

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the EFL Students' cognitive engagement in the EFL learning context. This section displays the study's background, the study's scope, research question, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the key terms definition.

1.1 Background of the Study

Student engagement is essential to the teaching and learning process. Abubakar, Abubakar, and Itse (2017) stated that student engagement in the classroom can also support personal development and understanding of the material. Christenson, Reschly, and Wylie (2012) define the student engagement as condition where student actively participate in academic and extracurricular activities and are committed to learning. Engaged students find their learning meaningful, actively work on it, and care about their education and future. Student engagement is what makes learning happen, but it can be affected by different things. The good news is that it is something all students can achieve.

Furthermore, Sesmiyanti (2016) argues that student engagement can be seen through students' willingness and activity to participate in the learning process to achieve success. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) found that student engagement comprises three key aspects. First, there is behavioral engagement, which involves following classroom rules and contributing to class discussion. Second, emotional engagement refers to students' affective reactions, including

their interest levels, boredom, happiness, sadness, and and anxiety while in class. Lastly, cognitive engagement refers to the mental effort and investment students dedicate to their learning. It includes the use of cognitive strategies, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating, as well as the application of knowledge and skills to solve problems and complete tasks. In essence, student engagement revolves around the students' commitment to understanding the material and mastering their abilities. In addition, cognitive engagement can be defined as students' investment in their learning, valuing their education, directing effort toward learning, and using learning strategies to understand the material, accomplish tasks, master skills, and achieve goals (Reschley, Appleton, & Pohl, 2014).

Based on Winnie, Madinah, and Godfrey's (2020) research, they found that students' cognitive engagement in group assignments can be increased through positive group dynamics. Meanwhile, negative group dynamics can affect ineffective cognitive engagement. Therefore, teachers are advised to manage group dynamics well for effective cognitive engagement for students. Furthermore, Cian, Marshall, and Qian (2018) also stated students' cognitive involvement could be increased through specific components of inquiry. These components can assist teachers in facilitating student engagement. In addition, Kew and Tasir (2021) focus on identifying students' cognitive engagement in discussion forums.

Based on the previous studies, researchers discussed the importance of various factors, strategies, and contexts in enhancing students' cognitive engagement in learning. While student engagement is widely studied, the cognitive side (how EFL learners think, process, and manage their learning) often gets overlooked. Many existing studies focus more on behavior or emotion, leaving a

gap in understanding how students actively engage with content on a deeper level. This study addresses that gap by reviewing recent research to highlight how cognitive engagement appears in EFL settings and why it matters for effective teaching and learning.

1.2 Scope of the Study

This research used selected relevant articles published in academic journals. The study investigated and focused on EFL students' cognitive engagement in the EFL learning context.

1.3 Research Question

This study is intended to frame the research question: in what ways are students cognitively engaged in EFL learning context?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research question, the main objective of this study was to examine and describe the different ways in which EFL students are cognitively engaged during the learning process. The study seeks to look closely at how students think, focus, and apply mental effort while taking part in classroom activities, and to identify the specific forms of engagement that support their understanding and language development.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study can serve not only as an illustration but also as a useful reference for future researchers who are interested in examining how cognitive engagement is shaped and developed within EFL learning environments. By presenting a clearer description of how students mentally involve themselves in different aspects of language learning, this research offers practical examples that other scholars can draw upon when planning similar investigations. In this way, the study contributes valuable insights to the broader field of education and second language acquisition, helping to build a stronger understanding of the relationship between classroom practices and students' active thinking processes. The information provided can also encourage future studies to look deeper into how different learning settings or student backgrounds may influence the development of cognitive engagement over time.

In addition, the findings of this study can help raise greater awareness among EFL instructors regarding their important role in fostering and maintaining cognitive engagement in their classrooms. The results highlight how various teaching strategies such as those used in speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary lessons can influence the level of student engagement and mental effort. Recognizing these connections allows teachers to reflect more deeply on their instructional methods and to design classroom activities that encourage students to think critically, stay focused, and participate more actively. This awareness can ultimately support teachers in creating more effective, interactive, and reflective learning environments that promote stronger language outcomes and encourage a habit of active participation among their students.

This research is also expected to provide meaningful insight to students themselves about the concept of cognitive engagement and how it relates directly to their own learning experiences. By gaining a clearer understanding of what cognitive engagement involves, such as setting personal goals, monitoring progress, and applying strategies to stay mentally involved, students can make more conscious decisions about how they approach their English language studies. With this awareness, they can take steps to optimize their learning process, use study strategies more effectively, and actively participate in their own language development both inside and outside the classroom. These insights can motivate students to take a more responsible and independent role in their learning journey and to develop habits that support long term growth in language proficiency.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In this study, several key terms that are central to understanding the research will be explained in the following section. These explanations are provided to give readers a clear idea of how each term is used within the context of this study and to avoid any confusion that might arise from different interpretations. By defining these important concepts, the discussion and analysis in the later parts of the paper can be followed more easily and understood in the way intended by the researcher.

EFL students: This research refers to students who do not use English as their daily language or are non-native speakers but still studying English for various reasons.

Cognitive engagement: This cognitive engagement refers to students' willingness to be involved in the learning process through the EFL learning context.

EFL learning context: EFL learning refers to the process of acquiring and using the English language in a non-English speaking environment. EFL learning typically includes the development of speaking, reading, vocabulary, grammar and writing skills in English.

