CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING MODELS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: This study aims to develop a culturally integrated English for Young Learners (EYL) instructional model to enhance student engagement. The research is grounded in the limited number of studies explicitly addressing learner engagement within the EFL context, particularly in Indonesia, as well as the lack of cultural representation in instructional materials, which negatively impacts student involvement. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was employed, guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework. Data were collected from the Scopus database for the publication period 2020–2025, yielding an initial 874 articles, which were narrowed down to 53 based on predefined inclusion criteria. The synthesis reveals that student engagement is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, social, and cultural aspects. Key influencing factors include motivation, positive emotions (such as enjoyment and L2 pride), fulfilment of psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), teacher support, technological integration (e.g., flipped classrooms, game-based learning), and culturally responsive pedagogy. Cultural integration has been shown to enhance student engagement through relevant material representation, arts- and heritage-based activities, and teachers' cultural competence. The study concludes by underscoring the importance of designing a culturally grounded EYL model that prioritizes engagement as a primary learning outcome. It offers conceptual, methodological, and contextual contributions to the advancement of English language education for young learners in Indonesia and provides a foundation for future empirical testing of the proposed model in real classroom settings.
Keywords: student engagement, English for Young Learners (EYL), cultural integration, systematic literature review, culturally responsive pedagogy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to young learners is no longer perceived merely as a linguistic activity, but rather as a multidimensional process encompassing cognitive, affective, social, and cultural factors. Over the past decade, the success of language learning has increasingly been determined by the extent to which students are actively engaged, motivated, and connected to the learning materials. Student engagement has emerged as a key construct in the literature, as it has been shown to significantly influence long-term learning outcomes. (Bai & Zang, 2025) argue that bilingual motivation can coexist synergistically rather than competitively, thereby enhancing engagement when the first and second languages are positioned as mutually supportive(Liu et al., 2025) further emphasize that the fulfilment of young learners' basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for sustaining engagement. These findings highlight that engagement in English language learning is shaped by

the complex interaction of motivation, emotion, psychological needs, instructional strategies, and cultural factors.

Despite growing scholarly interest in engagement, prior studies have primarily focused on university students or adolescents, leaving young learners as an under-researched population. For instance, (L. Yu & Shen, 2022) and (Zhao & Yang, 2022) explored the relationship between motivation, teacher support, and engagement among adolescents and university students, but did not sufficiently address engagement dynamics in early childhood education. In fact, at the primary education level, engagement plays a critical role in shaping children's initial attitudes toward foreign language learning, which in turn affects their long-term learning trajectories. Although studies by (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020) and (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2020)have touched upon the context of young learners, their focus has been limited to collaborative writing and the use of model texts. Consequently, there remains a significant research gap in designing instructional models specifically tailored to young learners that integrate cultural dimensions to foster engagement.

Culture has emerged as a central issue in recent studies. (Bowden, 2025) asserts that implementing Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (LCRP) can enrich teacher education curricula and support sustainable learning outcomes. In the Indonesian context, (Mulyani et al., 2024) revealed that English learning materials lack cultural representation, thereby failing to cultivate students' intercultural competence. Similarly, (Anlimachie et al., 2025) in Ghana found that student engagement improves when instructional content is directly connected to everyday cultural experiences. These findings underscore the relevance and urgency of cultural integration not only in global education discourse but also in local contexts such as Indonesia, which is characterized by rich cultural diversity.

Alongside culture, affective dimensions also warrant critical attention. (Zou et al., 2025) introduced the concept of L2 pride as a positive emotional force that strengthens engagement, particularly in informal digital learning environments. (Mohamad & Kuan, 2024) confirmed that enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom significantly influence student engagement, with negative emotions having a particularly strong impact in decreasing participation. This implies that children's engagement in EFL learning is shaped not only by cognitive factors but also by emotional experiences developed throughout their learning journey. This is especially pertinent in the Indonesian context, where engagement often declines when language instruction is perceived as monotonous or disconnected from learners' lived realities.

The urgency of this research is further underscored by the limited exploration of innovative, technology-based learning strategies for primary school children. (Bai & Zang, 2025) demonstrated that the online flipped classroom model enhances behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement, although challenges such as self-efficacy and technical barriers persist. (Eltahir et al., 2021) added that game-based learning significantly increases motivation and engagement, showing great potential for young learners. However, such approaches are still predominantly applied at the secondary or tertiary levels, with minimal application in early childhood education. This suggests a need for new studies that integrate technology with cultural relevance to create learning environments that are meaningful, enjoyable, and participatory for children.

Another often overlooked dimension in EFL curricula is listening skills. (Nguyen et al., 2023) emphasized that listening serves as a primary gateway to language engagement, yet it is frequently marginalized in classroom practice, particularly at

the elementary level. This finding is relevant for Indonesia, where English instruction remains heavily focused on reading and writing, with listening relegated to a supplementary role. In reality, listening skills can enhance engagement by enabling learners to comprehend linguistic input more effectively, thereby encouraging active participation.

Taken together, the reviewed studies reveal a significant research gap. First, investigations into engagement among young EFL learners remain scarce and fragmented, often isolating variables such as motivation, affect, or technology. Second, cultural integration has generally been examined through the lens of materials or teacher competence, without being synthesized into a comprehensive conceptual model tailored for children. Third, most existing studies employ cross-sectional designs, with limited evidence from longitudinal or implementation-based research. This study seeks to address these gaps by designing a culturally integrated EYL instructional model that synthesizes motivation, affect, psychological needs, teacher support, technology, and foundational language skills.

The objective of this study is to develop a culturally integrated instructional model for young English learners that explicitly targets multidimensional engagement cognitive, affective, social, agentic, and cultural. Theoretically, this research proposes a novel conceptual framework that positions engagement as the primary learning outcome, rather than a supporting variable. Practically, it offers an alternative instructional strategy relevant to the Indonesian context, emphasizing a balance between local cultural identity and global competencies. Drawing on the insights of (Bai & Zang, 2025), (Lambrev, 2025), (Zou et al., 2025), (Zou et al., 2025), and other scholars, this study provides a robust foundation for designing meaningful, inclusive, and enjoyable learning experiences for children.

This study maintains a strong alignment with existing literature. For example, (Bai & Zang, 2025) concept of bilingual motivational coexistence reinforces the argument that English learning should not diminish the role of the mother tongue, but rather support children's cultural identity. Culturally responsive pedagogy (Lambrev, 2025; (Nganga et al., 2025) calls for teachers' critical awareness to foster equitable and inclusive learning environments. (Zou et al., 2025) notion of L2 pride demonstrates how linguistic identity can drive engagement. (Liu et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2025) highlight the importance of meeting children's psychological needs through autonomy and competence. Moreover, studies on technology integration (Liu et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2025; Eltahir et al., 2021) open pathways for instructional innovations aligned with the digital-native nature of today's learners. Collectively, these findings provide a solid empirical foundation for the development of a culturally integrated instructional model.

Based on the background and literature review, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How have previous studies defined and measured student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning among young learners?

RQ2: What are the key influencing factors (motivation, emotion, psychological needs, technology, culture, and teacher pedagogy) that significantly enhance student engagement in the context of English language learning for children?

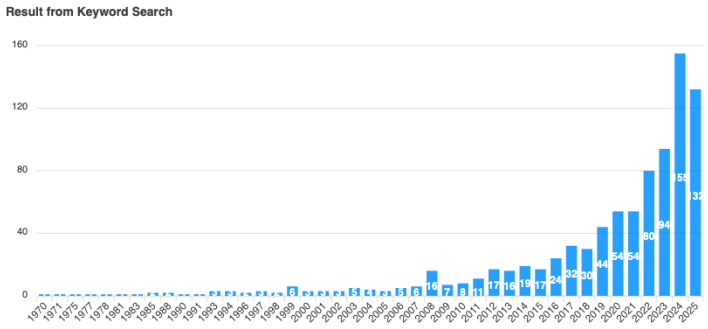
RQ3: How has cultural integration been implemented in instructional models for young English learners in previous studies, and to what extent have such approaches been shown to improve student engagement?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design, following the PRISMA 2020 reporting framework as illustrated in the study selection flow diagram. The SLR approach was chosen for its capacity to provide a comprehensive synthesis of relevant research concerning cultural integration in English language learning for children and its relationship to student engagement. The identification process began with the development of precisely formulated keywords, including: *Culturally Integrated Teaching*, *Cultural Awareness Education*, *Intercultural Language Learning*, *English Learning Motivation*, *Teaching Cultural Competence*, *Language Learning Engagement*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, *Young Learners Engagement*, and *English Cult*ure

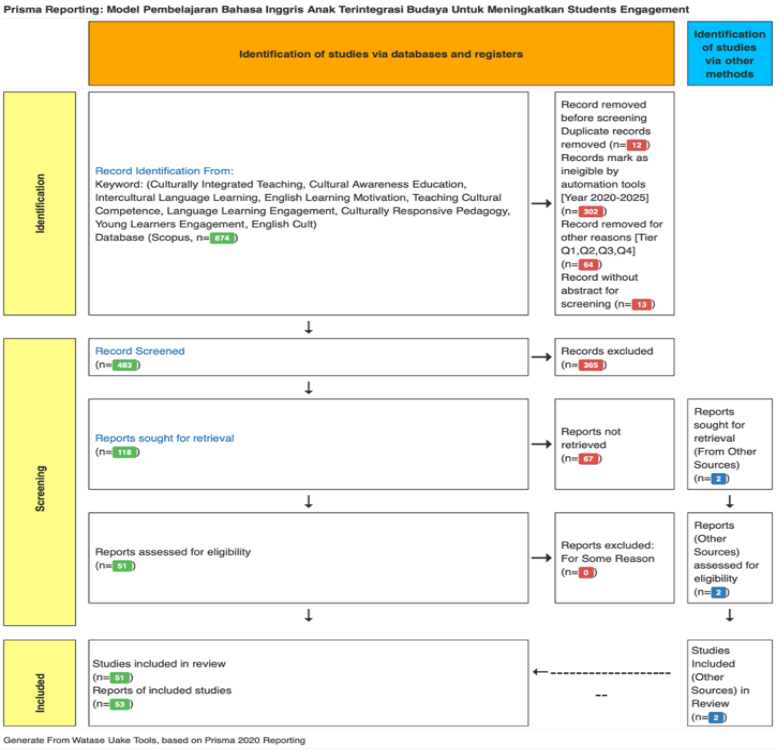
The primary database used for the search was Scopus, yielding an initial total of 874 articles. Of these, 302 were excluded for being outside the 2020–2025 publication range, 64 were removed for not being indexed in Scopus Q1–Q4 journals, and 13 were excluded due to the absence of abstracts. After this initial screening, 483 articles remained. Further eligibility screening resulted in the elimination of 365 articles that were not relevant to the research topic, leaving a final set of 118 articles for in-depth analysis.

Figure 1: Annual Distribution of Publications Based on Keyword Search Results



Following the screening process, a total of 51 primary articles met the inclusion criteria, supplemented by 2 additional articles identified through relevant secondary sources, resulting in a final sample of 53 articles for review. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the study was published in a reputable Scopus-indexed journal (Q1–Q4); (2) the research was conducted within the context of English language learning, specifically focusing on children or young learners; (3) the study addressed student engagement in relation to motivation, emotion, psychological needs, teacher pedagogy, technology, or cultural integration; and (4) the article was available in full text with an accessible abstract.

Figure 2: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of Study Identification and Selection for the Systematic Literature Review on Culturally Integrated EYL Instructional Models



The research instrument consisted of a coding form developed to categorize each article based on key information: author(s), year, research location, design, theoretical framework, methodology, main findings, limitations, and relevance to the focus of this study. Data collection was carried out by reviewing the abstract, methodology, results, and discussion sections of each eligible article. Relevant information was recorded and systematically coded into a synthesis table.

Data analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach, identifying major themes corresponding to the study's three research questions. To ensure reliability, a cross-checking procedure was employed among researchers, enabling consistent assessment of each article against the inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis produced overarching categories that represent (RQ1) definitions and measurements of student engagement, (RQ2) key factors influencing young learners' engagement, and (RQ3) patterns of cultural integration in instructional models.
This procedure enhances the replicability of the study by other researchers, as each step from search and selection to coding and analysis is clearly and systematically outlined.

3. FINDINGS (SYNTHESIS)

3.1 Definition and Measurement of Student Engagement (RQ1)

Previous studies have conceptualized student engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, social, and behavioural dimensions. (Bai & Zang, 2025) found that bilingual motivation can coexist synergistically rather than competitively, thereby enhancing engagement when the mother tongue is valued alongside English.

(Zou et al., 2025) introduced the concept of *L2 pride*, a positive emotion that reinforces engagement, particularly in informal digital learning contexts. (L. Yu & Shen, 2022; X. Yu et al., 2022) emphasized that basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness play a pivotal role in sustaining student engagement. (Zhao & Yang, 2022) showed that teacher support significantly influences engagement, with its effects mediated by affective factors such as enjoyment and boredom. (Bowden, 2025) highlighted that Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (LCRP) enhances engagement through the recognition of students' linguistic and cultural identities. In contrast, (Mulyani et al., 2024) found that English instructional materials in Indonesia lack cultural representation, leading to diminished student involvement. Studies by (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020) and (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2020) demonstrated that children's engagement can be assessed through collaborative participation and model-based writing tasks. Collectively, these findings indicate that engagement among young learners is measured through a combination of indicators, including motivation, emotions, teacher support, cultural relevance, and participation in learning activities.

3.2 Factors Influencing Engagement (RQ2)

Multiple factors were identified as influencing student engagement in children's English language learning. (Bai & Zang, 2025) emphasized that the coexistence of bilingual motivation enhances engagement by preventing learners from feeling caught in a dichotomy between the mother tongue and a foreign language. (Liu et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2025) found that basic psychological needs such as autonomy and competence are strong predictors of engagement, with boredom acting as a significant mediating variable. (Zou et al., 2025) added an affective dimension by showing that *L2 pride* directly influences engagement, especially in informal digital learning. (Zhao & Yang, 2022) confirmed that teacher support correlates positively with engagement, but this effect is mediated by students' emotional states. (Lambrev, 2025) underscored the need for teachers to possess critical cultural awareness in order to foster engagement among minority students. Similarly, (Nganga et al., 2025) found that reflective goal-setting by teachers strengthens culturally responsive pedagogical practices, which in turn enhance engagement. (Wang et al., 2025) demonstrated that online flipped classrooms improve behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement, despite technical challenges. (Eltahir et al., 2021) further revealed that game-based learning boosts both motivation and engagement in language learning. Altogether, these findings affirm that motivation, affect, psychological needs, teacher support, cultural integration, and technological innovation are essential drivers of student engagement.

3.3 Cultural Integration in Instruction (RQ3)

The literature clearly identifies cultural integration as a crucial component in fostering student engagement. (Bowden, 2025) found that LCRP not only enriches teacher curricula but also increases engagement by affirming students' linguistic and cultural identities. (Mulyani et al., 2024) noted the lack of cultural diversity in English instructional materials in Indonesia, which contributes to low engagement. In the Ghanaian context, (Anlimachie et al., 2025) demonstrated that culturally relevant

instructional content significantly boosts engagement when aligned with students' everyday cultural experiences. (Glass et al., 2022) found that culturally themed pre-visit art activities strengthen student engagement by making learning personally relevant. (Kwee & Dos Santos, 2022) showed that heritage-based instruction in blended learning not only increases engagement but also cultivates sustainability awareness. (Park et al., 2022) highlighted that the cultural competence of pre-service teachers directly impacts the effectiveness of multicultural instruction and student engagement. (Siskind et al., 2023) similarly reported that teachers with high cultural competence experience lower burnout and higher teaching efficacy, both of which contribute to improved student engagement. Lastly, (L. Yu & Shen, 2022) found that learning motivation within corpus-based blended teaching models directly correlates with engagement. Collectively, these findings confirm that cultural integration is an effective strategy for enhancing student engagement in English language learning for young learners.

3.4 Overall Synthesis

Taken as a whole, the reviewed literature reveals a consistent pattern: student engagement in children's English language learning is the outcome of multidimensional interactions among motivation, affect, psychological needs, teacher support, technology, and culture. (Bai & Zang, 2025) highlight the coexistence of bilingual motivation; (Zou et al., 2025) emphasize the role of L2 pride; and (Ma & Xu, 2025) identify psychological needs as core predictors of engagement. (Zhao & Yang, 2022) demonstrate that teacher support significantly affects engagement, mediated by emotional factors, while (Lambrev, 2025) and (Nganga et al., 2025) illustrate the importance of teachers' cultural awareness in fostering inclusive learning environments. (Bowden, 2025), (Mulyani et al., 2024), and (Anlimachie et al., 2025) provide evidence that integrating culture into instruction directly enhances student engagement. Additional studies by (Glass et al., 2022), (Kwee & Dos Santos, 2022), (Park et al., 2022), and (Siskind et al., 2023) reaffirm the significance of cultural competence among both students and teachers in promoting engagement. (L. Yu & Shen, 2022) further underline the link between motivation and academic performance as a driver of engagement. These findings collectively demonstrate the interrelated roles of motivational, affective, psychological, pedagogical, technological, and cultural dimensions in cultivating optimal engagement among young learners.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion RQ1: Definition and Measurement of Student Engagement in Young Learners

Conceptually, the reviewed literature agrees that student engagement in EFL for young learners comprises behavioural (participation, task persistence), cognitive (mental investment, strategy use), affective (positive and negative emotions), social/agentic (initiative and collaboration), and cultural (identity relevance) dimensions. Empirical evidence on bilingual motivational coexistence shows that engagement does not occur in a single language domain but emerges when the mother tongue and foreign language are mutually reinforced. This implies that

engagement indicators should capture the connection between learners' linguistic identity and their daily learning experiences.

The emergence of L2 pride as a measurable affective indicator, especially in informal digital contexts, suggests that engagement instruments should include language identity pride as a key component. Basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are shown to be strong determinants of engagement; thus, measurement tools must assess the extent to which instructional design offers choice, efficacy, and meaningful relationships. Teacher support, while positively correlated with engagement, is mediated by emotional states such as enjoyment and boredom, underscoring the need for engagement tools to assess emotional learning experiences. Classroom-based evidence also highlights the role of collaborative tasks, model texts, and educational games in fostering participatory behaviours. Lastly, culturally responsive pedagogy calls for indicators of cultural connection such as the degree of material relevance to learners' lived experiences as an integral part of engagement assessment.

4.2 Significance for RQ1

The primary contribution of RQ1 lies in expanding the scope of definitions and measurement instruments to incorporate identity cultural variables and positive emotions such as L2 pride, in addition to classical behavioural cognitive indicators. For the field of EYL, this provides a theoretical basis that evaluating culturally integrated instructional models requires more than test scores or participation metrics it must include measures of emotional engagement, psychological needs, and cultural relevance. The SLR thus formulates a spectrum of indicators usable as both *design specs* and *evaluation specs*, including: (a) support for autonomy and competence, (b) quality of relational and teacher support, (c) intensity of emotional experiences (positive/negative), (d) degree of cultural relevance, and (e) collaborative participation. These specifications offer an operational framework for culturally grounded EYL research and classroom interventions in Indonesia.

4.3 Discussion RQ2: Key Determinants of Student Engagement

Cross-study findings converge on six primary levers of engagement in young learners: motivation, emotion, psychological needs, teacher pedagogy/support, technology, and culture. The coexistence of bilingual motivation challenges the assumption of inter language competition; rather, affirming the value of the mother tongue becomes a motivational base for children's willingness to use English. In the affective domain, L2 pride and enjoyment strengthen participation, while boredom exerts a strong negative mediating effect implying that reducing boredom through culturally meaningful activities is a core strategy.

Psychological needs serve as the foundation: without autonomy, competence, and relatedness, other interventions tend to have limited impact. Accordingly, tasks must provide choice, scaffolded challenge, and supportive relationships as structural anchors. Culturally responsive pedagogy and teachers' critical cultural awareness shape classroom climate, with reflective goal setting emerging as a professional development practice that enhances sustainability. Technology whether in the form of flipped classrooms, game-based learning, or augmented reality enhances behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement when combined with pedagogical support and mitigation of technical barriers. Finally, cultural

integration acts as a "bridge of meaning," transforming language learning into a lived experience, thus sparking motivation, positive emotions, and social connection.
These six engagement levers reinforce one another in a circular rather than linear pattern.

4.4 Significance for RQ2

The significance of RQ2 findings lies in establishing a *design logic* that integrates motivational psychology, emotional management, and culturally responsive pedagogy into a coherent intervention package for children. From a disciplinary perspective, the contribution is an operational synthesis: engagement is most effectively enhanced when learning activities (1) uphold autonomy competence relatedness support, (2) minimize boredom and amplify enjoyment and L2 pride, (3) are led by teachers practicing reflective CRT/LCRP, (4) use technology meaningfully rather than superficially, and (5) are grounded in children's cultural experiences. This synthesis shifts the EYL discourse from "teaching techniques" to the "architecture of learning experiences," stitching together psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. For research and practice in Indonesia, this framework serves as a *playbook* for classroom design that honours local cultural diversity while meeting global language literacy goals.

4.5 Discussion RQ3: Implementation of Cultural Integration and Its Impact on Engagement

The SLR findings indicate that cultural integration has been implemented across three key domains: instructional materials (cultural representation and narratives), teaching practices (culturally responsive strategies, pre-visit arts activities, heritage-based learning in blended contexts), and teacher development (cultural competence and reflective goal setting). At the material level, the lack of cultural representation in Indonesian textbooks presents a critical bottleneck that undermines the relevance of learning; this finding identifies a key entry point for reform namely, the curation and development of content that reflects and celebrates local children's cultures. At the instructional level, evidence shows that learning activities rooted in cultural experiences (arts, local heritage, community-based projects) enhance emotional engagement, increase student participation, and enrich social interactions in collaborative tasks.

At the teacher development level, higher cultural competence and teaching efficacy as well as reduced burnout are associated with more supportive classroom climates, which in turn correlate positively with student engagement. Cultural integration is also shown to be highly compatible with technological innovation: both blended learning and flipped classroom models serve as effective platforms for delivering cultural content in multimodal and contextually relevant formats.
Overall, the findings demonstrate that culture is not a peripheral curricular element, but a foundational structure of meaning that activates children's motivation, emotional resonance, and social connection within EYL classrooms.

4.6 Significance for RQ3

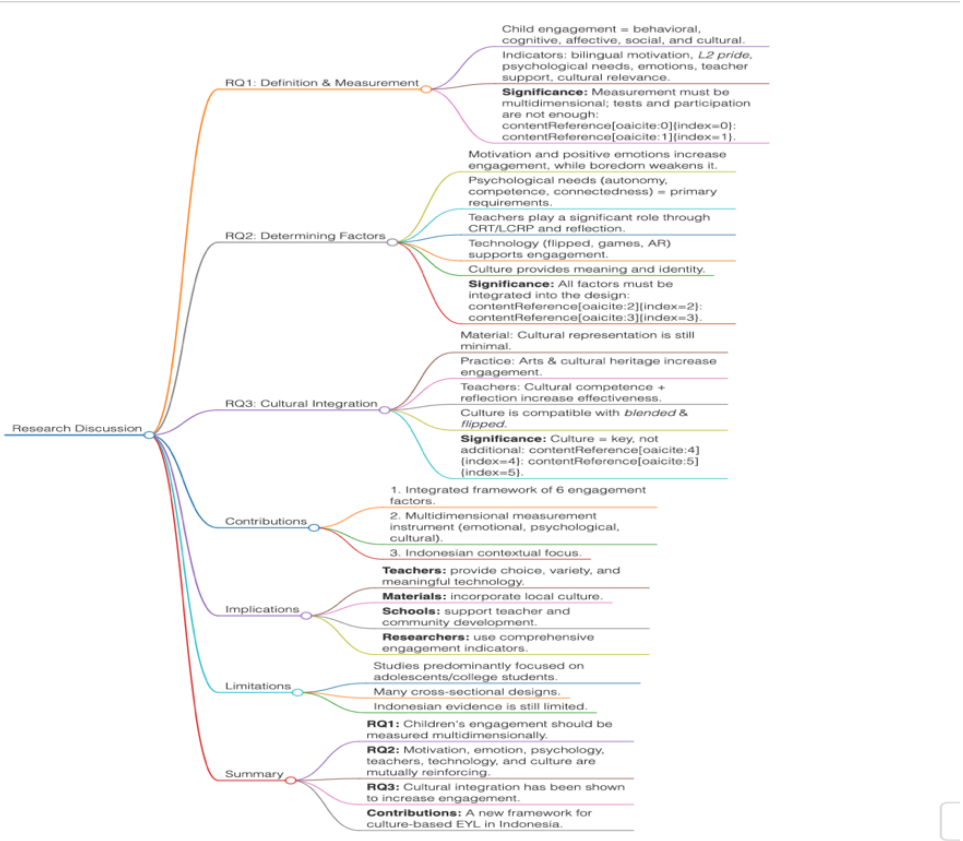
The significance of RQ3 lies in reaffirming culture as a core lever of engagement equally critical as motivation and psychological needs and fully compatible with

modern technological strategies. In this field, the contribution is both conceptual and practical. Conceptually, the study positions culture as a *mediating layer* that bridges learners' lived experiences with language learning objectives. Practically, it translates cultural integration into a series of actionable strategies:

a. **At the classroom level:** content curation, community based projects, pre-visit arts experiences, and exploration of local heritage.
b. **At the instructional level**: identity linked prompt questions and culturally grounded lesson design.
c. **At the teacher development level:** structured reflection and goal setting aligned with CRT/LCRP (Culturally Responsive Teaching/Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy).

The documented gap in cultural representation in Indonesian learning materials underscores the urgency of localizing content as a priority for implementing any engagement focused instructional model. This research thus provides empirical grounding for the argument that enhancing engagement in EYL requires an explicit "cultural pathway" embedded in curriculum and pedagogy design.

Figure 3: Research Discussion Mind Map: Definitions, Determining Factors, and Cultural Integration of Student Engagement

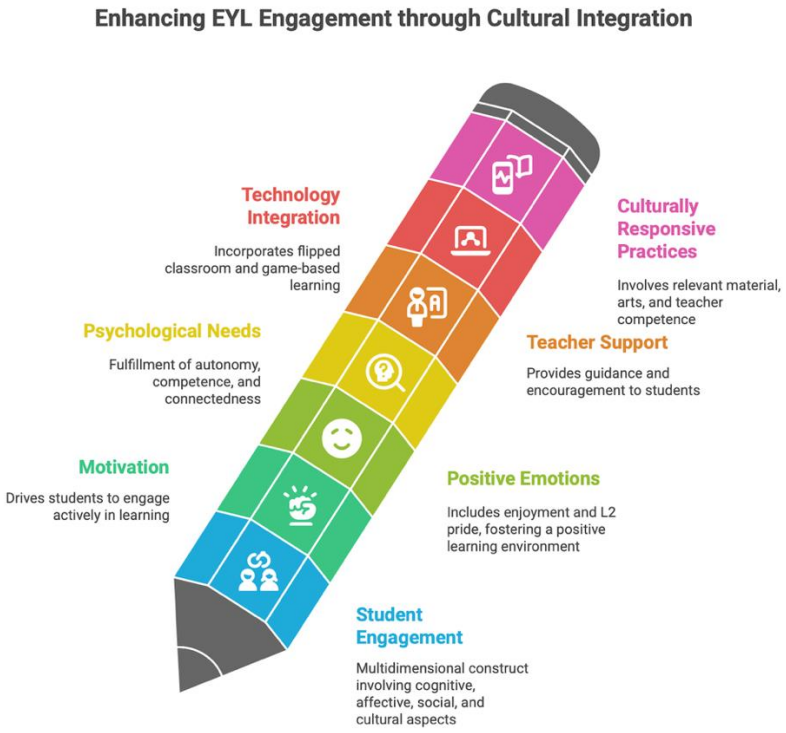


4.7 Scientific Contribution and Novelty

This SLR offers three key contributions. First, a conceptual contribution: it integrates six engagement levers motivation, emotion, psychological needs, teacher support, technology, and culture into a unified framework specifically tailored for young learners, addressing the fragmentation of previous literature. Second, a methodological contribution: it proposes expanded engagement measurement

indicators beyond traditional behavioural cognitive metrics, incorporating *L2 pride*, enjoyment/boredom, autonomy competence relatedness support, teacher relational quality, and cultural relevance as valid outcome measures for intervention studies. Third, a contextual contribution: it articulates the need for cultural localization of instructional content and practices in Indonesia, while also demonstrating the compatibility of cultural integration with blended, informal digital (IDLE), and flipped learning models for children. These three contributions underpin the novelty of the proposed model: a culturally integrated EYL framework that positions student engagement as the primary learning outcome and is fully operationalizable in real classroom design.

Figure 4: Conceptual Model of Enhancing English for Young Learners (EYL) Engagement through Cultural Integration



4.8 Practical Implications

For teachers: The findings inform classroom practices that (1) offer task choices and scaffolded challenges to foster autonomy and competence; (2) manage learning emotions by incorporating enjoyable, culturally meaningful activities to reduce boredom and foster L2 pride; (3) implement CRT/LCRP through identity-linked prompts, dialogic instruction, and material-life connections; (4) leverage technology (local videos, virtual cultural site tours, pre-meeting flipped content) to enrich modality; and (5) maintain consistency through reflective cycles and goal setting.

For curriculum and materials: Prioritize the curation of texts, visuals, and tasks that represent children's cultural diversity; apply a progression scheme linking local–

national–global cultural themes; and embed multidimensional engagement indicators into each unit.

For schools/administrators: Facilitate CRT/LCRP-based professional development, provide contextually relevant digital resources, and promote community collaboration (e.g., museums, local artists) for authentic projects.

For researchers: Use multidimensional engagement indicators as core outcomes and test cross-lever interactions (e.g., culture × teacher support × flipped learning) in quasi-experimental or field experimental designs. These implications are directly grounded in the SLR findings and can be implemented within the bounds of the established literature.

4.9 Theoretical Implications

a. The findings reinforce and intersect several theoretical lines within the corpus:
Basic psychological needs theory explains why autonomy, competence, and relatedness are preconditions for engagement;

b. *Affective pathways* enjoyment, boredom, L2 pride function as mediators/components within child engagement models;

c. *CRT/LCRP* provides the explanatory base for the effects of cultural relevance on motivation and participation;

d. *Technology* serves not as an end but as a medium that conveys cultural experiences in multimodal, personalized formats.

The integration of these four lines yields an *architecture of engagement* unique to young learners: culture provides meaning, psychological support provides energy, emotion provides momentum, technology provides modality, and the teacher provides direction. This framework contributes theoretically by encouraging further research into cross-path mechanisms for instance, whether L2 pride mediates the relationship between cultural integration and participation, or whether autonomy support moderates the effect of flipped learning on boredom. This study, therefore, enables more precise modelling of culturally based engagement mechanisms in EYL.

4.10 Limitations

This SLR acknowledges several limitations to ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings. First, most included studies focus on adolescents or university students; thus, evidence specific to primary aged children remains limited, warranting caution in generalization. Second, many studies use cross sectional designs and self-reported data, limiting causal inference and introducing potential perceptual bias. Third, empirical representation of the Indonesian context is sparse; while evidence confirms limited cultural representation in textbooks, it explains *what is*, not yet *what works* in intervention design. Fourth, technology implementation in many studies took place in contexts with more advanced infrastructure than is typically available in Indonesian primary schools, indicating that replication may require resource adaptation. Fifth, although this SLR integrates motivational, emotional, psychological, cultural, and technological dimensions, variation in instruments and definitions across studies introduces measurement heterogeneity. Lastly, limited full text access to a small subset of articles may have restricted the depth of certain data extractions. These limitations do not diminish the significance of the findings but indicate the need for follow up experimental or longitudinal research among Indonesian children.

4.11 Contribution to the Field and the Indonesian Context

For the fields of EYL and culturally responsive language education, this SLR consolidates scattered findings into an operational design map: comprehensive engagement indicators, mutually reinforcing intervention levers, and context sensitive implementation strategies. For Indonesia, the contribution is twofold: (1) it provides empirical justification for reforming learning materials toward equitable cultural representation; and (2) it offers a classroom roadmap that aligns local cultural identity with global English literacy goals.

At the academic level, this study enriches the discourse on *how culture works* in EYL not merely as content, but as a mechanism that mediates motivation, emotion, and social relationships, ultimately driving engagement. At the policy level, the findings justify investments in CRT/LCRP based teacher development and in digital infrastructure that supports locally adapted blended/flipped learning. In short, this SLR both broadens the scientific foundation and provides practical design tools ready for classroom trials with Indonesian children.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Through a Systematic Literature Review approach, this study reaffirms that student engagement in English for Young Learners (EYL) is a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, affective, social, and cultural aspects. Key findings demonstrate that student engagement cannot be reduced to behavioural participation or academic performance alone but must also consider motivation, emotion, psychological needs, teacher support, technological innovation, and cultural integration. The coexistence of bilingual motivation, fulfilment of core psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness and the presence of positive emotions like L2 pride have been shown to strengthen engagement. Conversely, a lack of cultural representation in learning materials and pedagogical practices serves as a barrier to sustained engagement. Overall, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how engagement can be cultivated through an integrative instructional approach

This research offers contributions across three major domains. First, conceptually, it integrates six critical engagement factors motivation, emotion, psychological needs, teacher support, technology, and culture into a unified model tailored for young learners. Second, methodologically, it emphasizes the need for multidimensional engagement instruments that assess not only cognitive participation but also affective, psychological, and cultural relevance dimensions. Third, contextually, it highlights the urgency of developing instructional content and pedagogical practices that more accurately reflect the local cultures of Indonesian learners. Collectively, these contributions extend the discourse in EYL research while offering practical direction for designing more relevant and inclusive instructional models.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to conduct empirical trials of this conceptual model in real classroom settings with Indonesian children, using experimental or

longitudinal designs. Further research may focus on the development of more comprehensive engagement instruments that incorporate dimensions such as language pride (L2 pride) and cultural representation. Field-based studies could also explore the effectiveness of cultural integration across technological modalities such as flipped or blended learning adapted to the infrastructure of primary schools in Indonesia. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse regions in Indonesia are needed to examine how local cultural variation can enrich English learning models for children. In this way, the current study not only addresses theoretical and empirical gaps but also opens pathways for future research that is both applicable and contextually grounded.

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