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EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MULTIPLE-RESPONSE STRATEGIES ON LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE EFLT METHODOLOGY CLASSES

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The article looks at learner engagement in English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFLT) Methodology classes, with particular attention to the role of multiple-response strategies (MRSs) in online learning contexts. The researcher uses an exploratory action research framework to examine the teacher's beliefs about learner engagement, students' perceptions of engaging tasks, activities, and strategies, observed engagement behaviours, and the extent to which instructional practices support active participation. Data were collected from multiple sources, including teacher-written reflections, a student ranking questionnaire, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and lesson plan analysis. The findings show that multiple response strategies contribute to learner engagement by promoting inclusive participation, interaction, and immediate feedback. Students reported higher engagement during fast-paced, collaborative activities such as digital quizzes, whip-around, and structured peer discussions, while engagement decreased during extended teacher explanations or low-interaction tasks. Classroom observations confirmed higher behavioural and emotional engagement during interactive and discovery-based activities, particularly those allowing personalisation. Lesson plan analysis revealed strong alignment between student-centred instructional design and learners' engagement preferences. Overall, the study suggests that multiple-response strategies effectively support behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement in EFLT Methodology classes. The findings highlight the importance of varied response formats, collaborative learning, and relevance to professional practice, offering practical implications for teacher educators seeking to enhance engagement in methodology courses.

Keywords: learner engagement; multiple-response strategies; online learning; classroom participation; EFLT methodology; teacher education; exploratory action research.

ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ВПЛИВУ СТРАТЕГІЙ МНОЖИННИХ ВІДПОВІДЕЙ НА ЗАЛУЧЕНІСТЬ СТУДЕНІВ ПІД ЧАС ОНЛАЙН ЗАНЯТЬ З МЕТОДИКИ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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У статті досліджується залученість здобувачів під час занять з методики навчання англійської мови як іноземної в онлайн-форматі з акцентом на

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використання стратегій множинних відповідей. Дослідник використовує рамкову модель експлоративного дослідження в дії для вивчення переконань викладача щодо залученості, уявлень студентів про види навчальної діяльності, які сприяють їхній залученості, спостережуваних проявів відповідної поведінки, а також визначення того, якою мірою навчальні практики сприяють активній участі здобувачів освіти. Дослідження базується на використанні кількох методів збору даних, зокрема рефлексивних записів викладача, анкетування студентів із ранжуванням видів діяльності, фокус-групових обговорень, спостережень за заняттями та аналізу планів занять. Результати дослідження засвідчують, що стратегії множинних відповідей позитивно впливають на рівень залученості студентів, забезпечуючи інклюзивну участь, активну взаємодію та оперативний зворотний зв'язок. Найвищий рівень залученості за свідченнями здобувачів спостерігався під час динамічних, співробітницьких і інтерактивних видів діяльності, зокрема цифрових вікторин, прийомів типу "експрес опитування" та структурованих обговорень у парах і групах, тоді як тривалі пояснення викладача та завдання з низьким рівнем взаємодії супроводжувалися зниженням зацікавленості. Дані спостережень підтвердили вищий рівень поведінкової й емоційної залученості під час діяльнісно- та дослідницько-орієнтованих завдань, особливо тих, що передбачали персоналізацію навчального досвіду. Аналіз планів занять виявив узгодженість між студентоцентрованим плануванням і вподобаннями студентів щодо форм навчальної залученості. Загалом, дослідження свідчить про ефективність стратегій множинних відповідей у підтримці поведінкової, когнітивної та емоційної залученості студентів у курсі з методики навчання англійської мови. Отримані результати підкреслюють важливість використання різноманітних форматів відповідей, співробітництва у навчанні, зв'язку з професійною діяльністю та мають практичну цінність для підготовки майбутніх учителів іноземних мов.

Ключові слова: залученість здобувачів освіти; стратегії множинних відповідей; онлайн-навчання; навчальна участь; методика навчання англійської мови як іноземної; підготовка вчителів; педагогічне дослідження.

Introduction of the issue. Due to the security situation in Ukraine, there is an increasing need to switch to online synchronous classes, one of the challenges of which is a decrease in student involvement and engagement [6]. Often, participants in online classes turn off their cameras [4], do not respond to the teacher's questions, and remain "silent observers", which complicates interaction and feedback. Such behaviour is due, in particular, to the lack of direct non-verbal contact, fear of answering in front of the whole class, and technical issues [13], among other factors. One factor promoting student engagement is teachers' competence in using active learning techniques [2; 9]. Research into student engagement in online courses suggests that "the right tools", such as chat features and polls, can make online learning engaging and increase students' receptivity [6]. Therefore, one approach to

overcoming passivity and enhancing student engagement in the online environment is the use of multiple-response strategies (MRS).

Current state of the issue. By multiple-response strategies, we understand teaching techniques that allow all students to respond to a question or task simultaneously, rather than just one or two volunteers. They help quickly see what everyone is thinking and keep all learners engaged. These are "strategies that increase opportunities for student participation, engagement, and self-evaluation" [8: 243]. S. Nagro et al. refer to multiple-response strategies as "whole-group response systems" and define them as "a method by which teachers can track student participation and measure current performance or understanding of all students at the same time through formative assessment" [8: 244], which in

its turn informs instructional decision making.

As for student engagement, we adhere to the following definition: "...student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught..." [12]. Abla & Fraumeni define student engagement as "a condition of emotional, social, and intellectual readiness to learn characterised by curiosity, participation, and the drive to learn more" [1: 2]. M. Bond et al. define this concept as "the energy and effort that students employ within their learning community, observable via any number of behavioural, cognitive or affective indicators across a continuum" [3]. Engagement is the physical and psychological energy students invest in their learning. In this study, it refers to the level of attention and commitment students exhibit during a lesson. At its highest level, learners show both high attention and commitment, demonstrating that they are engaged both mentally and emotionally in the learning process. On the other hand, students who are engaged are involved, but not all involved students are engaged. This idea prompts us to consider the distinction between mental engagement and actual occupation. It might lie in the type of involvement a learner shows. Mental engagement refers to a student's active thinking, concentration, and information processing. In short, mental engagement equals 'thinking' involvement. Actual occupation refers to being physically or behaviorally active in a task and equals 'doing' involvement. Using multiple response strategies can encourage learners both to think deeply (mental engagement) while also engaging actively (physical participation).

From a pedagogical perspective, multiple-response strategies align with constructivist and socio-constructivist principles, which view learning as an active process of meaning-making [5]. When students are encouraged to formulate and share responses frequently, they become more actively involved in processing content, monitoring their

understanding, and negotiating meaning with peers. This interaction supports both comprehension and retention of concepts under study in online classes. Moreover, using multiple response formats helps address learners' diverse preferences and participation styles. Some students are more comfortable expressing ideas in writing or through digital tools, while others prefer speaking. Providing various channels for participation reduces anxiety, particularly for those who might be reluctant to speak in front of peers in English, thus lowering the affective filter and fostering a safer learning atmosphere [7]. Finally, multiple-response strategies provide immediate feedback for both the teacher and the learners. The teacher can quickly check understanding across the group, identify misconceptions, and adjust instruction accordingly, while learners receive real-time feedback on their thinking. This responsiveness helps maintain motivation and sustains engagement throughout the session.

Aim of research. The aim of this study is to explore the effect of multiple-response strategies on learner engagement in online EFLT Methodology classes.

Research methods. The study uses the framework for exploratory action research developed by Richard Smith and Paula Rebolledo [11], specifically its exploratory stage.

The participants are 12 pre-service EFL student teachers in their second year, doing the first module of their EFLT Methodology course (Understanding Learners and Learning) as part of their teacher training programme at Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University.

For the exploration stage of the study, three types of exploratory questions were used, focusing on behaviour, students' perceptions, and the teacher's own perception:

- 1. How do my students currently engage with classroom activities in the EFLT Methodology class?*
- 2. What am I doing to engage my students in my classes?*
- 3. What do my students say about their engagement in classes?*

4. *What multiple response strategies do my students say are the most engaging?*

5. *Why do I think multiple response strategies contribute well to learner engagement in the EFL Methodology class?*

To answer the exploratory research questions, qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used. For exploring behaviour questions 1 and 2, classroom observation and lesson plan analysis were used, respectively. A guided observation template was created for the observer to complete with the purpose of recording how students engage with different online classroom activities in the EFLT Methodology class, noting participation patterns, attention, enthusiasm, and interaction. Two sessions in a row were observed, and notes were later analysed and coded. The lesson plan analysis aimed to assess the amount and quality of engagement the teacher planned for her sessions and identify how the teaching choices regarding objectives, activities, strategies, techniques, and materials encourage student engagement. Two lesson plans for the conducted sessions were analysed using the lesson plan analysis guide developed specifically for the exploratory stage of the research.

For exploratory questions 3 and 4, which sought to investigate students' perceptions, focus group discussions and a ranking questionnaire were employed. A focus group discussion was conducted via Zoom with five students from the group, who answered seven questions related to their engagement in the EFLT Methodology classes. Their answers were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The ranking questionnaire aimed to explore students' opinions of the eight multiple-response strategies used in class, ranking them by their ability to foster engagement (1-8, where 1 is most engaging and 8 is least engaging). And to explore the teacher's perceptions (exploratory question 5), written reflections were used for analysis and coding.

Results and discussion. Observation data show high engagement in guessing, answering video questions, quizzes, and jigsaw reading; moderate engagement in completing tables or categorising; mixed

voluntary participation in discussions; all students respond when asked, but some need more processing time; cognitive engagement is present through questions and clarifications; emotional engagement is higher in activities involving self-discovery or new insights:

"Only some students volunteered to answer in class discussions; others preferred to keep silent unless asked. All students responded to the teacher's questions, but some took longer to formulate their answers".

"...they felt quite positive about activities in which they had to find out something new about themselves..."

Lesson plan analysis reveals that the teacher uses student-centred objectives, engaging lead-ins, interactive videos, chat-based and breakout-room discussions, collaborative tasks, peer checking, questionnaires, and jigsaw reading. Tasks allow personalisation, decision-making, and peer interaction. Multiple-response tools include chat box, breakout rooms, annotation tools, collaborative documents, reactions, and Moodle tools.

Focus group data show several trends:

1) A generally positive attitude toward the course and its content:

"I really like our Methodology classes".

"I like information which we learn".

2) Students feel most engaged during discussions, group work, teacher questioning, quizzes, and tasks with new information:

"I like working in groups, especially if my partner wants to work".

"Discussing is enough for me to be fully engaged".

3) Lower engagement is linked to long explanations, checking homework, online distractions, and low topic interest:

"During online lessons... there are a lot of distractions at home".

"I feel less engaged when the lesson is mostly listening or very long explanations".

4) Students see pair work and tools as supportive:

"Pair work makes me more engaged".

"Whiteboards and online tools – yes, it affects".

5) Participation is generally equal but influenced by confidence:

"Everyone has an equal chance to participate".

"Some students are more confident and speak more, while others are shy".

"We need an example on how to express our thoughts".

6) Students want more discussion, interactive tasks, and real-life relevance:

"Discuss situations related to our speciality".

"More interactive activities, like games or debates".

7) Ideal activities involve discussion and problem-solving in groups:

"A group project where we solve a real problem together".

The results of the ranking questionnaire show that digital quizzes, questionnaires, and surveys were rated as the most engaging (Mean \approx 2), followed by whip-around (Mean \approx 3.3), which also ensures that everyone contributes quickly. Think-pair-share (Mean \approx 3.5) and the use of whiteboards or annotation tools (Mean \approx 3.8) were also rated highly, suggesting that students value opportunities for collaboration and visual participation. In contrast, exit tickets (Mean \approx 4.6) and jigsaw reading (Mean \approx 5) were perceived as less engaging, possibly because they involve slower, more individual work. Hand signals or gestures (Mean \approx 5.2) and chat box responses (Mean \approx 5.3) were rated lowest, indicating that minimal or less visible forms of participation do not feel as motivating. Overall, these findings suggest that multiple response strategies are most effective when they provide instant feedback, visible outcomes, and a sense of collective involvement, which together strongly contribute to learner engagement in EFLT Methodology classes.

Written reflections reveal several key reasons why the instructor thinks multiple-response strategies contribute well to learner engagement in the EFLT Methodology class: previous positive experiences with MRSs; strategies enable whole-class participation; they create an inclusive and interactive learning environment; they cater to different participation styles; and they provide immediate feedback, helping both

teachers and learners monitor understanding.

"...multiple response strategies allow every learner to respond simultaneously".

"I can quickly check understanding across the group, identify misconceptions, and adjust instruction accordingly, while learners receive real-time feedback on their thinking".

EFLT Methodology sessions are conducted as workshops, which means that there is a lot of space for student engagement. One of the key principles of session planning is that we work from practice to theory (principles). This is achieved by setting a shared task, which helps learners build a shared experience and guides their reflection through the teacher's questions and concept checking [10]. Multiple response strategies are incorporated in every session, including verbal and nonverbal responses, as well as oral and written responses. These strategies use various tools and methods, such as whiteboards/annotation tools, digital quizzes, questionnaires, surveys, hand signals or gestures, think-pair-share, jigsaw reading, chat box responses, exit tickets, and whip-around. These multiple-response strategies enhance learner engagement in EFLT Methodology online classes by creating a more inclusive, participatory, and interactive learning environment where all students have opportunities to contribute. Traditional classroom questioning techniques often privilege a few confident learners who are quick to volunteer, while others remain passive or silent. In contrast, multiple-response strategies allow every learner to respond simultaneously. This inclusive design ensures that engagement is not limited to verbal participation but extends to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional involvement.

Overall, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of multiple response strategies lies in their ability to synchronise cognitive, behavioural, and emotional engagement. Students feel more motivated when they have frequent opportunities to respond, interact, and personalise their learning. Engagement

increases when learners receive immediate feedback, work collaboratively, or discover new information about themselves. On the contrary, engagement drops when tasks are passive, too teacher-centred, or require long stretches of listening.

The alignment between what the teacher believes promotes engagement, what students say engages them, how they actually behave in class, and how the sessions are designed indicates a strong consistency between the teacher's intentions, learners' preferences, and classroom reality. This alignment

strengthens the argument that multiple-response strategies are an effective approach for teaching EFLT Methodology to prospective teachers. At the same time, the data indicate areas for improvement, particularly increasing the time for peer discussion, ensuring topics feel personally relevant, and providing scaffolding to help students express ideas confidently.

The findings from the exploratory stage of the research prompted an action plan that aligns with an EFLT Methodology context in Table 1.

Table 1

Action plan to enhance learner engagement in EFLT Methodology classes by strengthening the use of multiple-response strategies

Identified area for improvement	Planned action	Rationale (linked to findings)	How the action will be implemented	Evidence of impact
Some activities (e.g. long explanations, table completion) result in lower engagement.	Reduce teacher talk and break input into shorter interactive segments.	Students report lower engagement during long explanations; observation confirms reduced focus.	Input will be divided into 5–7-minute chunks, followed by quizzes, chat responses, or pair discussions.	Observation notes, student feedback, and increased participation during the input stages.
Students want more discussion and group work.	Increase structured discussion and group-based tasks.	Focus group data shows that discussion and group work are the strongest engagement triggers.	Add think-pair-share, small-group discussions, and problem-solving tasks to each session.	Frequency of student talk; focus group follow-up responses.
Some students lack confidence in expressing their ideas in English.	Provide linguistic scaffolding for discussion.	Students report needing examples and support for expressing their thoughts.	Provide sentence starters, model responses, and key vocabulary before discussions.	Increased voluntary participation; improved quality of responses.
Online distractions reduce engagement.	Increase pace and visibility of participation.	Students report lower engagement in online lessons due to distractions.	Use time-limited tasks, live quizzes, whip-around, and visible tools (annotation, shared docs).	Observation of on-task behaviour; reduced silence during activities.
Some strategies are perceived as less engaging.	Prioritise high-ranked MRSs.	The ranking questionnaire shows clear student preferences.	Use digital quizzes, whip-around, and think-pair-share as core strategies; use	Student ranking comparison in follow-up questionnaire.

			others selectively.	
Students value relevance to future teaching practice.	Integrate real-life professional scenarios.	Focus group data shows a desire for real-life relevance.	Introduce case studies, teaching dilemmas, and lesson-design challenges.	Student reflections: engagement during case-based discussions.
Unequal participation due to confidence differences.	Increase the use of small-group and pair work.	Pair work helps shy students participate.	Use breakout rooms and rotating roles (speaker, note-taker, reporter).	More balanced participation observed.

Conclusions and research perspectives.

This exploratory action research examined learner engagement in EFLT Methodology classes, with a particular focus on the role of multiple-response strategies. The findings indicate that such strategies contribute significantly to engagement by fostering inclusive participation, interaction, and timely feedback. Across the data sources (teacher reflections, student questionnaires, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and lesson plan analysis), a consistent pattern emerged: students are most engaged when learning activities are interactive, collaborative, and allow for visible and meaningful participation.

Students' responses revealed a clear preference for fast-paced and socially oriented strategies, such as digital quizzes, whip-around, and structured peer interaction. These preferences were reflected not only in self-reported engagement but also in observed classroom behaviour, where the highest levels of engagement occurred during activities requiring active contribution and discovery. On the other hand, engagement tended to decrease during more passive lesson phases, including extended teacher explanations or routine individual tasks, particularly in the online learning environment.

The analysis of instructional practices demonstrated that learner engagement was strongly supported by student-centred lesson design, the integration of multiple-response strategies, and the use of digital tools that facilitate interaction and collaboration. Importantly, the findings highlight that engagement is a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioural, cognitive, and emotional aspects, all of which are influenced by opportunities for interaction, relevance, and active learning.

Overall, the study suggests that multiple-response strategies represent an effective pedagogical approach in EFLT Methodology classes, particularly in online or blended contexts. By diversifying response formats and prioritising interaction, teachers can better personalise instruction, promote equitable participation, and enhance engagement with methodological content. While the findings are context-specific, they offer practical insights for teacher educators seeking to design more engaging methodology courses. Future research could explore the long-term impact of multiple-response strategies on student learning outcomes and professional development.

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