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Online Learning Engagement in an EFL Writing Coursework: An Undergraduate Student's Voice

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Article Info	Abstract
	This research aims to analyze the engagement of an EFL learner during an online writing course. The participant was a semester 3 student of English Education Department who had some experience and a great interest in writing skills in one of the universities in Indonesia. The data were collected through semi-structured interview and then were analyzed using thematic analysis. The finding shows that the participant has the three key aspects of learning engagement, there is behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in the writing online courses. Though the participant had obstacles when involved in collaborative learning, she still managed to engage well in the online writing course in general. Thus, this study concluded that EFL learners who perform well in online collaborative writing tasks are more likely to have great engagement in online learning courses. **Keywords:** *online language learning, online learning engagement, writing course*

INTRODUCTION

During a learning process, students and teachers try to maintain communication as much as possible. Communication is essential for building engagement during online learning. In Face-to-Face (FtF) classroom settings, teachers and students can have direct communication and respond immediately. In FtF learning, teachers find out the condition of students by measuring their involvement in learning (Cole et al., 2021). The condition is totally different in the online learning context. Teachers have different challenges in maintaining student engagement than in FtF learning as students are not physically present in the class at the same time due to an asynchronous structure(Purinton & Burke, 2020). Also, teachers may not be able to validate a student's engagement directly and accurately (Cole et al., 2021). However, despite the challenges in building students engagement, O' Shea et al (2015) show that the online course has alleviated students who find it difficult to come to school. In other words, it may ease their financial burden from travel, relocation, or having to manage their own home affairs, which are tightly bound by problems of the time.

The foundation of effective learning activities is that students should engage with their work and interact with others(O' Shea et al., 2015). In addition, the existence of a mutually respectful and supportive relationship between students and teachers is also indispensable in a learning environment. A study conducted by Fredricks et al (2004) found that teacher-student engagement in learning activities is characterized by behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. A student's behavioral engagement can be defined in terms of how they participate in learning and how they complete their final assignments. Moreover, emotional engagement refers to a student's attitude towards teachers, peers, or materials and assignments. While cognitive engagement is shown in how students evaluate a lesson. In the context of online learning, engagement between students and teachers is something that has to be maintained, especially in the online writing environment. An online writing course has specific characteristics compared to other skills courses because writing requires practice and structure feedback session to ensure students progress. This creates more challenge when the writing course is conducted online. Thus, as mentioned previously, good communication between students and teachers is a key to building students' engagement in the writing classroom to make it effective and efficient (Stewart, 2019). For a writing course to be successful, Sun (2014) found that students need to be involved in collaborative activities, interactions, and teamwork to build great communication.

Maintaining effective communication in an online writing setting does, however, present certain special obstacles, just as in any other online course. O' Shea et al (2015) found that in online mode, teachers have different teaching writing techniques. Teachers usually utilize videos, online learning management system and online materials. Moreover, teachers also have to adjust the way they deliver instruction due to the limited direct interaction. It is prominent to highlight that all of the adjustments should be based on the students need as the intended audience of the learning process. Students who receive rewards for their participation in finishing a project will feel more motivated (Purinton & Burke, 2020). Additionally, students' social presence during writing assignments contributes to their happiness with the learning process and increases student engagement. As a result, this can create a social construction that shows interaction and a positive relationship.

Even though students are an integral part of the learning environment, a number of research focused on student engagement from the teacher's point of view. According to Purinton & Burke (2020), giving students writing assignments and incentives that are intended to engage them can, in fact, rekindle their motivation to learn and sustain student engagement. However, this process can only be evaluated by the teacher, who observes the student learning process, but not from the perspective and experience of the student. Consequently, the

experience of an EFL learner using an online writing course is the main emphasis of this study. Research findings from this event will be summarized for the benefit of educators and learners alike. Because student involvement is the catalyst for the learning process, it is imperative to comprehend the perspective (experience) of student participation (O' Shea et al., 2015). Numerous research on online learning participation in writing courses have been conducted. Thus, exploring a student's perspective on online learning engagement in a writing course is the main subject of this study.

RESEARCH METHOD

Understanding how an undergraduate EFL student experiences online language learning when writing coursework is critical because this viewpoint provides additional recommendations about student-teacher engagement for teachers and researchers (O' Shea et al., 2015). Thus, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative approach to summarize and present the data collected from the participant (Lambert & Lambert, 2012).

The setting of this study was on an English Education Department in a private university in Indonesia that has conducted online learning for more than 2 years during the pandemic. The participant was Jane (pseudonym), a female student who were on her 3rd semester when the data was obtained. Jane was recruited due to her excellent academic performance and her great endurance during online learning course, especially writing. She has been studying virtually for 3 semesters in English Education Department and based on the researchers' observation, she showed positive behavior in online writing course and fulfilled the criteria to be recruited as a participant.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. On recruiting the participant, the researcher observe the online learning course to find a participant who matched the research context. The researcher then contacted the participant via WhatsApp to introduce themselves and request permission to do an interview. Following several attempts to contact the participant, the researcher provided a consent form in the form of a letter requesting permission to conduct interviews with the participant as part of the study. Following that, the researcher and the participant agreed on a particular time to conduct the interview. A voice recorder was used to record the data. The data then were transcribed and analyzed.

Thematic analysis was used to examine the data in this study. Thematic analysis, according to Braun & Clarke (2006), can be used to identify, analyze, and display themes in data. Its adaptability makes it easier for researchers to produce extensive and detailed research results. This method also includes six phases for data analysis that can be followed. The first step is to become acquainted with the collected data by re-reading and noting the most important parts. At this point, the researcher has some prior knowledge of the Argumentative Writing course. As a result, the researcher easily identified the relevant sections by re-reading them before moving on to the next phase. Following that, the data was transcribed and codes were assigned. The data will then be linked to the codes, making it easier to find. Following that, the researcher must re-check the themes to ensure that the codes are appropriate. The fifth phase involves naming the themes. The final step is to create a data report based on the themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The researcher contacted Jane for a previously scheduled interview. The interview took place in person at a university. It is made up of one section that lasts 31 minutes and 35 seconds. The voice recorder contains 19 transcriptions of statements. The data was then analyzed by introducing six phases:

familiarizing the collected data by re-reading and noting the most important parts, transcribing the data and giving them the initial codes based on the construct, giving the themes to the codes into the data so it can be found out, re-checking the themes to ensure whether the codes are suitable or not, defining the name of themes, and producing the data base report. The table of themes and coding to present the data is presented below.

Table 1. Themes and Coding

No	Frameworks	Code	Data Number	Theme	Sub Code
1.	Behavioral Engagement	**BE**	002 & 004	EFL Learners' Positive Emotions toward The Online Writing Course	BE02& BE04
			002 & 004	Intrinsic Motivation of The Importance of Writing Skills	BE02 & BE04
			003	The Power of Lecturer's Feedback in The Online Writing Course	BE03
2.	Emotional Engagement	**ET**	001 & 011	EFL Learners' Positive Emotions toward The Online Writing Course	ET01 & ET11
			001 & 005	The Power of Lecturer's Feedback in The Online Writing Course	ET01 & ET05
			007 & 006	Performance during Teamwork	ET07 & ET06
3.	Cognitive Engagement	**CT**	001	The Power of Lecturer's Feedback in The Online Writing Course	CE01

The researcher formulated four themes from the 19 statements that had been transcribed previously. The first theme concerns the positive emotions experienced by an EFL student who took an online writing course. The second theme was on how students have their intrinsic motivations (self-awareness) for writing. The third theme dealt with the importance of lecturer feedback in the course of online writing. As part of the final theme, undergraduate students were asked to describe their performance during teamwork exercises. Transcripts of the interview were written in Bahasa Indonesia, which was then translated into English and organized according to the themes. The following is an example of an interview transcript that has been translated.

> "While carrying out the assignment, we really participated maximally. We tried our best, for example if the target for this week is on C part, then we have to finish it up to it as well. Even though the essay is not completely finished, at least we have maximized the weekly target so that later we will know the response or feedback from the lecturer will be like." (*Example 1*. BE02, BE04 & ET01)

The previously discussed codes are included in the participant's statement above. The researcher mentioned several codes in the statement, including BE02, BE04, and ET01. The codes have been abbreviated as Behavioral Engagement (BE), Emotional Engagement (ET), and Cognitive Engagement (CE) because they were developed based on the research construct. The numbers that follow the codes are also coded in accordance with the data number, in addition to the codes. BE02 denotes Behavioral Engagement data number 002, BE04 denotes Behavioral Engagement data number 004, and ET01 denotes Emotional Engagement data number 001 (see Table 1. Themes and Coding).

EFL learners' positive emotions toward the online writing course
According to the data, the participant has several experiences of writing due to her personal interest in writing. Apparently, Jane's personal interest encouraged her positive emotion in engaging in online writing course.

> "I personally love writing. So initially I wrote it in Indonesian. I used to write novels and getting my articles published. Well, now I happen to be joining EDSA (English Department Student Area). At EDSA, I handled the writing club and of course the language use must be in English." (*Example 2*. ET11)

Those positive emotions arise due to several factors, both internal and external. According to Buelow et al (2019) , the factors that make students who have enjoyed the learning process, are because they feel a connection in the class. The word connection means that they feel valued by their presence in the classroom, such as being given freedom of opinion, and also their contribution to work is appreciated. Moreover, there is interest and experience in writing skills, thus it makes EFL learners have positive emotions toward the writing class (Park et al., 2012).

Intrinsic motivation of the importance of writing skills
Writing skills are crucial in life. It affects learners' ability to find a job in the future. In other words, learners who have writing skills may boost their odds of success in the future (Rao & Durga, 2018). Therefore, building up a writing skill requires self-conscious writing to develop this skill (Overbeck & More, 1984). This also applies to Jane in developing her writing skills.

> "I always optimize my performance in the writing course. Starting from trying to finish the tasks, always attending every meeting, making discussions with my lecturer, is all I did to improve my writing skills. Moreover, the writing skills itself is required in the field of work. I can say that this writing course is helped me to develop my writing skills." (*Example 4.* BE02 & BE04)

As we can see from the statement above, Jane tries to optimize her engagement in the writing class through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

The power of lecturer's feedback in the online writing course
Another theme that can be identified from the data is the power of the lecturer's feedback. Feedback is a response to an assessment of the results of assignments taken from various sources to serve as an indication of developing tasks to the fullest (Mulliner & Tucker, 2017). Therefore, it is one of the essential parts of an effective learning to build up students' fundamentals. The word effective means the feedback is consistent and prompt (Poulos & Mahony, 2008).

"I always feel enthusiastic when I get feedback from my lecturer. It is because the feedback that was given helped me to complete the tasks. Additionally, she always gave positive feedback such as telling in the right way if there was something less precise in the essay. Furthermore, the way she delivered the feedback is easy to understand." (*Example 6*. ET05)

Based on those statements, Jane feels helped by the feedback from her lecturer. Moreover, that feedback sharpens her writing skills in the online writing course. In other words, the participant tried to communicate with her lecturer about what difficulties that she has been through. Furthermore, because of the consistent, positive, and easy-to-understand feedback from the participants' lecturer, Jane was able to develop her writing skills by minimizing errors so that it would later become a perfect job. This is evidence that feedback is defined as a major role in effective learning that can help students develop about future work. Additionally, Poulos & Mahony(2008) in their research suggests that feedback is indeed intended to guide students towards learning goals, as well as students' fundamentals in improvising their abilities, especially writing skills.

Performance during teamwork
The last theme identified was student performance and interaction with their peers during classroom teamwork. During the learning process, teamwork plays an important role in improving student's performance and facilitating peer communication. During the learning process, teamwork plays an important role in improving student's performance and facilitating peer communication. This can be useful for students' training for work later on (Riebe et al., 2010). However, teamwork has often been complicated in an online classroom setting, especially when students have to interact with each other because of a lack of communication and contribution, and also procrastination made by students(Wildman et al., 2021). In addition, the researcher collected data regarding the participant's performance in teamwork.

"My classmates and I actually have known each other since our first semester. However, we still feel awkward when doing online group work in writing class." (*Example 8*. ET06)

According to her statements, Jane has difficulties in communicating with her team members online. Even though she and her teammates have known each other for three semesters, it is still challenging for her to collaborate virtually with them in online writing course. It implied that the long period of interaction with peers in online classroom setting does not guarantee easier academic collaboration. Nevertheless, Jane tried her best to be engaged in the teamwork, as evidenced by a statement such as "I and the other team members did our job to write on the Google.doc" (ET07). It can be inferred that she was able to collaborate with her peers well in the online writing course because she has already had a foundation in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

DISCUSSION
Students' emotions are one of the essential parts of learning, especially for the EFL learner. According to Luan et al (2023), in online learning, the engagement of the EFL learner can be found in their behavioral, cognitive, and affective (emotions). Additionally, those three aspects can show how EFL learners solve their tasks or how they can endure in class. Positive emotions can give a significant achievement for EFL learners in learning. It is also supported by the study of Oraif & Elyas (2021), EFL learners who have positive emotions in learning engagement through learning the class material can affect their behavioral and cognitive skills too. As mentioned before, these statements are amplified by research done by Park et al (2012) the factor that may engage students in learning is they already have an interest in it, and also have some experiences. Since Jane already has those backgrounds and interests in writing, this also strengthens her engagement in writing courses. Thus, it can be said that this interest creates positive emotions that she brings to the writing course.

There are three types of positive emotion in learning, namely enjoyment, enthusiasm, and excitement (Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012). As far as identified, Jane shows positive emotions of enjoyment during the writing online course. This enjoyment appears because of the internal factor, which has an interest and experience in writing as the theory Park et al (2012) as mentioned before. Therefore, this positive emotion affects her behavioral and cognitive development in writing course and improves her writing skills.

As discussed previously, students who show an effective reaction to the learning activities, teachers, peers, assignments, and materials has a positive approach to the course (Buelow et al., 2019). Meanwhile, behavioral and cognitive engagement refers to students' participation and how they solve problems to complete their tasks. As experienced by Jane who optimize her performance in the writing course to improve her writing skills. Additionally, it becomes one of the reasons for Jane's learning engagement in the writing course. She realizes that her writing skill is required for her future career. Hence, she optimizes her performance in the writing course to sharpen her writing skills.

Furthermore, according to the data, it is confirmed that the lecture's constructive feedback on Jane's writing task has positive impact on her learning engagement. It is clarified that the type of feedback of the participant's lecturer is consistent, positive, and understandable. According to Mulliner & Tucker (2017) and Poulos & Mahony (2008), the characteristics of effective feedback are consistent, prompt, specific, encouraging, motivating, building up comprehension, personal to the student, and simple to understand. In addition, effective feedback is how students comprehend and apply it, not only focusing on one point (e.g., discussing too specific a topic) instead of covering general points (Mulliner & Tucker, 2017) as the lecturer did to Jane in her writing course. This effective feedback that was given also influenced Jane's cognitive engagement in class. As Yang (2011) stated that cognitive engagement refers to how students evaluate their tasks.

Another factor that affects students' engagement is their capability in adapting into different groups of people. If students are able to adapt well, they will be more likely to create positive engagement during group work activities in online classroom setting. Performing in online group work is challenging in terms of maintaining communication and contribution, especially among team members (Wildman et al., 2021). The data confirmed that Jane faced challenges when she had to perform in a group work. It became a hindrance for her when all team members did not participate in the assignment. Additionally, even though she has known her peers in person, Jane still felt awkward when there is a teamwork assignment in an online environment. Konak et al(2019) mentioned that students in online classes lack a positive attitude toward interacting with peers, especially during teamwork. Therefore, collaborative learning in the online classroom is somehow more challenging than in face-to-face classroom settings (Konak et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion, this study highlights that participant engages in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in the online writing course. From the point of view of the participant, she optimized her performance well in the online writing course. It is because she has the self-intrinsic motivation and some experience in writing which becomes a positive emotion whenever she heads to the online writing course. Moreover, the effectiveness of the feedback given by the lecturer makes it helpful for Jane to develop herself in writing. Even though she had some obstacles when doing teamwork among her peers in an online classroom setting, Jane kept trying to complete the task. It is because she has already had foundations of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. In conclusion, this research found that there are four themes regarding the EFL perspective in the context of the online

writing classroom. The four themes are: 1) EFL learners' positive emotions toward online writing courses, 2) students' intrinsic motivation for the importance of writing skills, 3) the power of the lecturer's feedback in the online writing course, and 4) students' performance during the teamwork.

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