



Where Agentic Engagement Meets Autonomy Support: Unpacking the Engagement Nexus Among Moroccan EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study examined the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among 189 First Bacculaureate students at a private secondary school in Marrakesh, Morocco. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, the study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design. Data were collected using the five-item Agentic Engagement Scale and a six-item version of the Learning Climate Questionnaire, both rated on seven-point Likert-type scales. Spearman's rank-order correlation revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive association between the two variables ($\rho = .463$, $p < .001$). Exploratory item-level analyses further revealed variation in the associations between specific engagement behaviors and perceptions of autonomy-supportive teaching. The findings suggest that EFL teachers could encourage students to ask questions, seek assistance, express their interests, and communicate their learning preferences, while ensuring that students feel heard and understood. However, the cross-sectional design and single-school sample limit causal interpretation and the generalizability of the findings.

1. Introduction

Engagement is widely regarded as an important factor in academic success. Students who are actively engaged in learning are more likely to achieve academic success, persist in their studies, and develop intrinsic motivation to learn (Fredricks et al., 2004; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; Finn, 1989). Engagement has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of three main dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional (Fredricks et al., 2004; Finn, 1989; Christenson et al., 2012). Although valuable, these dimensions primarily capture students' responses to existing classroom conditions, offering limited insight into how students proactively shape their learning experiences.

To address this aspect of engagement, Reeve and Tseng (2011) introduced the concept of agentic engagement, which refers to students' proactive contributions to the learning process, including asking questions, expressing preferences and opinions, and influencing classroom instruction. From this perspective, students are not merely recipients of instruction but active contributors to their learning (deCharms, 1968).

However, students' opportunities to contribute proactively may also depend on the classroom environment. When teachers recognize and respect students' perspectives and provide options and opportunities that support their volition, they adopt an autonomy-supportive approach (Patall, 2024). Previous research has examined the relationship between

agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support, including the possibility of reciprocal associations between the two constructs (Reeve, 2013). The present cross-sectional study examines the association between these constructs but does not test reciprocal effects.

Although research has examined the association between teacher autonomy support and agentic engagement in various educational contexts, further context-specific evidence is needed to understand how these constructs are related among secondary-school EFL learners in Morocco. To address this gap, the present study examines the relationship between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support at a private secondary school in Marrakesh. It also describes students' responses to individual items on the two measures to identify variation in their reported engagement behaviors and perceptions of autonomy-supportive teaching. By combining correlational analysis with item-level descriptive analysis, the study provides context-specific evidence of the association between these constructs and a more detailed account of Moroccan secondary-school EFL learners' reported experiences. The findings may inform pedagogical reflection, although their interpretation is limited by the study's cross-sectional design and single-school sample.

2. Literature Review

Student engagement has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. More recently, researchers have examined agentic engagement, a more proactive form of engagement through which students actively contribute to shaping their learning experiences. Research has also explored agentic engagement and its relationship with teacher autonomy-supportive practices, alongside broader cross-cultural work on autonomy in education (Chirkov, 2009; Patall, 2024). Building on this literature, the present study examines the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among secondary-school EFL learners in Morocco.

2.1 Concept Definition

This section outlines the theoretical foundations of the study, beginning with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and its relevance to educational contexts. It then discusses teacher autonomy support and student engagement, before focusing on agentic engagement and its relationship with autonomy-supportive teaching.

2.1.1 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a prominent macro-theory of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It proposes that people have natural tendencies toward psychological growth, self-regulation, and optimal functioning. Unlike behaviorist perspectives that emphasize the role of reinforcement and punishment in shaping behavior (Skinner, 1984), SDT highlights people's potential to learn and develop when their social environments support these tendencies (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The theory also draws on earlier work, particularly deCharms's (1968) concept of personal causation, which emphasizes individuals' active role in shaping their behavior. However, this potential for growth depends partly on the social conditions in which people act (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Within SDT, three basic psychological needs are particularly important: autonomy, or experiencing a sense of volition in one's actions; competence, or feeling capable and effective; and relatedness, or feeling connected to and valued by others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Support for these basic psychological needs is associated with stronger intrinsic motivation and more autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation in educational settings (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

2.1.2 Self-Determination Theory in Educational Contexts

Self-Determination Theory provides a useful basis for understanding student motivation in education. However, the classroom environment also matters, as it can either support students' basic psychological needs or frustrate them. Teaching practices that overlook learners' views and rely heavily on control may frustrate their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, potentially contributing to amotivation, disengagement, or even defiance (Patall,

2024). By contrast, autonomy-supportive classrooms tend to promote stronger motivation and engagement.

Research has also linked autonomy-supportive teaching to a range of positive educational outcomes. These include greater intrinsic motivation, persistence, and academic success (Black & Deci, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2000), as well as deeper learning strategies and better long-term performance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Such teaching has also been associated with students' psychological well-being (Niemi et al., 2010). Su and Reeve's (2011) meta-analysis provides further evidence on autonomy-supportive interventions, while Jang et al. (2012) examined SDT's motivational processes in a classroom context and Chirkov (2009) explored autonomy in education from a cross-cultural perspective.

2.2 Autonomy Support

Autonomy support refers to teaching practices that allow students' own motivation to become the focal point. Unlike controlling approaches that rely on threats or the imposition of strict rules, autonomy support involves understanding students and helping them engage in activities they consider relevant to their interests and goals (Kaplan & Assor, 2012). In line with Self-Determination Theory, teachers can support students' basic psychological needs by providing opportunities for them to feel autonomous, competent, and connected to others (Reeve, 2013).

In practice, this approach can make classroom tasks more personally meaningful to students. However, not all teachers adopt autonomy-supportive practices. Some rely instead on controlling approaches, such as public shaming, tight deadlines, and guilt-inducing language. Such practices differ from autonomy support in the extent to which they acknowledge students' perspectives and allow them to experience a sense of volition in their learning (Amoura et al., 2015; Reeve, 2013).

These differences are relevant to the present study because students' opportunities to express their views and contribute to classroom activities are central to agentic engagement. The relationship between autonomy support and agentic engagement is examined more closely in the following sections.

2.3 Agentic Engagement

Agentic engagement refers to the proactive ways in which learners contribute to and influence their learning process, rather than simply responding to assigned tasks. Students demonstrate this form of engagement when they express their views, ask questions, suggest alternatives, or seek to make lessons more meaningful to them (Patall, 2024; Reeve, 2013). Reeve and Tseng (2011) identified agentic engagement as a distinct, fourth dimension of student engagement, highlighting its role in allowing learners to contribute to the learning environment.

These contributions can take different forms depending on the educational context. In higher education, for example, students may advocate for changes to course policies or greater relevance in their learning experiences (Klemenčič, 2017). More broadly, agentic engagement has been associated with academic success, motivation, and well-being, and it can provide teachers with information that helps them make instruction more responsive to students' needs (Matos et al., 2018). A meta-analysis by Reeve et al. (2025) also reported associations between agentic engagement, teacher autonomy support, and the teacher–student relationship.

2.4 The Relationship Between Autonomy Support and Agentic Engagement

Teacher autonomy support and agentic engagement have been described as part of a mutually reinforcing process known as the “reciprocal loop” (Reeve, 2013). When teachers offer meaningful choices, explain the purpose of learning tasks, and acknowledge students' perspectives, they create opportunities for students to contribute more actively to the learning process (Reeve, 2013). Students' questions, expressed preferences, and requests for

clarification can, in turn, help teachers better understand their needs and adjust their instruction accordingly (Mameli & Passini, 2017; Reeve, 2015).

The relationship may not, however, operate in the same way in every classroom. In more controlling environments, students' attempts to express their views may be met with resistance or may contribute to withdrawal or defiance (Reeve, 2009). Cultural expectations surrounding compliance and conformity may also shape how students express their agency, making the classroom context an important consideration (Pihu et al., 2008).

Overall, this literature provides a basis for examining the association between students' perceived teacher autonomy support and their agentic engagement. Although previous work has proposed a reciprocal relationship between the two constructs, the present cross-sectional study examines their association rather than testing reciprocal or causal effects.

2.5 Autonomy Support and Agentic Engagement in EFL

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to learning English in contexts where it is not the language of everyday communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In such contexts, opportunities to use English beyond the classroom may be limited, making classroom experiences particularly important. Teacher autonomy support and agentic engagement are therefore relevant to understanding how learners participate in and contribute to their learning. Although the relationship between these constructs has received some empirical attention, further evidence is needed across different EFL settings.

For example, Jiang and Zhang (2021) examined the relationship between autonomy support and agentic engagement in connection with mastery goals. Khabar et al. (2025) examined the relationships between teacher autonomy support, learning empowerment, and agentic engagement in an EFL context, finding that learning empowerment mediated the association between autonomy support and agentic engagement. These studies provide relevant points of reference, but their findings should be considered in relation to the contexts and specific relationships they examined.

Research conducted in Morocco offers additional context for examining student participation and autonomy-supportive teaching. Ait Hattani (2018) discussed the implementation of communicative language teaching in Moroccan EFL classrooms and reported tensions between the aims of communicative instruction and the emphasis placed on communication skills in the curriculum. Riad (2023) examined teacher talk in Moroccan secondary-school EFL classrooms, reporting a prominent role for teacher talk and classroom direction. Complementary research by Chafi et al. (2016) documented teacher authority and classroom control in Moroccan primary schools. Although these studies differ in educational level, setting, and research focus, they raise relevant questions about classroom interaction and opportunities for student participation. They do not, however, directly establish the relationship between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among Moroccan secondary-school learners, which is the focus of the present study.

2.6 Research Gap and Contribution

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory has established the relevance of teacher autonomy support to students' motivation and engagement. Within this broader literature, agentic engagement offers a distinct perspective by focusing on students' proactive contributions to the learning process, including asking questions, expressing preferences, and communicating their interests and perspectives (Reeve & Tseng, 2011; Reeve, 2013). Empirical research has also examined how students' perceptions of teaching practices relate to this form of engagement. For example, Jiang and Zhang (2021) investigated perceived teaching styles and agentic engagement among university students learning English as a foreign language, while Jang et al. (2023) examined the reciprocal associations between agentic engagement and perceived autonomy support using longitudinal data. The relationship between these constructs is therefore an established line of inquiry, although further evidence is needed from other educational contexts.

Research on psychological needs in Moroccan higher education offers a relevant contextual perspective on students' educational experiences (El Aatik et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the extent to which this literature informs our understanding of the relationship between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among Moroccan secondary-school EFL learners remains limited. This highlights the need for context-specific research examining the association between these constructs at the secondary-school level.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among First Baccalaureate students in a private secondary-school EFL setting in Marrakesh, Morocco. It also describes students' responses to individual items from the two instruments, providing a more detailed account of their self-reported engagement behaviors and perceptions of autonomy-supportive teaching than overall scale scores alone.

The study makes two contributions. First, it provides context-specific correlational evidence concerning the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among Moroccan secondary-school EFL learners. Second, its item-level descriptive analysis identifies variation in students' reported behaviors and perceptions, offering a basis for further research and consideration of context-sensitive pedagogical implications. These contributions should be interpreted in light of the study's cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report measures, and sample from a single private school. The study does not establish causal or reciprocal effects, nor does it test whether cultural norms or specific teaching practices explain the observed patterns.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Objectives

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to examine the association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. A correlational design was appropriate because the study sought to investigate the relationship between the two variables as reported by students, rather than to manipulate classroom practices or establish causal effects.

The general objective of this study was to examine the association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support in Moroccan secondary-school EFL classrooms.

To achieve this general objective, the study pursued three specific objectives:

1. To examine the association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support in the participating EFL classrooms.
2. To describe students' reported agentic engagement, including variation in their responses to the individual items of the Agentic Engagement Scale.
3. To describe students' perceptions of teacher autonomy support, including variation in their responses to the individual items of the Learning Climate Questionnaire.

In line with these objectives, the study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support in the participating EFL classrooms?

RQ2: How do students report their agentic engagement in these classrooms?

RQ3: How do students perceive teacher autonomy support in these classrooms?

Based on the theoretical relationship between student agency and autonomy-supportive teaching, the study tested the following hypothesis:

H1: Students' agentic engagement is positively associated with their perceived teacher autonomy support.

Descriptive statistics were used to address RQ2 and RQ3, while Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to address RQ1 and test H1. An additional exploratory analysis examined

associations between individual questionnaire items to provide a more detailed description of the relationships observed in the composite scores.

3.2 Participants and Research Setting

The participants were 189 First Baccalaureate students enrolled in ten intact EFL classes at Elaraki International School, a private school in Marrakesh, Morocco. The classes were pre-existing instructional groups rather than classes formed specifically for the study, and they were taught by three English teachers. Participation was voluntary, and students volunteered to take part in the study.

The sample comprised 90 male students (47.6%), 96 female students (50.8%), and three participants who did not specify their gender (1.6%). Regarding age, 68.3% of the participants were 16 years old, while 97.9% were in Grade 11. The majority of participants reported having studied English for more than four years.

The study focused on this educational setting to examine the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among secondary-school EFL learners. Using intact classes allowed data to be collected within students' existing educational environment without reorganizing their classes for research purposes. However, the voluntary nature of participation and the inclusion of students from a single private school limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other Moroccan secondary-school settings.

3.3 Research Instruments

Data were collected using a questionnaire comprising two established instruments: the Agentic Engagement Scale (AES) and the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ). Both instruments used seven-point Likert-type response scales. The questionnaire was administered electronically through Google Forms.

3.3.1 Agentic Engagement Scale

Students' agentic engagement was measured using the five-item Agentic Engagement Scale developed by Reeve (2013). The scale assesses students' proactive contributions to the learning process, including asking questions, communicating learning needs and interests, expressing preferences or opinions, and requesting the support or resources they need.

The five items were used to calculate a composite agentic engagement score for each participant. Responses were coded according to the seven-point response format, with higher scores indicating greater self-reported agentic engagement. The composite score was calculated by averaging the five item responses.

3.3.2 Learning Climate Questionnaire

Students' perceptions of teacher autonomy support were measured using a six-item version of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ), associated with Williams and Deci (1996). The instrument assesses students' perceptions of the extent to which their learning environment supports their perspectives, acknowledges their feelings, provides opportunities for choice, encourages questions, communicates confidence in their abilities, and considers their preferred ways of learning.

The six items were rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale. Responses were averaged to produce a composite perceived teacher autonomy support score, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived autonomy support.

3.4 Scale Reliability

The internal consistency of the two research instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α). This coefficient indicates the extent to which items within a scale are interrelated as indicators of the construct being measured.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics for the Research Instruments (N = 189)

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha (α)	Interpretation
Autonomy Support (LCQ)	6	.807	Good
Agentic Engagement (AES)	5	.715	Acceptable

As shown in Table 1, the six-item LCQ yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .807, indicating good internal consistency. The five-item AES yielded a coefficient of .715, indicating acceptable internal consistency for the purposes of the present study. Both scales were therefore retained for the subsequent analyses (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

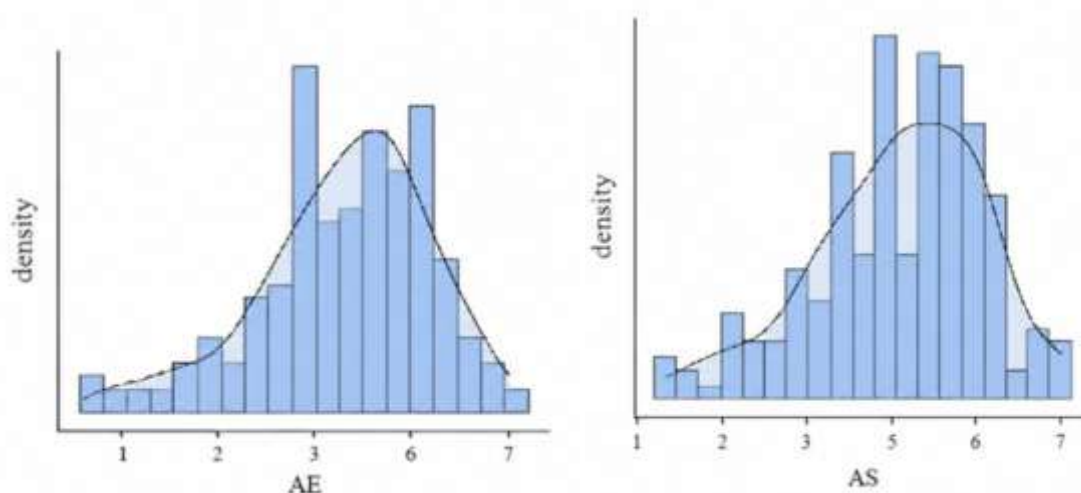
These coefficients provide evidence of internal consistency in the present sample; they do not, on their own, establish the validity or unidimensionality of either instrument.

3.5 Assessment of Distributional Shape

The distributions of agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support were examined through visual inspection of their histograms (Figure 1). Both distributions showed a concentration of scores toward the upper end of the seven-point response scale, suggesting a tendency toward negative skewness.

This pattern was consistent with the observed skewness coefficients for agentic engagement (-0.70) and perceived teacher autonomy support (-0.54). These values indicate that responses tended to cluster toward higher scores, with tails extending toward lower scores (Kim, 2013).

Figure 1. Density Histograms for Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support and Agentic Engagement



Note. AE = agentic engagement; AS = perceived teacher autonomy support. Both distributions show a concentration of responses toward the upper end of the scale, consistent with negative skewness.

Visual inspection of histograms was used to assess distributional shape rather than to establish statistical normality. The observed distributions were considered alongside the response format and the study's correlational objective when selecting the statistical procedure.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected during the second week of October 2025. The questionnaire was administered electronically through Google Forms, and students completed it on their mobile phones. Completion took approximately 15 minutes.

The questionnaire was administered to students in their existing EFL classes. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously. The resulting dataset contained 189 responses and was prepared for statistical analysis. The dataset used for the reported analyses contained no missing values.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from Elaraki International School before data collection. The school arranged parental consent for students' participation, and students provided verbal assent before completing the questionnaire. Students also had existing contractual arrangements with the school concerning participation in school activities and research. Nevertheless, participation in the present study was voluntary.

The questionnaire was completed anonymously, and the data were analyzed for research purposes. Findings were reported in aggregate form to protect participants' anonymity. These procedures were intended to respect participants' privacy and voluntary participation.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using jamovi 2.7. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the composite scores and individual questionnaire items to summarize students' reported agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support.

For the composite agentic engagement score, the mean was 5.30 ($SD = 0.90$), with a median of 5.40 and skewness of -0.70 . For perceived teacher autonomy support, the mean was 5.08 ($SD = 1.01$), with a median of 5.17 and skewness of -0.54 . These descriptive statistics were used to address RQ2 and RQ3.

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the association between the two composite variables. This non-parametric measure was selected in view of the seven-point response format, the observed distributional characteristics, and the aim of examining the direction and strength of the association without assuming a linear relationship. Statistical significance was evaluated using a two-tailed test, with the significance threshold set at $p < .05$.

The principal correlation analysis addressed RQ1 and tested H1. A positive and statistically significant coefficient would support the hypothesized association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support. However, given the cross-sectional correlational design, the analysis could not establish causal direction or determine whether either variable influenced the other.

An additional exploratory analysis examined associations between individual AES and LCQ items. The five AES items and six LCQ items generated 30 possible cross-scale item pairs. Spearman's rank-order correlations were calculated for these pairs, and the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure was applied to adjust for multiple testing and control the false discovery rate. These item-level results were interpreted as exploratory evidence about patterns of association among particular aspects of agentic engagement and perceived autonomy support, rather than as independent confirmation of the main hypothesis.

Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated separately for the AES and LCQ to assess the internal consistency of each scale in the study sample. The reliability estimates, descriptive statistics, and principal correlation analysis formed the basis of the main findings, while the item-level analyses provided supplementary detail.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Descriptive statistics were calculated to examine students' agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support. Both variables were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales, with a midpoint of 4.0. Table 2 presents the means, medians, standard deviations, skewness coefficients, minimum and maximum scores, and internal consistency estimates for the two composite variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency of the Study Variables ($N = 189$)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Min	Max	α
Agentic Engagement	5.30	5.40	0.90	-0.70	2.60	7.00	.715
Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support	5.08	5.17	1.01	-0.54	2.33	7.00	.807

Note. Composite scores were calculated by averaging the five agentic engagement items and the six perceived teacher autonomy support items. Scores ranged from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater agentic engagement and stronger perceived teacher autonomy support, respectively.

As shown in Table 2, agentic engagement had a mean score of 5.30 ($SD = 0.90$), while perceived teacher autonomy support had a mean score of 5.08 ($SD = 1.01$). Both means were above the scale midpoint of 4.0, indicating that participants tended to report relatively high levels of agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support. However, these descriptive findings should not be interpreted as evidence of statistically significant differences from the midpoint, as no such comparison was conducted.

The standard deviation for perceived teacher autonomy support ($SD = 1.01$) was slightly higher than that for agentic engagement ($SD = 0.90$), indicating somewhat greater variability in students' ratings of autonomy support. Both variables displayed negative skewness, consistent with a concentration of responses toward the higher end of their respective scales.

4.2 Association Between Agentic Engagement and Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support

Spearman's rank-order correlation was conducted to examine the association between students' agentic engagement and their perceived teacher autonomy support. The analysis revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive association between the two variables, $p = .463$, $p < .001$, $N = 189$.

This finding indicates that students who reported higher levels of perceived teacher autonomy support also tended to report higher levels of agentic engagement. The direction and magnitude of the association support H1, which predicted a positive relationship between the two variables.

Using Cohen's (1988) conventional guidelines as a general reference, the observed coefficient represents a moderate association. Nevertheless, the result should be interpreted as evidence of a relationship rather than a causal effect. The cross-sectional design does not establish whether perceived teacher autonomy support contributes to agentic engagement, whether students' agentic engagement influences their perceptions of autonomy support, or whether other factors contribute to the observed association.

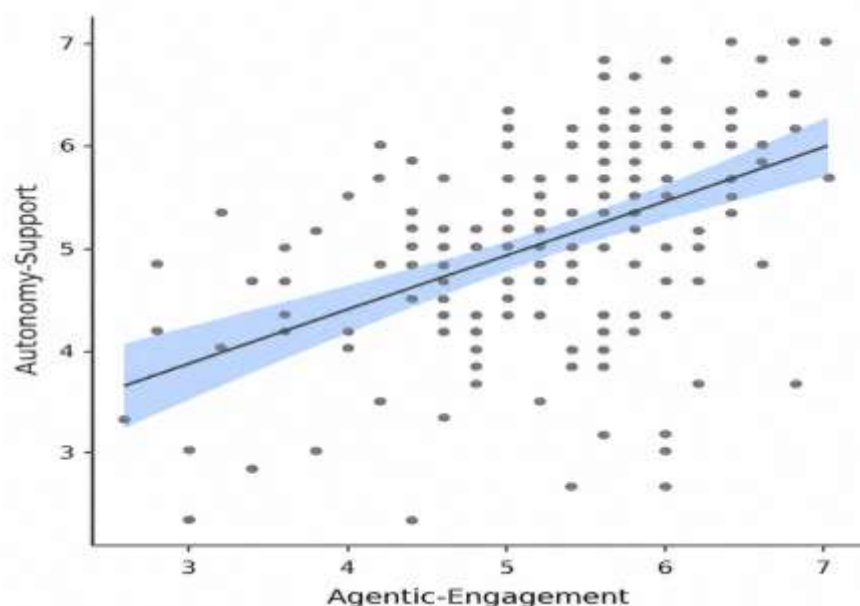
Table 3. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Between Agentic Engagement and Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support

Variable	Agentic Engagement	Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support
Agentic Engagement	1.000	.463***
Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support	.463***	1.000

Note. $N = 189$. Values are Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the positive association between the two composite variables. The upward pattern indicates that higher perceived teacher autonomy support scores tended to correspond to higher agentic engagement scores. The figure complements the correlation analysis by illustrating the overall pattern in the observed data.

Figure 2. Scatter Plot of the Relationship Between Agentic Engagement and Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support



Note. The scatterplot illustrates the positive association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support. The upward-sloping fitted line summarizes the overall pattern, while the shaded region represents the 95% confidence interval around the fitted line. The figure is intended as a descriptive complement to the Spearman rank-order correlation analysis.

4.3 Item-Level Descriptive Analysis

To examine variation within each construct, descriptive statistics were calculated for the individual items of the Agentic Engagement Scale (AES) and the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ). Tables 4 and 5 present the item means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha values if each item were deleted.

4.3.1 Agentic Engagement Items

Table 4. Item-Level Descriptive Statistics for Agentic Engagement ($N = 189$)

Item	Item description	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α if item deleted
AE1	During class, I ask questions to help me learn.	5.63	1.26	.704
AE2	I let my teacher know what I need and want.	5.13	1.32	.635
AE3	I let my teacher know what I am interested in.	4.72	1.38	.645
AE4	During this class, I express my preference and opinion.	5.44	1.31	.651
AE5	When I need something in this class, I ask the teacher for it.	5.56	1.29	.693

Note. Items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The overall scale reliability was $\alpha = .715$. AE = agentic engagement.

As shown in Table 4, mean scores for agentic engagement items ranged from 4.72 to 5.63. Asking questions to support learning received the highest mean score ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.26$), followed by asking the teacher for something needed in class ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.29$). Expressing preferences and opinions also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.31$), while communicating needs and wants yielded a mean of 5.13 ($SD = 1.32$).

Communicating personal interests received the lowest mean score ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.38$). These results indicate descriptive variation across the five measured agentic engagement behaviors. In this sample, students reported comparatively higher engagement in asking questions and requesting support than in communicating their personal interests. These differences are descriptive and should not be interpreted as statistically significant differences between items without appropriate inferential testing.

The alpha-if-item-deleted values were all below the overall scale reliability coefficient of .715. Thus, deleting any individual item would not have increased the observed Cronbach's alpha, providing no reliability-based reason to remove an item.

4.3.2 Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support Items

Table 5. Item-Level Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Teacher Autonomy Support ($N = 189$)

Item	Item description	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α if item deleted
AS1	I feel that my teacher provides me choices and options.	4.99	1.52	.794
AS2	I feel understood by my teacher.	4.75	1.44	.789
AS3	My teacher encourages me to ask questions.	5.60	1.25	.787
AS4	My teacher conveys confidence in my ability to do well in the course.	5.26	1.28	.753
AS5	My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.	4.97	1.50	.767
AS6	My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.	4.88	1.48	.767

Note. Items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The overall scale reliability was $\alpha = .807$. AS = perceived teacher autonomy support.

Table 5 shows that mean scores for perceived teacher autonomy support items ranged from 4.75 to 5.60. Teacher encouragement to ask questions received the highest mean score ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.25$), followed by teachers' communication of confidence in students' abilities ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.28$).

The provision of choices and options ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.52$) and listening to students' preferred ways of doing things ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.50$) received similar mean ratings. Students' perceptions that teachers tried to understand their perspectives before suggesting alternative approaches had a mean of 4.88 ($SD = 1.48$). Feeling understood by the teacher received the lowest mean score ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.44$).

These findings indicate descriptive variation across the six measured perceptions of autonomy-supportive teaching. Encouragement to ask questions received the highest rating, whereas feeling understood by the teacher received the lowest. The relatively higher standard deviations for some items, particularly the provision of choices and options ($SD = 1.52$), indicate greater variability in students' responses to those items.

The alpha-if-item-deleted values were all below the overall LCQ reliability coefficient of .807. Accordingly, deleting any individual item would not have increased the observed internal consistency coefficient.

4.4 Exploratory Cross-Item Correlations

In addition to the primary analysis of the composite scores, exploratory item-level analyses examined associations between individual agentic engagement behaviors and perceived teacher autonomy support practices. Spearman's rank-order correlations were calculated for all 30 possible cross-scale item pairs. To account for multiple testing, p -values were adjusted using the Benjamini–Hochberg false discovery rate procedure.

Table 6. Spearman's Correlations Between Individual Perceived Autonomy Support and Agentic Engagement Items ($N = 189$)

Autonomy support item	AE1	AE2	AE3	AE4	AE5
AS1	.137	.262***	.098	.202**	.162*
AS2	.221**	.232**	.250**	.246**	.229**
AS3	.256**	.180*	.269***	.280***	.186*
AS4	.176*	.316***	.361***	.310***	.209**
AS5	.206**	.289***	.322***	.289***	.143
AS6	.098	.187*	.358***	.209**	.186*

Note. Values are Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients. Significance markers refer to two-sided Benjamini–Hochberg-adjusted p -values: * $p_{\text{adj}} < .05$; ** $p_{\text{adj}} < .01$; *** $p_{\text{adj}} < .001$. Unmarked coefficients were not statistically significant after adjustment.

Following Benjamini–Hochberg adjustment, 26 of the 30 item pairs were reported as statistically significant positive associations. The strongest association was between the perception that the teacher conveyed confidence in students' abilities (AS4) and students' tendency to communicate their interests (AE3), AS4–AE3: $\rho = .361$, adjusted $p < .001$.

Perceived teacher confidence was also positively associated with communicating needs AS4–AE2: $\rho = .316$, adjusted $p < .001$, and expressing preferences and opinions AS4–AE4: $\rho = .310$, adjusted $p < .001$. In addition, encouragement to ask questions (AS3) was positively associated with asking questions to support learning AS3–AE1: $\rho = .256$, adjusted $p = .00102$, while feeling understood by the teacher (AS2) showed positive associations with all five agentic engagement items.

Four item pairs did not reach statistical significance following adjustment: AS1–AE1, AS1–AE3, AS5–AE5, and AS6–AE1. Overall, the exploratory analysis indicates that the associations between perceived autonomy support and agentic engagement varied across individual item pairs. These findings provide supplementary detail about the relationships between specific reported behaviors and perceptions, but they do not establish causal relationships or demonstrate that particular autonomy-supportive practices produce specific agentic engagement behaviors.

5. Discussion

The present study examined the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among First Baccalaureate students in a private secondary-school EFL context in Morocco. The findings revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive association between the two constructs ($\rho = .463$, $p < .001$). Students who reported higher levels of agentic engagement also tended to perceive greater autonomy support from their teachers. This finding supports the study's hypothesis and is consistent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the importance of the social environment in supporting students' motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). From this perspective, teaching practices that acknowledge students' perspectives, encourage participation, and respond to their learning needs may create conditions conducive to agentic engagement. Nevertheless, because the present study employed a cross-sectional correlational design, the results indicate an association rather than establish a causal relationship between the constructs.

The findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing agentic engagement from other dimensions of student engagement. Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement capture different aspects of students' participation, affective experiences, and mental investment in learning (Fredricks et al., 2004; Finn, 1989; Christenson et al., 2012). Agentic engagement, in contrast, concerns students' proactive contributions to the instruction they receive, including asking questions, expressing preferences, communicating their needs, and seeking instructional support (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). The positive association observed in this study suggests that students' reported willingness to contribute actively to classroom interactions is related to their perceptions of teacher autonomy support. However, the two constructs remain conceptually distinct; that is, perceived autonomy support concerns students' perceptions of teaching practices, whereas agentic engagement concerns their proactive contributions to the learning process.

The item-level descriptive findings provide a more differentiated picture of these experiences. Among the agentic engagement items, asking questions to support learning received the highest mean score ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.26$), followed by asking the teacher for something needed in class ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.29$). Communicating personal interests received the lowest mean ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.38$). For perceived teacher autonomy support, encouragement to ask questions received the highest mean ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.25$), whereas

feeling understood by the teacher received the lowest ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.44$). These differences are descriptive and should not be interpreted as statistically significant, as no inferential comparisons between item means were conducted.

These findings indicate that participants reported comparatively higher ratings for question-asking and requests for learning support than for communicating personal interests. One possible interpretation is that students may find it easier to contribute through behaviors directly related to academic tasks than through expressions of personal interests. However, the questionnaire did not directly investigate the reasons for these differences. The comparatively lower scores cannot, by themselves, establish that students feel unsafe expressing themselves, that teachers discourage personal expression, or that academic participation occurs at the expense of students' identities. Such possibilities would require further investigation through classroom observations, interviews, or other measures that directly examine students' experiences of classroom interaction.

The exploratory item-level correlations further clarify the associations between particular perceptions of teaching and specific agentic behaviors. The strongest association was between students' perceptions that their teachers conveyed confidence in their abilities (AS4) and their tendency to communicate their interests to the teacher ($\rho = .361$, adjusted $p < .001$). Perceived teacher confidence was also positively associated with communicating learning needs ($\rho = .316$, adjusted $p < .001$) and expressing preferences or opinions ($\rho = .310$, adjusted $p < .001$). These findings indicate that perceived teacher confidence was associated with several forms of agentic contribution, including communicating interests and preferences. However, the correlations do not demonstrate that teacher confidence causes these behaviors or that it is more influential than other autonomy-supportive practices. Because these analyses were exploratory, the results should be interpreted as supplementary evidence of associations between individual questionnaire items rather than as evidence of a specific underlying mechanism.

The association between teacher encouragement of questions (AS3) and students' question-asking (AE1) was also positive ($\rho = .256$, adjusted $p = .00102$). This association remained statistically significant following Benjamini–Hochberg adjustment, although it was not the strongest item-level association. The finding suggests that students' perceptions of an encouraging classroom environment may be related to their willingness to seek clarification and contribute to instruction. It also illustrates that agentic engagement encompasses several related but distinguishable forms of contribution, including asking questions, requesting assistance, expressing preferences, and communicating personal interests. Differences in the strength of the item-level associations warrant further investigation, particularly through research designs that examine how these behaviors unfold during classroom interactions.

These findings can be considered alongside previous research on agentic engagement and teaching practices. Jiang and Zhang (2021), for example, examined relationships between perceived teaching styles and agentic engagement among Chinese university EFL learners. Their work provides a relevant point of comparison for understanding how learners' perceptions of instruction relate to proactive classroom participation. However, differences in educational context, participant characteristics, and research design mean that the present findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating the same mechanisms among Moroccan secondary-school students. Similarly, research on autonomy support and choice, including Iyengar and Lepper (2000), Katz and Assor (2007), and Patall et al. (2008), provides a theoretical basis for considering how teaching practices may relate to students' motivation and engagement. The present study did not directly compare the relative associations of choice, encouragement, and teacher confidence, nor did it compare Moroccan learners with learners in other cultural contexts. Consequently, it cannot establish that one form of autonomy support is more effective than another in Morocco or that cultural orientation explains the observed pattern.

The Moroccan educational literature provides additional context for interpreting these findings. Previous studies have discussed teacher-centered practices, examination demands, and constraints on student participation in Moroccan educational settings (Ait Hattani, 2018; Chafi et al., 2016; Riad, 2023). This literature raises relevant questions about the opportunities students have to express their needs, interests, and preferences during classroom interactions. However, the present study did not directly measure classroom discourse, examination pressure, class size, teacher training, or institutional constraints. These factors therefore cannot be identified as explanations for the observed association on the basis of the present data. Moreover, because the participants were recruited from a single private secondary school in Marrakesh, the findings should not be generalized to Moroccan education as a whole.

Overall, the findings provide context-specific evidence of a positive association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among the participating EFL learners. The descriptive and exploratory item-level results further indicate that different forms of agentic contribution and perceptions of teaching may exhibit different patterns of association. The principal contribution of the study is therefore to document this relationship in a Moroccan secondary-school EFL context and identify specific patterns that merit further investigation, rather than establish a causal pathway or a culturally specific mechanism.

5.1 Pedagogical Implications

Although the study did not test a teaching intervention, its findings suggest several practical considerations for EFL teachers. These implications should be understood as evidence-informed recommendations rather than demonstrated effects of particular instructional strategies.

First, teachers may consider making opportunities for student questions and requests for assistance a routine part of classroom instruction. Question-asking and requesting support received comparatively high mean scores among the agentic engagement items, while teacher encouragement to ask questions received the highest mean score among the autonomy-support items. Teachers could build on this pattern by allowing time for clarification questions, inviting students to identify difficulties, and responding constructively when students request help.

Second, teachers may benefit from explicitly communicating confidence in students' abilities while providing appropriate guidance. Perceived teacher confidence showed the strongest item-level association with communicating personal interests and was also positively associated with communicating needs and expressing preferences. Teachers could acknowledge students' contributions, recognize their progress, and invite learners to explain their reasoning or suggest alternative approaches. These practices are consistent with an autonomy-supportive perspective, although their effects would need to be evaluated in future research.

Third, teachers could create more regular opportunities for students to communicate their interests and preferences. Communicating personal interests received the lowest mean score among the agentic engagement items. Teachers might therefore invite learners to suggest discussion topics, connect language tasks to their experiences, or choose between appropriate task formats. Such opportunities need not remove curricular requirements; rather, they can provide meaningful scope for student input within existing instructional objectives.

Fourth, teachers may pay particular attention to listening to students' perspectives and demonstrating that their views have been understood. Feeling understood by the teacher received the lowest mean score among the autonomy-support items. This finding does not establish a lack of understanding in the participating classrooms, but it identifies an aspect of students' perceptions that merits further attention. Teachers could acknowledge students' viewpoints before offering corrections or alternative approaches and invite them to explain the reasons behind their preferences.

Finally, teacher professional development could include practical strategies for recognizing and responding to agentic engagement. Rather than treating student questions, requests, and

suggestions as interruptions, teachers could use them as information about learners' needs and as opportunities to adapt instruction when feasible. These recommendations are consistent with the study's theoretical framework and observed associations, but the present data do not demonstrate that implementing them would necessarily increase agentic engagement.

5.2 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design means that both variables were measured at a single point in time. Although the analysis identified a statistically significant positive association, it cannot establish causal direction or determine whether perceived teacher autonomy support precedes agentic engagement, whether agentic engagement influences students' perceptions of teacher support, or whether the relationship is reciprocal. Longitudinal research could examine how the two constructs change over time and whether earlier scores predict later scores.

Second, the study relied on students' self-reported questionnaire responses. Such measures are appropriate for examining students' perceptions and reported behaviors, but they may be influenced by social desirability, response tendencies, or differences in how participants interpret questionnaire items. Future research could combine student questionnaires with classroom observations, teacher reports, and interviews to provide a more comprehensive account of agentic engagement and autonomy-supportive teaching.

Third, the sample comprised 189 students from a single private school in Marrakesh. The findings should therefore not be generalized to all Moroccan secondary-school students or assumed to represent public-school settings. Future studies could include multiple private and public schools across different regions and educational contexts to examine whether the observed association is replicated across settings.

Fourth, the participants were distributed across ten intact classes taught by three English teachers. Students within the same class may share classroom experiences and teacher-related influences, meaning their responses may not be fully independent. The present analysis did not account for possible classroom- or teacher-level clustering. Future studies with sufficient numbers of classes and teachers could use multilevel or other cluster-aware analytical approaches to investigate individual- and classroom-level variation.

Fifth, the item-level correlations were exploratory and involved 30 cross-scale comparisons. Although the Benjamini–Hochberg procedure was used to adjust for multiple testing, these analyses should not be treated as confirmatory evidence for specific mechanisms linking particular teacher practices to particular student behaviors. Future research could preregister hypotheses concerning selected item-level relationships or examine them in independent samples.

Finally, the study examined perceived teacher autonomy support and agentic engagement but did not directly measure the psychological mechanisms that might explain their association. Although SDT provides a useful theoretical framework for interpreting the findings, the study did not test whether satisfaction of autonomy, competence, or relatedness mediated the relationship between the two constructs. Future research could examine these mechanisms explicitly and use longitudinal, mixed-methods, or intervention-based designs to investigate how student agency and perceived teacher support may develop together.

5.3 Conclusion

This study examined the association between agentic engagement and perceived teacher autonomy support among 189 First Baccalaureate students at a private school in Marrakesh, Morocco. The results revealed a statistically significant, moderate positive association between the two variables ($\rho = .463$, $p < .001$). Students who reported greater perceived teacher autonomy support also tended to report higher agentic engagement, supporting the study's principal hypothesis.

The descriptive findings indicated variation across the measured behaviors and perceptions. Students reported comparatively higher scores for asking questions and requesting assistance, while communicating personal interests received the lowest mean among the agentic engagement items. Encouragement to ask questions received the highest mean among the autonomy-support items, whereas feeling understood by the teacher received the lowest. The exploratory item-level analysis further identified positive associations between perceived teacher confidence and several forms of agentic engagement, with 26 of the 30 item pairs remaining statistically significant after Benjamini–Hochberg adjustment.

These findings offer context-specific evidence consistent with the theoretical relationship between autonomy-supportive teaching and student agency. They also suggest that examining individual behaviors and perceptions may provide a more detailed understanding of the association between the two constructs. Nevertheless, the study's cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report data, and single-school sample limit causal interpretation and generalizability. Further research across multiple educational settings and over time is needed to clarify the nature of the relationship and examine the classroom processes that may underlie it.

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