

# Factors Influencing Classroom Participation: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at Education Faculty, Paktia University

Saifurahman Rohi<sup>1</sup> and Saifullah Muslim<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, English Language and Literature Department, Paktia University, AFGHANISTAN.

<sup>2</sup>Junior Teaching Assistant, English Language and Literature Department, Paktia University, AFGHANISTAN.

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: saif.rohiafg@gmail.com



www.jrasb.com || Vol. 2 No. 1 (2023): February Issue

Received: 06-01-2023

Revised: 27-01-2023

Accepted: 06-02-2023

## ABSTRACT

There was a lack of students' participation in classroom activities. Student participation varied according to gender, education level, housing area, and employment, language proficiency and cultural restrictions. It was needed to discover factors that influence students' participation in classroom activities, to address the current situation and key challenges of classroom participation. Therefore, the objectives of the study were to distinguish the factors that increase and decrease student classroom participation and to investigate the most influential factors that affect classroom participation. In addition, the research recommends sustainable resolutions. The methodology adopted includes the use of questionnaires, two classes of observation in the English department, and a review of relevant documents. The size of the class, a lack of time, and the course policies that were observed in class were major barriers to student participation in class activities. Teachers did not give students enough time to consider the question before responding. The current survey found that the personalities of the instructor and students, the size of the classroom, and the perception of peers influenced students' willingness to speak up in class. It is pointed out that both active and passive students agree that instructors are the main characters in classrooms. The method or style of teaching and positive traits of instructors play an important role in motivating and stimulating verbal engagement among students in the classroom. Students actively participated when they received an equal chance to participate in the classroom. When there was respect, small classes, student support, constructive feedback, and the application of theory to a real-life situation, participation levels in classes were higher. Moreover, teachers must consider and overcome those factors to give students a chance to communicate effectively in classroom participation.

**Keywords-** Teacher Traits, classroom participation, class size, pseudo team work, constructive feedback.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In any educational setting, a classroom is a formal place where the learning process takes place. In the classroom, teachers and students are the actors, and both of them play an important role in the process of learning. Instructors have responsibilities to guide, facilitate, and motivate learners to become skilled and talented people. Learners, on the other hand, are seeking knowledge, absorbing ideas, and applying skills shared with them in the learning activities in the classroom. These relationships between instructors and students generate a valuable learning environment [1][2]. It is the

right idea, which really can enhance classroom participation, but this study also pays more attention to investigating the most influential factors that increase and decrease students' participation. Some of the scholars discussed the issue of participation in classroom instruction and teaching.

Ghalley & Rai [11] found that learning is a process that involves interaction between the learner and the instructor. Classroom participation requires students to interact, negotiate, and indicate that they are learning. The important point here is the student's involvement in the learning process. The classroom is a golden opportunity for instructors to meet face-to-face with

students, and delivering teaching materials effectively has an impact on what is taught. Students are expected to be present in class and participate in classroom activities to meet their expectations.

Interaction is the basic quality of the classroom learning process. There are two ways of student interaction: one is active, in which students participate in classroom activities to achieve the goal, and the other is passive, in which students do not participate in classroom activities. The amount of interaction can be a factor in the success of a class. Instructors facilitate students' ability to negotiate and adopt certain tasks and activities, but there is a problem with the non-participation of students in classroom activities [8]. The classroom interaction will never fail to reveal the teaching in the class. It is complicated for students to participate. What is behind the participation of students' classroom interaction merits investigation?

In conclusion, the dynamic process of students' participation has a major role in the classroom, and an effective learning process happens when both students and teachers participate and interact in learning activities. A participatory type of learning process will motivate the mutual exchange of information and stimulate interest, as well as recognize respect among teachers and students.

## II. METHODOLOGY

A case study was conducted using research data obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary data sources are classroom observation and questionnaires. Secondary data consisted of books, journals, and reports. The questionnaire had closed-ended questions and was distributed to 55 male and female students and ten instructors to express their viewpoints. The questionnaire was reliable and consistent; so, every participant answered precisely similar questions. This questionnaire consisted of the

aspects that contributed to increase and decrease student participation in the classroom.

Second, field observation was conducted in two classes. The classes of two teachers were observed. During the observation, the researcher focused on the first, middle, and last parts of the class. The researcher mostly focused on factors that increase and decrease students' participation. Interruptions from classmates, teaching method, student level, educational proficiency of student, motivation, and level of participation (individual, pair, group, etc.) were all observed.

### Participants

The study was conducted at a government university in Paktia. Participants included undergraduate English language and literature students as well as their lecturers. From two classes of 59 + 43 students, 40 students were chosen at random from a diverse population based on age, gender, native language, background, and race. The participants were not all from similar educational backgrounds. Some of the students were in-service 13+3 students and the remaining 86 were free-service 46+ 40 students in both classes. 40 students were selected from both in-service and free-service classes. Gender equality is based on the number of students included in the participation selection because the viewpoints of male and female students are different due to cultural factors. Ten female students were selected, and the rest of them were male students. Because there were more male students than female students, the number of male students exceeded the number of female students. Two classes were observed, randomly selected, and substituted for all other classes in the English department of education faculty.

### Data analysis

SPSS software was used to analyze the questionnaire data. It pointed out the highest mean, standard deviation, and highest and lowest percentage. It concluded in table format.

Table 1: Summary of General Section

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	Valid	20-25	31	83.8	83.8
		25-30	5	13.5	97.3
		35-40	1	2.7	100.0
		Total	37	100.0	
Accommodation Area	Valid	village	19	51.4	51.4
		city	18	48.6	100.0
		Total	37	100.0	
Language Proficiency	Valid	weak	5	13.5	13.5
		Good	30	81.1	94.6
		Professional	2	5.4	100.0
		Total	37	100.0	

Gender	Valid	male	33	89.2	89.2	89.2
		female	4	10.8	10.8	100.0
		Total	37	100.0	100.0	
Service	Valid	Free Service	30	81.1	81.1	81.1
		In Service	7	18.9	18.9	100.0
		Total	37	100.0	100.0	

### III. PRIOR APPROACH

#### *Key Challenges of the Classroom Participation*

It is a considerable issue that most Afghan female and male students at the undergraduate level do not actively participate in their classroom learning. According to the viewpoint of teachers, students did not actively participate in classroom activities. Most of the instructors mentioned that it was a major issue while they were teaching and that the students did not participate actively. Students' participation was different in level of education, accommodation area, and employment. Students living in cities and on free-service were found to benefit more from positive relationships with teachers, whereas students living in villages and in-service benefited less from positive relationships with teachers and participated in more class activities.

Sedova and Navratilova [18] conducted a study and investigated two levels of student participation: low-achieving and high-achieving silent students. The teachers were called rarely to low-level achieving silent students, but they were mostly called to high-achieving silent students. No one in the Afghan context studied this specific issue, and there is no research study on what is the reason for lacking participation and what are the strengthening points to encourage students participation during class instruction and learning, but most of the researchers and scholars outside of the Afghan context pay more attention to the participation issue in the classroom. In this regard, Tatar [19] stated that active participation in the classroom can enhance the educational level and enrich students' personal development. Meanwhile, it is reported that active student involvement leads to higher persistence and satisfaction [5]. Several factors cause students to withdraw from classroom participation, such as behavior, motivation, level of education, culture, teaching method, and so on.

Komaraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya [14] found that several aspects can contribute to decreasing and increasing student interaction inside and outside the classroom, for example, academic self-concept, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and demotivation. This study investigated which factors mostly prevent students from active participation in the classroom and which factors enhance students' active participation in the classroom. It is currently difficult for teachers to make a decision about how to involve Paktia University education faculty

students in classroom participation because the factor that prevents students from active participation in the classroom is not specified. It needs to be investigated to find out if there is a particular problem that increases or decreases student classroom participation. Moreover, this study will help Afghan instructors keep track of how to increase students' participation and what factors should be considered to develop students' active participation. Afghan instructors can benefit from the study because they will see the weakest and strongest points of active classroom participation. The research will also assist other researchers in evaluating this research finding and applying it to their context.

#### *Literature Review*

It is really important to enhance classroom participation because it can help students who are silent in the classroom. In classroom observation, the participation patterns of high-achieving and low-achieving students were different. The teachers were asked by high-achieving silent students to answer the most difficult question, but they were rarely called low-achieving students. High-achieving students consider themselves exceptionally capable students, but low-achieving students consolidate themselves as less capable. It is possible to engage low-achieving silent students if teachers maintain their desire and make space in the classroom for their voices [18].

Girardelli *et al*, [12] elicited the beliefs of Chinese EFL students about classroom participation. They suggest that the decision to participate is an integral part of attentive listening. Interaction is more effective in improving English skills, but it is also a frustrating practice that wastes time and generates anxiety. Teacher perception has a significant impact on a learner's anxiety and enjoyment during interactions with the teacher.

Regarding this, Dewaele, Magdalena and Saito [9] showed that the perception of teachers influences Spanish EFL learners' anxiety and enjoyment, but various factors affect learners' anxiety and enjoyment. For example, the participants with native English teachers reported more enjoyment and less anxiety than those with foreign language teachers of English. The participants had more anxiety with younger teachers, teachers who didn't use foreign languages much in class, and very strict teachers.

A flipped classroom approach is another great way to engage students in the classroom. Elmaadaway

[10] illustrated the effects of a flipped classroom approach on class engagement. He illustrated that the participants in the experimental group were more engaged and active than the control group. In the flipped classroom approach, students were reading the course contents at home and prepared themselves to participate in relevant class activities, engage in problem-solving, and pose questions to peers. A participant reported preference for the flipped approach over other approaches in classroom learning.

**IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The questionnaire was divided into sections related to general information, factors that increase and decrease students' classroom participation, advantages and disadvantages of classroom participation, and environmental factors inside and outside the classroom that affect classroom participation. The following tables indicate the findings of the questionnaire.

**Table 2: Summary of Questionnaire Results**

	Mean	Var	Min	Max
Providing discussion to students during class can help them to actively participate in the class.	1.6216	.408	1.00	4.00
Engagement and team working can really help students to actively participate in the lesson.	1.3514	.234	1.00	2.00
Teacher behavior can really help with students to actively participate in the lesson.	1.7568	.245	1.00	3.00
Using suitable teaching method helps students to participate in the classroom.	1.5946	.526	1.00	4.00
Providing a Positive classroom environment motivates students to take part actively in the lesson.	1.9444	.797	1.00	5.00
Using humor and fun helps with students to actively participate in the lesson.	1.6757	.614	1.00	4.00
English language proficiency or background of students can effect on students class participation	1.5833	.421	1.00	3.00
Communication skills really help with students to actively participate in the lesson.	2.0811	.354	1.00	4.00
Providing sufficient time to students help them to actively participate.	1.9412	1.087	1.00	4.00
Observing students help each other to participate in the class.	1.8649	.676	1.00	4.00
I observe students behavior that help them to participate in the classroom.	1.7297	.647	1.00	4.00
Using comprehensible language can help with students to participate in the classroom.	1.8333	.771	1.00	4.00
Class size directly impacts on students' classroom participation.	2.2286	1.476	1.00	5.00
Using projector, audio, videos and flipcharts help with students' participation.	2.0541	.775	1.00	5.00
Choosing appropriate materials help with students to participate in the class.	2.0270	1.194	1.00	5.00
Nonverbal behavior such as shaking head, hands, eyes and body is really helpful for students to participate in the classroom.	1.7838	.674	1.00	3.00
Response to students question with good manner really helps students to participate in the classroom.	1.7027	.326	1.00	3.00
Teacher and students' feedback motivate students to participate in the lesson.	1.8378	.640	1.00	4.00
Choosing comprehensible contents help with students to participate in the class.	1.8108	.991	1.00	5.00
Assigning me to the task can help me to actively participate in the class.	1.5676	.308	1.00	3.00

**Resolution of Classroom Participation**

As indicated in Table 2 that many students focus on the class size and having good communication skills, which are the most important for taking part in class activities. In larger classes, most of the students can't take part in activities because of the lack of daily teaching time and the implementation of the syllabus over a selected duration. The observation pointed out that a teacher's motivation is a factor in students' encouragement to actively participate in class activities.

If teachers motivate students for their performance and better activities, it will encourage them to come to class with preparation and participate enthusiastically for a better outcome. Teachers can encourage students while they are discussing, presenting, or doing an activity by using nonverbal behavior such as shaking their heads, making eye contact, and so on.

A class observation indicated that lack of cooperation in teamwork is the biggest challenge to participating in activities. Free riders are noted in a



group; the results of the group's work were not good, and the group may destroy itself. Cooperation among students and teachers included providing constructive feedback, preparing facilities for students, and controlling the group work from time to time, which affected the outcome of the group work. Every member of the group must contribute to the success of the group activity.

Students' manners and behavior impact student participation in activities. Students have to value each other's ideas about a topic to discuss different aspects of the issue. If a student laughs at another student's idea, he/she is discouraged and does not speak in front of the class again. Each student should take part in activities and try to work hard for a better outcome. Background knowledge and the environment outside of the classroom can help students participate in activities. Family support and encouragement in learning motivate students to be confident.

It is considered that gender differences significantly influence classroom participation. Teachers must focus on strategies that encourage equal participation by male and female students. As well, Neill, Cotner, Driessen and Ballen [16] demonstrated that male students interacted more than female students in some environments. They suggest to improve teacher training programs and providing equitable teaching strategies to enhance the learning climate by promoting equitable participation in the classroom. Aziz *et al.* [6] investigated gender-based classroom participation factors in secondary school students. The study illustrated that students indicate a significant level of classroom participation. Boys interacted more than girls in the class; external and internal participation were the same. Girls were affected due to a lack of motivation in their classroom participation as compared to the boys. Boys were more engaged based on their high self-esteem. Parents, teachers, peers, and the curriculum are the most important external factors that cause boys to participate in classroom activities more than girls, who are more influenced by the classroom environment. Students' participation was different in level of education, accommodation area, and employment.

## V. CONCLUSION

According to Table 1, there was variation in terms of gender, living arrangements, in-service and free learners, linguistic abilities, and cultural restrictions. The students who were living in cities and free-service students were found to benefit more, possess positive relationships with teachers, and participate more in activities, but those who were living in villages and in-service students benefited less in their relationships with teachers and participated in fewer in-class activities.

The findings of the current survey showed that the personalities of the instructor and students, the size of the classroom, and the perception of peers affected the

students' willingness to speak up in class. It is pointed out that both active and passive students agree that instructors are the main characters in classrooms. The method or style of teaching and positive traits of instructors plays an important role in motivating and stimulating verbal engagement among students in the classroom. The favored traits of the instructors are that they are friendly, always have a good mood, know each student well, and do not criticize the students. These characteristics make students feel less embarrassed or afraid to speak up in class. Students actively participated when they received an equal chance to participate in the classroom.

Abdullah, Bakar, & Mahbob [1][2] stated three personal factors of students' participation in class activities. First, some of the students have good skills, they are responsible for their learning and ask for clarification from the instructor, and come to class with some preparation. Second, passive students are difficult to concentrate on in class because they are uninterested in learning or the topic being studied. So, they are ashamed to ask questions, don't know, and are not confident in themselves. Third, they have little knowledge of the topic but do not have an interest in reading.

Table 2, lists some of the other reasons why students do not choose to participate in class, such as the larger size of the class, time constraints, and course policies that are enforced in the classroom. Teachers did not give students enough time to consider the question before answering it. The way a professor treats his or her students can have a significant impact on how actively they participate in class. If students and teachers have a good relationship, it has positive effects on students' learning. Positive teacher personalities and teaching methods are essential for encouraging and stimulating verbal engagement among students in the classroom. A teacher's traits that are favored by students are being friendly, know each student well, not disapproving of the students, always showing a good mood, and being approachable.

The level of participation was higher in classes where there was respect, small class sizes, student support, constructive feedback, and theory that was relevant to real-life situations. According to Pradestina [17], five major factors can influence students' lack of verbal participation: lack of self-efficacy, teachers' personalities, lack of self-confidence, lack of preparation, and the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by others. It is also suggested that the teacher use some of the strategies to improve students' verbal participation in English class. Moreover, teachers must consider and overcome those factors to give students chances to communicate effectively in classroom participation.

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