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Competitiveness in EFL: The Mediating Effect of Competition Self-Efficacy on the Relationship Between Engagement and Self-Determination

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This study investigated the role of competition in academic settings by conceptualizing competitive engagement and examining how competition self-efficacy defined as confidence in one's ability to outperform others could mediate learner engagement and self-determination to learn English as a foreign language (EFL). Within the context of a videoconference EFL course, a cross-sectional research design was employed during the fourth semester of remote teaching in South Korea due to COVID-19. Statistically significant relationships existed among variables. Students reported high levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement but low levels of competitive engagement. Through structural modeling, competitive engagement emerged as a conceptually unique form of engagement. The relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English when attending an EFL videoconference course was fully mediated by competition self-efficacy. Partial mediation was observed in the relationship between cognitive engagement and self-determination. These findings suggest that both competitive and cognitive engagement are powerful indicators of learning outcomes, especially when learning EFL.

Key words: competitive engagement, self-efficacy, self-determination for learning, EFL/ESL, cognitive engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aside from sports studies in competition (Walton, Baranoff, Gilbert, & Kirby, 2020), competition related constructs in academics are sorely underrepresented in the literature. Therefore, some effort must be given to defining competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy and their effect on learning in the context of communication studies. The socio-cultural emphasis on education in South Korea creates a highly competitive learning environment (Shin, Jahng, & Kim, 2019). and ideal conditions for studies on competition beliefs in academics. The potential negative impacts of competition on student motivation and well-being also need to be considered in this context; however, positive learning outcomes are associated with competitive students (Hwang & Arbaugh, 2009), and shouldn't be overlooked. In the current study, competitive engagement refers to the inherent level of motivation and effort that students put into a learning activity because of the perceived need to outperform others. However, the confidence in their ability to outperform their peers (i.e., competition self-efficacy) is conceptualized as a separate, mediating, construct.

The current study investigates competitive engagement alongside cognitive and behavioral engagement, both established factors in engagement theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). Further, self-determination in learning English as a foreign language, epitomized by persistence and effort, is acknowledged in this study as a key determinant of learning success (Bandura, 1997).

By recognizing and acknowledging competitive engagement as a distinct form of engagement in addition to established forms (e.g., cognitive and behavioral engagement), researchers and educators can establish competitive engagement as a valuable educational construct. This recognition enables us to explore and understand the impact of competition on learning outcomes more comprehensively. It also opens up opportunities to identify the most effective teaching methods that embrace competition within EFL learning contexts.

A clear definition of competitive engagement should be given before moving forward. Competitive engagement in the context of education, when considered alongside cognitive and behavioral engagement, can be defined as a student's level of participation, involvement, and motivation in learning activities framed within a competitive environment. The concept centers around the use of competition as a mechanism to stimulate active participation, motivate learners, and create a more interactive and dynamic learning environment.

In competitive engagement, the competitive characteristic is considered an innate individual characteristic and is posited to influence classroom participation and consequential language output and acquisition (Swain, 1985). Students actively engage with the content not just for the sake of learning or achieving mastery, but also to outperform peers in a competitive setting. This form of engagement depends on the student's motivation to excel in a competitive environment, often induced by incentives or recognition. This is

conceptually unique from competition self-efficacy which refers to one's confidence to outperform others. Instead, competitive engagement refers to the innate willingness to engage in competitive activities. Moreover, the foundation of competitive engagement lies in a delicate balance between cooperation and competition. It fosters an environment where students compete for success, yet often need to work collaboratively to achieve their goals. This paradoxically cooperative-competitive environment could be seen in team-based challenges, debates, and games, where students are required to work together to outperform other teams.

While competitive engagement involves an element of comparison to others, it equally emphasizes the pursuit of personal growth and improvement. It encourages students to challenge their boundaries, take risks, and develop resilience, shaping them into self-directed learners. It promotes a growth mindset, with students learning to view mistakes not as failures, but as opportunities for learning and improvement.

Building on the foundation of competitive engagement fostering personal growth and a growth mindset, it is essential to consider cognitive and behavioral aspects of engagement. Cognitive engagement refers to the mental effort and focus that learners put into acquiring knowledge or developing skills in an online course. Behavioral engagement, on the other hand, encompasses observable actions and participation in the learning process. By examining these different forms of engagement, this study aims to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how engagement theory explains one's self-determination to learn English.

Another variable of interest in this study is competition self-efficacy and refers to the belief that one can outcompete their peers. Competition self-efficacy is a specific subcomponent of the broader concept of self-efficacy, focusing on an individual's cognitive beliefs about their capability to succeed in competitive situations, particularly in comparison to others. Therefore, competition self-efficacy differs from competitive engagement since competition self-efficacy refers to one's confidence in outperforming others while competitive engagement refers to one's innate propensity to engage in competitive activities, regardless of who they are competing against.

The study intends to reason that students who engage more during class will report that they work harder (i.e., have more self-determination) than students who engage less. Secondly, this study intends to reason that higher levels of competition self-efficacy will partly, or fully, explain the relationships between engagement constructs and self-determination to learn English.

Before proceeding, it is important to consider the impact of the competitive learning environment created by videoconference learning environments during the Covid-19 pandemic and its limitations, particularly in regard to student interaction and engagement in English language learning. Videoconferencing during the Covid-19 pandemic has primarily

relied on video conferencing tools and platforms such as WebEx (webex.com) or Zoom (zoom.us), which limits opportunities for student interactions and engagement. These platforms often prevent the use of body language, which can make it difficult for students to communicate or engage effectively. Additionally, students may be hesitant to speak up during video conference lessons due to fear of making mistakes or interrupting their classmates or the instructor. This lack of student interaction during class can be especially problematic for language studies, as engagement leads to output and provides opportunities for corrective feedback (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Gass & Mackey, 2006; Hiver, Al-Hoorie, Vitta, & Wu, 2021).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study is centered on engagement theory, which presents a framework for technology-based teaching and learning (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998). The core tenet of this theory is that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks. The more students are engaged, the more they learn. In this context, structured competitiveness can also enhance engagement by energizing the learning process and encouraging students to interact more deeply with the educational material (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 2004). Complementing the role of engagement theory in this study, self-determination theory (SDT) also provides key insights into enhancing learning outcomes. SDT is a macro-level theory of motivation that underpins learning and overall psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). In the context of language learning, students that engage more frequently create more opportunities for language practice and acquisition. Instructors should encourage active participation during video conference courses since students with a propensity to engage classmates and the instructor have high success expectations (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021; Bardovi-Harlig, 2017). Competitiveness can drive autonomy and competence by encouraging students to take charge of their learning. By unifying engagement theory, competitive engagement, and self-determination theory, this study proposes a holistic framework for enriching language acquisition in a technology-based educational environment.

2.2. Self-Determination to Learn English as a Foreign Language

A growing body of literature has underscored the crucial role of self-determination, often manifested through persistent effort, as a pivotal outcome variable in models assessing

learner engagement and self-efficacy, notably in the EFL context (Ahmetović, Bećirović, & Dubravac, 2020; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Learner engagement has been consistently linked to heightened effort and sustained persistence among students (Zimmerman, 2000). Empirical research solidifies the notion that engaged learners are inclined to devote more effort to conquer challenges and demonstrate increased persistence in learning activities, a pattern especially pertinent in EFL classrooms (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Further strengthening the relationship between engagement and self-determination is the dynamic role of self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their personal abilities. The work of Bandura (1997) and Zimmerman (2000) identified the significant influence of self-efficacy on the extent of effort a learner invests in a task, which becomes particularly consequential in language acquisition processes (Bailey & Rakushin-Lee, 2021). In learning environments with a competitive socio-educational context like South Korea (Kim, 2010), we posit the emergence of competition self-efficacy, a distinct subcomponent of self-efficacy. This refers to a learner's confidence in their ability to perform effectively in a competitive setting. Such belief can positively influence their determination and persistence to learn, vital attributes in overcoming the challenges of second language acquisition.

2.3. Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement is considered a crucial component of Philp and Duchesne's (2016) interaction model and refers to the extent to which learners are actively involved in the learning process, and are willing and able to engage in learning tasks and activities. According to Helme and Clarke (2001), cognitive engagement involves processes such as self-regulation, sustained attention, and mental effort. It can take many forms and can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the nature of the learning task, the learning environment, and the learners' prior knowledge and experiences. For example, learners may be more cognitively engaged when they are presented with challenging tasks that require them to think critically and creatively, or when they are given opportunities to collaborate.

2.4. Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement refers to the observable actions of students that demonstrate their involvement in learning, such as participating in academic activities, expressing interest in an academic task, and interacting with others (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2018). Research has shown that positive behavioral engagement is linked to increased self-efficacy and learning achievement in EFL settings (Kang & Wu, 2022). It is a crucial factor for second language acquisition, as learners who are passive and do not engage with the target language may be limited in their ability to learn it. Therefore, promoting positive behavioral

engagement in EFL settings can be beneficial for students' language learning outcomes. Furthermore, the use of technology can also play a role in promoting positive behavioral engagement in EFL settings.

2.5. Competitive Engagement

The current study focuses on the construct of competitive engagement, which refers to the degree to which students are motivated by competition in the classroom. Competitive engagement is considered a form of engagement because it involves participating in activities or tasks that have a relative or competition-based reward system, such as outperforming peers or receiving a higher grade. In the context of second language learning, students may use the target language (e.g., English) to compete for points, achieve a higher grade, or demonstrate their language skills. While research on emotional and cognitive engagement is abundant in the literature, there is a limited amount of studies on competitive engagement. Competition, as defined Hwang and Arbaugh (2009), is an attitude focused on personal success and outperforming others. Hwang and Arbaugh (2009) found that competitive students were driven to seek more feedback on the class discussion boards as a means of getting ahead of others and this led to more participation and higher scores on course assessment.

Competitive engagement in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context refers to the active involvement of learners in activities that entail some level of competition with others. Ideally, the competition leads to increased interactions and improved language proficiency. Activities that promote competitive engagement include debates, role-play scenarios, presentations, debates, and other types of task-based communication activities that involve open displays of language ability in a competitive setting.

Verbal participation is a typical reflection of engagement and is expected in courses such as English communication. Students were expected to participate when classes were moved online due to Covid-19. In video conference-supported classes during Covid-19, students who are more competitive may be more likely to speak up and engage with their classmates, as participation is often a part of the grading criteria.

2.6. Competition Self-efficacy

Competition self-efficacy describes how confident a student feels they can achieve the desired outcome in comparison to others and this may influence how one's competitive engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement relates to academic outcome beliefs. Self-efficacy for competitiveness refers to the extent one believes they can outcompete their classmates. Self-efficacy for competitiveness is conceptually distinct from

actual competitiveness. Self-efficacy pertains to the confidence one has in succeeding in competitive endeavors while competitive engagement refers to the tendency one wants to participate in competitive activities. In the EFL context, competition self-efficacy in EFL settings is similar to social self-efficacy which pertains to the confidence one has to perform social interactions (e.g., communicate with others) correctly (Liu, 2020).

To improve motivation to learn English, Liu (2020) carried out a community-based English reading contest for pre-college learners. Liu's research model predicted learners' intention to participate based on extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and social self-efficacy levels. Liu's (2020) study found that social self-efficacy mediated the relationship between motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and intention to participate. Liu (2020) integrated learning and competition and used competition to stimulate future learning to better understand how perceived competition outcome beliefs influence intrinsic motivation toward learning satisfaction. Competitive students were more performance-oriented and more likely to sacrifice learning opportunities for better performance.

2.7. Mediation

Competition self-efficacy, a sub-component of general self-efficacy, is posited to have a mediating effect on the relationship between engagement and performance. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1997), is an individual's belief in their ability to perform actions required to achieve specific outcomes. This belief is molded by personal experiences, encompassing the outcomes of past actions, observation of others' actions, verbal encouragement, and emotional conditions. Within this model's framework, engagement, be it competitive, cognitive, or behavioral, can be viewed as a form of mastery experience. When students actively participate and excel in these forms of engagement in comparison to classmates, it strengthens their belief in their competitive abilities, known as competition self-efficacy. For instance, a highly engaged student who consistently performs well in competitive, cognitive, and behavioral tasks would have greater confidence in their ability to outperform their peers (i.e., high competition self-efficacy; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Contrarily, it is less probable for competition self-efficacy to impact engagement. Even though the belief in one's competitive capabilities could influence their readiness to engage, the actual degree of engagement hinges on other factors such as interest, relevance, the level of challenge, or supportive elements, which are not influenced by competition self-efficacy. Consequently, self-efficacy beliefs are expected to have a mediating effect on engagement beliefs and not the other way around.

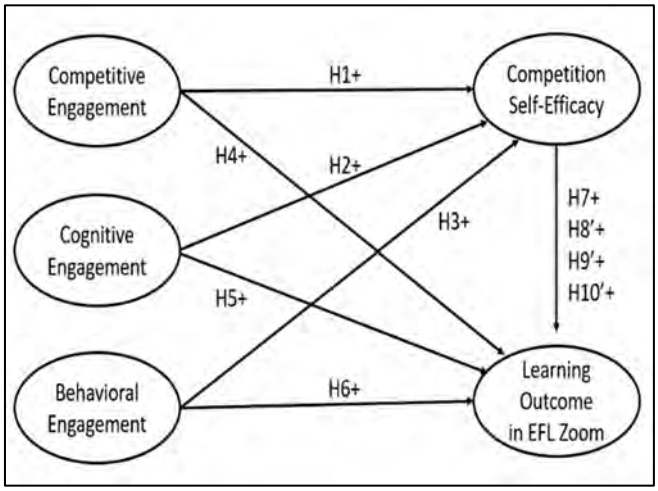
2.8. Proposed Model

This student posits that competitive, cognitive, and emotional engagement are constructs that can help explain learning outcome beliefs. The sense of accomplishment over other students (i.e., competition self-efficacy) may help explain the relationship between engagement factors and academic learning outcome beliefs. Competition self-efficacy to outcompete other students refers to how well students feel they learned, received grades, and accomplished tasks in comparison to their classmates.

This study examines the relationships among competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. Additionally, the study aims to identify the mediating influence of competition self-efficacy on the relationship between engagement factors and learning outcomes as defined by self-determination to learn English. To this end, the following hypotheses were proposed.

H1: Competitive engagement has a positive influence on competition self-efficacy.
H2: Cognitive engagement has a positive influence on competition self-efficacy.
H3: Behavioral engagement has a positive influence on competition self-efficacy.
H4: Competitive engagement has a positive influence on self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H5: Cognitive engagement has a positive influence on self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H6: Behavioral engagement has a positive influence on self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H7: Competition self-efficacy has a positive influence on self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H8: Competition self-efficacy mediates the relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H9: Competition self-efficacy mediates the relationship between cognitive engagement and self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.
H10: Competition self-efficacy mediates the relationship between behavioral engagement and self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course.

FIGURE 1
Proposed Model



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

In this study, a cross-sectional research design was employed to investigate the engagement variables, competition self-efficacy, and self-determination to learn English among students. A cross-sectional study is a research design that involves collecting data from a group of individuals at a single point in time. The sample of participants in this study were fourth-semester students who were attending emergency remote online courses due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This design allows for the examination of engagement, self-efficacy and self-determination in the unique context of remote learning during a pandemic.

3.2. Participants

Convenience sampling was used to recruit a university professor in South Korea who has taught EFL communication courses for over 10 years and has a graduate degree in teaching English as a foreign language. These EFL courses were communications classes taught at the university level with the aim to help students develop second language writing, speaking, listening, reading, vocabulary, and other language skills. In all, 201 students (115 males and 86 females) with ages ranging from 19 to 25 (M = 20.7, SD = 1.48) were recruited to take

part in this study. Students had moderate levels of L2 proficiency as indicated by self-reporting. On a scale from 1 (true beginner) to 10 (expert), the students had a moderate level of proficiency with a score of 4.86 (SD = 1.88). Albeit a simple measure, self-report evaluations of proficiency level have been found to be reliable (Kao & Reynolds, 2017). Students came from a variety of academic majors including Management, English, Accounting, Economics, Civil Engineering, Nursing, and Social Welfare.

3.3. Learning Environment: Emergency Remote Teaching with Video Conferencing

The classes were 90 minutes long and held twice a week for 16 weeks. The live, face-to-face component of the online class was conducted through the videoconference platform Zoom (zoom.us) and the asynchronous component was conducted through the university's learning management system. The textbook *Present Yourself 1* (Gershon, 2015) was used, and the topics taught from this book pertained to friendship, places, possessions, and memories. The classes were structured as follows: a lecture class once a week, followed by a presentation class the following week. The most frequent speaking activity involved practicing presentations in front of other students in small groups using the Zoom breakout room function. The second most frequent speaking activity was discussion activities during the lecture class. The instructor explained presentation techniques and then provided the students with time to have a discussion based on the content of that week. Scriptwriting was the most frequent writing activity. Presentation and speaking activities were conducted through Zoom, while script writing was completed and assessed through the course's LMS.

3.4. Study Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study had a two-part structure, including a demographic section and a section assessing the five variables of interest: competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, competition self-efficacy, and self-determination for learning English. The demographic section gathered information about the students' majors, self-reported L2 proficiency levels, and ages. Table 1 displays items along with mean scores for the study's scales. The self-determination to learn English as a foreign language scale measures a student's level of motivation and perseverance in learning English. This scale gauges a student's diligence, preparation, and overall dedication to mastering the English language within an educational context. These items were adapted from Glynn, Taasoobshirazi, and Brickman's (2009) self-determination for learning science scale, with necessary modifications to suit the English class context. For instance, an original item states, " I prepare well for science tests and labs," while a modified item states, "I prepare well for

my English class."

TABLE 1
Mean Scores for the Study Variables

		M	*SD*
	Self-determination to learn English as a foreign language		
1	I put a lot of effort into learning English.	3.90	0.89
2	I prepare well for my English class.	4.08	0.84
3	I study hard to learn English.	3.81	0.90
	Competition self-efficacy when learning English as a foreign language		
4	Compared to other students in my English class, I expect to do well.	3.48	1.01
5	My learning ability is superior to other students in this class.	3.04	0.99
6	Compared to the other students in this class, I think I know a lot about English.	2.92	1.07
	Competitive engagement		
7	I get a lot of pleasure from competition in my English class.	2.60	1.19
8	I enjoy setting goals and winning through class competitions.	2.72	1.20
9	I am a very competitive person in my English class	2.60	1.18
10	I enjoy competing with others in English class activities.	2.43	1.18
11	Competition in English class motivates me.	2.90	1.12
	Cognitive engagement		
12	Review the learning materials before engaging in online discussions.	3.90	0.98
13	I try to connect what I'm learning online with what I've learned before.	3.77	0.92
14	When I study online, I try to find extra study material to understand difficult concepts.	3.64	1.04
15	If I am wrong during my online learning activities, I try to understand my mistakes.	4.04	0.76
	Behavioral engagement		
16	I enjoy online learning activities.	3.62	1.03
17	I look forward to online learning activities.	3.56	1.07
18	I feel comfortable participating in online discussions.	3.53	1.14

The competition self-efficacy scale measures a student's belief in their competitive capability and expected performance relative to peers in an English language class. In contrast, the competitive engagement scale focuses on the student's emotional and motivational response to competition, gauging enjoyment, goal-setting inclination, and overall competitive nature within the class context. While the former evaluates perceived competitive advantage, the latter assesses the enjoyment and engagement derived from the competitive process. Items for the competitive engagement scale were taken from Newby and Klein's competition scale (2014) and measured the students' level of competitiveness. For example, an original item states, "I am a competitive person," and a modified item states "In this English class, I am a competitive person."

In this study, we derived items for the competition self-efficacy scale from Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) work on motivation and self-regulation. The concept of competition self-efficacy, a specific subcomponent of the broader self-efficacy construct, is central here. It specifically deals with a student's cognitive beliefs regarding their capability to succeed in competitive situations. Thus, adapting items from Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) study allowed us to focus on this aspect of self-efficacy, aligning with the aims of our research. An example item states, "I expect to do well compared to others in this class." Item construction for the cognitive and behavioral engagement scales was influenced by Hoi and Hang's (2020) learner engagement scales (see also Deng, Benckendorff, & Gannaway, 2020) learner engagement studies. An example item in the cognitive engagement scale states, "I try to connect what I am learning online with what I learned before." An example item in the behavioral engagement scale states, "I stay focused during online learning activities." All items in section two of the questionnaire were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and had Cronbach reliability scores above the .70 bottom threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978). Cronbach reliability scores and validity checks are presented in Table 3.

3.5. Procedures

The survey was translated from English to Korean by a professional translator who holds a graduate degree in English education and has over 15 years of experience in translation. Prior to administering the survey, it was pilot tested among a group of ten students that met the background criteria of the target population. Data collected during the pilot test was analyzed to identify any potential issues with the questions and responses. Upon careful consideration, the survey was deemed appropriate and effective for the study's objective.

The survey was administered on week 14 of a 16-week semester using Google Forms (forms.google.com). The instructor provided an explanation of the nature of the study and informed the students that participation was voluntary and completely anonymous. Upon completion, students were given the option to exclude their responses from the study. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

3.6. Data Analysis

A combination of SPSS (version 27) and AMOS (version 27) was used to calculate descriptive statistics and to test the proposed model. For research question one, Pearson correlation and mean score analysis were used to calculate mean scores for individual items and overall scales. Next, Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the relationships among the variables of interest. SPSS was used to carry out exploratory factor analysis using

Principal axis factoring (PAF) method and Varimax rotation. PAF is a statistical method used to identify underlying factors within a set of observed variables. All items loaded in their expected scales (Table 3). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test the proposed hypotheses and calculated using AMOS. Direct and indirect relationships were calculated after testing the five-factor model.

3.6.1. Data Cleaning and Screening

Data cleaning initially involved outlier analysis. Three surveys were removed after checking Mahalanobis and Cook's distance values. Normal distributions for the model variables were observed. Kurtosis values ranged between -0.054 and -0.652 and skewness values ranged between 0.374 and -0.292, both within acceptable limits (George & Mallery, 2010). Next, the study checked Variable Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The KMO of sampling adequacy was 0.833, above the recommended 0.60 value (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value was significant at 2598.73 (df = 153, $p < .001$), indicating significant differences in the variance between variables. Finally, the commonality values were all above the recommended value of 0.50 (Kline, 2015). After reviewing the data, it was determined that the study could proceed with testing the proposed model.

4. RESULTS

The results of this study, as displayed in Table 2, indicate that there are positive and significant relationships among self-determination for learning, competition self-efficacy, and the three engagement variables. Additionally, the results show that higher L2 proficient students reported higher levels of competitive engagement and stronger determination when learning English, as well as more confidence in their ability to outcompete their lower L2 proficient counterparts. Furthermore, L2 proficiency had the strongest relationship with competition self-efficacy, suggesting that higher level students recognize their ability to outcompete their lower proficient counterparts.

The results also reveal that students had high levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement, as well as a strong determination to learn English. However, students reported moderate levels of competition self-efficacy and low levels of competitive engagement.

Students rated cognitive and behavioral engagement in the 3.5 to 5.0 range while competitive engagement was rated lower (M = 2.65, SD = 1.06), indicating that students enjoyed learning English and participating in online activities but did not identify as overly competitive with one another. However, they did exhibit moderate levels of competition self-efficacy (M = 3.15, SD = .901), suggesting that they believed they could outperform their

classmates in competitive situations more often than not. Few differences were recognized regarding age and no relevant differences between genders emerged. Older students attended more English classes than younger ones and rated their behavioral engagement higher than their younger counterparts.

TABLE 2
Correlation and Means Scores for Variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Age								
2	Gen.	-.21**							
3	L2	.05	.13						
4	SDT	.03	.08	.38**					
5	SE	.05	.04	.52**	.46**				
6	Cog. E	.01	.07	.23**	.57**	.40**			
7	CE	.10	-.11	.16*	.27**	.42**	.40**		
8	BE	.17*	-.07	.16*	.45**	.35**	.58**	.40**	
	M	20.7	0.43	4.86	3.93	3.15	3.78	2.65	3.57
	SD	1.49	0.50	1.89	0.79	0.9	0.71	1.07	0.98

Note: $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .05^{*}$. Gender (Male = 1, Female = 2), Gen = Gender, L2 = L2 Proficiency, SDT = Self-determination to learn English, SE = competition self-efficacy, Cog. E = Cognitive engagement, CE = Competitive engagement, BE = Behavioral engagement.

To better understand how learner engagement relates to learner determination, the study proceeds to examine how engagement factors influence determination to learn English and how their competition self-efficacy influences those relationships.

4.1. Study Model

Table 3 displays the results of the reliability and validity analysis. Convergent validity was used to check the unidimensionality of the constructs (Bollen, 1989), and discriminant validity was used to check that the constructs were statistically different (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000). Composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha values were used to check the discriminant validity, convergent validity, and reliability. All AVE values were above the recommended .50 level and CR values were above the recommended .60 level (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha values were above the recommended .70 level (Nunnally, 1978). These results indicate that the data is ready for confirmatory factor analysis.

TABLE 3

Reliability and Validity Checks with SMC, CR, and AVE

Item	FL	SMC	CR	AVE	α
Self-determination 3	.818	.669	.847	.649	.875
Self-determination 2	.800	.640			
Self-determination 1	.798	.637			
Competition SE 3	.834	.696	.816	.597	.856
Competition SE 2	.743	.552			
Competition SE 1	.737	.543			
Competitive engagement 5	.918	.842	.942	.766	.948
Competitive engagement 2	.912	.831			
Competitive engagement 3	.896	.803			
Competitive engagement 4	.875	.766			
Competitive engagement 1	.767	.589			
Cognitive Engagement 3	.754	.569	.827	.545	.950
Cognitive Engagement 1	.751	.564			
Cognitive Engagement 2	.747	.558			
Cognitive Engagement 4	.700	.490			
Behavioral Engagement 3	.822	.676	.858	.668	.898
Behavioral Engagement 2	.816	.666			
Behavioral Engagement 1	.814	.663			

Note: FL = Factor Loading, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite Reliability, SMC = Squared Multiple Correlations, Self-determination = self-determination to learn English, Competition SE = competition self-efficacy

4.2. Structural Model

The study measured validity using confirmatory factor analysis, a technique used for testing theoretical models (Kline, 2015). Results from CFA indicated that the model fit was sufficient ($\chi 2$= 250.05; df = 125; $p < .001$; CMIN/df = 2.00; RMSEA = .071; NFI = .910; CFI = .952; IFI = .953; TLI = .942; PCLOSE = .004), indicating that construct validity was achieved. Self-determination for learning English, competition self-efficacy, competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement were conceptually unique. These findings suggest that competitive engagement can be regarded as a distinct form of classroom engagement along with other forms including cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Table 4 displays the results of the ten hypothesis tests, examining the relationships among five variables: competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, competition self-efficacy, and self-determination for learning English. Results showed that the relationship between competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy (hypothesis 1) and cognitive engagement and competition self-efficacy (hypothesis 2) were both significant and were accepted ($p < .01$). The relationship between behavioral engagement

and competition self-efficacy (hypothesis 3) was not significant and consequently rejected (p = .308). The relationship between competition self-efficacy and self-determination to learn English was mediated (hypothesis 4), while the relationship between cognitive engagement and self-determination to learn English (hypothesis 5) and competition self-efficacy and self-determination to learn English (hypothesis 7) were both significant and were accepted (p < .01). The relationship between behavioral engagement and self-determination to learn English was not significant and was rejected (p = .326). Hypotheses 8 to 10 tested for mediation and showed that the relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English was fully mediated by competition self-efficacy (hypothesis 8) and the relationship between Cognitive engagement and self-determination to learn English was partially mediated by competition self-efficacy (hypothesis 9).

TABLE 4

Tested Paths for the Study's Model

H	Tested Path		ß	SE	Beta	*p*	Result
1	CE	+→ CSE	.176	.065	.229	.007**	Accept
2	Cog. E	+→ CSE	.350	.130	.301	.007**	Accept
3	BE	+→ CSE	.026	.084	.032	.308	Reject
4	CE	+→ SDL	-.077	.058	-.092	.186	Mediated
5	Cog. E	+→ SDL	.743	.135	.590	.001**	Accept
6	BE	+→ SDL	.077	.078	.088	.326	Reject
7	CSE	+→ SDL	.238	.081	.220	.003**	Accept
Mediation							
8	CE	x CSE x SDL	.042		.050	.017*	Full Mediation
9	Cog. E	x CSE x SDL	.083		.066	.004**	Partial Mediation
10	BE	x CSE x SDL	.006		.007	.718	Reject

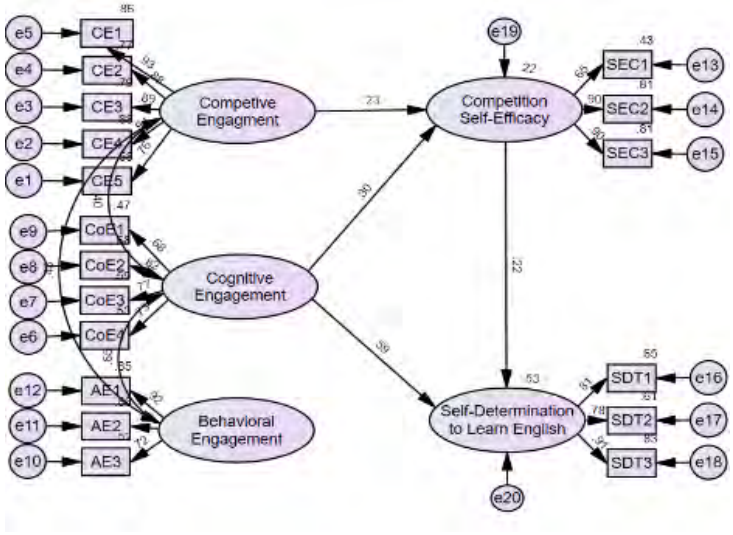
Note. p < .01**, p < .05*; CE, Competitive Engagement; CSE Competition Self-efficacy; BE, Behavioral Engagement; Cog. E, Cognitive Engagement; SDL, Self Determination for Learning English.

The model was run using a 5000-bootstrapping sample for indirect effects. Figure 2 illustrates the statistically significant path coefficient from competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy (B = .23**) and competition self-efficacy to self-determination to learn English (B = .22**). However, the statistically significant Pearson correlation observed between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English (r = .272**) vanished, indicating complete mediation when added to the model. Similarly, the positive relationships between behavioral engagement and competition self-efficacy (r = .349**) and behavioral engagement and self-determination for learning English (r = .452**) disappeared when included in the study's model. The highest path coefficient stems from cognitive

engagement to self-determination for learning English (B = .59**).

FIGURE 2

Results for the Tested Model



The model found that 53% of self-determination for learning English is primarily explained by cognitive engagement and competition self-efficacy. This suggests that these traits are important factors in understanding motivation among language learners. Additionally, the relationship between self-determination and behavioral engagement, as well as self-determination and competitive engagement, can be better explained through competition self-efficacy. This provides evidence that confidence in one's ability to outcompete others is a key mediating variable in EFL videoconference courses.

5. DISCUSSION

This study's model conceptualized competitive engagement alongside cognitive and behavioral engagement among students attending videoconference EFL courses. Further, the influence these engagement variables have on self-determination to learn English was also explored. Lastly, the mediating effect competition self-efficacy has on the relationship between engagement factors and self-determination to learn English was identified.

The mean scores revealed that while students had a high level of self-determination to learn English in videoconference courses, their level of competition self-efficacy was

moderate. Additionally, students reported high levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement but did not report high levels of competitive engagement. These findings suggest that students were motivated to learn English and actively engaged in language learning activities, but may not have felt a strong sense of competition in their course.

In line with extant literature (Zhao, Xiao, & Zhang, 2022), L2 proficiency was positively correlated with several factors related to language learning. L2 proficiency continues to be a powerful predictor of motivation in EFL settings. Specifically, it was correlated with self-determination to learn English, competition self-efficacy, competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. All of these correlations were statistically significant, with the highest correlation found between L2 proficiency and competition self-efficacy (.515**). These findings suggest that students who possess higher levels of L2 proficiency may be more likely to engage in activities that promote language learning and are more confident in their ability to compete in language-based tasks.

The results of the correlation analysis showed that there were moderate to strong correlations among all the constructs in the model.at the bivariate level. These findings support previous research indicating that motivation stemming from competitiveness impact EFL learning (Kim & Kim, 2016) and participation (Hwang & Arbaugh, 2009). Furthermore, past research consistently reports a high positive correlation between engagement variables and academic achievement beliefs (Lei, Cui, & Zhou, 2018; Reeve, Cheong, & Jang, 2020), and this was the case here. Self-determination to learn English had strong correlations above the .45 ($p < .01^{**}$) level with competition self-efficacy, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement, suggesting that it may be closely related to other factors that promote language learning and engagement in language-based activities. Further research is needed to fully understand the relationships between these variables.

The initial step in the analysis involved conducting a correlation analysis to examine whether competition self-efficacy mediated the relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English. Moving forward, the discussion will explore findings obtained through structural equation modeling.

Hypotheses 1 to 3

The first three hypotheses of the study investigated the influence that competitive engagement, cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement have on competition self-efficacy in EFL videoconference courses. Hypotheses One and Two were supported, while hypothesis Three was rejected. This suggests that both cognitive and competitive engagement positively predict students' self-efficacy beliefs about their ability to outperform others in these courses. When behavioral engagement was added to the model, the statistically significant relationships found through bivariate correlation analysis with the

other variables disappeared, indicating that cognitive and competitive engagement are more explanatory of positive learning outcomes in videoconference courses. The diminished path between behavioral engagement and learning outcome contradicts findings from which found engagement variables and achievement, and this can partly be attributed to the method of reporting achievement and cultural values (Lei et al., 2018). Further research is needed to fully understand these relationships and their impact on student learning.

Of note are the significant relationships observed between cognitive engagement and competition self-efficacy and cognitive engagement and self-determination to learn English. A student who has high self-efficacy beliefs is likely to be more cognitively engaged in language learning activities and would believe in their ability to learn the language, which can make them more motivated to invest mental effort in the process (Hiver et al., 2021; Mills, Pajares, & Herron, 2007). This might involve focusing their attention on understanding linguistic structures, actively practicing speaking, writing, reading, or listening skills, or reflecting on their progress and identifying areas for improvement.

Hypotheses 4 to 7

The fourth to seventh hypotheses of the study investigated the influence of engagement factors and competition self-efficacy on self-determination for learning English in an EFL videoconference course. Hypothesis four posited that competitive engagement has a positive influence on self-determination for learning in an EFL videoconference course. Initially, this relationship showed statistical significance in a bivariate Pearson correlation analysis. However, when incorporated into the structural model, the relationship vanished, indicating full mediation. In simpler terms, the direct connection between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English vanished when the influence of competition self-efficacy was considered. The strongest path in the model was from cognitive engagement to self-determination to learn English, which is consistent with previous research that has found a strong relationship between cognitive engagement and positive learner outcomes (Dincer, Yesilyurt, Noels, & Vargas Lascano, 2019; Zhao et al., 2022). However, behavioral engagement did not have an influence on self-determination to learn English in the videoconference course, which may be due to the inclusion of the other engagement variables. When these variables were allowed to cross-correlate with cognitive and competitive engagement, the relationships between behavioral engagement and these variables as seen in the correlation analysis disappeared. This suggests that cognitive and competitive engagement factors might overshadow the role of behavioral engagement in influencing a student's self-determination to learn English. As such, it underscores the complexity of the engagement variables and their impact on learning outcomes. This connection underlines the findings from the prior study (Guo, Xu, & Chen, 2022) that

individual-based cognitive engagement holds significant weight in impacting learning outcomes. Guo et al. (2022) found that behavioral engagement, particularly in interactive classroom activities, was prominent; however, it was individual-based cognitive engagement that showed significant effects on learning outcomes. This again emphasizes the need for a balanced approach in fostering all types of engagement for effective language learning. The results of hypothesis seven showed that competition self-efficacy had a statistically significant effect on self-determination for learning English, suggesting that competitive engagement should be considered when examining and evaluating learning behavior. Further research is needed to more clearly understand how competitive engagement and behavioral engagement may influence learning outcome beliefs, particularly in the context of videoconference courses.

Hypotheses 8 to 10

Hypotheses Eight to Ten investigated the mediating effect competition self-efficacy had on the engagement variables and self-determination to learn English when attending EFL videoconference courses. Full mediation was recognized in the relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination to learn English, partial mediation was identified with cognitive engagement, and no mediation on behavioral engagement by competition self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has previously been recognized for its role as a mediating variable in EFL learning models (Zarei & Naghdi, 2017); however, this is one of the first studies to place competition self-efficacy as the mediator between engagement variables and an achievement variable (i.e., self-determination to learn English). Competition is ingrained into the attitudes and motivations of students in East Asian countries like South Korea because of socio-educational conditions (Kim, 2010).

Competition self-efficacy, which reflects students' confidence in their ability to outperform their peers, fully mediated the relationship between competitive engagement and self-determination. This full mediation effect by competition self-efficacy suggests that it's not the competitive engagement alone that influences self-determination to learn English. Instead, it's the students' belief in their ability to outperform others that directly impacts their self-determination. This suggests that fostering a sense of competition could enhance students' motivation to learn a language, but it's crucial to also support their self-confidence in their competitive abilities. The focus, therefore, might be shifted towards increasing students' self-efficacy in competitive scenarios, as this may lead to increased self-determination in language learning.

The partial mediation of cognitive engagement by competition self-efficacy implies that while cognitive engagement does influence self-determination to learn English, it's not the sole factor. The learners' confidence in their ability to outdo others, reflected by competition

self-efficacy, also plays a significant role. This means that while it is crucial to stimulate cognitive engagement, fostering a sense of competition and enhancing students' self-confidence in their competitive abilities are equally important. As such, attention may need to be given to strengthening students' self-efficacy in competitive situations, alongside promoting cognitive engagement, to augment self-determination in language learning.

Regarding behavioral engagement, no mediation was observed and this may be attributed to the cross-correlation with the other two engagement variables. Students reported high levels of behavioral engagement and a strong correlation between behavioral engagement and the other variables was evident. However, the connection between behavioral engagement with competition self-efficacy and self-determined learning outcome were lost when added to the model. Moving forward, there is a need deriving from this study to explore how competition self-efficacy influences the relationship of other learner characteristics and learning outcome measures.

6. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Summary

Competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy are important factors that influence participation in EFL communication courses. Competition self-efficacy was added as a mediating variable to the study's model since outcompeting others for speaking opportunities contributes to increased language use and consequential learning gains. Video conferencing during Covid-19 created unique circumstances to better understand how students perceive competitive engagement alongside other engagement factors and how this engagement influences one's self-determination to learn English.

Although this study provided valuable insight into competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy, there are limitations that should be considered. This study was limited to one university in South Korea. Cultural differences should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. Factors such as collectivism, individualism, and general education norms of different countries or contexts could result in varied findings. Further, competitiveness can be construed in various ways beyond the scope of our current understanding. Some researchers may conceptualize competitiveness as an inherent personality trait (Newby & Klein, 2014), while others might view it as a modifiable attitude. Moreover, the structure, intensity, and outcomes of competitiveness can differ significantly based on the cultural, educational, and individual contexts. This diversity in the conceptualization and operationalization of competitiveness constitutes a limitation, as it complicates the development of a uniform theoretical framework and hampers comparability

across studies. Therefore, further research is warranted to elucidate the different forms and dimensions of competitiveness and their respective implications for educational outcomes. Consequently, the recognition that competitiveness, specifically in the context of competitive engagement, cannot be definitively established as a theoretical construct. This inherent complexity in defining and operationalizing competitiveness due to its multifaceted and subjective nature poses significant challenges to our understanding and application of competitive engagement in educational settings.

6.2. Implications

Students reported high levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement, however, competitive engagement was moderate. Competition can be a supporting form of engagement when introduced to students appropriately. For example, games that do not have winners or losers may be beneficial to students in the South Korean context. Reducing the stakes in competition is another approach to optimizing the benefits of competitive engagement. To this end, student participation in small group games or activities rather than ones involving the whole class may help students to feel more comfortable and confident.

EFL instructors should utilize emotionally positive and academically beneficial engagement since engagement is a crucial factor in successful language learning outcomes. Emotionally positive engagement stems from inviting circumstances. Students do not fear negative repercussions including embarrassment if they fail to appropriately engage others or their understanding of the course content. In the online setting especially, it is critical for learners to have meaningful and effective opportunities to engage in learning. Providing students with praise and valuable feedback through engaging activities can be rewarding. Students should also be reminded that making mistakes is part of the language learning process and not to feel uncomfortable and embarrassed when not knowing something.

For future research, the study's model could be tested in other academic domains. Replicating this study in other EFL classes in South Korea and in international contexts could also shed light on potential differences in competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy across cultural domains. Finally, this study only included quantitative data. Exploring students' perceptions of their competitive engagement and competition self-efficacy through open-ended surveys or interviews may provide deeper insight into their educational experiences and beliefs.

Applicable level: Tertiary

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