivated, so we discuss, and we talk. We share ideas [...] and opinions."
		"They are more interested when they have a competition between them using different tools like Kahoot or the others."
	Competition	
Interest	Situational interest: - Playing games that foster instant enjoyment	"All of them liked the games. […]And the emphasis for that is to use a speaking activity, so they were all interested […] because it's a game, they enjoy it."
		"The reward for them was playing the games. […] Those games are for learning, to review one assignment, or when we finish one of the units, or when I'm going to start one unit."
	-Variations of activities with interactive resources	"[…] we teachers use a lot Kahoot, right, which is very engaging for them because they are very into

Interest Authenticity	Personal interests: Addressing the interests of different students in different moments, activities with topics related to students' lives	competing. […] I also use another tool, Bamboozle. A game-like tool with many variations." "I use Liveworksheets. It's much more fun for them to work with those than in a regular book. It has varied activities." "Another tool that I use is Liveworksheets in order to give them other types of activities to practice and to try other activities with them because sometimes you can find activities with videos, listening and other writing tasks so they can practice." "Nearpod is a presentation tool, […] it also gives you the opportunity to interact with your students through their answers […] different things that you can do with your students, for example, they can write a sentence, complete a sentence, or draw." "I know this group, they really like anime, they really talk about it, but the other group doesn't. [...] but they do have a favorite type of singers from Korea. […] So, in one class what I did was 'OK, we're gonna focus on this group and they are going to share', and they loved it. They were fascinated to talk and present what they wanted about the group, and they enjoyed it. […] and they were super amazed, thrilled because they wanted to share what they know."
Chall enge	Adjusting activities to match their level of complexity to the skills of learners	"When I give them the opportunity to write down what they're going to say for one or two minutes, they become more engaged instead of doing an impromptu speech."
Learning Support	Making them feel in a safe learning environment Employing relevant class activities	"There were some questions that may be personal, […] and then I told them they could share until the point they want. 'And if you make any mistake, that's OK' […] things like that in order to encourage them to participate." "There were some topics that were not real to apply here because of our context, because [of] where we live. […] So, we did a little research on our country. And then they wrote about something related to that, and then we shared. […] So, in that way, I could say they were more connected with the activity. […] I felt that they wouldn't be that connected, so I adapted my class into the reality that we are, which is in our country." "I consider the different abilities that students can have, the different things they might like or dislike

	Promoting students' needs and interests; considering activities for mixed-ability classes	to do in class and what can be kind of boring for them and not very engaging. I try to think as a student. So as a student, what would I like to do? [I] take into account their abilities and things that could help them develop the skills that are required." "[…] when I ask them for their opinion, I ask them to answer in English, so sometimes I give them a structure or an example that they can apply for their answer." "I always share something that is funny for them, or humor, or let them also share something, and they quite enjoy that."
	Scaffolding	
	Using humor	
Autonomy	Encouraging initiative and creativity	"I want them to be able to present something that they want, or something that they like. I like to let them do different things. […]but always, of course, always following the structure of what the activity is. "
	Allowing students to choose topics to perform a task	"In daily activities, assignments, homework, I would also say they have this freedom to choose, to do, to express what they want. And if they really don't like the topic of the unit, they are going to say 'Can I just do something different?', and they give me the options. That is wonderful, and I would agree, why not? As long as they produce and are practicing, it's OK for me." "The topic was interesting, but it's not something that teenagers are crazy for. So, I sort of, used a topic that they gave." "I helped this student to follow the essay format so as not to miss any part from the structure that we have from the book. The thing is, the student was motivated to write it, but on her own topic. So, I let that student do it."
	Allowing students to organize and distribute work	"So, I let them decide who was going to be the leader, who was going to provide the information, who was going to talk. They needed to organize everything. I would say they felt free to choose the things that they wanted to do in the group."

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Challenges in the design and implementation of tasks with engagement facilitators integrated in remote language classes

Teachers shared the challenges in integrating engagement facilitators into language tasks during remote language classes. Some students struggled with English, making the integration of certain facilitators complicated. In contrast, teacher James (advanced) pointed out that his "brilliant students [...] already know how to use the language."

Concerning authenticity, teachers face challenges in implementing authentic tasks due to time constraints, students' diverse backgrounds, and unfamiliar topics from their books. Preparing authentic tasks requires effort and effort, which may not always be possible due to workload. Additionally, students with different cultural backgrounds may struggle to relate to the content being shared.

As to social interaction, teachers noted that some students struggle with English and feel uncomfortable in group conversations. They suggested that creativity is crucial to avoid repetitive tasks. Interaction improved when students kept their cameras on. Group work in remote environments was challenging but improved with increased structure and choice. Students' disinterest in some peers improved with increased structure and choice.

Participants discussed the challenges of learning support in remote instruction, highlighting the need for teachers to identify and provide appropriate support for students. They noted that identifying student needs and providing appropriate support is more challenging in remote lessons. Teachers also noted the high demands of providing individualized feedback and ensuring students read comments on the school's platform. They also acknowledged the difficulty in proposing relevant and varied learning activities, considering students' individualities, and establishing meaningful teacher-student relationships in this learning environment.

Teachers Robert and James emphasized the challenges of integrating a facilitator to address students' interests and promote situational interest. They argued that different activities and topics are needed to address students' diverse interests. Teachers Carol and Robert discussed the difficulties faced by students struggling with speaking and the effectiveness of game-like platforms in fostering situational interest. However, some students became anxious or discouraged with these tools if their performance was inferior to their classmates.

About the integration of autonomy, teacher Carol found it challenging to offer "choices on what to do" to students with low proficiency levels. She provided specific instructions and steps, allowing them to share opinions and suggestions. The other teachers did not report any problems with this facilitator.

Finally, teachers reflected on balanced tasks respecting challenge and skills. Teacher Robert, aware of the varying proficiency levels of intermediate students, constantly monitors and involves students to support learners in need. Teacher Carol, on the other hand, faces the challenge of identifying the right topics, grammar, and vocabulary for beginners, while avoiding students becoming anxious, frustrated, or even "hate English" due to demanding tasks.

Discussion

The perspectives of participants are aligned with the general propositions of scholars about the active nature of engagement and its role in the improvement of the learning experience of the students (Fredricks et al., 2019; Hofkens & Ruzek, 2019). Teachers did not make any reference to the multidimensional nature of student engagement, and their

descriptions matched Berry's (2019) categories of Investing and Driving and Harris' (2008) categories of Enjoying and Being Motivated. Additionally, they indicated that if students are not motivated to learn English, they cannot become engaged in their learning tasks, regardless of the efforts of their teachers (Crick, 2012). Only once did one of them use the word motivation as a synonym for engagement, a misconception that has been a common practice among authors and teachers (Christenson et al., 2012; Oga-Baldwin, 2019)-

Participants mentioned students' positive reactions such as enjoyment and excitement towards some tasks, which are indicators of affective engagement (Egbert et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021). Learners also give their opinions and preferences and make suggestions or contributions, which belong to the agentic dimension of engagement (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). In addition, learners demonstrate active participation and invest time, attention, and effort in task completion, which correspond to the behavioral dimension (Egbert et al., 2021; Hiver, Al-Hoorie, Vitta, et al., 2021). Behaviors like asking questions for clarification of content, persisting to complete difficult tasks, going beyond expectations, providing explanations, and exchanging ideas were also noticed, which are examples of cognitive indicators (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Hiver, Al-Hoorie, Vitta, et al., 2021) Finally, indicators like eagerness to interact with their peers, offering support to each other, and sharing what they have learned fit into the category of social engagement (Hiver, Al-Hoorie, Vitta, et al., 2021; Sang & Hiver, 2021).

Teachers in this study addressed, to some extent, each of the facilitators of language task engagement in Egbert et al.'s (2021) model: authenticity, social interaction, learning support, interest, autonomy, and challenge. Participants also noted that students' engagement significantly improves learning outcomes, as they perceive progress and positive results after lessons (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Teachers also experience satisfaction and enjoyment when their students actively participate and strive to achieve lesson goals (Skinner & Pitzer's, 2012).

Participants discussed challenges in remote learning, including inadequate assistance, poor bonding due to physical distancing, family issues, and a lack of cooperation among students, which they believe threatens student engagement. Negative conditions like family problems and deficient teacher-student relationships have been identified as issues that affect student task engagement in online and remote instruction (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Dempsey & Burke, 2021; Trinidad, 2021). Agreeing with Stott (2016), participants commented that supporting task engagement in remote learning is more difficult than in face-to-face classes.

Participants reported employing various strategies, class activities, and technological tools to support language task engagement in remote learning. They focused on getting students interested, using relevant tasks, ensuring safety and support, monitoring and intervening to maintain engagement, and adapting class activities according to their perceptions. This aligns with Berry's (2019) study and Harris' (2010) study on modification in teaching practices.

Egbert et al. (2021) found that integrating facilitators into task elements, such as topics, strategies, resources, goals, processes, and products, can increase engagement in various aspects. This is possible in remote learning environments (Egbert, 2020b), as students showed some engagement. Research shows that promoting interaction, linking real-world experiences to coursework, and using relevant online and multimedia resources have positive effects on student engagement in online and remote courses (Boling et al., 2012; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020; Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021).

As a means to sustain and increase student engagement, continuous interaction and a sense of community among participants have been suggested in online learning (Carr, 2014;

Mandernach, 2009; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008), online language learning (Jeong, 2019), and in remote learning environments (Denning et al., 2021; Kolesnikova, 2021). This study highlights the integration of authenticity and social interaction in teaching by incorporating topics related to students' lives and using various activities for sharing personal experiences (Egbert, 2020a; Ainley, 2012; Valizadeh, 2021). Videos are suggested as a resource to spark interest and engage students in conversation. Teachers also use popular learning platforms like Kahoot!, Bamboozle, and Quizizz for students to play and review content while competing, promoting instant enjoyment and engagement (Denning et al., 2021; Kolesnikova, 2021; Martín-Sómer et al., 2021; Valizadeh, 2021).

Liveworksheets and Nearpod are effective tools for presenting creative, interactive, and varied activities as alternatives to traditional tasks (Kolesnikova, 2021; Sarginson & McPherson, 2021; Valizadeh, 2021). The beginner level teacher found high engagement in students when asked to write blog entries on authentic topics, which is an effective strategy for promoting student engagement in online and remote language learning classes (Liu et al., 2016; Woo et al., 2011; Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021). Nartiningrum and Nugroho (2020) suggest incorporating students' personal and academic preferences in online EFL instruction. However, the present study only mentions a teacher's task addressing students' personal interests at a group level, highlighting the need for such activities.

The beginner level teacher tackled a challenge by breaking down tasks into manageable units for her students. This approach, as suggested by Sivachenko and Nedashkivska (2021), helps students engage in remote language instruction. Teachers ensured a safe learning environment by presenting relevant activities, promoting students' needs, interests, and goals, considering mixed-ability classes, providing scaffolds, showing personal interest, and using humor. These practices align with Chakraborty & Muyia Nafukho (2014) and Kolesnikova (2021)'s emphasis on creating a positive learning environment.

The study found that learners' autonomy was enhanced by encouraging initiative and creativity, allowing students to choose task topics, and allowing them to organize and distribute responsibilities in groups. Advanced students found this beneficial for their engagement in remote language learning. Teachers working with intermediate learners also reported improved engagement when they perceived autonomy in completing tasks. This highlights the importance of fostering autonomy in remote language learning (Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021).

Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) found that EFL teachers face challenges in involving students with low English proficiency in synchronous and asynchronous assignments. Two teachers mentioned the difficulty of integrating engagement facilitators like challenge, autonomy, and social interaction into task elements. The first required extensive planning, supervision, and intervention. The second was difficult for beginner students, as they struggled with decision-making activities. The third was due to some students not feeling comfortable using English. Another participant noted that their poor English level limited the type of activities they could work with, resulting in less language task engagement. The study suggests that learners' proficiency levels influence teachers' decisions to prepare activities with integrated facilitators, affecting students' task engagement during lessons.

The integration of engagement facilitators in language learning is not limited by students' proficiency level (Egbert et al., 2021). To promote engagement and avoid negative feelings like embarrassment, stress, and anxiety, teachers should include relevant learning activities and be aware of students' proficiency levels (Sivachenko & Nedashkivska, 2021). Teachers in this study noted that in remote classes, presenting learning activities at the precise level of

challenge, such as topics, grammar, and vocabulary, is challenging; therefore, they must proactively monitor students' progress and assist those struggling with their activities to ensure effective teaching.

During the pandemic, global studies revealed challenges in integrating engagement facilitators like authenticity, learning support, and social interaction into online and remote learning tasks (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Dempsey & Burke, 2021). Teachers reported difficulties in delivering authentic tasks due to time and preparation requirements, making it impractical to integrate these facilitators in this learning modality, which is consistent with Dempsey & Burke's (2021) study. These authors highlight the challenges faced by teachers in promoting social interaction in online and remote learning due to the difficulty in encouraging peer and group work, and students' unwillingness to turn on their cameras. Teachers initially struggled to engage with students due to their lack of camera and microphone access, and some students' low English proficiency. Collaborative work implementation was also challenging, as students often refused to cooperate with peers or form groups with certain classmates. The pandemic has also highlighted the challenges in promoting learning support, providing additional explanations and guidance, and delivering timely feedback (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Dempsey & Burke, 2021). The three Junior High School teachers expressed concerns about students who needed extra help to complete assignments and work in class.

Teachers face challenges in their classes, not all of which are due to the learning modality itself. Some of these difficulties may be present in face-to-face settings, as they involve integrating engagement facilitators into task components. Integrating authenticity into tasks is challenging due to cultural differences and the need for coursebooks with unfamiliar topics. Teachers also face challenges in integrating authenticity, social interaction, and relating students' personal interests to lesson topics and tasks, which require creativity and thinking.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show how student task engagement was approached by a group of teachers in remote language learning during the pandemic. Their statements indicate that these conceptions guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of learning tasks that are aimed at sustaining engagement in learning settings (Berry, 2019; Fredricks, 2016; Harris, 2011). They reported the use of varied strategies and learning activities in remote classes that were chosen based on the preferences and abilities of their students in order to foster task engagement. However, as recent studies indicate (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Dempsey & Burke, 2021; Trinidad, 2021), they also experienced challenges of different nature that affected their efforts to sustain this engagement; it was observed that some of these issues are typical of remote instruction, others were exacerbated by the pandemic situation, and others were related to the complexities of integrating engagement facilitators into task components.

The procedures employed in this investigation also demonstrate how the Model of Language Task Engagement proposed by Egbert et. al (2021) can be used as a reference framework to study different aspects of task engagement in language learning. Results in this study might contribute to existing literature about the perspectives of teachers concerning student engagement considering such perspectives are thought to guide classroom decisions and strategies in the classroom in order to facilitate student engagement (Berry, 2019; Harris, 2011). This study also provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their perspectives about student task engagement and to consider the integration of engagement facilitators in their teaching practices in the future. (Egbert et al., 2021) The model of language task engagement used for this study might also benefit university education students by directing

their attention to this theoretical framework so that they could also become familiar with the importance of task engagement in language learning. The model presented in this study as well as its findings may inform future research and practice, especially considering the importance of creating spaces where scholars, teachers and students may discuss and share knowledge about strategies to promote task engagement in language learning.

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