I have always enjoyed riddles. The riddle "What must be broken before you see it?" instantly engaged me and spurred a gamut of associations in my head before I knew the answer: an egg. Sherlock Holmes is the epitome of a riddle solver for me, possessing somewhat otherworldly analytical capacities. Yet his ingenious deduction method is precisely what an instructional designer does: looks at the whole system with the zeal of a detective to find a learner's gap in knowledge, skills, or attitudes and prescribe a unique solution. Unlike detectives, instructional designers en masse rarely smoke a pipe or play the violin. I want to develop a skill set akin to the Holmesian and join the team of researchers who are trying to solve one of darkest riddles of instructional science: student engagement.

Thirty years of research on student engagement have not yet resulted in a solid body of knowledge about the concept. Some snippets can serve as a starting point, in particular, dimensions of engagement: behavioral, cognitive, psychological, and academic. Certain parameters such as attendance, preparation, participation in and out of class, and time spent on task can be measured and observed. Others such as feelings, emotions, attitudes, and interests can be collected by self-reports and questionnaires. Consequences of non-engagement are dire: from simple daydreaming to cutting classes to dropping out (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). I am captivated to explore how instruction in face-to-face and online settings can increase student engagement. Ultimately this affects performance.

Student engagement and performance bring invaluable learning benefits only when instruction is done by design. However, I have frequently found myself in the courses designed by heuristics. As a university student, I experienced happiness and despair at what language classes offered. Of the eight languages I studied for my linguistics degree, I could not say a full phrase in five of them while taking classes. Instruction lacked hands-on and minds-on activities and did not engage students in group work. I took seven online classes and found it hard to engage myself in most of them. There was a chasm between me and my peers, instructors, technology medium, and text-heavy content. It will be fascinating to re-evaluate face-to-face and online environments and discover how instructional interventions promote full interaction among all these variables. I am particularly intrigued by how the human factor can be brought into online instruction to promote engagement.

Between 2012 and 2014, I taught translation studies for people with a non-linguistics degree in a retraining program at Belarusian State University. The program used a syllabus from a linguistics university. It was cumbersome for novices to digest in one year, as was demonstrated by the previous students' mediocre grades. I put on my Sherlock's deerstalker in order to find the best way to teach fundamental translation skills and principles. How could I help students think critically about translation and equip them with strategies to judge or justify translations? Seven days and nights of toil resulted in a redesigned syllabus that would engage students in authentic texts, individual projects, and written reflections on their learning. Students loved the experience and excelled on the final exam. I witnessed firsthand that student engagement improved performance. Little did I know at the time that behind my endeavors, science was happening: instructional design found me rather than I found instructional design.

My immersion in instructional design started in the master's program at Syracuse University (SU), where I spent more than 650 hours engaging myself in the discipline through coursework, readings, and assignments. The program solidified my goal to become a professor, teach, and conduct research. At SU, I value the time that professors dedicate to their students. At the master's level, I was fortunate to work on my practicum with Professor Koszalka, who provided all the time and support I needed to succeed. During our practicum collaboration, I was thrilled to learn that Professor Koszalka is currently working on the *Research in Designing Learning Resources* project, which analyzes the relationships between learning and interactive learning resources. One of the approaches whereby this research is done is through exploring the level of engagement. I find this work to be complementary to my own interests, as I see myself contributing to it by developing research-based guidelines to create engaging instructional materials that will support learning. Therefore, I believe that studying at SU with Professor Koszalka will be an ideal environment to strengthen my scholarly interests and contribute to the existing remarkable work that is being done at this department.

As I pursue my doctoral degree, I eventually want to be the Sherlock Holmes of instructional design. How can we ensure student engagement? How can we increase engagement in face-to-face and online classes? How do we design interactive solutions that connect students to the content, peers, instructors, and technology? How can we then improve performance? I am convinced that taking classes in research methodology, in which the IDD&E department is strong, and conducting research under the aegis of the professors of this department will result in profound findings regarding student engagement and eventually elucidate this dark area of instructional design. My detective mind is set to solve this riddle.