



Student Participation in Higher Education: Profiles, Factors, and Impacts: A Case Study of the Department of English at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, FLDM, Fez

Abdeghni Dahman

Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco

abdeghni.dahman@usmba.ac.ma

Salah Boutouil

Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles, CPGE- Taza

salahboutouil15@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates the factors affecting student classroom participation in higher education, grounded in the hypothesis that the student-teacher rapport, student motivation, and course preparation significantly shape the extent of their engagement in class. The research aims to examine the level of student participation, identify characteristics that distinguish active participants from non-participants, and explore the key determinants of classroom involvement, as well as potential strategies to enhance it. The study targets Semester Six students from the Department of English at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fez (FLDM), selected for their advanced level and familiarity with classroom dynamics. A random sampling technique was employed to ensure representativeness and objectivity. Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data to measure participation patterns and assess variable relationships, alongside qualitative insights to explore students' perceptions and explanations of their engagement. The combination of both approaches strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings and offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping classroom participation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning is a socially situated and interactive process that relies on meaningful engagement between teachers and students. Effective learning occurs when both parties actively participate; however, despite pedagogical efforts, students' passivity and lack of engagement remain a persistent concern in many classrooms. Accordingly, recent research foregrounds student participation as central to learning and an important component in their academic success (Therriault, 2019). Additionally, class participation is important for the teacher's performance as well: "Class participation also is a valuable learning tool for teachers. Through students' questions, you learn what they don't understand, and can adjust your instruction accordingly" (Black & William, 1998). Class participation is important for the students' academic achievements as well as for the teacher's performance. Therefore, Rod Ellis (1991) considers such opportunities for negotiation of meaning as a key driver of second language acquisition. The literature provides ample evidence supporting the importance of students' participation in class for their academic achievements as well as the teacher's role in class management and

performance. Gage (1960) indicated that "College teaching and lecturing have been so long associated that when one pictures a college professor in a classroom, he almost inevitably pictures him as lecturing." Few would argue with the statement that the vast majority of today's professors were primarily lectured to as both undergraduates and graduate school students. It is not surprising, therefore, that lecturing continues to be our most prevalent mode of instruction. According to Chickering and Gamson (1987, p. 3), learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. Regarding the teacher's role in classroom management and performance, teachers' classroom practices and their interactions with their students are seen to have the greatest effect on student learning outcomes (as cited in Hayes et al., 2006). Connor et al. (2005) examine research that indicates that teachers' regard for their students, their responsiveness to students' questions and interests, the emotional climate of the classroom, and their expectations have all been related to student achievement.

Student participation in class affects both their interaction with the teacher and their understanding. Also, it affects the teacher's role in class and their performance. For example, a good teacher's performance produces a good participatory classroom. The learning environment, as a result, needs to encourage social networks and teacher-student interactions where students are placed at the centre of learning and are encouraged and challenged to make sense of information for themselves (Weimer, 2013).

In this study, it is hypothesized that the student-teacher relationship, student motivation, and preparation for the course can affect the extent to which students participate in class. Although students' oral participation in class has been addressed significantly in education research, as the next section will show, much of what was written about this topic focused on non-Moroccan contexts. This study seeks to address this research gap by exploring participation within this under-researched context to look at the specific linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and institutional realities experienced by students. With that said, the paper seeks to address the importance of students' participation and the factors that affect it within a context characterized by different socio-cultural expectations, power dynamics, and pedagogical traditions, providing some insights into ways to increase it.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before tackling the importance of students' participation in class, it would be worthwhile to define what the term refers to. Classroom participation means interaction inside the classroom, answering questions, and discussing topics. Moreover, Natvig, Albrektsen, and Qvarnstrom (2003) and Petress (2006) consider that class participation can be seen as an active engagement process which takes several forms and may take a few seconds or an extended period of time. This definition extends beyond the spoken or oral form of participation to include ways of participation such as completing written tasks and paying attention in class. Cohen (1991) and Dancer and Kamvounias (2005) attempt to sort participation into five categories: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance. Burchfield and Sappington (1999, p. 290) define participation as 'the number of unsolicited responses volunteered by students'. Taken together, class participation has been defined in various ways by different scholars, each approaching the concept from their own theoretical perspective. Although the term may appear simple, it carries multiple implications and interpretations. In this study, the focus will be on the observable dimension of students' participation in the classroom, viewing participation as an active process that encourages interaction and engagement among students.

Student participation in class has a great impact on their achievements in the sense that they are getting high grades as their participation in class increases, play new roles in class, and

become active contributors, not just passive consumers of ready-made knowledge presented to them by the teacher or other students. Lyons (1989), Petress (2006), and Weaver & Qi (2005) suggest that participation is a way to bring 'students actively into the educational process' and to assist in 'enhancing our teaching and bringing life to the classroom'. Fassinger (1995) notes that both students and professors can see the benefits of student participation, and Fritschner (2000) has found that students thought participation was essential to their own learning. Moreover, students' participation in class plays a vital role not just in the students' achievements but also improves their communication skills, their self-confidence, and their language efficiency. Classroom participation leads to a better understanding of the lesson (Petress, 2006), developing self-confidence and eagerness to know more (Fewings & Wonder, 2009). It also enhances critical and analytical thinking ability (Raisa et al., 2014), improving communication skills and interactions within and among peers (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005), and developing interpretation, analysis, and synthesis capacity (Peterson, 2016). These are among the most significant benefits of participation, as widely recognized and documented by various researchers. While much of this literature assumes a positive relationship between participation and academic achievement, it does not clearly state whether engagement directly leads to higher achievement or whether high achievers and confident students are simply more likely to participate. Furthermore, the issue of conceptual clarity may also affect the consistency of the findings as participation is often treated as a homogeneous concept with little attention paid to its different forms (e.g., voluntary or teacher-invoked, written vs. oral). Therefore, while the positive impact of participation is well documented, there is still a need to examine when, how, and for whom participation is academically rewarding.

Factors Affecting Student Participation in Class

Previous research has identified a range of factors that either promote or hinder students' participation in the classroom. The present section is therefore divided into six subsections, each examining key variables that influence students' level of engagement in class.

Preparation

Students' prior preparation of the course or homework can be the key to effective participation in class. Cohen (1991) has made several suggestions to increase engagement through preparation. He recommended assigning readings before class and asking students to select and bring five key words that summarize or clarify the text. During the lesson, these words are written on the board and discussed, allowing students to justify their choices. He also suggested in-class brainstorming about lesson content and incorporating role-playing debates to stimulate active involvement. Similarly, Crone (1997) emphasized the importance of preparing arguments in advance for weekly debates, noting that such preparation encourages greater participation. Therefore, pre-class preparation can be considered an essential component of learning, significantly contributing to students' willingness and ability to participate in class discussions. However, the literature does not account for the gap that might exist between students having ideas and actually expressing them in class, which may result in an overestimation of the impact of preparation on class observable participation. Moreover, the suggested practices in Cohen (1991) and Crone (1997) remain largely task-oriented and teacher-oriented, which raises the question of whether such approaches can stimulate genuine and spontaneous interactions in class, given that transforming prepared knowledge into actual classroom participation is bound to different variables and complexities addressed in this review.

Motivation

In addition to students' preparation, there is evidence that students' motivation also plays a significant role in influencing students' participation. However, before exploring this factor in detail, it is important to first clarify the meaning of the term motivation. Numerous cross-disciplinary theories have been postulated to explain motivation. Several definitions were put forward, but they all seem to meet at one point; motivation is: "what gets you going, keeps you going, and determines where you are going to go" (Slavin, as cited in Chelbi, 2010, p. 30). To put it differently, motivation is the drive that pushes people to act to meet their desires. As Brown (1980) puts it: "Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action" (p. 112). In other words, human beings, no matter to which ethnic or racial backgrounds they belong to, have needs and desires that lie behind their performing any given task. It is thus the fulfillment of needs and the heart of all human actions.

Motivation can generally be divided into two broad types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. All of us, occasionally, perform some tasks for pleasure, and sometimes, we do things just because we expect a reward; in a similar way, psychologists have considered the divergence that exists between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation has also been labeled 'enjoyment-based intrinsic motivation' (Lindenberg, 2001). That is, through an intrinsically motivated behavior, the individual derives enjoyment and satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation refers to being involved in an activity for the sheer pleasure that such involvement elicits (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, when extrinsically motivated, the individual does not perform an activity out of pleasure but rather does so to derive some kind of rewards that are external to the activity itself, e.g., a school boy who strives to succeed to avoid his parents' reproaches (Brown, 1980).

In the literature, motivation is profusely considered as one of the most important variables in students' levels of participation. According to Rocca (2010), motivated students are more excited to learn and participate actively in class. Such students participate in order to receive some kind of satisfaction when only intrinsically motivated, and an extrinsically motivated student participates for other reasons. Brewer & Burgess explain:

"Intrinsically motivated students participate in an activity for enjoyment, the learning it permits, and/or the sense of accomplishment it brings. Extrinsically motivated students, on the other hand, participate in an activity only to receive a reward or to avoid punishment external to the activity itself." (Brewer & Burgess, 2005, p. 4)

Furthermore, educational research has also focused on the teacher behaviors that should be effective in promoting students' motivation. Several teacher behaviors have been suggested. For example, Brophy (1986) has included guidance, modeling, enthusiasm, provision of choice, sincere praise, reinforcement, curiosity, dissonance, and interest-induction. Keller (1983) has provided four basic strategies to promote motivation: attention focusing, relevance, confidence building, and satisfaction.

In view of these studies, the importance of motivation becomes clear as a powerful variable that drives student engagement in the classroom; consequently, it can be inferred that when motivation is lacking, students' participation in class would hardly take place. Motivation, therefore, serves as the backbone of classroom participation.

Student Linguistic Competence

In addition to the aforementioned factors, it is suggested that students' level of language proficiency may be another variable that determines their participation levels. Although not a great deal of literature has focused on it as a strong variable that impacts students' participation, in this study the level of language proficiency gains its significance from the fact that the study investigates participation among students in a foreign language teaching class, so not all students are able to speak fluent English, thus it might be reasonable to assume the existence

of a direct correlation between the two, the level of language proficiency and the level of students' participation. Kao & Ganseder (1995) surveyed three hundred and fifty-five international students from forty-five countries enrolled in an American University to figure out why they did not participate in American classroom discussions and found that students who did not speak English as their first language were less likely to participate. Likewise, in the Moroccan context, most of the teachers would agree that English proficiency would be particularly problematic for Moroccan students learning English as a foreign language. According to Wan (2001), Chinese students, for example, know English grammar and vocabulary better, but have hard time with conversational English and participation because of being taught the English language more through writing than a speaking form. Moreover, because participation in class often takes effort and sometimes involves taking risks, it follows that it would be most likely to occur with the students whose good or average level of English mastery enables them to take part actively in class, and least likely to occur with students with poor mastery of the English language. Pajares (2005) has reported that students' self-efficacy beliefs impact their academic performance by influencing the choices they make and the course of action they take. In other words, students selectively choose to engage in tasks about which they feel confident and avoid tasks where they feel less competent. Ohata (2005) has pointed out that English language learners expressed serious concern about various kinds of evaluative situations in which their knowledge and performance of English were to be monitored by people around them. Accordingly, the research done by Lim (2003) on ESL/EFL learners also indicated that students were used to viewing teachers as authority figures in class. Students tend to believe that a teacher is a person who knows everything. Therefore, students tend to be quiet and just wait for the knowledge from the teacher to be transmitted to them. Furthermore, Lim (2002) also has suggested that students worry about mistakes when speaking. Therefore, participation may represent a serious challenge to students in a foreign language classroom as they feel hesitant about their language proficiency level, hence their participation. Students tend not to speak much in class, appear reserved, rarely ask questions, and do not express opinions since they may have low English language proficiency and self-efficacy.

Student Gender

Gender is another factor that contributes to low or high levels of class participation. Mayhill (2006) has argued that a strong relationship exists between gender and classroom participation in interactions with the teacher, noting that girls are generally more likely to respond, either by raising their hands or by contributing to collective responses whereas boys are more often off-task. However, boys tend to initiate talk by shouting out, which may suggest that they are particularly resistant to teacher orchestration of classroom talk and are keen to take more ownership of the discourse.

Other studies have concluded that males participate disproportionately more than females (Brooks, 1982; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Fassinger, 1995; French, 1984; Graddol & Swann, 1989; Karp & Yoels, 1976; Pearson & West, 1991; Spender, 1981). Some researchers have attempted to explain this imbalance by pointing to the instructor gender. For example, Brooks (1982) reported that males participate more than females in female-taught classes. On the other hand, Sternglanz and Lyberger-Ficek (1977) and Pearson and West (1991) have concluded that male students are more likely to dominate discussion in male-taught classes.

On the contrary, several studies found no effect of students' gender (Boersma, Gay, Jones, Morrison, & Remick, 1981; Cornelius, Gray, & Constantinople, 1990; Crawford & MacLeod, 1990; Hamlin & Janssen, 1981). Similarly, Fassinger (1995) concluded that although instructor gender did not affect the participation of male students, female students were more likely to participate in classes taught by female instructors. These findings suggest that students' level of participation may not solely be determined by their gender, but rather by the interaction between the student and the instructor's gender.

In light of these studies, we can safely say that gender has been the object of considerable studies, yielding different results. This can be attributed to methodological differences across studies in addition to variations in how participation is defined as mentioned at the beginning of the literature review. These inconsistencies can also be attributed to cultural and institutional contexts. These mixed findings may be due to the way sex is measured; whether as a biological sex or as gender which goes beyond the concepts of femininity and masculinity to look at the psychological construction of males and females and to which gender an individual may be more oriented regardless of his/her biological sex. Moreover, differences in age groups and class size may also influence participation patterns rendering explicit comparisons difficult, which suggest the need to examine gender within specific educational settings — Moroccan higher education in our case — in order to determine whether similar patterns exist or new context-based trends emerge.

Teacher's Methodology

The literature review has thus far concentrated primarily on student-related variables. This section shifts the focus to teacher methodology, referring to the instructional approaches and classroom management strategies that teachers employ in the teaching process. Weaver & Qi (2005) have indicated that the actions of the teacher are one of the most important factors in promoting/hampering participation. In the same regard, Cotton (1995) thinks that teachers are effective when they pre-plan courses and integrate skills where appropriate, provide clear expectations for students, carefully orient students to lessons, and are clear and focused in instruction. Apparently, effective teachers provide feedback and reinforcement. The teacher's methodology is one of many reasons that make the teacher more wanted or hated by his students, also the teacher must have his own methods in dealing with his students, but the most important thing in the teacher's methodology is the way he delivers the course content to his students. A method of teaching generally means 'the practical realization of a method. The originators of an approach have arrived at decisions about type of activities and roles of teachers and learners' (Harmer, 2001). According to Morgan (1999), the traditional 'stand and deliver' style of teaching is no longer useful in encouraging students' participation, as it fails to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and worse it suppresses their natural creativity and curiosity. Therefore, this way of delivering the course content implies that the classroom discussions are more likely to be dominated by the teacher which may have undesired effects on students' willingness to participate. Moreover, Aslam and Kingdon (2007) examined the influence of several teacher activities on students' performance and found that students participated more in classes taught by teachers asking more questions, quizzing students on past materials, and spending less time on lecturing style teaching. This indicates the powerful influence of teaching methodologies on students' overall engagement in class. Further, it is largely acknowledged that teachers, regardless of the methodology they opt for, play an important role in motivating students which in turn influences students' participation. Subsequently, certain teaching styles may fail to motivate students. Galbraith and Sanders (1987) explain:

"Instructors tended to teach the way they preferred to learn, a practice which would not benefit students with learning styles differing from their teachers'. If the needs of these students were not met, such situations could result in a loss of motivation."

In view of this quote, the teacher methodology should be adequate to students' needs; otherwise, the teacher will not push the students to perform better in class. Brophy (1987) states that teachers who viewed themselves as active socialization agents were capable of stimulating students' motivation to interact actively with the course. In other words, by being a cooperative communicator, the teacher gains his/her students' attention and receives more and more

feedback. Therefore, the teacher's methodology is as important as any ingredient as far as students' participation in class is concerned.

Teacher's Role and Class Management

The present section examines the teacher's role and classroom management, as both are closely related to students' participation and engagement in class. Teachers accompany learners through each crucial stage of their development. Spending six to eight hours a day with students, five days a week, teachers are often among the most influential figures in their lives. After parents, elementary school teachers are usually the first formal educators who shape children's learning experiences. Later, during middle school, teachers guide students through another critical transition, i.e., adolescence. As children grow into young adults, teachers do more than deliver academic content. They answer questions, listen to concerns, and support students as they navigate new intellectual, emotional, and social challenges. In this sense, teachers not only observe their students' growth but also actively contribute to it. Throughout the different stages of schooling, teachers play a central role in shaping learners' academic progress and personal development.

Moreover, contemporary educators are increasingly rethinking various aspects of their profession. They reconsider their relationships with students, colleagues, and the wider community; they adapt the tools and strategies they employ; and they reflect on their rights and responsibilities. They also reassess curriculum content, standards, and assessment methods, as well as their own professional preparation and ongoing development. In short, teachers are continuously reinventing their professional identities in order to better meet the evolving needs of students and educational institutions.

With regard to classroom management, each teacher adopts a particular approach to organizing and leading the classroom. According to George (2003), classroom management refers to the teacher's ability to effectively coordinate time, space, resources, and students' roles and behaviors in order to create a learning environment that fosters academic success. Effective classroom management is closely linked to teaching techniques and instructional styles. Teachers strive to identify what constitutes 'good' and 'ineffective' teaching practices through self-assessment, reflection, and the use of peer and student feedback (Weimer; Slavin, 1990). Research published in *African Research Review* indicates that teachers enhance classroom management by encouraging students to express diverse viewpoints, thus making lessons more interactive and engaging. At the same time, the use of quizzes and tests helps monitor progress and maintain academic standards. Therefore, successful classroom management involves both granting students the freedom to express themselves and establishing a structured, supportive environment conducive to learning. In conclusion, the teacher's role and classroom management practices are of paramount importance in shaping students' academic achievement and overall development.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to investigate student participation in class. It presents the research objectives, questions, variables, population and sampling procedures, research approach, and data collection instruments.

The present study is based on the hypothesis that the student-teacher relationship, students' motivation, and their preparation for the course significantly influence the extent to which students participate in class. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to examine the factors that affect students' classroom participation and to explore possible ways to enhance it. In order to achieve this objective, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

3.1. To what extent do students participate in class?

3.2. What characterizes the profile of students who participate compared to those who do not?

3.3. What factors influence student participation? And how can classroom participation be increased?

The study includes both dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is students' participation in class. The independent variables consist of the factors assumed to influence participation, namely students' motivation, the student-teacher relationship, and students' preparation for the course. These variables are examined to determine the nature and strength of their relationship with classroom participation.

The target population of this research consists of Semester Six students from the Department of English at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fez (FLDM). This group was selected due to its relevance to the research topic. As final-year undergraduate students, they have accumulated several years of academic experience and are therefore likely to possess a clear understanding of classroom participation dynamics. A random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample from this population. Random sampling was chosen to ensure objectivity and to provide all students with an equal opportunity to participate in the study.

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research designs. The quantitative approach enables the researcher to measure the frequency and extent of students' participation, identify participation patterns, and analyze the influence of the selected variables. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, allows for a deeper exploration of students' perceptions and explanations regarding their participation or non-participation. The integration of both approaches enhances the validity and reliability of the findings and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Regarding data collection procedures, the primary instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. As a quantitative tool, the questionnaire is designed to gather data concerning the frequency of students' participation, their profiles, and the factors affecting their engagement in class. It also seeks to identify possible strategies to improve classroom participation. In addition to the questionnaire, interviews are conducted to complement the quantitative data. The interviews provide participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives, thereby offering richer insights into the reasons behind active or limited participation. In sum, this methodological design, grounded in a mixed-methods approach and supported by both questionnaires and interviews, aims to ensure a comprehensive and reliable analysis of the factors influencing student participation in the EFL classroom context.

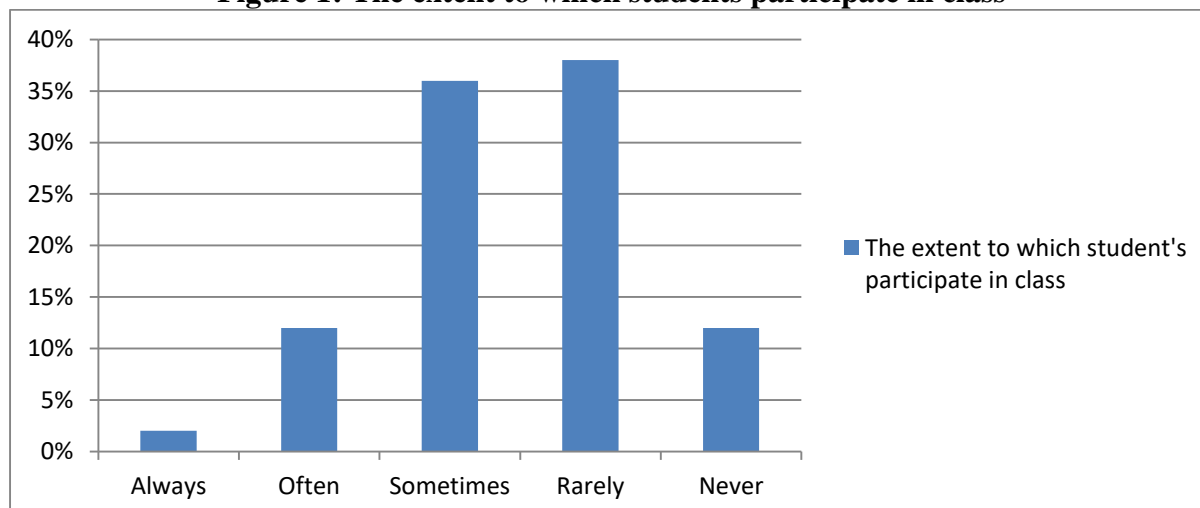
4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the quantitative and qualitative data collected. It aims to provide a comprehensive discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions and hypotheses. The chapter is organized into three main subsections. The first subsection examines the extent of students' participation in class. The second one explores the reasons underlying both participation and non-participation, while the third one analyzes the key factors that influence students' classroom participation.

Assessing the Extent of Student Participation in Class

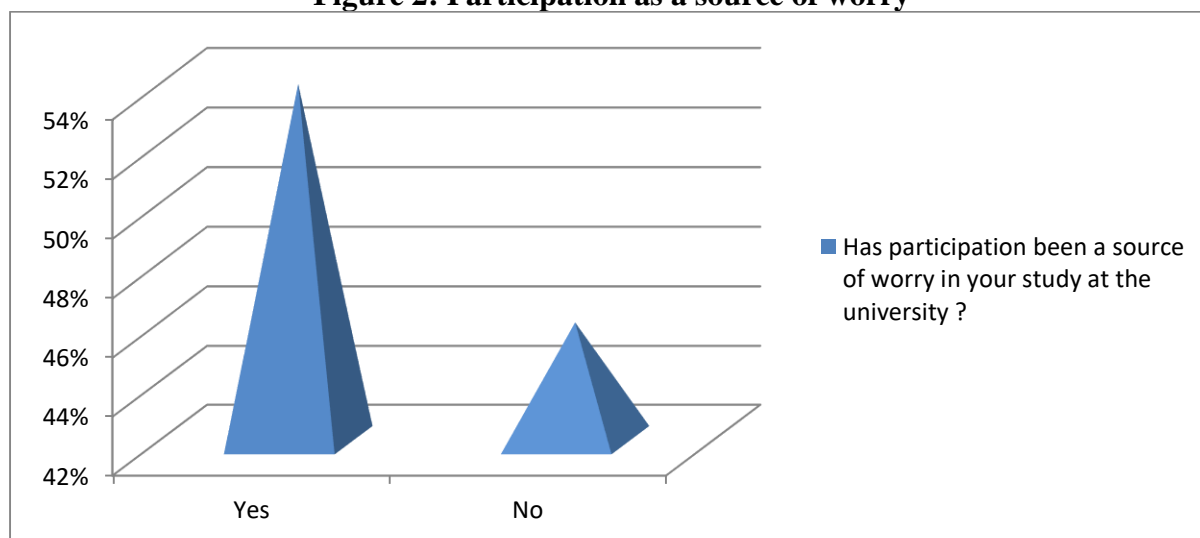
The findings illustrate that the students barely participate in class, as Figure 1 shows:

Figure 1: The extent to which students participate in class



A quick look at this Figure shows that 38% of respondents chose "Rarely" and 36% chose "Sometimes". However, only 2% have chosen "Always", and 12% have chosen "Often", while 12% "Never". These findings show that students do not consider participation as a priority in their studies. The participation has taken another dimension when the students were asked whether or not participation has been a source of worry for them during their studies, as the majority confirmed that it was, as the figure below illustrates:

Figure 2: Participation as a source of worry



A close analysis of the above figure reveals that 54% of the respondents selected "Yes," indicating that participation in the classroom is a source of worry for them. In contrast, 46% chose "No," suggesting that they do not feel anxious about participating in class. Some respondents explained that their willingness to participate without worry depends largely on the nature of the topic discussed. For instance, Respondent 2 stated: "I don't think so. It is not a source of worry for me because when I like to participate, I do so freely. I don't have any problem with that. Of course, when the topic is good, and I feel like participating with my classmates, I do it, especially when it is interesting and makes me react with the whole class."

There are no worries about that." This response suggests that engagement is strongly influenced by interest in the subject matter.

In addition, some interviewees emphasized that teachers do not pressure them to participate, which allows them to speak voluntarily and express themselves freely. Interviewee 6 explained: "I think participation in the course was not a source of worry for me because there is no pressure from the teachers. They don't force you to participate. It depends on you. If you want to get involved, you participate; if you don't, you just listen to the course, take notes if you want, and leave the room—that's it." This perspective highlights the role of a supportive classroom environment in reducing anxiety. On the other hand, students who do not participate often associate participation with fear of negative judgment. They worry about making mistakes or being unable to express themselves clearly. As Interviewee 7 stated: "I think participation is a source of worry. For example, if I want to participate, I feel that somebody will judge me or say that my answer is not correct, or the teacher will react. I'm afraid they will judge my answer." This response illustrates how fear of evaluation can hinder classroom engagement.

Furthermore, some interviewees reported that their lack of participation stems from long-standing habits and insufficient subject knowledge. Interviewee 3 noted: "Yes, it has been a source of worry for me because I'm not used to participating. Since elementary, secondary, and high school, I didn't participate much, and even now I don't. I don't have enough knowledge to keep up with the questions or with what the teacher expects, and I make many mistakes." This statement indicates that previous educational experiences and perceived academic limitations contribute significantly to participation anxiety. Overall, the findings suggest that students' classroom participation is influenced by multiple factors, including interest in the topic, teaching style, fear of judgment, and prior educational experiences.

Reasons Behind Students' Lack of Participation

One of the primary reasons behind students' lack of participation is the theme discussed in class. Several respondents indicated that their willingness to participate largely depends on the topics introduced by the teacher. As Respondent 1 stated: "Sometimes I participate in the classroom, but not always, because the themes that the teacher offers are sometimes not interesting or are too general. Also, I don't like to participate all the time." This statement suggests that the level of interest and relevance of the topic significantly influences students' engagement. Similarly, some students reported that they refrain from participating when they lack sufficient knowledge about the topic or feel that they have nothing meaningful to contribute. For example, Respondent 2 explained: "I participate sometimes, not all the time, but when I feel like it. Sometimes the topic is not worthy, or I don't have enough information about it, so I don't have anything to add. Sometimes there is simply no need to participate." This response highlights the role of preparedness and perceived competence in shaping participation behavior.

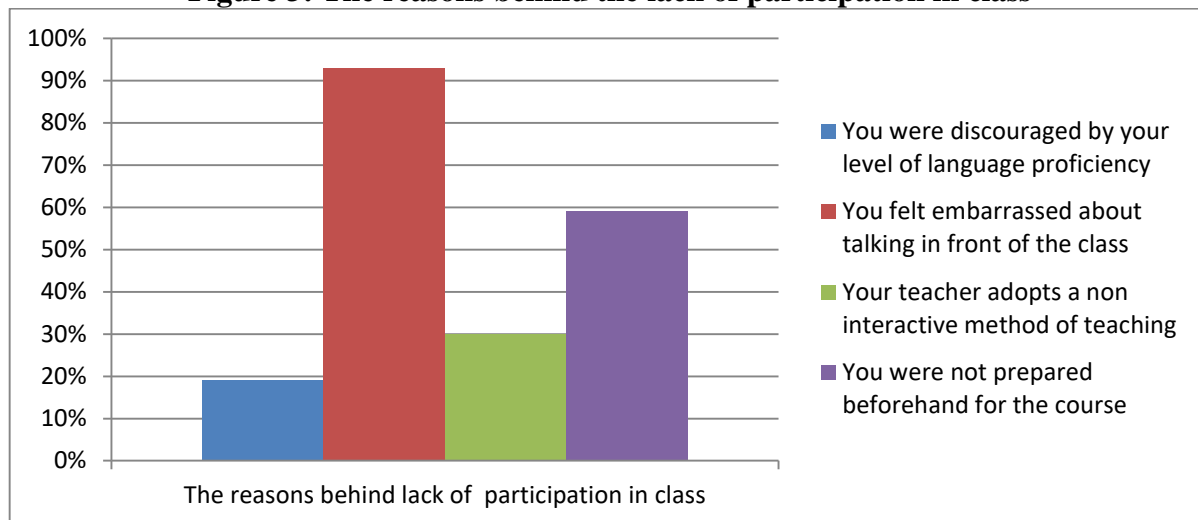
Additionally, the interviews revealed that self-confidence plays a crucial role in classroom engagement. Respondent 7 stated: "Sometimes I participate and sometimes I don't because I don't feel confident enough to participate regularly." This indicates that a lack of self-confidence may prevent students from expressing their ideas, even when they possess relevant knowledge. As well as this, class size was identified as another factor affecting participation. Some students noted that a large number of classmates discourages them from speaking. Respondent 8 pointed out: "I don't participate a lot because there are many students in the class, and I'm a shy person. Sometimes I just read a part of the novel, but I don't participate in discussions." This testimony suggests that overcrowded classrooms may increase anxiety and reduce opportunities for active engagement.

On the other hand, one respondent emphasized the importance of teacher involvement in encouraging participation. Respondent 5 stated: "I usually participate when I know about the topic, and also when the teacher involves me by asking questions. That makes me think and

answer." This highlights the significant role teachers play in fostering interaction and prompting students to contribute. These testimonies demonstrate that both students and teachers share responsibility for the level of classroom participation. When students are prepared and confident, and when teachers create an engaging and supportive learning environment, participation is likely to increase, benefiting both parties.

The quantitative findings also revealed additional reasons for students' lack of participation, as illustrated in the following graph.

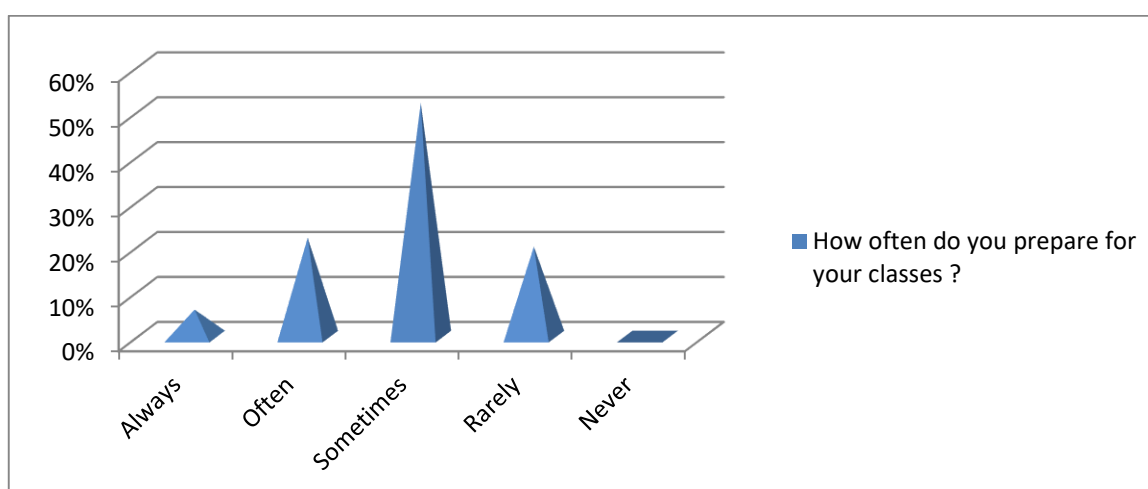
Figure 3: The reasons behind the lack of participation in class



A close analysis of Figure 3 reveals that the majority of students identified embarrassment about speaking in front of the class as the main reason for their lack of participation. Indeed, 93% of the respondents selected this option. Additionally, 59% indicated that they were not adequately prepared beforehand for the course, while 30% attributed their limited participation to the teacher's adoption of a non-interactive teaching method. Finally, 13% reported that they were discouraged by their level of language proficiency.

With regard to lack of preparation as a factor influencing participation, the findings show that students only sometimes prepare for their classes in advance, as illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 4: The frequency of student preparation for their classes



The results indicate that students do not consistently prepare their assignments for a variety of reasons. Some respondents reported that they prepare only when the course is considered important or when they plan to participate in class. For example, Respondent 2 stated: "I prepare for my classes sometimes, but not all the time—only when the session is important, or I plan to participate, answer questions, or when the teacher has assigned specific questions or

a presentation. It depends on the teacher, how the session is conducted, and whether I find the session engaging." From this response, it can be concluded that preparation often depends on students' interest in the subject or on specific obligations, such as presentations.

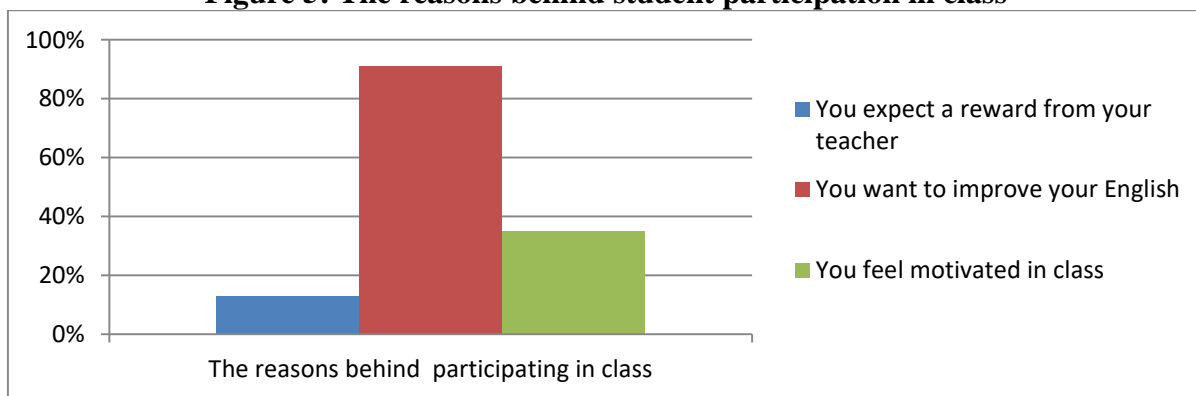
Other respondents noted that time management or conflicting commitments influence their preparation. Respondent 9 explained: "Sometimes I prepare for my classes. Why only sometimes? Because sometimes I cannot manage my time to work on all my courses, or I have other tasks, such as revising or reading for another course. Sometimes there is nothing to prepare." This response highlights that students' preparation is influenced by their ability to manage time effectively and by the presence of other competing responsibilities.

Finally, some students indicated that their lack of preparation stems from a general disinterest in classroom participation. As Respondent 1 argued: "Class participation is just one part of studying. I don't think it has much impact on my overall learning, so I don't focus on it. I am more interested in other activities, such as reading books, and class participation is not a priority for me." This statement illustrates that for some students, participation and preparation are driven less by academic requirements and more by personal priorities and interests. Overall, the findings suggest that preparation for class is influenced by a combination of factors, including interest in the topic, perceived importance of the session, time management, and personal priorities.

Reasons Behind Participation in Class

The following Figure outlines the reason behind students' participation in class:

Figure 5: The reasons behind student participation in class

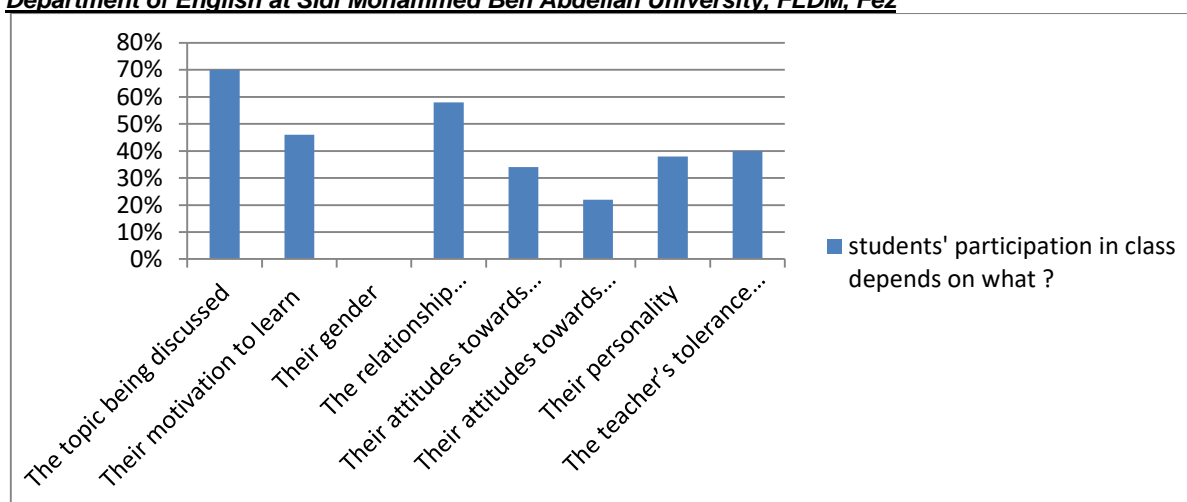


A close examination of this figure shows that 91% of respondents selected "You want to improve your language," while 35% chose "You feel motivated in class." Additionally, 13% of respondents indicated "You expect a reward from your teacher." These results suggest that the primary reason students participate in class is to improve their English proficiency. As Interviewee 10 explained: "Participation in class helps us improve our English and pronunciation, learn new vocabulary, and make a good impression on the teacher." Other students reported that their participation is driven either by external rewards or by personal motivation. For instance, Interviewee 8 stated: "The teachers don't give us points for participation. If you want to get a good grade, you should prepare for your exams. I think if participation were graded, I would participate more." The findings indicate that while most students engage in class to enhance their language skills, factors such as teacher incentives and personal motivation also influence participation.

Factors Affecting Student Participation in Class

The following Figure illustrates the factors that affect students' participation in class:

Figure 6: The criteria that affect student participation in class



The above figure indicates that 70% of respondents believe that participation in class depends on "the topic being discussed." Additionally, 58% selected "the relationship between the students and the teacher," 46% chose "their motivation to learn," 40% indicated "the teacher's tolerance for students' mistakes," and 38% identified "their personality" as a factor. Furthermore, 34% of respondents stated that participation depends on "their attitudes toward the subject," while 22% noted "their attitudes toward the teacher." Notably, none of the respondents considered gender as a factor influencing participation.

In addition to these quantitative findings, several interviewees emphasized the importance of the teacher's role in fostering participation. Interviewee 1 stated: "It depends first on the teacher—how the teacher engages students in classroom participation." Other respondents highlighted the role of knowledge and preparation. Interviewee 7 explained: "Participation depends on many factors. For example, if you have prior knowledge of the topic or have read relevant books, and if you have good communication skills, you can interact with the teacher and express your opinion fluently." These responses indicate that classroom participation is influenced by multiple factors, including the topic, teacher-student interaction, motivation, personality, and preparation. Moreover, participation can take various forms, offering students different opportunities for learning and engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

Maintaining an active classroom is the shared responsibility of both teachers and students, and this study focused on several factors influencing students' participation, including students' preparation for the course, motivation, language proficiency, gender, and the teacher's methodology. The findings indicate that these factors play a central role in shaping both the teacher's performance and students' academic achievement. Specifically, a lack of student participation negatively affects classroom dynamics: for teachers, student feedback serves as a key indicator of comprehension and a source of motivation, while for students, a silent classroom can hinder learning and gradually reduce self-confidence.

Furthermore, the results confirmed the study's initial hypothesis that a positive teacher-student relationship benefits both parties by enhancing the classroom environment and improving performance. In addition to these factors, the findings highlighted that the topic being discussed is among the most influential determinants of students' willingness to participate, emphasizing the importance of engaging and relevant content in fostering active classroom involvement. The study has also demonstrated that student participation profiles suggest that confidence, preparation, motivation, and classroom context enhance students' engagement in the course; whereas, gender does not seem to play a significant role.

6. RECOMMENDATION

A dedicated teacher and a hardworking student are the cornerstones of any successful educational system. Students' participation in class serves as a key indicator of whether these elements are functioning effectively. It is important to recognize that a disengaged or 'dead' classroom poses a significant threat to the quality of education, and addressing this issue requires deliberate and comprehensive measures. First, Moroccan scholars and educators should conduct more theoretical and field-based research to identify the root causes of low student participation and develop strategies to address them effectively. Second, students must be regarded as active participants in the learning process rather than passive consumers of knowledge. Teachers, in turn, have a critical role in motivating students, fostering a supportive classroom environment, and encouraging productive engagement. Moreover, the topics discussed in class should be relevant, meaningful, and applicable to students' lives, as this significantly enhances their willingness to participate. Finally, the issue of student participation should be given greater attention in university conferences, educational media, and policymaking forums. All stakeholders invested in improving the quality of education should prioritize strategies that promote active classroom engagement, recognizing that increasing students' participation is essential for the overall development and effectiveness of the educational system.

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Authors' Bio:

Abdeghni Dahman

He holds a Ph.D. in Language and Cultural Studies from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Fez, Morocco. His research interests include Moroccan, African, and transnational cinemas, cultural studies, media studies, travel narratives, postcolonial literature, gender studies, and language education. He has published articles in the *Journal of African Cinemas*, the *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, the *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Translation*, and the *Open Journal of Social Sciences*.

Salah Boutouil

He is a recent Fulbright alumnus of the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program for International Teachers (Fulbright DAI) in EFL. He is also an EFL teacher at the Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles (CPGE) Taza. His research interests include AI in education, media literacy, and professional development.