



Student's Engagement in English Classroom with Hybrid Learning Environment

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Abstract

The present study seeks to (1) examine the influence of a hybrid learning environment on students' engagement in learning English, (2) investigate students' perceptions of differences in their level of engagement between fully online and hybrid classes, and (3) identify the factors and challenges within hybrid learning that shape student engagement in comparison with online-only learning. The research was conducted at Junior High School in Makassar. An autoethnographic approach was employed within a qualitative research design. Cluster random sampling was utilized to select the participants, comprising nineteen students and one English teacher who had experienced both online-only and hybrid modes of instruction. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the data. The findings reveal that (1) the hybrid learning environment exerts a positive influence on students' engagement in learning English, (2) students perceive clear differences in their engagement between online and hybrid classes, and (3) several factors and challenges inherent in hybrid learning affect students' engagement when compared with online-only classes.

Keywords: *Hybrid Learning, Student Engagement, English Language Learning*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed various aspects of daily life, with the education sector being among the most affected. In the first six months of the pandemic, numerous schools and educational institutions were closed, compelling students to adapt to fully online learning. Although conditions have gradually improved and students have been able to return to face-to-face learning, the threat of renewed virus transmission remains, making the possibility of reverting to online learning ever-present.

This transition to remote instruction—referred to in Indonesia as *pembelajaran jarak jauh* (PJJ)—has been implemented through platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Google

Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom, in accordance with Circular Letter of the Minister of Education No. 4 of 2020 on the implementation of education during the COVID-19 emergency period (Aritonang et al., 2021; Rizal et al., 2020).

As schools continue to operate amid ongoing uncertainty, PJJ has become an essential mechanism for sustaining educational processes. These platforms have enabled teachers and students to interact virtually and engage in distance teaching and learning. The widespread adoption of online learning has brought both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, it offers flexibility regarding time and place, allowing students to access materials and participate from their homes while reducing the risk of virus transmission. It has also encouraged teachers to experiment with innovative pedagogical strategies, integrate multimedia resources, and facilitate interactive learning, thereby enriching the learning experience (Mutmainnah, Samtidar, & Korompot, 2022)

On the other hand, several obstacles persist. Not all students have adequate internet access or technological devices, limiting participation in virtual classes. Others struggle with self-discipline and time management, potentially leading to learning loss. Furthermore, the absence of direct social interaction and hands-on activities—hallmarks of traditional classrooms—may hinder students' social and emotional development (Mutmainnah, Samtidar, & Korompot, 2022).

As the pandemic situation gradually improved, schools were permitted to reopen with restricted classroom capacity. This prompted school leaders and teachers, particularly in green-zone areas, to innovate, one of which was the implementation of hybrid learning.

Hybrid learning, or blended learning, represents an alternative mode of instructional delivery (Eliveria, Serami, Famorca, & Cruz, 2019). Its definition varies across contexts, as practitioners operationalize it in diverse ways. Commonly, hybrid learning is described as: (1) the combination of conventional face-to-face instruction and web-based learning, (2) the integration of multiple media and tools in e-learning environments, or (3) the integration of varied teaching and learning approaches regardless of technological use (Driscoll, 2002).

Despite its extensive adoption, hybrid learning still presents challenges, especially in sustaining student engagement (Mutmainnah, Samtidar, & Korompot, 2022). Student engagement is widely acknowledged as a key determinant of academic success (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; McCormick et al., 2013), reflecting students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in learning (Chapman, 2002; Coates, 2007; Kuh, 2009; Shulman, 2002).

Axelson and Flick (2010) describe student engagement as the degree of students' involvement and interest in learning and their sense of connection to peers, classrooms, and institutions. Similarly, Afzal and Crawford (2022) emphasize that engagement is central to the learning process and positively influences performance. Nevertheless, engagement in hybrid learning settings remains underexplored compared with traditional face-to-face environments.

Previous research has indicated that engagement is critical to the effectiveness of hybrid learning. Simbolon (2021) reports that unclear online instruction diminishes engagement, negatively influencing learning outcomes. Afzal and Crawford (2022) further identify a positive relationship between engagement and academic performance.

In relation to technology-mediated hybrid learning, Rosita, Saun, and Mairi (2019) found that optimal use of Google Classroom requires frequent teacher–student interaction. Hollister et al. (2022) note that interactive features such as chats and polls can strengthen engagement during synchronous online sessions. In addition, Khlaif, Salha, and Kouraichi (2021) show that infrastructure, culture, digital inequality, and privacy concerns influence engagement during pandemic-era online learning.

Although a substantial body of research has examined student engagement in online learning, relatively little attention has been paid to the factors influencing engagement in hybrid learning environments, particularly in English language classes. Therefore, further investigation is required to identify variables affecting engagement in hybrid contexts. A deeper understanding of these factors will enable educators to design more effective strategies to enhance student participation and academic achievement in hybrid learning environments.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach with the objective of examining how hybrid learning shapes students' engagement in learning English. It further sought to explore the extent to which hybrid learning influences engagement, to compare students' engagement across online and hybrid classrooms, and to identify the factors and challenges within hybrid learning that affect engagement in contrast to online-only instruction.

The participants in this study consisted of 19 students and one English teacher from Junior Metro School Makassar during the 2022–2023 academic year. Data were collected through interviews, recording of classroom activities, and direct observation. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns of engagement as well as the factors that encouraged or hindered students' participation during hybrid learning.

Result and Discussion

Result

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher concluded the following results:

Influence of the Hybrid Learning Environment on Student Engagement

This study examined how the hybrid learning environment shapes students' engagement in learning English. Through thematic analysis, three principal sub-themes were identified.

a. Active Participation.

Hybrid learning was found to support direct, offline interaction, thereby facilitating communication and collaboration between students and teachers. In this setting, students were able to participate in face-to-face exchanges, collaborative tasks, and friendly competitions. At the same time, the integration of technology enabled smooth communication among all learners, further strengthening their engagement.

b. Peer Collaboration.

Students in hybrid classes were actively involved in group discussions and collaborative learning activities that nurtured communication skills and fostered a supportive classroom community. The combination of online and onsite students encouraged a range of viewpoints, which enriched the overall learning process.

c. Technological Adaptation and Engagement.

Technology-mediated activities—such as games and quizzes—stimulated participation in hybrid classes. Digital tools helped create more engaging learning experiences, increasing students' interest and concentration, particularly during activities that required active involvement such as question-and-answer sessions and speaking practice.

Differences in Engagement Levels Between Online and Hybrid Classes

a. Active Participation.

Students reported feeling less connected in fully online classes and often found it difficult to engage fully. In contrast, hybrid classes, where the teacher was physically present, encouraged greater participation. Direct, face-to-face interaction enhanced students' motivation and concentration while reducing distractions, thereby improving the quality of learning.

b. Interpersonal Interaction.

Hybrid learning enabled meaningful communication and collaboration among students regardless of whether they attended online or in person. Conversely, maintaining

continuous communication in online-only classes was more challenging and often led to a sense of isolation and reduced engagement among students attending remotely.

Significance of Student Engagement in Online and Hybrid Classes

a. Active Participation and Interaction.

Students highlighted constraints in online learning and expressed a stronger preference for offline interactions. Hybrid learning provided a balance between online and offline participation, creating a more engaging learning environment. Physical presence made it easier for students to contribute actively, especially during classroom discussions.

b. Attention and Focus.

Online learning environments were associated with more distractions, particularly due to digital devices. By contrast, hybrid classes that involved direct teacher–student interaction helped promote better concentration and attentiveness, resulting in a more immersive learning experience.

c. Collaborative Learning and Peer Interaction

Hybrid learning supported collaborative activities and mutual peer assistance, which strengthened engagement. Online classes tended to rely on fewer interactional activities, often reducing opportunities for collaboration. Students perceived offline elements as more engaging, underscoring the difficulties of sustaining high engagement levels in a fully online setting.

Conclusion

This study concludes that hybrid learning has a positive impact on students' engagement in learning English. The integration of online and face-to-face learning fosters an interactive environment that encourages active participation and a sense of community.

Students report clear differences in their engagement between online and hybrid classes, with hybrid learning supporting better communication and social interaction than online-only learning.

Furthermore, several factors and challenges specific to hybrid learning shape student engagement, particularly the role of the physical classroom and technological adaptation. Online-only settings present communication barriers and distractions that may reduce students' level of engagement.

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