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Learner engagement and self-regulated
behaviour. A multiple case study

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Learner engagement

- Engagement refers to basic processing operations that describe how students react to and interact with the learning material and people present in the learning environment to enhance knowledge and skills
- Engagement in SLA:
 - ✓ exploring engagement with language (e.g., Svalberg, 2009, 2017),
 - ✓ exploring engagement in task-based interaction (e.g., Philp & Duchesne, 2016),
 - ✓ establishing the engagement component structure (Reeve, 2012; Reeve & Tseng, 2011): cognitive, behavioural, social, emotional, agentic,
 - ✓ positioning it within a broader theoretical framework (Dincer et al., 2019; Lawson & Lawson, 2013; Skinner, 2016).

Engagement in SLA

Different guises and under many names:

- *motivational intensity* defined as “the amount of work done, persistence, and consistency in focus” (Gardner, 2010, p. 121),
- *positive attitudes towards the language* that, like emotional engagement, predetermine language achievement (for an overview of examples of constructs corresponding to engagement see Skinner, 2016)
- motivation is engagement precursor (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012), or antecedent (Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012),
- “a visible manifestation or ‘descriptor’ of motivation” (Philp & Duchesne, 2016, p. 52),
- engagement as “a downstream consequence of the motivational intentions and desires of the individual” (Henry & Thorsen, 2018, p. 3),
- “what differentiates engagement from motivation is the action dimension” (Mercer, 2019): while motivation is part of mental reality hidden from the onlooker, engagement is its observable manifestation in the form of participation and enjoyment.

Engagement in SLA

- Engagement in Ellis' (2010) model for investigating corrective feedback:
 - ✓ learners' reactions to error correction engage
 - the **cognitive** response, **behavioural** response (uptake or revision), **emotional** response (learners' attitudes to correction)
- Engagement conceptualized as **quantity and quality of language** produced in communicative activities (measured as the number of words produced (Bygate & Samuda, 2009) or turns taken in a conversation (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000))
- Manifestations of learner engagement in dyadic collaborative dialogue:
 - **sharing previous knowledge** or **explaining choices** in language related episodes (Fortune & Thorp, 2001)
 - **responsiveness** and **attentive listening, asking questions, negotiation of meaning, back channeling, commentary, and indications of empathy** (Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss, & Kim, 2016; Lambert & Philp, 2015; Storch, 2008)
 - **vicarious responses, private speech and attentive listening** (Snyder Ohta, 2001)

Self-regulation

- Self-regulatory processes are goal-directed and purposeful control processes over one's cognition, motivation, emotion, and social functioning (Boekaerts, 2016)
- Self-regulation entails strategy use
- Self-regulated learning strategies:
 - Deliberate, goal-directed attempts to manage and control efforts to learn [;] teachable actions that learners choose from among alternatives and employ for L2 learning purposes (Oxford, 2011, p.12)
 - Domain appropriate actions purposefully used in an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453)

The study

- **Aim:**

to understand the connection between L2 learners' engagement and their self-regulation by comparing engaged and disengaged students' use of self-regulated learning strategies

- **Participants:**

2 most engaged (ME) and 2 most disengaged (MDE) students of a cohort of 120 Year 2 and 3 English majors, nominated by their teachers

	age	gender	year	grade	level	experience	additional
ME							
Sue	25	F	3	5	C1	17	exchange programmes, stay abroad
Alice	25	F	2	5	B2/C1	19	BA in geography
MDE							
Tom	21	M	2	3	B2	11	
Mat	21	M	2	3	B2	16	

Method

Data collection:

- Semi-structured interviews – 14.50 min on average (range 12.50 – 18.20 min); based on the *Motivated Strategy for Learning Questionnaire* (Duncan, Pintrich, Smith, McKeachie, 2015)
- Questions referring to:
 - Cognitive and metacognitive strategies: rehearsal, elaboration, organization, critical thinking, metacognitive self-regulation
 - Resource management strategies: regulation of time and learning environment, control of effort and attention, collaboration with others, getting support

Method

- Data collection and analysis
 1. Interviews transcribed with CLARIN
 2. A non-overlapping list of significant phrases and statements extracted
 3. Interpretative meanings were produced for each statement
 4. Clusters of themes (Colaizzi, 1978) were developed
 5. Independent themes were produced from similar theme clusters (Sanders, 2003)
 6. A descriptive account was produced for each participant's output
 7. Theme clusters and themes were worked through and reexamined several times

Results

An attempt was made to develop themes that could best reflect the data and tap into differences in strategy use among engaged and disengaged students. Five main themes were identified:

1. Cognitive strategies
2. Metacognitive regulation
 - Awareness
 - Planning
 - Monitoring
3. Goal-orientation
4. Prior experience
5. Resource management
 - Teachers
 - Peers

Results

1. Cognitive strategies:

- ME: elaborate procedures (strategy chains) adjusted to task and course requirements, e.g., keyword techniques, mindmaps, semantic maps, flow charts, note taking, languaging, rehearsing, summarising, making associations, etc.
- MDE: same techniques used for different purposes: *“I read articles to learn new words and I read them again before a vocabulary test”* (Mat); *“To remember some content, arguments or ideas, I read the text sometimes several times”* (Mat)

Results

2. Metacognitive regulation

Awareness:

“My memory is like a sieve – I need to write down everything because otherwise I forget, I keep a diary where I put everything” (Sue)

“I am a procrastinator and I know I must do things immediately, later it’s going to be more difficult, there will be more work to do” (Alice)

“Now when I am a teacher myself I know I shouldn’t be answering all questions because others just don’t have a chance to say much, I’ve changed” (Sue)

“I start revising 3 days before a test because it takes the tension off, I am not stressed out so much” (Sue)

“I am quiet and shy and I don’t speak in class very often, teachers know that” (Tom)

Results

2. Metacognitive regulation

Planning:

- ✓ a diary with assignments and comments (Sue),
- ✓ a weekly planner (Alice),
- ✓ revisions planned for 3 to 4 days before tests or exams (Sue, Alice, Tom), *“at the last moment”* (Mat)

Monitoring:

- ✓ continuous self-assessment, self-testing: *“I ask questions in my head and answer them”* (Sue);
- ✓ controlling attention: *“I try to use lesson time to learn, if I don’t understand something when the teacher is trying to explain, I know it’ll be much harder, if I try to understand it at home”* (Sue), *“It was my decision to study now what I love so I don’t have to strive to stay focused”* (Alice);
- ✓ other-regulation: *“my girlfriend sometimes checks what I have learned (...) and sometimes tests me on vocabulary”* (Tom)

Results

3. Goal-orientation

ME: **clear long-term goals**

“I want to go abroad and into the teaching profession, I want to teach kids, at the kindergarten (...) I worked in Norway and Britain, and the US, but it was in restaurants and I need a formal qualification to teach” (Sue)

“I want to be a teacher of English, I know it is hard today but this is what I want to do” (Alice)

MDE: **vague**

“why? For holidays (...) I might become a teacher, there is such a possibility” (Tom)

“to improve my English, to be able to emigrate, perhaps, I don’t have concrete plans” (Mat)

Results

4. Prior experience

Increased effort results from reflection on experience: *“I have another degree but only now I am studying what I really like, it is not studying for its own sake,(...) I like English and studying it is fun (...) I want to be a teacher”* (Alice)

“I worked abroad (...) and went to college in the US and I want to live abroad” (Sue)

Negative affect shapes present attitudes:

“I had a conflict with my English teacher at school (...) she was really mean” (Tom)

Results

5. Resource management: peer learning and help seeking, interaction and initiation

Peers: *“my group get together before tests and we revise”* (Tom); *“before tests I listen to my friends when we meet to revise the material”* (Mat)

“in my group we divide, for example, new words and each person prepares only part of them” (Alice)

“if I really can’t understand something, I first pick my phone and talk to my friends” (Sue)

Teachers:

“I ask my teachers when I don’t understand something,” “I have told the teacher, on a few occasions, what I particularly liked about the lesson but never what I didn’t like, I don’t want to hurt anyone’s feelings” (Sue)

“perhaps teachers can see if I am enjoying the lesson but I’ve never discussed that with a teacher,” “I’d rather ask my friend who graduated a few years ago, (...) I don’t ask teachers to explain stuff or anything” (Tom)

“I don’t think the lesson depends on what I do,” “I only follow my teachers’ recommendations or instructions, I don’t do anything else, not really” (Mat)

Discussion

Engaged and disengaged learners differ with respect to attitudes, behaviour, goals, quality and quantity of strategies used to regulate their learning

- Engaged learners appear more mature in planning and foreseeing consequences of their actions; they invest emotionally in the learning process, are more willing, purposeful and autonomous
- Engaged learners are more independent and engage socially with teachers and peers
- Both engaged and disengaged learners are aware of their weaknesses but only the engaged ones reflect on ways of eliminating or compensating for them
- Disengaged learners rely to a greater extent on their peers but seem reluctant to seek support from teachers; their behavioural engagement is externally regulated by their teachers or important others
- Engaged learners proactively shape the learning environment, feel responsible for what is happening during lessons and adapt to changing requirements or different teaching styles
- Goal-orientation enhances engaged learners' motivation and helps overcome hardships, boredom, and exhaustion
- Positive affect enables engaged learners to perceive language learning as a pleasurable experience

Discussion

There seems to be a considerable degree of overlap between student engagement and self-regulation:

- engagement and self-regulation in close connection and reciprocally affect one another
- both frameworks overlap with regard to many student characteristics and processes crucial for effective and efficient learning
- both frameworks involve multiple processes representing cognitive, behavioural, emotional and social dimensions; engagement recognizes the agentic dimension which corresponds to self-regulatory mechanisms learners use in and out of the classroom

Conclusion

- Greater engagement coincides with a larger scope of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, increased awareness and goal-orientation, which in turn translate into better learning outcomes
- Engagement and self-regulation play a mediating role between learners' characteristics and perceptions and language attainment (Wolters & Taylor, 2012)
- Apart from other components of engagement, self-regulated learning strategies correspond to **agentic engagement** "intentional, proactive, and constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction [learners] receive" (Reeve, 2012, p. 161)
- Engagement and self-regulation are parallel paths with interconnecting side paths (Boekaerts, 2016, p. 6)
- More research needed to tap into the intricate connection between the constructs

Thank
you!

The text 'Thank you!' is rendered in a vibrant, hand-drawn style. Each letter is filled with a different color and has a decorative, scalloped border. The word 'Thank' is on the top line, and 'you!' is on the bottom line. Several colorful flowers (pink, blue, purple) are interspersed with the letters, adding a cheerful and artistic touch to the message.