

The influence of perceived teacher support on undergraduate English learning engagement: The mediating role of self-efficacy

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Abstract

English learning engagement is crucial to the academic development of undergraduate English majors. This engagement can be influenced by both external classroom support and internal psychological beliefs. In this context, the current study investigates the link between students' perceived teacher support and their English learning engagement as well as the mediating role of self-efficacy. Data were gathered from 608 undergraduate English majors at a university in Henan Province, China, using three scales to measure perceived teacher support, self-efficacy, and English learning engagement. The responses were analysed to assess both the direct and indirect relationships among these three variables. The results demonstrate that perceived teacher support is positively related to English learning engagement. It also positively influences self-efficacy, which in turn has a significant positive association with English learning engagement. Furthermore, self-efficacy acts as a mediator between perceived teacher support and English learning engagement. The findings indicate that perceived teacher support promotes learners' engagement not only by providing academic assistance, but also by boosting their confidence in studying English. Overall, the study offers valuable practical insights. It underscores the importance of supportive pedagogical practices and confidence-building strategies, offering guidance for English language education in Chinese higher education.

Keywords: English learning engagement, Perceived teacher support, Self-efficacy, Undergraduate English major, Chinese higher education, mediating effect.

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Contribution of this paper to the literature

This study contributes to the relevant literature by elucidating the association between undergraduate English majors' perceived teacher support and their English learning engagement. Furthermore, by identifying self-efficacy as a key psychological mechanism linking these two variables, this study expands the scope of existing EFL research.

1. Introduction

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to English learning engagement, which has become a key topic in foreign language instruction due to its close link with learner motivation, classroom participation, and learning outcomes (Chiu, 2022; Sulis, 2022). In foreign language contexts, learning engagement is crucial because students require sustained effort and emotional involvement to develop their language abilities (Oga-Baldwin & Ryan, 2025). Furthermore, students' perceived teacher support is equally important, as such support helps students feel guided and encouraged in the classroom and thereby boosts their confidence (Guay, 2022). More specifically, for undergraduate students majoring in English, the subject is not only a standard course but also central to their degree program. Consequently, their English learning engagement may directly influence their academic development and future career progression (Almayez, Al-Khresheh, Al-Qadri, Alkhateeb, & Alomaim, 2025). It is therefore necessary to explain how perceived teacher support promotes the learning engagement of undergraduate English majors within the Chinese higher education setting.

Perceived teacher support may serve as an important antecedent of English learning engagement. One possible reason is that students tend to take a more proactive approach to learning English when they receive useful guidance and emotional encouragement from their instructors (Chen, 2025). In language classrooms, teacher support can help students understand assignments and increase their willingness to participate in classroom activities (Sulis, 2022). This relationship is especially crucial in the Chinese context, where many university students still learn English in highly structured classroom environments, and teachers remain central in organizing lesson plans and providing feedback (Miao & Ma, 2023). Furthermore, undergraduate English majors may require more teacher support as they must complete demanding language tasks, such as reading academic papers, delivering presentations, and communicating entirely in English (Cong, Yang, & Ergün, 2024). When teachers provide targeted support in these tasks, students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement is likely to increase (Chiu, 2022).

The association between perceived teacher support and learning engagement in English can be explained by internal psychological factors within the learners (Guay, 2022). Self-efficacy may be one such mechanism. Students who believe in their capabilities are more likely to persist, employ effective learning techniques, and engage actively in English learning (Xu, Li, & Yang, 2024). Teacher support can enhance this self-efficacy by providing clear feedback, facilitating successful learning experiences, and building confidence to face difficult English tasks (Oga-Baldwin & Ryan, 2025). Moreover, students with stronger self-efficacy are better equipped to navigate the challenges of English learning and are more likely to exert effort in English learning activities (Cong et al., 2024). This psychological process is of significant importance for Chinese undergraduate English majors, whose engagement may depend not only on external teacher support but also on their internal confidence to complete complex academic English assignments (Guo, Wang, Li, & Wang, 2025).

While previous studies have addressed these three variables, further research is needed to elucidate how they interact specifically among undergraduate English majors. This study emphasises the direct association between teacher support and their learning engagement, while further investigating whether self-efficacy mediates this relationship. By extending research on these three variables to the specific population of Chinese undergraduate English majors, this study enriches the existing literature. This study also holds practical value, as the findings can assist English instructors in designing more effective pedagogical approaches to foster students' engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perceived Teacher Support and English Learning Engagement

Teacher support refers to the academic, emotional, and practical assistance that students perceive from their instructors through the educational process (Liu, Du, & Lu, 2023). More specifically, in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, teacher support may include clear instruction, timely feedback, encouragement, care, and useful learning resources (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). Meanwhile, English learning engagement refers to learners' active involvement in English language activities across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Eerdemutu, Dewaele, & Wang, 2024). Greater teacher support leads to higher engagement in language learning, including increased classroom participation, more positive emotions, and greater effort (Liu et al., 2023). Conversely, students who receive minimal teacher support are more inclined to feel unguided and less encouraged in their English learning (Li, 2024). Consequently, those with lower engagement in English studies may lack sufficient emotional support, academic guidance, and opportunities for active participation in English classes (Liu & Zhou, 2024).

Empirical evidence consistently supports this relationship. For instance, Zhao and Yang (2022) noted that teacher support is positively associated with student engagement at Chinese universities. Similarly, Li (2024) further reported that academic engagement and perceived teacher support are positively and directly correlated among Chinese EFL learners. A primary reason for this positive relationship is that teacher support can reduce learning stress, boost student confidence, and cultivate a supportive classroom atmosphere conducive to English communication (Alrabai & Algazzaz, 2024). Moreover, teacher support assists students in setting academic goals, managing English learning tasks, and maintaining focus on their coursework (Yin & Luo, 2024). Based on these insights, the present study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₁: Teacher support has a significant positive connection to the English learning engagement of undergraduate students majoring in English.

2.2. Perceived Teacher Support and Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to students' confidence in their ability to complete academic assignments and achieve expected learning outcomes (Tang & Zhu, 2024). In the context of language acquisition, self-efficacy implies that students believe they can understand English materials, complete English tasks, and improve their academic performance through effort (Kono, Hirose, & Oga-Baldwin, 2024). Moreover, robust teacher support is one of the most crucial elements in enhancing this internal belief system among undergraduate learners (Gong & Xu, 2024). Furthermore, higher levels of teacher support lead to stronger self-efficacy by helping students resolve learning difficulties and cultivate confidence in their coursework (Ma, Jiang, & Nong, 2023). Ultimately, receiving targeted teacher support helps increase students' confidence in their capacity to cope with challenging English assignments and make meaningful progress in their degree programs (Guo et al., 2025).

Recent empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between these two variables (Bai & Gu, 2022; Gong & Xu, 2024; Ma et al., 2023). For instance, Bai and Gu (2022) noted that teacher-initiated support could indirectly influence self-regulated learning by bolstering student self-efficacy. Kono et al. (2024) further demonstrated that in foreign language classrooms, self-efficacy is strongly correlated with perceived teacher support, suggesting a potentially reciprocal relationship between the two. A primary reason for this positive relationship is that constructive feedback, emotional encouragement, and structural guidance provide students with mastery experiences while reducing their fear of failure (Liang, Jiang, & Jin, 2026). Consequently, learners who receive greater teacher support may feel more confident when faced with challenging language tasks (Tang & Zhu, 2024). Therefore, the present study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₁: Teacher support has a significant positive association with the self-efficacy of undergraduate English majors.

2.3. Self-Efficacy and English Learning Engagement

In language acquisition, students' learning engagement is directly influenced by their beliefs regarding their own learning capabilities (Wang, Patterson, & Long, 2024). Specifically, robust levels of self-efficacy can lead to deeper engagement in English coursework, manifesting as more active participation in complex linguistic tasks (Hao & Lu, 2024). Conversely, students with low self-efficacy often avoid demanding assignments because they lack confidence in their capacity to finish them satisfactorily (Kim, 2024). This dynamic is particularly evident among undergraduate English majors, who are typically required to complete demanding English learning tasks, such as reading academic texts, writing academic essays, and communicating in English (Aldayel, Pravitasari, & Fadillah, 2026). Moreover, their confidence may influence the level of effort they invest in their English studies. When students believe they can solve these tasks, they are more likely to be immersed in their English studies (Yang, Xu, & Li, 2026). Consequently, self-efficacy serves as one of the crucial psychological components driving the academic engagement of undergraduate English majors.

Recent empirical literature consistently demonstrates a strong positive association between these two variables in foreign language contexts. For instance, Cai and Xing (2025) found that self-efficacy improves learning engagement. Furthermore, Kim (2024) observed that internal psychological factors, such as self-efficacy, are closely linked to learning engagement, and this engagement mediates the association between this psychological factor and perceived language competence in second language learning. Concurrently, Fang, Meng, Tang, and Cui (2025) further demonstrated that higher self-efficacy enhances learning engagement among EFL students learning English informally online. This positive relationship likely exists because self-efficacy helps students to set ambitious goals, persevere when encountering difficulties, and maintain confidence in their English studying tasks (Guo et al., 2025). Learners who believe in their own capacity are better equipped to face challenging assignments and engage more deeply in the English learning process. Therefore, the present study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₂: Self-efficacy has a significant positive connection to the English learning engagement of undergraduate English majors.

2.4. The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy in the Relationship Between Perceived Teacher Support and English Learning Engagement

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that the relationship between teacher support and student engagement is mediated by self-efficacy (Liang et al., 2026; Ma & Li, 2026; Zhou, Liu, & Guo, 2025). Specifically, in foreign language learning contexts, teacher support manifests through clear explanations, useful feedback, emotional encouragement, and optimal learning opportunities, all of which assist pupils in cultivating more confidence in their capacity to complete English learning activities (Liang et al., 2026). Furthermore, when students receive greater teacher support, they tend to feel more confident when facing more challenging English learning tasks such as reading, writing, and speaking (Wu & Cai, 2025). In other words, teacher support strengthens students' internal beliefs regarding their own capacity to learn English, and this belief further promotes their engagement in the language acquisition process.

Ample literature supports this indirect pathway. For instance, Wu and Cai (2025) found that teachers' supportive behaviors improve EFL learners' academic studying engagement through self-efficacy and peer support. Furthermore, Huang and Wang (2023) reported that teacher support positively influenced engagement in university online learning via academic self-efficacy. Furthermore, Alrashidi and Alshammari (2025) reported that both teacher support and self-efficacy may predict learner engagement in online courses for EFL students through self-efficacy. Taken together, these findings imply that teacher support may be predicted by both directly and indirectly boost English studying engagement by raising learners' confidence, such as self-efficacy. Consequently, self-efficacy likely serves as a psychological bridge between these two variables among undergraduate English majors; the present study proposes the hypothesis:

H₃: Self-efficacy mediates the association between teacher support and English learning engagement among undergraduate students majoring in English.

The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 to explain the association between three variables. This conceptual framework provides a clear structure for testing both the direct and indirect associations between teacher support, self-efficacy, and English learning engagement.

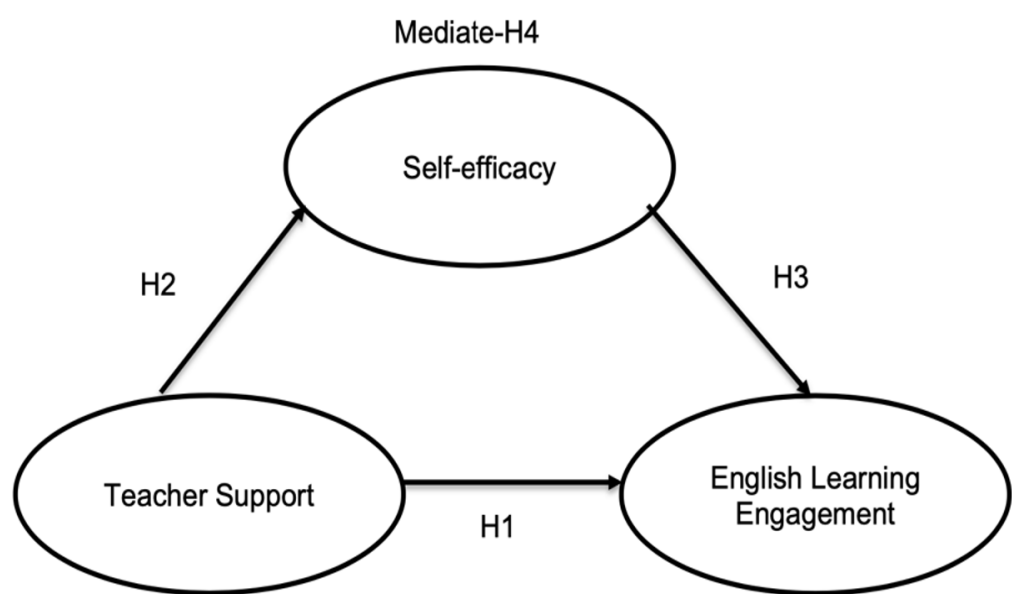


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

This research focuses on undergraduate English-major students at the School of Foreign Languages in Henan University in China. This population was chosen because English majors need systematic English education and directly participate in different English learning activities, including reading, writing, speaking, translation, and classroom interaction. Therefore, they were suitable subjects for investigating the relationship between the three target variables (Li & Pan, 2025).

Data collection was conducted from February to April 2026 using convenience sampling via a questionnaire survey. Before completing the instruments, participants were informed of the study’s purpose and assured that their participation was entirely voluntary. Out of 670 questionnaires distributed, 608 valid responses were returned, yielding a response rate of 90.7% (rounded to 91%). Among the 62 excluded invalid questionnaires, 12 were entirely blank, 39 were incomplete, and 11 exhibited identical, patterned answers.

In terms of gender background, 101 (16.6%) participants were male, and 507 (83.4%) were female. Regarding the academic background, 127 (20.9%) were first-year English major undergraduates, 146 (24%) were second-year English major students, 183 (30.1%) were third-year English major students, and 152 (25%) were fourth-year English major students. Furthermore, regarding whether they had served as class leaders, 176 (28.9%) students had served as class leaders, while 432 (71.1%) participants had not. A comprehensive summary of this demographic profile is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the samples (N = 608).

Demographic variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	101	16.6%
Female	507	83.4%
Grade		
First-year	127	20.9%
Second-year	146	24%
Third-year	183	30.1%
Fourth-year	152	25%
Class leader or not		
Class leader	176	28.9%
Non-class leader	432	71.1%

3.2. Instruments

The Perceived EFL Teacher Support Scale, developed by Liu and Li (2023), was adopted in this research to measure perceived teacher support for learning English. This 12-item scale covers three distinct dimensions and utilizes a five-point Likert response format in this study. Specifically, academic support comprises 5 items, focusing on the assistance that English teachers provide in instruction, guidance, and student feedback. Moreover, instrumental support comprises 3 items that measure teachers’ assistance in providing English learning resources. Emotional support includes 4 items that evaluate the care and encouragement extended by instructors during students’ English learning process. The scale contains no reverse-scored items, as all items retained in the scale are positive statements. Furthermore, the scale demonstrates strong reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.903 for the overall scale, 0.897 for academic support, 0.878 for emotional support, and 0.889 for instrumental support. It also exhibits strong validity, with a total explained variance of 66.801% and construct reliability (CR) values for three dimensions higher than 0.70 (Liu & Li, 2023). Consequently, this scale is highly suitable for the current study because it explicitly captures students’ perceived English instructor support within an EFL context framework tailored to undergraduate English majors (Liang & Long, 2024).

The second research instrument adopted in this study was the Chinese version of the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), originally developed by Zhang and Schwarzer (1995). The GSE is a widely used scale for measuring a person’s general belief in their capacity to face difficult tasks and challenges. More specifically, this unidimensional scale comprises 10 items to measure general self-efficacy, employs a five-point Likert scale, and contains no reverse-scored items. It exhibits strong psychometric properties, featuring a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 and a correlation coefficient of 0.71 between the Chinese and English versions. The present study utilized the GSE to evaluate the internal confidence of undergraduate English majors in managing academic difficulties – a cognitive factor closely linked to their subsequent language engagement (Álvarez, Rendón, & Lalinde, 2022).

Finally, the Student Engagement Scale (SELS), utilized by Zhang and Kim (2025), was adopted in this research. This 10-item instrument measures the engagement of university-level Chinese EFL learners across three dimensions using a five-point Likert scale in the current study. Behavioral engagement comprises 4 items measuring students’ effort, participation, focus, and attention in English classes. Cognitive engagement comprises 3 items measuring students’ learning methods. Emotional engagement comprises 3 items measuring students’ interest in English coursework. Furthermore, the scale contains no reverse-scored items. It demonstrates high reliability and validity, with Cronbach’s alpha values of 0.766, 0.742, and 0.807 for the three dimensions, alongside corresponding average variance extracted (AVE) values of 0.589, 0.557, and 0.595. This scale is appropriate for this study given its prior validation in Chinese university EFL settings.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

To investigate the connection between three variables, this research employed Pearson’s correlation analysis. Pearson’s correlation analysis is frequently employed in quantitative research (Karch, Perez-Alonso, & Bergsma, 2024). Within EFL research, Pearson’s correlation analysis is standard for examining links between the psychological factors and behavioral learning outcomes (Cong et al., 2024). Table 2 presents the results of descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlation analysis among three variables. Students scored relatively high on perceived teacher support (M = 3.107, SD = 0.894). For self-efficacy, students also scored relatively high (M = 3.036, SD = 1.060). As for English learning engagement, students’ scores were relatively high (M = 3.010, SD = 0.806). Furthermore, the correlation analysis showed significant positive correlations among the three variables. Specifically, perceived teacher support and self-efficacy had a significant positive correlation (r = 0.430, p < 0.01), indicating that learners who perceived better teacher support would have stronger self-efficacy. Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation (r = 0.585, p < 0.01) between teacher support and English learning engagement, presenting that students receiving better teacher support would have stronger English learning engagement. Furthermore, self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with English learning engagement (r = 0.517, p < 0.01), confirming that students with elevated self-efficacy are inclined to participate more actively in English learning tasks.

Table 2. Means, SD and correlations among variables in the research.

Variables	1	2	3
1. PTS	1		
2. SE	0.430**	1	
3. ELE	0.585**	0.517**	1
Mean	3.107	3.036	3.010
SD	0.894	1.060	0.806

Note: P<0.01** PTS: Perceived Teacher Support; SE: Self-efficacy; ELE: English Learning Engagement.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

This study employed SPSS 27.0 and PROCESS Macro 4.1 to analyze the collected data and test the research hypotheses. First, the researcher employed SPSS 27.0 to do descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Then, the researcher used PROCESS Macro 4.1 to further examine the effects among three variables. More specifically, control variables such as gender, grade, and class leader or not were included. Furthermore, 5,000 repeated samplings were used to test the mediating impact using the bootstrap approach. The significance of the indirect effect was evaluated utilizing a 95% confidence interval.

Before structural path analysis, the reliability and factor loadings of the measurement model were assessed, as summarized in Table 3. The range of factor loadings and Cronbach’s alpha among the three dimensions are as follows: for academic support (factor loadings: 0.852–0.872, α = 0.915), for instrumental support (factor loadings: 0.887–0.893, α = 0.868), for emotional support (factor loadings: 0.824–0.933, α = 0.904). These results indicate that there is strong internal consistency across all facets of perceived teacher support. Furthermore, for self-efficacy, the range of factor loadings was from 0.804 to 0.894, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.959, indicating that the scale has good reliability. Finally, the dimensions of English learning engagement demonstrated robust psychometric properties: behavioral engagement (factor loadings: 0.784–0.902, α = 0.851), cognitive engagement (factor loadings: 0.950–0.968, α = 0.954), and emotional engagement (factor loadings: 0.860 – 0.892, α = 0.848).

Factor loadings signify the strength of the association between each item and the variable to which it belongs; therefore, evaluated factor loadings suggest that these items represent the construct they are intended to measure more effectively (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2022). According to Cardella, Hernández-Sánchez, and Sánchez-García (2021) and Hair et al. (2022), factor loadings are often regarded as a key indicator of validity; the factor loadings in this study are all above 0.70; therefore, they are considered to indicate good validity. All item factor loadings and Cronbach’s alpha were above 0.7, and this is generally considered to indicate high reliability and validity in measurement models (Hair et al., 2022). Taken together, these preliminary evaluation results confirm that the measurement instrument in this study is reliable and appropriate for further hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Results of reliability and factor loading of the construct.

Constructs	Items	Loading	α
Academic support	AS1	0.872	0.915
	AS2	0.852	
	AS3	0.861	
	AS4	0.869	
	AS5	0.864	
Instrumental support	IS1	0.887	0.868
	IS2	0.893	
	IS3	0.889	
Emotional support	ES1	0.925	0.904
	ES2	0.933	
	ES3	0.824	
	ES4	0.844	
Self-efficacy	SE1	0.815	0.959
	SE2	0.804	
	SE3	0.812	
	SE4	0.877	
	SE5	0.834	
	SE6	0.865	
	SE7	0.857	
	SE8	0.870	
	SE9	0.873	
	SE10	0.894	
Behavioral engagement	BEG1	0.827	0.851
	BEG2	0.811	
	BEG3	0.902	
	BEG4	0.784	
Cognitive engagement	CEG1	0.968	0.954
	CEG2	0.950	
	CEG3	0.954	
Emotional engagement	EEG1	0.892	0.848
	EEG2	0.860	
	EEG3	0.876	

Moreover, Table 4 presents the findings of the mediation effect analysis. After controlling for demographic variables such as gender, grade, and class leader or not, it shows that perceived teacher support has a significant positive association with English learning engagement ($\beta = 0.383$, $t = 12.363$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.322, 0.444]). Therefore, H1 is supported. Furthermore, perceived teacher support also has a significant positive association with self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.500$, $t = 11.201$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.413, 0.588]). Therefore, H2 is supported. Additionally, self-efficacy has a significant positive relationship with English learning engagement ($\beta = 0.243$, $t = 9.475$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.193, 0.294]). Therefore, H3 is supported. Finally, the indirect effect of students’ perceived teacher support on English learning engagement through self-efficacy was highly significant ($\beta = 0.122$, $t = 7.176$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.091, 0.156]). Consequently, H4 was supported.

Table 4. Mediation analysis.

Hypotheses	Relationship among construct	Effect	t-value	P-value	Bootstrap 95% CI		Remarks
					Lower	Upper	
H1	PTS- ELE	0.383	12.363	0.000	0.322	0.444	Accepted
H2	PTS-SE	0.500	11.201	0.000	0.413	0.588	Accepted
H3	SE-ELE	0.243	9.475	0.000	0.193	0.294	Accepted
H4	PTS-SE-ELE	0.122	7.176	0.000	0.091	0.156	Accepted

Note: PTS: Perceived Teacher Support; SE: Self-Efficacy; ELE: English Learning Engagement.

5. Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that perceived teacher support has a significant positive predictive effect on English learning engagement, meaning that learners who perceived better support are more likely to proactively participate in English studies. This outcome may be because supportive teachers can provide helpful feedback, emotional encouragement, and classroom guidance, thus helping students to invest more effort in English learning (Huang, 2026). This finding aligns with Gong and Xu (2024) the engagement among students is positively predicted by teacher support at local universities in China. Similarly, Fan (2024) observed that online language learners' engagement is related to teacher assistance. These similar findings suggest that improving students’ engagement in three dimensions, such as behavioral, cognitive, and emotional, in English learning requires teacher support in the classroom. In contrast, Zhou and Liu (2025) noted that teacher emotional support has an indirect connection to pupils’ online engagement through feelings of pleasure and boredom rather than directly predicting it. This difference may stem from the type of teacher support examined, as this study measures students’ overall perceived teacher support, while Liu and Zhou (2024) focused on the emotional support given by teachers within online learning contexts.

Furthermore, the present study reveals that perceived teacher support has a significant positive association with self-efficacy, meaning that learners who experience more English teacher support would have more belief in their capacity to learn the English language. A plausible explanation is that supportive teachers can help students feel more capable of finishing English learning assignments (Xia, 2026). Similarly, Huang and Wang (2023) noted that teacher support predicts learners' psychological mechanisms such as academic self-efficacy in online university

studying. Similarly, Xia (2026) found that in generative AI-assisted EFL learning, teacher assistance can promote learners' academic self-efficacy. These findings suggest that teacher support can promote students' confidence by providing learning guidance, feedback, and psychological safety. Conversely, Kono et al. (2024) found that some foreign language learners with high self-efficacy may need less teacher support because they already feel more capable of managing learning tasks independently. This difference may be related to learners' age and classroom context, since Kono et al. (2024) focused on primary school foreign language classrooms, while this study examined undergraduate English majors at the higher education level.

Additionally, this research shows that self-efficacy improves engagement in English learning, indicating that students are more inclined to participate in English learning tasks when they have greater confidence in their English academic capacity (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024). One possible reason may be that confident learners usually believe they can cope with learning difficulties, and therefore they would have more effort and engagement in their coursework (Xu et al., 2024). Furthermore, this pattern is consistent with Zhou and Liu (2025), who identified self-efficacy as a crucial element in explaining classroom engagement within Chinese higher education. These findings imply that self-efficacy can encourage students to be more persistent throughout the English learning process.

Finally, this study reveals that self-efficacy mediates the association between these two variables. This underlying mechanism suggests that teacher support not only provides external assistance but also helps students develop stronger beliefs that they can complete English learning tasks. When students have more confidence in their English learning capacity, they are better able to translate teacher support into active participation, sustained effort, and deeper engagement (Wu & Cai, 2025; Yang et al., 2026). Similarly, Derakhshan and Fathi (2024) discovered that self-efficacy explains how positive learner factors contribute to online learning engagement among EFL learners. In contrast, Li (2025) discovered that teacher emotional assistance influences online learning engagement through feelings of pleasure and boredom, rather than through self-efficacy. This difference may be attributed to the research environment and the type of independent variable; while emotional support in online learning may primarily affect learners' immediate emotions, the comprehensive perceived teacher support in this study directly targets and enhances students' long-term confidence in learning English.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between three variables among Chinese undergraduate English majors. The results demonstrated that perceived teacher support has a significant positive association with English learning engagement, demonstrating that students receiving more teacher support would more actively participate in English study. The findings also presented that perceived teacher support has a significant positive connection with self-efficacy, which in turn exhibits a strong positive connection with English learning engagement. Crucially, the association among the three variables means that teacher support promotes students' English learning engagement by boosting their confidence in learning English. These findings underscore the significance of supportive pedagogical practices in foreign language education. To foster deeper student engagement, English instructors should provide clear instruction, timely feedback, emotional encouragement, and useful learning resources. Overall, this study advances the understanding of how external teacher support and internal psychological beliefs jointly promote English learning engagement among undergraduate English majors.

The findings of this study offer several important practical implications for higher education. First, the results emphasize the crucial role of teacher support in promoting English learning engagement among undergraduate English majors. English educators should give clear instruction, prompt feedback, emotional encouragement, and more opportunities for classroom interaction, so that students feel supported throughout the learning process. Second, the study indicates that self-efficacy is a crucial psychological component in English learning. Therefore, teachers should help learners build confidence by recognizing their progress and providing constructive feedback. Third, higher education institutions should offer relevant training for teachers to help them develop supportive teaching techniques and create a more positive English learning setting. Implementing these practices will ultimately enhance students' confidence and motivate them to participate more fully in their English studies.

Although this study contributes valuable insights to this field, it is subject to certain limitations. First, because the sample was restricted to undergraduate English majors at a single university in Henan province, the findings cannot be generalized to other institutional tiers or other degree programs. Second, all data gathered in this research were via questionnaire surveys, which may introduce subjectivity or common method bias based on individual participant perceptions. Third, because this research employed a cross-sectional design, it can only examine the relationship between three variables at a single point in time, preventing causal conclusions. To address these limitations, future studies should involve students from different disciplines, universities, or regions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, future studies could also adopt a longitudinal design or mixed-methods approach that includes interviews or classroom observations to provide a more robust, comprehensive understanding of these dynamics over time.

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