UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

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EDISI 17

OKTOBER 2026

AKADEMI PENGAJIAN BAHASA
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
CAWANGAN NEGERI SEMBILAN
KAMPUS SEREMBAN

e-ISSN : 2682-7948

Learner Engagement in Online Webinars

SHEELA PARAMASIVAM & NURUL KAMALIA YUSUF
UiTM CAWANGAN NEGERI SEMBILAN KAMPUS SEREMBAN

Online webinars have become increasingly critical as the shift towards online and blended learning accelerates, especially in higher education. Engagement is essential not only for retention but also for meaningful learning experiences. Webinars offer flexibility in teaching and learning but also pose challenges because they lack physical presence and can be distracting (Ramos & Soliven, 2020). This article shares engagement strategies used in an online webinar for a reading course and assesses their impact on undergraduate students' involvement in learning.



Importance of learner engagement in webinars

Learner engagement is commonly defined as a multidimensional construct involving behavioural, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Studies have shown that content relevance, interactive tools, multimedia use, and the presenter's delivery style drive engagement in webinars. Conversely, barriers such as technical issues, session length, and low interactivity reduce engagement levels (Pedroso, 2021).

Learner engagement has become a central focus in online education, particularly in webinars, which offer a unique blend of synchronous interaction and digital flexibility. Engagement in online learning environments generally refers to the attention, curiosity, and interest students show during a learning experience (Nagaraju et al., 2021). Webinars, while efficient and accessible, struggle to sustain learner engagement because of physical separation and potential distractions.

What constitutes learner engagement in online webinars?

Effective engagement strategies in webinars often include multimedia, interactive elements such as polls and quizzes, and active learning components like discussions or Q&A sessions. These strategies help reduce cognitive overload and foster learner motivation by making content more interactive and relatable. For instance, research indicates that integrating multimedia content enhances attention span and knowledge retention, especially when paired with real-time feedback (Zhang et al., 2006).

Instructors also play a critical role in shaping learners' engagement in webinars. Instructor presence, delivery style, and the use of chat or emotive cues have been found to significantly impact learners' perceived connection and participation levels. (Ramos & Soliven, 2020). Social presence theory suggests that when learners feel acknowledged and included, their participation and satisfaction increase (Al-Naabi, 2023). Despite these strategies, barriers such as technical issues, poor interactivity, and content irrelevance continue to hinder engagement. Thus, effective engagement strategies are necessary to meet learners' needs and support webinar goals.

An exploratory study of learner engagement in an online webinar

This article presents an exploratory quantitative survey of students enrolled in an English language course at a public university, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Seremban campus. The researchers conducted online webinars in the March 2026 semester to supplement the course as part of a

collaborative teaching initiative. The study distributed a Google Form survey to gather responses from 113 participants on their engagement experiences and perceptions of webinar strategies.

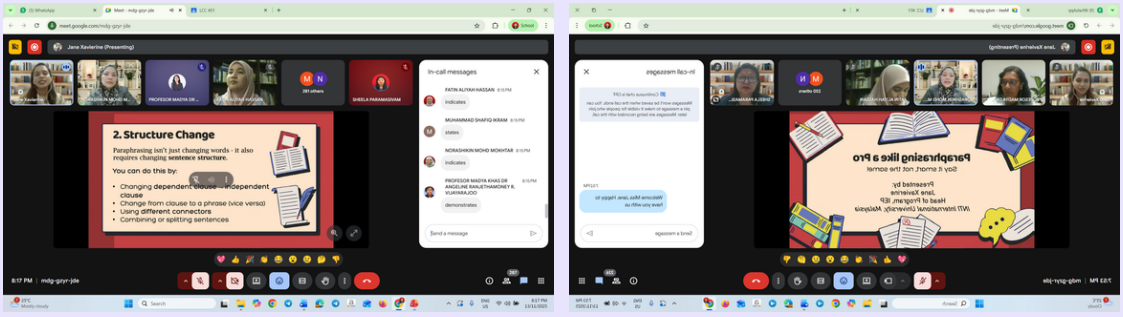
Survey findings indicated that 54.9% of students stayed engaged throughout the entire online webinar session conducted via Google Meet, while 28.3% said they were engaged for most of the time. Multimedia content was the most impactful strategy, preferred by 60.2% of participants. Other commonly used tools included Q&A sessions (26.5%) and chat features (12.4%), which sustained participants' interest in the webinar. A significant majority (64.3%) reported using these strategies consistently throughout the session.

When asked whether these strategies influenced their decision to stay for the entire webinar, 54% said they did, and 43.4% said they somewhat helped retain their interest. Students rated the engagement strategies highly, with over 80% giving scores of 4 or 5 out of 5 on a Likert scale. Students were pleased with the speakers' engaging presentation style and the use of interactive multimedia. Barriers to engagement included technical issues (53.2%), external distractions (35.8%), and long, unstructured sessions (29.4%).

This study found that effective webinar engagement relies on speakers' consistent use of multimedia, interactive tools, and engaging presentation styles. These were considered the most engaging strategies that attracted students to 'stay tuned' in the webinar. Most students reported being engaged for most or all of the webinar sessions and showed strong satisfaction with the strategies employed. These results underscore the need for thoughtful webinar design that incorporates these elements.

Insights for future implementation of online webinars

As such, webinars are seen as an engaging platform and a useful strategy for delivering content to students because they are interactive and foster learners' engagement in teaching and learning. Students look forward to interactive engagement with webinar speakers, such as games, Q&A sessions, and multimedia tools. Institutions of higher learning should invest in training faculty to use interactive technologies and follow best practices in webinar delivery. Technical infrastructure must be reliable to prevent disengagement caused by system failures. Future research could explore engagement strategies across disciplines or compare webinar engagement in synchronous versus asynchronous formats.



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