

Research Article

Laughing it Off or Leaning on Peers? Humor and Peer Support as Coping Strategies in the Context of Learning Disengagement among Vietnamese EFL Students

Chu The Le Hoang^{1,*} ¹ University of Phan Thiet, Vietnam* Correspondence: hoangchuthele@gmail.com<https://doi.org/10.59652/r0fas912>

Abstract: This study examines how Vietnamese students learning English as a foreign language use humor and peer support to cope with a lack of engagement in their studies. In many classes, students do not exhibit clear pressure despite low levels of participation. This phenomenon raises questions about the role of positive emotions in the learning context. The study uses a qualitative approach. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with seven students at a college in Ho Chi Minh City. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify behavioral patterns and how students interpret their experiences. The results reveal three main trends. First, students use humor to alleviate feelings of frustration when they do not understand the material or can't keep up with the content. Second, interaction with peers helps maintain a relaxed atmosphere in class, even when they are not focused on academic tasks. Third, the combination of these two factors creates a state of emotional stability but is accompanied by low levels of learning engagement. The results show that positive emotions do not always lead to positive learning behavior. In some cases, students prioritize maintaining a comfortable feeling over improving academic performance. The research provides a learner's perspective and clarifies how they adapt to a lack of engagement in foreign language classes.

Keywords: learning disengagement; humor; peer support; emotional regulation; student engagement; ESP classrooms

1. Introduction

Research on how Vietnamese EFL students use humor and peer support to cope with learning disengagement addresses a common but underexplored classroom pattern. In many EFL settings, students appear relaxed and socially engaged, yet show low levels of academic participation (Fredricks et al., 2004). This pattern raises questions about how emotional experiences relate to actual learning behaviour.

Within Applied Linguistics, recent work has focused on positive emotions in language learning. Studies on foreign language enjoyment report consistent links between positive affect, motivation, and engagement (Dewaele, 2010; Dewaele & Li, 2020). Empirical work also shows that positive classroom emotions tend to co-occur with higher participation and better learning outcomes. This line of research positions positive affect as a supportive factor in second language development.

However, recent studies suggest that this relationship is not always linear. Learners may report positive emotional states while remaining behaviourally disengaged. This mismatch, often described as an affective, behavioral gap, indicates that emotional comfort does not necessarily translate into active learning. Research on student engagement further shows that disengagement can take subtle forms, including passive participation and limited cognitive investment rather than overt resistance (Hiver et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2019). These findings point to the need to examine how students manage their emotional experiences in such contexts.

One area that requires closer attention is the role of humor. A growing body of research highlights the benefits of humor in language classrooms, including reduced anxiety, increased attention, and improved classroom climate. At the same time, recent reviews note that humor

Received: April 11, 2026

Accepted: June 18, 2026

Published: June 28, 2026

**Copyright:** © 2022 by the authors.

Submitted for open access publication

under the terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY)

license

[\(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

can also produce mixed outcomes depending on context and use (Zhou & Lee, 2025; Tianli et al., 2024). Importantly, most studies focus on humor as a pedagogical tool used by teachers. Less attention has been given to humor generated by students themselves and its function in managing learning experiences.

A similar pattern appears in research on peer support. Studies show that interaction with peers can support motivation and engagement, particularly in collaborative learning environments. Yet peer interaction may also shift attention away from task-related goals toward social interaction. In such cases, students maintain a sense of belonging and emotional stability without increasing their academic involvement (Nokes-Malach et al., 2015).

Taken together, existing research tends to assume that positive affect, humor, and peer support contribute to higher engagement. This assumption leaves a gap in understanding situations where these factors help students feel comfortable but do not lead to active learning. In other words, current research has focused more on instructional effects than on student coping behaviour (Kahu, 2013).

This study addresses that gap by examining humor and peer support as forms of emotional regulation in contexts of learning disengagement. It shifts the focus from teaching strategies to student responses and considers how these responses shape classroom participation in a Vietnamese EFL setting.

The study is guided by three research questions. First, how do Vietnamese EFL students use humor to cope with learning disengagement? Second, what role does peer support play in buffering or reinforcing students' disengaged emotional states in the ESP classroom? Third, how are these coping strategies related to students' levels of engagement in ESP classes?

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory design to investigate how Vietnamese EFL students mobilize humor and peer support as coping strategies in response to learning disengagement. An exploratory qualitative approach is appropriate when the research aims to examine under-researched phenomena from the participants' emic perspectives rather than testing *a priori* hypotheses (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was situated within an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that learners' disengagement is socially constructed and subjectively experienced. Within this framework, the study employed thematic analysis to systematically identify patterns of meaning across participants' accounts of their classroom experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The research was carried out at a public college in District 7, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The institution offers English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses as a mandatory component of its associate degree programs. This context was purposively selected due to two characteristics observed during preliminary visits: marked heterogeneity in English proficiency levels within single classrooms, ranging from pre-A1 to B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and a prevalent classroom dynamic in which students maintained relaxed social interactions while demonstrating minimal academic participation. This setting provided an information-rich case for examining the coping strategies of disengaged learners (Duff, 2014; Eckerth, 2008). The researcher had no prior teaching relationship with the participants to minimize authority bias.

A purposive sampling strategy (Palinkas et al., 2015) was employed to recruit participants who met three inclusion criteria: regular attendance, observed low levels of academic participation like defined as voluntarily speaking or answering questions fewer than twice per 90-minute session, and willingness to discuss their classroom experiences openly. Seven students (five females, two males) enrolled in two ESP classes at the target college agreed to participate. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years, and all were second year students majoring in Business English. Proficiency levels, based on institutional placement tests, spanned A2 to B1 (CEFR). The sample size aligns with recommendations for qualitative studies aiming for data saturation in homogenous populations (Guest et al., 2006). Pseudonyms (S1-S7) are used throughout this article to protect anonymity. Individual demographic details are not presented separately to minimize the risk of identification given the small sample size.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection instrument. An interview guide was developed based on the research questions and a review of the literature on student engagement and coping strategies. The guide included open ended prompts such as: "Can you describe a typical moment when you feel disconnected from the lesson?" and "What role do jokes or chatting with friends play in those moments?" Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. All interviews were conducted face to face in Vietnamese by

the researcher to enable participants to express themselves fluently. Sessions were audio recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim by a research assistant. To ensure accuracy, the transcripts were cross checked against the recordings by the author. Data collection took place over a three-week period in April.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Phase 1 involved reading and re reading all transcripts while making initial observations. Phase 2 was conducted manually: the researcher assigned descriptive codes to meaningful segments using an inductive approach, allowing codes to emerge from the data rather than imposing pre-existing categories. Phase 3 (theme development) involved grouping related codes into candidate themes. Phase 4 required checking the candidate themes against the entire dataset to ensure internal coherence and external distinctiveness. Phase 5 refined each theme's scope and name. Phase 6 produced this report. To enhance analytical rigour, a second coder independently coded 30% of the transcripts. Inter coder agreement reached 86%; disagreements were resolved through discussion. The codes S1-S7 are used in the results section to attribute quotations while preserving participant confidentiality. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was established through member checking: a summary of preliminary findings was shared with four participants, who confirmed that the interpretations resonated with their experiences. Transferability was supported by providing thick description of the research context, participant characteristics, and classroom dynamics, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

Dependability was enhanced by maintaining a detailed audit trail, including raw transcripts, coding logs, and theme development records. Confirmability was addressed through reflexivity: the researcher maintained a reflective journal documenting assumptions and potential biases throughout the research process. Additionally, direct quotations are presented in the results section to ground the analysis in participants' voices.

Ethical safeguards were implemented following the core principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Miteu, 2024). Before recruitment, the study design was submitted to the Foreign Languages Department at the University of Phan Thiet for administrative review, as the institution lacked a dedicated research ethics committee.

Each participant signed an informed consent form written in Vietnamese, which explained the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality. Participants were assured that non participation or withdrawal would have no effect on their course grades or academic standing.

All names and identifying details were replaced with pseudonym codes (S1-S7) during transcription. Audio recordings were stored on an encrypted laptop and were erased after transcription. Data analysis was anonymized throughout. No conflicts of interest were present.

3. Results

3.1. *Relational Humor Against Classroom Boredom*

Qualitative evidence indicates that academic disengagement among Vietnamese EFL students is deeply rooted in physiological and temporal friction. All seven participants reported acute manifestations of somatic fatigue, somnolence, and a decelerated perception of time during English lessons.

This embodied state of disengagement is explicitly captured in the account of S1:

"I feel tired and sleepy. I also feel the time goes very slowly. I only want the class to finish so I can go home and have lunch."

This feeling of exhaustion systematically erodes pedagogical interest, as further articulated by S6:

"I usually yawn and feel tired. Then, I do not feel interested in the lesson anymore."

When these physical boundaries are reached, students actively look for ways to escape the situation, a phenomenon noted by S7:

"When I feel bored in class, I want to do other things or sleep."

These collective somatic triggers establish a baseline of discomfort, which directly prompts students to seek immediate behavioral coping mechanisms.

To cope with classroom boredom, students shift from formal learning to informal, low-stakes peer interactions. These behaviors form a localized strategy known as relational humor.

This strategy is primarily driven by two modalities: casual interpersonal dialogue and the collaborative consumption of digital content.

For some students, the coping mechanism relies on immediate, off-task peer verbalization, as S2 explains:

"I often talk with my friend beside me. We usually talk about daily life or another subject."

For others, mobile devices serve as a gateway to shared entertainment, allowing students to co-consume social media and digital narratives, as described by S4:

"I use my phone to watch movies or read news on Facebook and Twitter, then share them with my friend for fun."

This digital escapism frequently transitions into collaborative gaming and the analysis of pop-culture social controversies, as detailed by S6:

"I ask my friend to play online games with me during class. Sometimes we use our phones to read hot drama stories on Facebook or Twitter and talk about them together."

In short, these spontaneous and low-stakes interactions transform an unengaging classroom into a socially tolerable environment. Rather than serving an academic purpose, humor functions as "emotional first aid" to help students endure boredom and a perceived lack of lesson relevance.

In direct response to the first research question, the findings reveal that Vietnamese EFL students deploy humor as an emotion-focused coping mechanism in two primary ways. First, they engage in casual, off-task peer dialogue about daily life and unrelated subjects, which provides a cognitive diversion from the lesson. Second, they collaboratively consume and share digital content, such as social media, films, or online games, which transforms the classroom into a more tolerable social space. Importantly, these behaviors are triggered by somatic symptoms of disengagement, including physical fatigue and a decelerated perception of time. Rather than deepening academic involvement, this relational humor serves as a form of emotional first aid that allows students to endure boredom without addressing its source.

3.2. Peer Dynamics: Bonding Versus Normalized Apathy

The data reveals a clear distinction between shared peer interactivity and solitary classroom isolation. Collective humor functions as an essential "social glue," buffering students against classroom anxiety by generating emotional energy and strengthening peer relationships.

S1 highlights how shared laughter actively reduces stress while preventing the perceived inefficiency of solitary device use:

"I feel happier when I talk and laugh with my friends. It helps our friendship become closer and reduces stress. Using the phone alone only wastes time."

From a social capital perspective, S2 notes that shared humor leaves lasting positive memories, whereas isolation weakens peer bonds:

"I think talking and laughing with friends creates good memories. If I only use my phone alone, my friendship with others becomes weaker."

Furthermore, this emotional relief can lead to perceived improvements in classroom comfort and peer collaboration, as S4 observes:

"I think talking with friends helps reduce stress and makes the class more fun. Then, the lesson becomes less boring and we can learn better."

This interactive dynamic also supports micro-communicative confidence. S6 reports that *"When I share my ideas with my friend and receive understanding from them, my communication skill also becomes better,"* while S7 concludes that they feel *"less sleepy and less bored when I talk with friends instead of using my phone alone."*

Conversely, peer dynamics also play a role in reinforcing disengagement by collectively validating minimal academic standards. When evaluating peer responses to the sub-baseline performance standard: *"I only need 5 points to pass the course"*, the data reveals a shared culture of normalizing apathy.

S1 confirms that low achievement is widely accepted within the peer group:

"Most of my friends agree with me. They think passing the subject is already lucky and good enough."

This sentiment is echoed by S3, noting a mutual disregard for high academic performance:

"My friends also do not care too much about high scores. They only want enough points to pass the subject."

This shared attitude creates a protective comfort zone that reduces individual accountability, as S6 notes:

"My friend feels comfortable because many students probably think the same way. We only do not want to study the subject again."

The common goal of *"as long as I do not have to retake the course"* represents an unspoken agreement that prioritizes avoiding failure over achieving success. While some individual variation exists, such as S2 and S4 viewing the statement as a joke or a tool for comfort, and S7 explicitly rejecting it *"I do not accept getting only 5 points"*, the five-point standard remains a powerful force. It shields students from academic pressure but, in doing so, inadvertently lowers collective aspirations.

With respect to the second research question, peer support plays a dual role in the emotional experience of disengaged students. On the one hand, collective laughter functions as a social buffer, reducing anxiety, strengthening friendships, and making the classroom atmosphere feel less oppressive. This buffering effect helps students temporarily escape the discomfort of perceived irrelevance. On the other hand, peer dynamics also reinforce disengagement by normalizing minimal academic effort. The widespread acceptance of a bare pass standard creates a comfort zone in which low aspirations are collectively validated, shielding students from individual accountability while simultaneously lowering their academic urgency. Thus, peer support operates both as a protective emotional cushion and as a mechanism that stabilizes disengagement at a low level.

3.3. Engagement Trade-offs in ESP Classrooms

When comparing their current interactive classroom with a highly structured, silent learning environment, the majority of students prefer a lively atmosphere, despite its lack of academic focus. Silence is frequently associated with heightened anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and passive learning.

S2 highlights the psychological barriers triggered by a quiet room:

"I feel shy to interact. I do not feel comfortable when everyone looks at me while I answer questions. I am also afraid of answering incorrectly."

This fear of public evaluation is echoed by S7:

"I feel scared and worried when the teacher calls someone's name. In contrast, I like active and exciting classes."

Similarly, S5 views classroom silence not as a sign of focus, but as an indicator of low energy and passivity:

"I think many students are shy and do not have energy for studying. Everyone learns very passively."

While a minority of students recognize the academic benefits of a quiet environment, such as S3, who notes, *"I think I can learn more in that class... people pay attention to me and value my ideas,"* and S6, who acknowledges that *"students focus more on the lesson, but the classroom atmosphere is very stressful"*, the majority choose noise and laughter as a pressure-release valve. They prioritize emotional safety over academic rigor.

The final trade-off lies in the conflict between immediate emotional survival and long-term language acquisition. Although students rely on peer sympathy to ease the disappointment of low grades, this comfort often acts as a subtle demotivator that reduces academic urgency.

For instance, S3 admits that peer empathy normalizes a low-effort approach:

"Even though I know my score is low, I do not think it is very important. I just study little by little."

This protective environment can also encourage students to accept fixed limitations regarding their abilities, as seen in S2's response:

"I think my learning ability is limited, so I choose to study slowly and never give up."

Consequently, learning goals are reduced to mere compliance, as S7 notes: *"I only try my best to pass the subject so I do not disappoint my family."* While outliers like S1: *"I do not want comfort from anyone"* and S5 *"Low scores mean I do not understand the knowledge well"* resist this comfort, and S6 uses peer encouragement productively to improve, the overall trend points to an academic cost.

Students are fully aware of this compromise. On the benefit side, interactions reduce stress (S2) and improve peer familiarity for group work (S4). However, the costs to language acquisition are substantial:

"Sometimes I have too much fun and forget about studying." (S2)

"If I talk too much, I may miss some important knowledge." (S4, S7)

"It affects my English learning and is not really helpful." (S3, S5)

Ultimately, S6 identifies the core linguistic variable:

"If we only talk in Vietnamese, it is meaningless. But if we talk in English, it can bring many benefits."

This survival-acquisition dilemma illustrates a fundamental trade-off in the psychology

of disengaged learners: students knowingly prioritize immediate emotional comfort over long-term linguistic development.

In answer to the third research question, the coping strategies of humor and peer support are linked to students' engagement levels through a consistent comfort-participation trade-off. Students clearly express a preference for lively, socially interactive classrooms over silent, high-pressure environments, because the former reduce anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. However, this preference comes at an academic cost: the very interactions that make the class emotionally bearable also divert attention away from instructional content. Students are aware that their laughter and peer conversations often lead to missed key knowledge and lowered language gains, particularly when these interactions occur in Vietnamese rather than English. Consequently, while humor and peer support sustain emotional well-being and social belonging, they do so at the expense of cognitive investment and active learning, leaving students in a state of comfortable passivity.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study offer considerable grounds for reflection as language teacher educators. Across the interviews, a consistent pattern emerged that has long been observed in many EFL classrooms but has rarely been articulated with such clarity. It is worth adding that, according to Perkun et al. (2010), EFL students are not passive victims of disengagement but active agents who skillfully deploy humor and peer support to make the experience of boredom emotionally survivable. The critical insight, and the one that is most troubling from an educational perspective, is that these very coping strategies, while preserving students' emotional well-being, appear to stabilise a state of comfortable passivity in which academic engagement remains persistently low.

The data show that students primarily use humor not to deepen their connection with English but to endure the lesson. Participants described chatting about daily life and sharing online content with friends as ways to combat fatigue and make time pass faster. Humor has long been recognised as an emotion-focused coping strategy that reduces immediate discomfort without necessarily altering its source (Martin & Ford, 2018). This aligns with findings of Tianli et al. (2024) saying that student-generated humor often serves social bonding purposes distinct from instructional goals, yet the present findings extend this argument further. A notable finding is students' explicit acknowledgment that their laughter, while making the class feel more interesting, did little to support their language learning. From a practitioner's vantage point, this honesty reveals a form of meta-awareness that is rarely credited to learners: they know exactly what they are doing and can distinguish clearly between emotional comfort and cognitive gain.

The role of peer support proved equally complex and deeply thought-provoking. Peer inter-action has long been encouraged in language teaching, assuming it to be an unalloyed good for motivation. The present findings challenge this assumption in ways that necessitate uncomfortable self-examination. Consistent with Hiver et al. (2024), who note that disengagement can take subtle and passive forms, the participants described a peer culture in which aiming for a bare pass was not merely accepted but collectively validated (Ryan, 2000). When a student tells her friend that five out of ten is sufficient and receives agreement rather than encouragement to aim higher, peer support has shifted from being a scaffold for learning to becoming a cushion for disengagement. Kindermann (2007) demonstrated that students' engagement tends to gravitate toward the norms of their immediate peer group, providing a mechanism for how such low expectations become entrenched. Wang et al. (2019) have observed that learners may appear socially integrated while remaining cognitively detached from academic tasks, and the data provide vivid empirical substance to this observation. This phenomenon can be understood as a form of mutual emotional protection: students shield one another from the sting of academic inadequacy, but in doing so, they inadvertently reinforce the very disengagement they seek to alleviate.

The relationship between these coping strategies and classroom engagement revealed a pattern here referred to as the "comfort-participation trade-off". Students clearly preferred their lively, socially interactive ESP classroom to the imagined alternative of a silent and serious one, which they associated with anxiety and reluctance to speak. This resonates with the emphasis on foreign language enjoyment as a driver of engagement (Dewaele, 2010). However, the findings compel an important qualification that has been underappreciated in the literature: enjoyment may sustain behavioural presence without catalysing the cognitive investment re-quired for meaningful language development (Dewaele & Li, 2020). In practice,

a smiling, chatting classroom is often mistaken for an engaged one. This study highlights the need to examine more carefully the quality of that engagement (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

These observations carry implications that extend beyond the Vietnamese context. If humor and peer support can function to make disengagement comfortable, then pedagogical interventions aimed simply at making classrooms more enjoyable may inadvertently reinforce the very patterns they seek to change. The findings raise difficult questions: are we designing our ESP courses in ways that challenge students to channel their considerable social resources toward genuine communicative goals, or are we creating environments that students must learn to endure?

The answer, we suspect, lies not in discouraging humor and peer interaction, which clearly serve vital emotional functions, but in structuring classroom tasks so that students' natural sociality is directed toward using English meaningfully. Classroom research has shown that only collaborative, as opposed to merely associative, peer interaction reliably facilitates language development (Storch, 2002), reinforcing the need for careful task design that channels social energy into cognitive engagement.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. Our reliance on self-report data from a modest sample in one institution means that these findings represent an initial exploration rather than a definitive account. As researchers, the author is acutely aware that what students say about their behaviour and what they actually do in the classroom may differ, and future work would benefit substantially from direct observation. We also recognise that we did not examine teacher perspectives, and experience suggests that instructional practices almost certainly shape the coping strategies students adopt. Comparative studies across different pedagogical settings, particularly those employing more interactive approaches, would help determine whether the patterns we observed are context-specific or reflect broader tendencies. Longitudinal designs tracing how humor and peer support evolve over an academic term would further illuminate whether these strategies eventually contribute to or undermine learning outcomes (Mercer, 2019).

Despite these limitations, this study makes a modest but meaningful contribution by foregrounding student agency in the coping process and by encouraging the field to look beyond simple associations between enjoyment and engagement toward a more nuanced understanding of how learners navigate the emotional landscape of the EFL classroom.

5. Conclusions

This study set out to understand how Vietnamese EFL students use humor and peer support to navigate the experience of learning disengagement in ESP classrooms. What we found leads us to a conclusion that is both simple in its essence and profound in its implications: the very social behaviours that make disengaged classrooms emotionally tolerable are also those that make disengagement academically sustainable. Students in our study were not passive or indifferent; they were actively and skillfully constructing an emotional buffer against boredom and low achievement through shared laughter and mutual acceptance of modest academic goals. Their humor was not a bridge to deeper learning but a shelter from the discomfort of learning that felt irrelevant or overwhelming. Their peer support was not a scaffold toward higher aspirations but a cushion that softened the impact of underperformance and, in doing so, diminished the urgency to improve. These coping strategies served a clear and rational purpose: they preserved students' emotional well-being in a context where the perceived returns on academic effort were low, yet they also locked students into a state of comfortable passivity that fell short of genuine engagement with English.

The study thus complicates the widely held assumption that positive affect and peer interaction are inherently conducive to language learning, and it underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of how learners actively manage their emotional lives in classroom settings. For language teachers and teacher educators, the practical challenge that emerges from these findings is to design learning environments that acknowledge students' legitimate emotional needs while simultaneously channelling their considerable social energy toward meaningful communicative goals. This is not a call to eliminate humor or peer interaction from the classroom, which would be both unrealistic and counterproductive, but rather to structure tasks so that the natural human impulse to connect with others is harnessed in the service of language development rather than merely in the service of survival. We are left with a final reflection that we hope will resonate with fellow practitioners: a classroom filled with laughter is not necessarily a classroom filled with learning, and the distinction

between the two may be one of the most important things we can teach ourselves to recognise.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dewaele, J. M. (2010). *Emotions in Multiple Languages*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230289505>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Li, C. (2020). Emotions in second language acquisition: A critical review and research agenda. *Foreign Language World*, 196(1), 34-49.
- Duff, P. A. (2014). Case Study Research on Language Learning and Use. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 233-255. DOI:10.1017/S0267190514000051
- Eckerth, J. (2008). Case Study Research in Applied Linguistics - by Patricia Duff. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(3), 302-306. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2008.00204.x>
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059>
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hiver, P., Al-Hoorie, A. H., Vitta, J. P., & Wu, J. (2024). Engagement in language learning: A systematic review of 20 years of research methods and definitions. *Language Teaching Research*, 28(1), 201-230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211001289>
- Kahu, E. R. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758-773. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.598505>
- Kindermann, T. A. (2007). Effects of Naturally Existing Peer Groups on Changes in Academic Engagement in a Cohort of Sixth Graders. *Child Development*, 78(4), 1186-1203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01060.x>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Martin, R. A., & Ford, T. (2018). *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach*. Academic press.
- Mercer, S. (2019). Language Learner Engagement: Setting the Scene. In X. Gao (ed.) *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*. Springer *International Handbooks of Education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02899-2_40
- Miteu, G. D. (2024). Ethics in scientific research: a lens into its importance, history, and future. *Annals of medicine and surgery* (2012), 86(5), 2395-2398. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MS9.0000000000001959>
- Nokes-Malach, T. J., Richey, J. E., & Gadgil, S. (2015). When is it better to learn together? Insights from research on collaborative learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, 27(4), 645-656. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9312-8>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Daniels, L. M., Stupnisky, R. H., & Perry, R. P. (2010). Boredom in achievement settings: Exploring control-value antecedents and performance outcomes of a neglected emotion. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 531-549. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019243>
- Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(4), 257-267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.002>
- Ryan, A. M. (2000). Peer Groups as a Context for the Socialization of Adolescents' Motivation, Engagement, and Achievement in School. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(2), 101-111. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3502_4
- Storch, N. (2002). Patterns of Interaction in ESL Pair Work. *Language Learning*, 52(1), 119-158. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00179>
- Tianli, Z., Mansor, N. S., Liu, G., & Junhua, P. (2024). A Systematic Review of Humor Employed in Teaching English as a Second Language in Asia. *Sage Open*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241250125>
- Wang, C., Fang, T., & Gu, Y. (2019). Learning performance and behavioral patterns of online collaborative learning: Impact of cognitive load and affordances of different multimedia. *Computers & Education*, 143, 103683. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103683>
- Zhou, W., & Lee, J. C. (2025). Teaching and learning with instructional humor: A review of five-decades research and further direction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1445362. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1445362>