

The Broaden and Build Theory in English Learning: Unraveling the Link between Achievement Goals and Engagement among English Major

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Abstract

Amid globalization, English's significance as an international communication tool is evident. However, while much research focuses on middle and high school and general college students, English majors have been relatively overlooked. Their achievement goals and learning engagement are crucial for academic and career advancement.

This study adopted a mixed - methods approach. It surveyed 416 English - major students from diverse universities, including both Han and ethnic minorities. An optimized questionnaire was used, and data were analyzed with SPSS 26.0. Results show a significant positive correlation between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement, both at a medium - high level. Differences exist across various factors like gender, grade, ethnicity, and proficiency. For example, female students have less speaking anxiety, and seniors are more proficient and engaged. Based on the Broaden and Build Theory, this research offers new perspectives for English teaching, while also identifying limitations and suggesting future research directions.

Keywords: broaden and build theory, english learning achievement goals, learning engagement

1. Introduction

In the contemporary globalized era, English has emerged as an indispensable tool for communication, research, and career advancement. As China's education system continues to evolve, there is an increasing emphasis on cultivating students' English proficiency and cross - cultural communication capabilities. However, modern society's growing complexity presents students with various 21st - century educational challenges. For instance, Kennedy & Sundberg (2020)[1] pointed out that students often face issues such as insufficient learning motivation, low levels of learning engagement, and unscientific learning methods. These problems directly impede their English learning achievements. Therefore, exploring the relationship between English major students' English learning achievement goals and learning engagement is of great significance for improving the quality of college English teaching and promoting students' comprehensive development.

Learning achievement goals are specific and measurable objectives set by students, which have a profound impact on their learning behavior and outcomes. For English majors, these goals are closely related to their future career prospects and personal development. Research has shown that students with clear achievement goals tend to be more engaged in learning, more motivated, and achieve better academic results. Achievement motivation pervades various aspects of daily life, including classrooms and workplaces, where individuals strive to excel. Over the past decade, many theorists have adopted a social - cognitive perspective and an achievement goal approach to explain individuals' aspirations related to competence. An "achievement goal" is widely regarded as the driving force behind task - learning engagement, and the specific goal type forms a fundamental framework that influences how individuals perceive, engage in, and act upon their pursuit of achievements. Mastery-approach goals are driven by a pursuit of achievement and an expectation of high personal competence; performance - avoidance goals stem from a fear of failure and a belief in low personal competence; and performance - approach goals are influenced by achievement motivation, fear of failure, and high expectations of personal competence. Mastery objectives promote intrinsic motivation, performance - approach objectives improve academic performance, while performance - avoidance goals are harmful to both intrinsic motivation and academic performance. Learning engagement refers to students' positive attitudes, behaviors, and emotional investments during the learning process. It includes cognitive engagement (such as focused attention and deep thinking), behavioral engagement (such as

active participation in classroom activities and proactive completion of assignments), and emotional engagement (such as enjoying the learning process and being enthusiastic about learning). Mercer (2019)[2] emphasized that learning engagement requires the active participation of learners, and action is the defining characteristic of learner engagement. Hiver et al. (2024)[3] defined learning engagement as students' participation in and identification with school, as well as the extent to which individual and contextual factors contribute to students' positive responses to school demands. Across different theoretical frameworks, there is a consensus that learning engagement is fundamental to all forms of learning. The level of learning engagement is closely related to students' academic achievements and long - term well - being. High - level learning engagement means that students have abundant energy, strong psychological resilience, and the ability to actively face learning challenges, thus achieving better learning outcomes. In English learning, the Broaden and Build Theory provides a connection between achievement goals and learning engagement. Clear achievement goals can enhance students' motivation and participation, leading to improved English proficiency and learning outcomes through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement.

This study aims to investigate the application of the Broaden and Build Theory in college English learning, with the goal of understanding the relationship between achievement goals and learning engagement. It explores the time, effort, and resources that students invest in activities to improve their English proficiency, aiming to reveal the dynamic relationship between goal - setting and engagement. By understanding how different achievement goals affect learning engagement, this study hopes to provide insights for improving the efficiency of English learning, guiding the formulation of effective study plans. This research advocates teaching strategies that can inspire what Wang & Lee (2021)[4] called "agentic learning engagement," where students take the initiative to enhance their learning and create a positive learning environment. The focus is on improving and streamlining the teaching strategies and methods in English language teaching, so that students can actively, constructively, and reciprocally accelerate their academic progress. This approach not only promotes students' comprehensive development but also meets the diverse social needs for English proficiency. The research also attempts to support personalized learning and holistic development by identifying differences in achievement goals and learning engagement among different student groups. Ultimately, by improving students' English proficiency, this study aims to enhance their employability and meet the changing demands for English - proficient talents in a globalized world. The overall objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of English language learning. By understanding the impact of different achievement goals on learning engagement, this study hopes to provide guidance for individuals to formulate scientific and rational English learning plans, so as to optimize learning outcomes within limited time. The Broaden and Build Theory emphasizes the broadening and constructive role of positive emotions in individual thinking and behavior. By studying the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement among English major students, this research provides a new perspective for understanding English language learning. It further explores the application of the Broaden and Build Theory in the educational field, deepening our understanding of the theory. Learning achievement goals are crucial sources of motivation for students. Elliot & Hulleman (2017)[5] described achievement goals as "the objectives that drive engagement in learning activities related to competence development." Learning engagement is the key to achieving these goals. Skinner & Pitzer (2012)[6] believed that the core characteristic of learning engagement is action. Despite the diverse perspectives and definitions of learning engagement, Reschly & Christenson (2011)[7] thought that its essence as an active activity remains consistent across different frameworks and interpretations. As mentioned above, learning engagement reflects the level of students' active participation in learning tasks and the degree to which their physical and mental efforts are directed towards specific goals. This study explores the dynamic interaction between these two factors, revealing how they are intertwined and influence each other. By studying the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement among English major students, this research provides new insights into second - language acquisition and educational psychology. It promotes academic discussion, advances theoretical development, and improves researchers' professional knowledge through various research methods. The research results provide practical guidance for college English teaching, helping teachers understand students' needs, design effective teaching strategies, and guide students to improve their learning outcomes. Learning engagement, learning achievement goals, and learning outcomes are important factors affecting English learning. This research identifies the key factors affecting English learning engagement and achievement goals, guiding the formulation of teaching strategies that can motivate students and improve learning. It provides insights for educational reforms, helping teachers understand students' needs and evaluate the impact of reforms, and provides empirical evidence for future educational changes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of English Learning Achievement Goals

In the early 1980s, scholars like Dweck[8] and Nicholls[9] first introduced the concept of achievement goals. Dweck (1986)[10] considered achievement goals as a comprehensive result of cognition, emotion, and behavior in the context of learning motivation. Nicholls (1989) [9] further explored the competitive ethos related to achievement goals within the framework of democratic education. Subsequently, Ames and Archer synthesized different concepts, orientations, and viewpoints on achievement goals from the works of Dweck, Nicholls, and others.

Regarding the definition of achievement goals, different scholars have diverse perspectives. Pekrun, Elliot, and Maier (2006)[10] defined achievement goals as the ability - related goals that individuals pursue in achievement situations. Although the specific definitions vary, several commonalities can be identified. Firstly, achievement goals are a form of cognitive representation. Secondly, their content encompasses the reasons, significance, and purpose of learning.

In the context of this study, achievement goals specifically refer to an individual's perception of the purpose and significance of performing tasks in competence - related situations. More precisely, it focuses on the perception of the purpose and significance of learning English in learning contexts, especially for English language learning. This definition emphasizes the cognitive aspect of students' understanding of why they engage in English learning, which serves as a crucial driving force for their learning behavior.

2.2 Definition of Learning Engagement

Schaufeli (2002)[11] was among the first to define learning engagement. He described it as a positive and profound spirit associated with learning, which consists of three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor implies that learners have abundant energy and mental endurance, being both willing and able to put effort into their studies. Dedication means that learners find learning meaningful, engage with it passionately, take pride in their efforts, and are brave enough to face challenges. Absorption refers to learners being so immersed in their studies that they lose track of time and experience joy during the learning process.

In 2004, Fredricks et al.[12] developed a three - dimensional model of learning engagement based on previous research. This model includes behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement focuses on learners' compliance with educational norms and their commitment and focus in academic activities. For example, it can be manifested in regular class attendance, active participation in classroom discussions, and punctual completion of assignments. Emotional engagement captures learners' emotional responses to learning, ranging from positive emotions such as excitement and curiosity to negative emotions like frustration and anxiety. It also involves learners' appreciation of the learning process. Cognitive engagement highlights learners' ability to think strategically and self - regulate in their educational pursuits, such as using effective learning strategies, setting appropriate learning goals, and actively monitoring their learning progress.

Reeve and Tseng (2011) [13] expanded the framework by adding agentic engagement to the existing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagements. In general, most scholars agree that learning engagement mainly consists of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions. Fredricks et al.[12] further elaborated that behavioral engagement refers to the observable actions of learners, such as their participation in class, school, and extracurricular activities. Cognitive engagement involves the learning strategies learners employ, the effort they exert, and their motivations for learning. Emotional engagement pertains to the affective responses learners have during the learning process, including emotions like happiness, anxiety, excitement, and sadness. This multi - dimensional understanding of learning engagement provides a comprehensive perspective on how students interact with the learning environment and materials.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the "Broaden and Build Theory". This theory posits that positive emotional states, such as those triggered by clear learning achievement goals, expand an individual's immediate cognitive - behavioral repertoire. For example, when a student has a clear goal of achieving a high score in an English language exam, this goal can stimulate positive emotions like motivation and determination. These emotions, in turn, prompt the student to engage in broader and more creative actions, such as exploring different learning resources, participating in language exchange activities, or devising innovative study plans. Over time, these actions lead to the building of enduring personal resources, such as enhanced language skills, improved communication abilities, and a broader social network in the language - learning community.

Based on this theoretical foundation, the study hypothesizes that clear and personally relevant English learning achievement goals can evoke positive learning emotions in students. For instance, if a student's goal is to be able to communicate fluently in English with international peers, this goal may make them feel excited and motivated. These positive emotions not only enhance their immediate learning experiences but also encourage a more profound and multi - faceted engagement with their studies. Students with such goals may be more likely to invest more time and effort in learning English. They might spend extra hours practicing speaking, reading English - language materials, or seeking opportunities to use English in real - life situations.

The study also aims to explore how these positive emotions and the subsequent broadened actions contribute to the building of personal resources. Students who are emotionally invested in their English learning goals, such as aiming to master a particular English - language literature genre, are more likely to develop effective study habits, improve their language proficiency, and form valuable relationships with peers and instructors. These resources can then serve as a solid foundation for their future academic and professional success.

Furthermore, the study intends to investigate the mechanisms through which clear learning goals influence positive emotions and, consequently, learning engagement. It seeks to identify specific factors within the educational environment that can either enhance or impede the effectiveness of learning goals in promoting positive emotions and engagement. For example, a supportive classroom environment with encouraging teachers and collaborative peers may strengthen the positive impact of learning goals on emotions and engagement. In contrast, a highly competitive and stressful environment may undermine the positive relationship. By understanding these mechanisms, educators can design more effective teaching strategies that leverage the power of positive emotions to create a more engaged and successful learning experience for students.

2.4 Research on English Learning Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement Abroad

Research on English learning achievement goals and learning engagement is relatively extensive, yet there is a notable shortage of studies specifically focusing on the relationship between these two constructs. Firstly, achievement goals, an important psychological construct in educational literature, have not received sufficient attention in language learning contexts. The significance of achievement goals lies in their ability to initiate and guide the self - regulatory processes in language learning. For example, Feng, Wang, and King (2023)[14] pointed out that achievement goals play a crucial role in influencing students' emotions and willingness to communicate in EFL learning.

With the rise of the positive psychology movement, researchers have increasingly paid attention to learners' positive and negative traits. Foreign scholars have conducted related research in areas such as exploring the influence of learning environments and teaching methodologies on English learning achievement goals and learning engagement. Using empirical research methods, they have analyzed the impact of individual factors, such as learning motivation and strategies, on students' English learning achievement goals and learning engagement. Learning engagement is often used to broadly discuss learners' interest in activities. High classroom learning engagement is a goal that most teachers strive for in an ideal classroom setting, as it is essential for enhancing learning outcomes, as emphasized by Fredrickson (1998)[15]. For example, Van den Branden (as cited in Philp & Duchesne, 2016[16]) reminded us of the important role of teachers in motivating students through well - designed tasks that are both challenging and closely matched to their needs. Teachers can involve students through tasks that are highly relevant and achievable with support, which can inspire students' effort and persistence.

2.5 Research on English Learning Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement at Home

In China, with English becoming an increasingly vital tool for international communication, research on English learning achievement goals and learning engagement has gradually attracted more attention. Mastering English well not only facilitates students' academic pursuits and career development but also broadens their international perspectives and enhances their cross - cultural communication capabilities. Therefore, understanding the current situation of English learning achievement goals and learning engagement is of great significance for improving the quality of English education.

Learning achievement goals refer to the specific outcomes or standards that individuals pursue during the learning process. These goals can be classified into three types: performance - approach goals, mastery goals, and performance - avoidance goals. Mastery goals involve students focusing on understanding and mastering the learning tasks themselves, aiming to improve their personal abilities and skills with a primary pursuit of deep knowledge comprehension. Performance - approach goals mean students prioritize comparison with others and external evaluations, striving to outperform their peers or achieve specific grade standards. Performance - avoidance goals refer to students attempting to avoid failure or negative evaluations, which may lead them to avoid challenging tasks or show a negative attitude towards learning.

Learning engagement, on the other hand, encompasses the effort and time an individual devotes to learning activities. It can be further divided into behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to the time, effort, and participation of students in learning activities, often manifested in attendance rates, classroom participation, and completion of homework assignments. Emotional engagement involves students' interest and enthusiasm towards learning activities, as well as their emotional responses to learning. Cognitive engagement represents the degree of mental involvement in the learning process, including how students think, understand, and apply what they have learned. Cognitive engagement enables students to understand and apply knowledge more deeply.

Numerous studies have indicated a close relationship between learning achievement goals and learning engagement. Clear learning achievement goals can stimulate students' learning motivation and enhance their learning engagement, while high levels of learning engagement facilitate the achievement of learning goals and contribute to academic success. Traditional English teaching models in China often emphasized knowledge impartation, neglecting students' subjectivity, which led to a lack of initiative and creativity in the learning process. Therefore, this study aims to explore the current situation and relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for improving the quality of college English education.

Domestic scholars have conducted preliminary investigations in this field. For example, Feng (2023)[14] proposed a study combining variables and a person - centered approach to investigate achievement goals, emotions, and willingness to communicate (WTC) in EFL learning, focusing on the role of achievement goals and achievement emotions in understanding WTC. In China, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, especially Chinese students, tend to prioritize examination scores over communication, which may significantly hinder their language learning outcomes.

Learning engagement, as a crucial indicator of learning quality, positively predicts academic performance, reflecting learners' efforts in behavior, cognition, and emotion towards learning. It represents both an efficient learning process and an ideal learning outcome. In foreign language learning contexts, where language skill automation requires learners' sustained and whole - hearted participation, the role of learning engagement is even more significant. Thus, this construct has received increasing attention from academia in recent years.

Past research has shown that the existence of superficial motivation often leads to a lack of sustained interest and motivation in English learning, thereby affecting students' learning outcomes. English learning engagement varies, and it is closely related to students' learning achievement goals. Specifically, students with positive learning achievement goals tend to invest more time and effort in English learning, while those with negative goals often lack motivation and invest less. Furthermore, Li Chengchen (2022)[17][18] pointed out that factors such as learning environments and teaching methods also influence students' learning engagement. Their mixed - methods study of 2002 EFL learners from 11 Chinese universities examined the complex relationships between perceived teacher enthusiasm, emotions (enjoyment and boredom), and social - behavior learning engagement. Quantitative analysis revealed small to moderate correlations among these variables.

Over time and with societal development, students' English learning achievement goals and study engagement have shown certain trends. On one hand, with the acceleration of globalization and China's increasing openness, students have placed greater importance on English learning, and their learning achievement goals have gradually shifted from simply coping with exams to more diversified and individualized directions. On the other hand, as teaching reforms deepen, there are still research gaps when examining the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement.

2.6 Research Gaps

In the exploration of the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement, there are indeed research gaps and underexplored areas.

Firstly, although a significant amount of theoretical and empirical research has been conducted on English achievement goals and learning engagement, research in domestic contexts, especially among Chinese scholars, has certain limitations. Chinese students often prioritize examination outcomes over communicative competence and are reluctant to use English for communication. Incorporating speaking activities into daily teaching practice is crucial to improve learners' willingness to communicate and make them aware that communication is the ultimate goal of language learning. Moreover, learning engagement has multiple dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. However, existing studies often focus on one or two of these dimensions, lacking a comprehensive, multi - dimensional analysis. This shortcoming may prevent a deeper understanding of the relationship between learning engagement and achievement goals. For example, a study might only consider

students' behavioral participation in class without taking into account their emotional attitudes and cognitive strategies, which could lead to an incomplete picture of their overall learning engagement.

Secondly, achievement goal theory has not received sufficient attention in the field of second - language acquisition. Future research should explore its potential as a highly explanatory framework. For instance, scholars can study the interaction between achievement goals and various language competencies. Experimental designs and longitudinal investigations can provide a more detailed understanding of how achievement goals interact with other relevant factors. Additionally, the learning backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and individual differences of English majors may have a significant impact on their English learning achievement goals and learning engagement. However, previous studies may not have fully explored these aspects, failing to uncover the complex relationships among these variables. For example, students from different cultural backgrounds may have different understandings and pursuits of their English learning achievement goals, and their approaches to learning engagement may also vary. A student from a culture that values group harmony may have different learning engagement patterns compared to a student from a more individualistic culture.

Thirdly, existing research in China has mainly focused on various samples of English as a foreign language learners, such as senior high school students and secondary school students. There is limited research on the experiences of college students, especially those majoring in English who are often multilingual. For many students, English may be their third or fourth language, presenting unique challenges in learning, especially in spoken communication. There may be differences in English learning motivations, goals, and learning engagement between English majors and non - English majors. However, current research rarely considers these disciplinary differences. Conducting studies tailored to students from different disciplines can lead to more comprehensive and nuanced analytical results.

Finally, beyond learning engagement and achievement goals, many other factors, such as teaching methodologies, learning resources, and family backgrounds, can affect English learning outcomes. Current research often focuses on one or two of these factors, neglecting a comprehensive analysis of multiple influencing factors. This limitation may impede a thorough and in - depth understanding of English learning outcomes. For example, a study might only examine the impact of teaching methods on learning outcomes without considering the role of family support or the availability of learning resources, which could lead to an incomplete understanding of what influences students' English learning success.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, we present the methodology utilized for this study. It encompasses the formulation of research questions, the study design, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

3.1 Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: What is the general profile of English learning achievement goals and learning engagement among English major students?
- RQ2: What is the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement?

3.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study is the questionnaire survey approach. English major students were chosen as the research subjects. A questionnaire was developed, covering two main dimensions: English learning achievement goals and learning engagement. The questionnaire was distributed through an online platform, and a total of 416 valid responses were obtained. For data analysis, SPSS software was employed to conduct descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and other relevant methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, providing both numerical data and insights into the relationships between variables.

3.3 Participants

A total of 416 English major students were recruited for this study. They were from diverse universities, including Renmin University of China, Xiamen University, and Fudan University, among others. The student body was composed of both Han and minority nationalities, such as Shui, Tajik, and Dongxiang. Table 3.1 provides detailed information about the participants. There were 219 male students (52.6%) and 197 female students (47.4%). In terms of academic levels, 82 were freshmen (19.7%), 75 were sophomores (18.0%), 96 were juniors (23.1%), 98 were seniors (23.6%), and 65 were graduate students (15.6%). Regarding ethnicity, 355 students were of Han

ethnicity (85.3%), while 61 students were from 31 different ethnic minorities (14.7%). This diverse sample ensures a wide range of perspectives and experiences are represented, enhancing the generalizability of the study's findings.

Table 3.1 Background information of the Participants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	219	52.6	52.6	52.6
	Female	197	47.4	47.4	100.0
Total		416	100.0	100.0	
Grade	Freshman	82	19.7	19.7	19.7
	Sophomore	75	18.0	18.0	37.7
	Junior	96	23.1	23.1	60.8
	Senior	98	23.6	23.6	84.4
	Postgraduate	65	15.6	15.6	100.0
Total		416	100.0	100.0	
Ethnicity	Han	355	85.3	85.3	85.3
	Minority	61	14.7	14.7	100.0
Total		416	100.0	100.0	

3.4 Instrument

An adapted English achievement goals and learning engagement questionnaire (see Appendix) was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part gathered background information about the participants. The second part focused on English learning achievement goals, and the third part dealt with learning engagement, which was further divided into behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement.

3.4.1 The Background Information of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire model for background information was adapted from the work of Andrew J. Elliot and Marcy A. Church (2006)[3]. It collected data on student demographics, including school affiliation, gender, major, academic standing, ethnicity, and personal English proficiency levels. This detailed background information is crucial as it offers insights into the participants' language acquisition journey and helps account for potential demographic influences on their English learning achievement goals and engagement.

3.4.2 The Questionnaire of English Learning Achievement Goals

The survey instrument for English learning achievement goals has demonstrated both validity and reliability. It is structured into three sections: performance approach goal, mastery goal, and performance avoidance goal. Achievement goals are generally considered as the driving forces behind task engagement, and the specific goal types shape how individuals perceive, feel, and act in their pursuit of achievements. Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996)[19] conducted two experiments to explore the predictive value of this achievement goal framework with approach and avoidance tendencies. In these experiments, performance - approach, performance - avoidance, and mastery goals were induced through experimental manipulation, and their impacts on intrinsic motivation, as well as the pleasure and interest derived from the activity, were observed. The achievement goal section of the questionnaire contains 17 items, with six for the Performance - Approach Goal, six for the Mastery Goal, and five for the Performance Avoidance Goal. Learning engagement is categorized into four dimensions: behavioral engagement (items 18, 19), emotional engagement (items 20 - 22), and cognitive engagement (items 23 - 25). The entire 25 - item questionnaire was rated on a 5 - likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (5 points).

3.4.3 Discussion of the Reliability and Validity of the Survey Instrument

The reliability and validity of the measures for achievement goals and learning engagement were thoroughly tested. The results are presented in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. The reliability of Achievement Goals, as measured by Cronbach's

Alpha, is 0.915, and for Learning Engagement, it is 0.950. In terms of validity, the KMO values for Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement are 0.988 and 0.96 respectively, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity shows significant results with Approx. Chi - Square values of 7187.772 and 3802.952 for Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement respectively. These high coefficients indicate that the scale used in this research is both valid and reliable for data collection.

Table 3.2 Reliability Statistics of Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Item
Achievement Goals	0.915	17
Learning Engagement	0.950	8

Table 3.3 Validity Statistics of Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement

Scale		Achievement goals	Learning Engagement
KMO		0.988	0.96
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7187.772	3802.952
	df	136	28
	Sig.	0.00	0.00

3.4.4 Test of Normal Distribution of Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement

To verify the normal distribution of English learning achievement goals and engagement among English majors, a descriptive analysis focusing on skewness and kurtosis was carried out. When the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis are below 1, they are considered important predictive indicators of normal distribution. As shown in Table 3.4, the skewness values for Achievement Goal and Learning Engagement are - 1.075 and - 1.063 respectively, and the kurtosis values are - 0.657 and - 0.661 respectively. These values are close to 0, suggesting a normal distribution of the data. Figures 3.1 and 3.2, which present the normal curves of achievement goals and learning engagement in histogram form, further confirm that the data of Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement are well - suited to a normal distribution. This normal distribution is important as it validates the use of parametric statistical methods in the data analysis stage.

		Achievement Goal	Learning Engagement
N	Valid	416	416
	Missing	0	0
Skewness		-1.075	-1.063
Std. Error of Skewness		.120	.120
Kurtosis		-.657	-.661
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.239	0.239

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The General Profile of Achievement Goals

Table 4.1 showcases the sample size, minimum and maximum values, mean scores, and standard deviation for self - assessed variables. Among the 416 participants, the mean scores on a 5 - likert scale for various self - rated variables were calculated. The self - assessment of English Performance had a mean (M) of 3.64 with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.34. The Performance approach goal had an M of 3.66 and an SD of 1.16, the Mastery Goal had an M of 3.62 and an SD of 1.13, and the Performance avoidance goal had an M of 3.22 with an SD of 0.45. These figures provide an initial overview of how students perceive their English - related achievement goals.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of self-rated variable

Dimension	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Assessment of English Performance	416	1	5	3.64	1.338
Performance Approach Goal	416	1.00	5.00	3.6591	1.15509
Mastery Goal	416	1.17	5.00	3.6374	1.13288
Performance Avoidance Goal	416	2.00	4.17	3.2220	0.45110
Behavioral Learning Engagement	416	1.00	5.00	3.6242	1.19417
Emotional Learning Engagement	416	1.00	5.00	3.6530	1.17792
Cognitive Learning Engagement	416	1.00	5.00	3.5954	1.15678
Achievement Goal	416	1.68	4.44	3.5062	0.87037
Learning Engagement	416	1.11	4.89	3.6242	1.13070
Valid N (listwise)	416				

4.2 The General Profile of Learning Engagement

The table also presents data on learning engagement variables. Behavioral Learning Engagement had an M of 3.62 and an SD of 1.19. Emotional Learning Engagement had an M of 3.65 and an SD of 1.17, and Cognitive Learning Engagement had an M of 3.59 with an SD of 1.15. The overall Achievement Goal had an M of 3.50 and an SD of 0.87, while Learning Engagement as a whole had an M of 3.62 and an SD of 1.13. Since the average scores of all these variables are above 3 points, they are all above the median level. This indicates a relatively positive stance among students in terms of their learning engagement and achievement goal orientation. Moreover, these data suggest a potential correlation between English achievement goals and learning engagement.

4.3 The Relationship between Achievement Goals and Learning Engagement and Some Variables

Table 4.2 shows the correlation statistics of self - rated variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Self - Assessment of English Performance and Achievement Goal is 0.845, and this correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Sig. = .000). This implies a very strong positive correlation, meaning that as the self - assessment of English performance increases, the achievement goal value also tends to increase. The Pearson correlation coefficient between Self - Assessment of English Performance and Learning Engagement is 0.841, which is also significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a strong positive correlation between these two variables.

The highest Pearson correlation coefficient, 0.967, is between Achievement Goal and Learning Engagement, and it is significant at the 0.01 level. This demonstrates an almost perfect positive correlation. When the level of achievement goal increases, learning engagement also significantly increases. These correlations highlight the close relationships among these variables, suggesting that students' self - perception of their English performance, their achievement goals, and their learning engagement are intertwined.

Table 4.2 Correlations statistics of self-rated variables

		B6	Achievement Goal	Learning Engagement
Self-Assessment of English Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.845**	.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	416	416	416
Achievement Goal	Pearson Correlation	.845**	1	.967**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	416	416	416
Learning Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.841**	.967**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	416	416	416

4.4 Discussion

In this research, a hierarchical model of approach and avoidance achievement motivation was constructed and evaluated within the context of college classrooms. The results strongly support the proposed theoretical framework. Factor analysis of the achievement goal items revealed three expected factors: mastery, performance - approach, and performance - avoidance goals. Path analyses exploring the precursors of each orientation showed

that mastery and performance - avoidance goals are respectively based on achievement motivation and fear of failure as their underlying motivational dispositions. In contrast, the performance - approach goal is influenced by both achievement motivation and fear of failure.

Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996)[19] pioneered the integration of the traditional approach - avoidance distinction into the modern framework of performance and mastery achievement goals, leading to a trichotomous conceptualization of achievement goals, including mastery, performance - approach, and performance - avoidance orientations. In this study, we adhered to this trichotomous framework as the theoretical foundation and further extended the integration by focusing on the motive disposition construct and different levels of analysis from traditional and modern perspectives. As a result, we developed a hierarchical model where mastery, performance - approach, and performance - avoidance regulatory forms are intermediate representations of their underlying motive dispositions: achievement motivation and fear of failure. Achievement motivation drives individuals towards success, so both levels related to it exhibit an approach orientation. Performance - avoidance goals focus on avoiding unfavorable outcomes, and fear of failure steers individuals away from the risk of failure, resulting in an avoidance orientation at both related levels.

In this study, achievement motivation and fear of failure were conceptualized and operationalized as distinct constructs. This approach has enabled a more concise evaluation of our hypotheses and a deeper understanding of the individual contributions of each motivational disposition. Self - report tools were used to assess both motivational dispositions, and a fear - of - failure metric was chosen as a proxy for the broader motive of avoiding failure instead of a test anxiety measure. To gain more in - depth insights, it would be valuable to further test the proposed relationships of these two motivational dispositions. Overall, this research contributes to a better understanding of the complex relationships between achievement goals, learning engagement, and underlying motivational factors in the context of English learning among college students.

5. Conclusion

This study, based on the Broaden and Build Theory, has explored the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement among English major students, revealing valuable insights.

By taking a comprehensive view that considers individual differences, cultural contexts, and the multi - dimensional nature of learning engagement, we've discovered the complex interplay between these constructs. The findings highlight the significance of students' unique learning goals, which are shaped by personal aspirations and academic disciplines. These personalized goals greatly influence their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral learning engagement. The Broaden and Build Theory helps us understand that positive emotions from pursuing meaningful achievement goals can expand students' thought - action repertoires and build resilience, leading to better learning outcomes.

However, this study also indicates that future research should adopt a more all - encompassing perspective. There are numerous factors affecting English learning achievement, such as teaching methods, learning resources, and external support systems. Considering these, educators and researchers can design more targeted interventions to meet students' diverse needs, creating an environment for personal and academic growth.

A detailed understanding of the relationship between English learning achievement goals and learning engagement is essential for improving teaching strategies and student results. Future research should dig deeper into the specific ways different achievement goals affect various aspects of learning engagement, especially in English major education. For example, it could explore how mastery and performance goals impact students' participation in language learning tasks, their use of learning strategies, and their overall motivation and perseverance.

Moreover, there's a need to examine the role of cultural factors and individual differences in shaping achievement goals and engagement. This may involve studying how students from different ethnic backgrounds or with different levels of prior English exposure set and pursue their learning goals, and how these relate to their academic performance and satisfaction.

In conclusion, integrating positive psychology principles into English language teaching holds potential benefits. By creating a learning environment that encourages students to set and pursue achievable, meaningful goals, educators can help students develop a growth mindset and a resilient attitude towards learning difficulties. This approach can not only enhance students' English proficiency but also contribute to their overall well - being and personal development.

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