



## RESEARCH ARTICLES

# Understanding the Concept of Student Agentic Engagement for Learning

## Comprendiendo el concepto de compromiso agéntico de los estudiantes en su aprendizaje

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### Abstract

Bearing in mind that agentic engagement has a recent history in comparison to the other types of engagement (behavioral, emotional and cognitive), this paper will present a theoretical review of this concept, including the reasons it has been denominated as *the fourth type of student engagement*. Agentic engagement is understood as the observable classroom event in which the learner constructively contributes to his/her learning and the instruction he/she receives (Reeve, 2012). The revision of research and theory on agentic engagement included in this paper supports the idea that it provides a consistent researchable field. Future research contributions may focus on (1) the disaffected face of agentic engagement, its conceptualization and its effects (Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013) and (2) the understanding (description, typology, and analysis) of students' self-initiated contributions (proactive actions) in the classroom (Waring, 2011) in order to identify which strategies may facilitate students' learning processes, teacher's agentic engagement interventions, and student-teacher interaction.

*Keywords:* agentic engagement, choices, initiatives, proactive behavior, student engagement

### Resumen

Teniendo en cuenta que el compromiso agéntico tiene una historia reciente en comparación con los otros tipos de compromiso (comportamental, emocional y cognitivo), este documento presenta una revisión teórica sobre este concepto, incluyendo las razones por las cuales se le ha denominado *el cuarto tipo de compromiso en el aula*. El compromiso agéntico se entiende como el evento de clase observable en el que el alumno contribuye de manera constructiva con su aprendizaje y la enseñanza que recibe (Reeve, 2012). La revisión teórica y de investigación sobre el compromiso agéntico en este documento apoya la idea de que este compromiso proporciona un campo investigable consistente. Contribuciones sobre este tema podrían centrarse en (1) el lado opuesto del compromiso agéntico, su conceptualización y sus efectos (Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013) y (2) el entendimiento (descripción, tipología y análisis) sobre las contribuciones iniciadas por los alumnos en el aula (acciones proactivas) (Waring, 2011) con el fin de identificar estrategias que puedan facilitar el proceso de aprendizaje de los estudiantes, la intervención del docente, y la interacción estudiante-docente.

*Palabras clave:* compromiso agéntico, opciones, iniciativas, comportamiento proactivo, compromiso del estudiante

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## Introduction

Student engagement has been considered a predictor of learning, improvement of performance, positive expectations about abilities, long-term academic achievement, and the quality of socialization and preferences (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). In an attempt to understand this construct, researchers have explored behavioral (e.g., Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004), emotional (e.g., Wang, Chow, Hofkens, & Salmela-Aro, 2015); cognitive (e.g., Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006), and agentic engagements (e.g., Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Specifically, research examining agentic engagement is still in progress and claims a specific theoretical framework. This type of engagement is understood as the observable classroom events in which the learner constructively contributes to his/her learning and the instruction he/she receives (Reeve, 2012).

Through agentic engagement, learners find ways of enriching, modifying and personalizing their instruction by providing teachers with opportunities to determine how autonomy-supportive his/her instruction is or can be (Reeve, 2012). Such proactive actions of engagement, as Reeve defines them, are highly connected with a set of motivational constructs (e.g., self-efficacy) which might aid in describing the profile of an agentially-engaged learner. This author affirms that the contributions that personalize learning and are initiated by learners are missing in the model of engagement. This paper starts with a definition of student engagement and how researchers have attempted to identify and understand it. This theoretical and research revision will contextualize the concept of agentic engagement for the reader.

### *Student Engagement*

Engagement refers to the specific conditions in which a set of motivational variables such as persistence and focused actions interact among themselves (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) and is defined as a “relatively public, objective, and observable classroom event” (Reeve, 2012, p. 167). Based on empirical studies and theoretical conceptualization, Reeve (2012) states that engagement is a contributor

to the learning process, it is susceptible to external support such as feedback from teachers, and it is an indicator of teachers’ efforts to motivate their learners. According to this author, this last function is possible by monitoring levels of effort, enjoyment, strategic thinking, and contributions.

Engagement has also been considered as a signal or predictor of learning, improvement of performance, positive expectations about abilities, long-term academic achievement, and the quality of socialization and preferences (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Thus, monitoring and responding constructively to students’ signals of motivation and engagement are two important teaching skills (Lee & Reeve, 2012) which require training.

According to Reeve (2012), engagement displays three functions. First, it makes learning possible (e.g., academic performance and skill development). Second, it is malleable to external support (e.g., after teacher’s intervention and feedback), which confirms the idea that engagement is “highly influenced by the learning environment” (Shernoff, 2012, p. 199). In fact, recently, engagement has been related to well-being and flow experiences (Shernoff, 2012). And third, it is an indicator (through a dialectical framework) for teachers on their efforts to motivate their learners.

As Reeve (2012) states, even though student engagement is described as the student’s active involvement (coined by Wellborn, 1991) of concentration, attention, and effort (behavior), positive feelings (emotions) and sophisticated learning strategies (cognition), they represent “only an incomplete understanding” of engagement (Reeve, 2012, p. 161). Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagements emerge from a directional process initiated by the teacher (Reeve, 2012). But what happens to the students’ constructive contributions? This author affirms that this model of engagement misses the learners’ contributions that seek to enrich and personalize the instruction they receive. Agency as a component of student engagement contributes considerably to the understanding of how students really engage themselves in learning activities (Reeve, 2012).

Although the perception of the learners as active contributors of their own learning process is not new (see the theoretical work on student efficacy and agency by Bandura, 2006, 2012), it was only in 2011 that a concept was proposed to comprehend and measure the verbal contributions learners display in the classroom. Reeve and Tseng (2011) coined the term “agentic engagement” to describe a learner’s constructive contributions for their own learning process, as well for the transactional and reciprocal processes learners go through with teachers and peers (Reeve, 2013). Thus, the conceptualization of the fourth type of engagement is developed differently in comparison to the other types. According to Reeve (2012), behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagements emerge from a directional process initiated by the teacher. From his point of view, agentic engagement refers specifically to the proactive contributions initiated by the learner.

To sum up, effort, enjoyment, strategic thinking, and contributions have been conceptualized as part of the literature on engagement. Thus, researchers have explored *behavioral* (e.g., Fredericks et al., 2004; Cappella, Kim, Neal, & Jackson, 2013), *emotional* (e.g., Sagayadevan & Jeyaraj, 2012; Wang et al., 2015), *cognitive* (e.g., Walker et al., 2006; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011), and *agentic engagements* (e.g., Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve & Lee, 2014) in classroom settings. Demonstrations of effort are connected to *behavioral engagement*, *emotional engagement* is related to interest and positive feelings, *cognitive engagement* is associated with self-regulation, and all three have contributed to the understanding of student engagement (Fredericks et al., 2004, see literature review on these three engagements by Trowler, 2010).

### *Research on Student Engagement*

Researchers have explored student engagement by including bi-polar categories (e.g., engagement versus disaffection) in their studies (see Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009; Furrer & Skinner, 2003) by adding complementary mediators of motivation (see revision by Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012) in their analysis (e.g., Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Reeve, 2013; Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014; Wang & Eccles,

2013; Wolters, 2004), by contrasting teaching styles (e.g., mastery structure vs. performance structure), by comparing different types of engagement (see Wang & Eccles, 2011; Reeve, 2013; Wang, Bergin, & Bergin, 2014), and by determining levels of concentration, enjoyment, and interest (see Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003; Shernoff, 2012). The following research review attempts to provide insights about what has been done and what still needs to be analyzed in regard to student engagement.

A research interest in relation to engagement has been the comparison of scores between students and teachers. Thus, Skinner et al. (2009) compared reports of teachers and their students on two types of engagement (engaged behavior and engaged emotion) and two types of disaffection (disaffected behavior and disaffected emotion), in grades 3 through 6, in math, language, social studies, and project presentations. This study revealed stable correlations between the reports of the participants, but with a greater degree of active connection of children compared to the factor of emotions. The results of classroom observations also showed a correlation with teachers’ reports. The analysis of the results verified the quality of child participation in class activities. The authors suggest that the levels of both concepts (engagement and disaffection) can be better represented by a hierarchical structure that takes into account the emotional and behavioral components. Based on the multidimensional nature of both active connection (engagement) and disconnection (disaffection), Skinner et al. (2009) suggest that other components of the process (e.g., re-engagement) be considered in relation to the four components analyzed in their research.

Shernoff et al. (2003) analyzed student engagement, challenge/skills conditions, instructional relevance, and school subject through forms, Likert-type response scales, and logbooks with pre-programmed wristwatches. Each component of engagement (concentration, enjoyment, and interest) was tested and reported separately. A group of 526 middle-to-high school students (in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) across the U.S. participated in this study. The results highlighted the balance between challenge and skills, learning environment’s

control and meaningfulness of the instruction. Specifically, higher interest and enjoyment scores were reported during computer science and art and less attention during history (58%), English (57%), and social studies (53%). Students who participated in activities that required higher level skills and more difficult challenges reported higher levels of interest, concentration, and enjoyment. In general, students reported that their non-academic courses were more intrinsically motivating. The researchers suggest creating learning activities that support students' autonomy and provide an appropriate level of challenge for students' skills to increase engagement. For further research, they recommend including teachers' perspectives and longitudinal designs in order to evaluate how motivation and engagement change over time taking into account that the implementation of strategies for student engagement requires skills, training, and experience.

In relation to engagement and achievement, Wang and Eccles (2011) identified changes in school engagement and possible associations with academic achievement (grades) and educational aspirations (eight choices, including "graduate from school") in 7th, 9th and 11th grades (1,148 students of 23 public middle schools in the U.S). Through existing validated scales, behavioral engagement was measured with six items on school participation (e.g., "Have you been involved in a fight in school?"), emotional engagement with five items on school belonging (e.g., "In general, I like school a lot"), and cognitive engagement with four items on self-regulated learning (e.g., "How often do you try to relate what you are studying to other things you know about?"). The researchers found that the levels of the three dimensions of engagement were positively related to academic achievement and educational aspirations, but the degree of relatedness presented a decrease from 7th through 11th grades. Thus, behavioral engagement and cognitive engagement were more commonly linked to academic achievement and educational aspiration, in comparison to emotional engagement. According to the authors, this finding of feeling "attached to" or "part of" may not be directly related to academic achievement due to students' lack of active participation and self-regulatory strategies. For further studies, they suggest that

this instrument adds perceptions of the value of school (e.g., purposes to study harder). They also suggest examining the dimensions of engagement in different school subjects, and longitudinal studies to determine how and why student engagement and achievement changes over time.

Some studies on engagement also relate achievement with a motivational status. For example, Furrer and Skinner (2003) examined the relationships between relatedness (i.e., feelings of security and belonging in a social environment), engagement (behavioral and emotional) and school marks in classes related to math and verbal performance (reading, language, and/or spelling) across a school year, with 641 children in grades 3 through 6. To report engagement, a scale included reverse-coded items on behavior and emotion. One example of an item in a teacher report included, "In my class, this student is enthusiastic." Students were given equivalent versions of the reports to complete. The findings reveal that relatedness was a strong predictor of engagement, and that this predictor presented improvement over time. Girls perceived higher levels of relatedness to their teachers than boys. Interestingly, older children reported drops in relatedness to teachers, but at the same time, relatedness to teacher was a strong predictor of engagement for them. In regards to this, the researchers suggest that interpersonal ties to the teachers might be a strong contributor of engagement, even if the learners show less enjoyment in classroom activities. They concluded that relatedness is a motivational resource that promotes high levels of engagement in school, from both children and teachers' perceptions, and with a unique participation and contribution of social partners (parents, teachers, and peers). For further research, they suggest an elaboration of the measures of relatedness and evaluate performance in specific subject areas.

There is also an interest in conducting studies on engagement over a considerable period of time to analyze effects, for example on achievement. For instance, Reeve and Lee (2014) conducted a longitudinal study to predict changes in engagement and its possible effects on motivation and academic achievement. A questionnaire was administered to

313 Korean 10th, 11th and 12th graders during three moments (weeks 2, 9 and 17). On all measures, including academic achievement, girls reported higher scores. Although records on engagement revealed changes in motivation, some motivational states did not. For example, mastery goals did not present relevant variations during the second period. Because each dimension of engagement (means) contributes to different students' outcomes (ends), the researchers claim the need to identify levels of responsibility for possible changes in motivation. In order to accomplish this, grouping dimensions of engagement (for example, putting students into pairs) might contribute to understanding their effects on motivation. Expanding the time frame and including objective measures of engagement (not only self-report measures) are also highly recommended by the researchers (see a revision of instruments on student engagement by Fredricks et al., 2011).

Achievement has not been the only focus of research on engagement. Teacher-student interaction can also determine levels of engagement. For example, Rimm-Kaufman and her colleagues (2014) examined the quality of teacher-student interaction and student engagement. A survey with ten domains regarding the quality of teacher-student interaction, a measure of students' efficacy in math, a measure on students' engagement on a specific day in a math context, a measure on social engagement, and a teacher-report questionnaire on student engagement were administered to a group of 5th graders in a math class. The study found that students in classrooms with teachers who provided more emotional support and higher quality classroom organization reported higher cognitive engagement, higher emotional engagement, and higher social engagement. Girls reported higher cognitive and social engagement than boys. They were more engaged than boys for three of the five measured engagement constructs: observed behavioral engagement, student-reported cognitive engagement, and student-reported social engagement. This study states that girls may have better developed self-regulatory skills, skills that do not require external structures to support their engagement. For further research, the researchers suggest including other classroom compositions

(e.g., peer group), experimental designs, and/or students' reports of their teachers' quality of interaction.

A synthesis of suggestions for further research on student engagement includes: (1) longitudinal studies to determine how and why motivation, engagement, and achievement change over time (Wang & Eccles, 2011; Shernoff et al., 2003), (2) analysis of engagement and performance in different school subjects (Furrer & Skinner, 2003), (3) inclusion of perceptions such as the value of school (e.g., reasons to study harder) (Wang & Eccles, 2011), as well as objective measures of engagement, not only self-report measures (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Other recommendations include adding (1) classroom compositions (e.g., peer group), (2) experimental designs, (3) students' reports of their teachers' quality of interaction (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014), and (4) "the role of engagement in the long-term development of student academic resilience and success" (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 779).

To sum up, studies on student engagement offer a rich opportunity to unveil connections (e.g., with motivations status such as relatedness) and interactions (e.g., peers and teachers) in research and pedagogical designs. It seems that there are more probabilities to experience lower levels of engagement in high school; for this reason, suggestions for population selection criteria are also in this direction, including specifications in the data collection of demographic information (e.g., age, gender, linguistic, and social characteristics). Also, recommendations have been made for specifying subjects (e.g., math or English class), data collection instruments (e.g., self-reports; for a review see Veiga, Reeve, Wentzel, & Robu, 2014), and instructional methods (e.g., teacher-centered approach; mastery goal oriented instruction) to determine additional factors related to students' levels of engagement in specific contexts.

### *What Does Agentic Engagement Mean?*

Reeve (2013) has conceptualized agentic engagement as the act of exerting agency through proactive behaviors that may alter or enrich the flow

of teaching. Through such engagement, according to this author, learners find ways of enriching, modifying, and personalizing their instruction. Thus, this type of engagement is linked to the learners' constructive and transactional contributions in the classroom (Reeve, 2012). These acts of contribution are understood as those that enrich (e.g., challenging the activity), modify (e.g., working with a peer), and personalize (e.g., expressing a preference) learning (Bandura, 2006 in Reeve, 2012). According to Reeve (2013), agentic-engaged learners may create self-supportive learning moments in the classroom by displaying their initiative and collaboration, which contributes directly to themselves (e.g., motivational support and achievement) and the classroom environment itself (e.g., instruction, teacher-student communication). The activities in which these engaged learners display their own contributions (e.g., student-initiated questions, recommendations, seek clarification, among others) may have two properties: the learners' own initiative (through sentences such as, "Teacher, can we do this?"), and the collaborative transaction among teachers and peers (Reeve, 2013).

In order to explain agentic engagement, this paper clarifies two concepts: choices (within the concept of autonomy) and initiatives (within the concept of agentic engagement). Autonomy refers to an "action that is chosen; action for which one is responsible" (Deci & Ryan, 1987, p. 1025) and as a "psychological condition to be reached at the beginning of adulthood" (Bekker & van Assen, 2006, p. 51). As a condition to be reached, being autonomous is a state that may be activated through choices and goals. This activation also applies to the concept of agentic engagement, but with an additional component—initiatives. Learner initiative "is broadly defined as any learner attempt to make an uninvited contribution to the ongoing classroom talk" (Waring, 2011, p. 204) and "is often considered an important factor in generating learning opportunities" (p. 202).

According to Waring's (2011) definition of the concept of learner initiative, the word "*uninvited*" may refer to (1) not being specifically selected as the next speaker or (2) not providing the expected response when selected" (p. 204). Taking into consideration

this definition, and as the author argues, learner initiative "cannot be narrowly defined as simple self-selection" (p. 214). Learners take initiatives in a variety of ways such as "stepping in on behalf of another, by responding when no responses are called for, and by using a given opportunity to do more than what is expected or the unexpected" (p. 214). This author explains broad initial categories that can be helpful in understanding the characteristics of initiatives. As she clarifies, this "picture is certainly more complex." (p. 214).

Agentic engagement is defined as the action of taking initiatives that contribute to learning and teaching (Reeve, 2012). Bandura (2006) argues that human agency implies intentionality with plans and strategies that might require accommodation of self-interests with other agents, for example, with teachers. Thus, teacher-student interaction is a key factor in order to experience agency in the classroom. Zuckerman (2007) labelled a supra-individual outcome as a situation "that appears at the place where the two intents meet and enrich one another [which] constitutes the significance of the joint action" (p. 12). In her words:

The actions of the teacher have the character of a probe; at each point in the lesson the teacher checks whether the situation corresponds to the pedagogical intent or whether the latter requires restructuring. When this instantaneous restructuring takes place, a feeling of success arises in the teacher: something greater and better has happened in the lesson that was planned. (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 11)

The concept of supra-individual shares a common theme with agentic engagement in that they refer to the enrichment of both learning and classroom interaction. The author affirms that supporting the impulse of a learner's initiative directed toward a goal means to construct mutually active cooperation with them, "action in accordance with *two intents* coordinated at each point of interaction" (Zuckerman, 2007, p. 35). An intention may be defined as "a determination to engage in a particular behavior, and it is equivalent to being motivated to act" (Reeve & Jang, 2006, p. 209), can be originated from ourselves, coerced, pressured,

seduced, or elaborated by another entity (e.g., teacher, reward), and may determine the degree of autonomous or controlled types of motivation (Reeve & Jang, 2006, p. 209).

A key word related to autonomy is goal which may be defined as the structure of knowledge that can be activated by the individual or influenced by the information available in his/her context (Pintrich, 2000). The achievement goal theory identifies a difference between mastery goals and performance goals. Mastery goals refer to “the desire to learn, that is, to acquire new knowledge and skills,” and performance goals refer to “the desire to attain competence in comparison with others” (Dompnier et al., 2015, p. 722). Research has confirmed that mastery goals adopted by learners contribute significantly to their motivation (Reeve, 2012). However, promoting these goals in school is not an easy task. As an example of this complexity, Urdan and Midgley (2003) found that changes of learners’ perceptions during the transition from elementary school to middle school include lower levels of mastery goals, self-efficacy, interest in school, and achievement. Another complexity emerged between the adolescents’ desire to become autonomous and at the same time the need to experience support from their teachers (Urden & Schoenfelder, 2006). Adolescence is critical for student engagement in school, including agentic engagement (Veiga et al., 2015).

Another theory related to autonomy is self-determination theory (SDT) which states that “intentional behaviors can be motivated by either autonomous or controlled forms of regulation” (Tsai, Kunter, Lüdtke, Trautwein, & Ryan, 2008). SDT takes into account the degree to which behavior can be transformed through autonomy and control (Black & Deci, 2000), and comprises competence (related to self-worth), autonomy (related to perceived control over the behavior and success) and relatedness (feelings of security and belonging in a social environment), which allow an increase in intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, and decrease the number of school drop-outs (Urden & Schoenfelder, 2006). Changes in these psychological needs may depend on the teacher’s motivating style (Reeve, 2012).

An autonomous learner has the ability to set goals, implement strategies to attain goals, and identify relevant resources (Aliponga, Gamble, & Ando, 2011). But how is autonomy developed? According to Bandura (2006), it is possible by perceiving and understanding causal relations and recognizing self-agentic responsibility. He clarifies that this last process of recognition “extends the perception of agency from action causality to personal causality” and permits that “the self becomes differentiated from others” (Bandura, 2006, p. 169). The self “exercising agency is not passive, and neither is it static” (Murray, 2011, p. 6). Agency requires practicing oneself to make conscious choices of action (Dion, 2011). Thus, “in order to effectively promote autonomy, a process of learning must first occur” (Aliponga et al., 2011, p. 90). According to Zuckerman (2007), teachers should support “a student’s initiative directed toward the search for new methods of action” which is “necessary for the cultivation of people with the initiative to teach themselves” (p. 9). Agency is most clearly observed in the initiatives that learners take in the classroom (Waring, 2011).

Researchers have used experimental designs to classify autonomy supportive versus controlling behaviors (Black & Deci, 2000). Reeve and Jang (2006) exemplify these two behaviors in their study on what teachers say and do to support students’ autonomy during a learning activity. They argue that instructional behaviors support autonomy by (1) “identifying and becoming more aware of students’ inner motivational resources” (p. 210) (e.g., by listening and asking their interests), (2) identifying students’ internal causality and creating “opportunities for students to align their inner motivational resources with their ongoing classroom activity” (p. 210) (e.g., peer or individual work), (3) “offering informational language” (p. 210) to support and build inner resources (e.g., praise as informational feedback, offering hints), and (4) promoting teachers’ sensitivity to students’ experiences (e.g., being responsive to students’ questions). Reeve (2012) claims that there is a need to consider the learners’ inner motivational resources because these resources permit learners to be and feel capable of engaging themselves. To do so, he emphasizes the reciprocal relation among students and teachers in order to facilitate students’ self-

expression of their interests, opinions, suggestions, and other acts of communication that may add more sources of motivation, as well as outcomes such as engagement.

In education, the word *choices* may be connected to autonomous individuals who can become autonomous agents when they express initiatives that contribute not only to their learning process but also to the development of their lessons. As Luck and d'Inverno (1995) explain, an autonomous agent is a motivated agent with a set of inner motivations and goals and potential means of perceiving and evaluating relevant aspects of their contexts. Being an agent is to "influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). Thus, autonomous agents do not depend on the adoption of goals because their goals are generated from internal motivations (Luck & d'Inverno, 1995).

### *Research on Agentic Engagement*

The study of agentic engagement has a recent history. Even though there have been previous attempts to specify verbal contributions initiated by the learners through data collected from observation, as in the Hit-Steer Observation System (e.g., Wood & Fiedler, 1978; see review on observation systems by Meehan et al., 2004), there was no description with a validated measure of learners' agentic engagement until 2011. Thus, Reeve and Tseng (2011), in an attempt to comprehend the contributions displayed by learners in the classroom, created a data base of middle and high school learners' proactive actions as described in field notes using the Hit-Steer Observation System. Then, after identifying categories, possible items were correlated through exploratory and confirmatory analyses with the other three types of engagement, namely behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. Then, the scores reported by high school students between 10th and 12th grades were correlated with the results of autonomy, self-efficacy, relatedness, and performance. By doing this, the researchers confirmed the existence of agentic behavior as a type of engagement and the first measure for students' contributions was described and validated. This scale of five items was called the Agentic Engagement Scale (AES).

With the aim of corroborating the five items related to agentic engagement and to systematically validate its concept, Reeve (2013) conducted a project designed in three parts. In his first study carried out in a Korean college environment, the researcher administrated the first scale of agentic engagement (Reeve & Tseng, 2011) and five items of proactive contributions related to psychological need satisfaction and self-efficacy. By applying factorial validity criteria, the researcher proposed a validated and refined version that was used in his two later studies.

In his second study, again conducted with college students, Reeve (2013) correlated the results of the refined scale to include the three additional types of engagement, academic performance, autonomous motivation, and controlled motivation. As predicted by the researcher, the scores of agentic engagement correlated positively with autonomous motivation, and both were related to proactive actions. For his third study, the researcher administrated the refined scale to 302 Korean middle-school students in physical education class in three moments over the course of a semester. In this survey, he also included six items of teacher-provided autonomy support which allowed prediction of progressive changes in the learners' perceptions, learning environment and performance, as well as confirmation of the internal consistency of the refined five-item scale on agentic engagement. Through Reeve's three studies, a refined measure of agentic engagement was validated by relating the items to a motivational construct such as teacher-perceived autonomy support which also confirms the social dimension of agentic engagement.

From my point of view, the scores of this measure may differ notably in learning contexts where students use a second or foreign language which may require higher levels of teacher-perceived autonomy support than in other contexts where the mother tongue facilitates self-expression of needs, preferences, opinions, requests, clarification, interest, and other verbal interventions that aim directly at understanding and teaching, just as agentic engagement is conceptualized. In order to test this measure in classrooms of second or foreign languages and verify if it is highly connected to the



attitude towards the language itself, it would be necessary to add items of individual interest in the specific language.

One study on the nature of learner initiative was conducted by Waring (2011). She analyzed the classroom interaction of seven groups of students with class sizes ranging from seven to 15 ESL (English as a Second Language) adults who represented 10 different cultural backgrounds. In her line-by-line analysis, she focused on initiative turns, conversational sequence, and accomplishments, which allowed her to propose an empirically based typology of learner initiatives using conversation analysis (CA). In her study, she identified 160 cases of initiatives, bearing in mind that they constituted neither a response in the IRF (initiative-response-feedback) sequence nor a response to the teacher's initiation.

In her analysis, she identified three types of initiatives—namely type A (initial self-selection), B (volunteering initiative as a response), and C (initiative to transform a sequence), all situated in a turn-taking process. Type A represents a clear connection with learner agency in action (with 50% of the cases in the researcher's data) and helps to “display knowledge and to seek and pursue understandings” (Waring, 2011, p. 207). In type B, the learner self-selects through a volunteering response (e.g., when the teacher asks a question to the entire class) or activates previous turns. In type C, the learner tries to maximize speaking opportunities by doing more than what was asked for or transforming the learning atmosphere (e.g. with jokes), both actions are displayed for specific purposes.

Waring (2011) concluded that the use of self-selection (type A) manifests the students' participation at the level of the discourse that typically belongs to the teacher. Thus, the participants are not mere respondents to teacher questions because they “use the language to inform, resist, redirect, plead and persuade” (p. 208). Her findings present three types of learner initiatives (initiate a sequence, volunteer a response, and exploit an assigned turn), and as she admitted, her results do not show how learners changed their participation

over time, but her description on what initiatives do attempt “to show how they [initiatives] may contain certain ingredients that are considered important in providing learning” (p. 208). She discussed how initiatives might create kinds of learning opportunities taking into consideration theoretical assumptions of what promotes learning (e.g., participation, agency, and humor). In this respect, Zuckermann (2007) states that supporting learner's initiatives “must be accomplished tactically” (p. 38) which means supporting impulses as well as the highest capabilities of the various social groups.

To sum up, agentic engagement has been identified and measured by gathering behavioral observation and self-reports (Reeve, 2012). Recently, the first scale to measure this type of engagement was developed (Reeve & Tseng, 2011) and refined (Reeve, 2013). This scale condenses the verbal constructive contributions initiated by learners. Further studies should be related to clarifying the profile of an agentic-engaged learner, within a specific situation and taking into account specific aspects such as the student's interest in the school subject. A future investigation could look at how and why “students can take action to motivate (and demotivate) themselves” (Reeve & Lee, 2014, p. 537) as well as to understand the disaffected face of agentic engagement, its conceptualization, and its effects (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). This side is understood as “those occasions when students sit passively and simply take whatever instruction teachers provide [for] them” (Reeve & Tseng, 2011, p. 266).

### *Further Research on Agentic Engagement*

The theoretical framework and the literature review presented in this paper are connected to the need of understanding agentic engagement from the teachers' as well as from the students' perspectives. Studies on the disaffected face of agentic engagement, its conceptualization, and its effects are also needed in order to identify which strategies may facilitate students' learning processes and teacher's intervention (Reeve & Tseng, 2011), for example during school transitions (e.g., from primary to secondary schools) or during biological changes (from childhood to puberty). Suggestions also

include the understanding (description, typology, and analysis) of students' self-initiated contributions (proactive actions) in the classroom (Waring, 2011) in order to identify which strategies may facilitate students' learning processes, teacher's intervention, and student-teacher interaction. Questions formulated by Waring (2011) may contribute in this direction. Her questions include, "In what specific ways can instruction be organized to maximize learner initiatives?" and "What exactly is entailed in learner initiative?"

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