

Expounding the Determinants of Learners' Active Participation in Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract—This paper addresses the characteristics that influence students' engagement in the Foreign Language classroom. The researcher employed a quantitative study methodology to collect data from 20 foreign language (FL) instructors from a variety of high schools and 130 learners. Students were chosen using "purposive sampling," while instructors were selected using "random sampling." For this study, an online survey was used to obtain the necessary data. Using charts and percentages, the researcher scientifically assessed the gathered data. Based on the results, it is clear that students have several challenges and difficulties to overcome, which leads to their underperformance in FL lessons. Students' inactivity in language courses was caused by variables like anxiety, lack of motivation and stimulation, fear of criticism by classmates, instructors' methods of instruction, classroom organization, the learning context, and other cultural influences. The research shows that there are significant differences in how teachers and students perceive the variables. Instructors believe that students' lack of comfort with speaking up in front of their peers is the most significant internal barrier to their success in the FL classroom. The majority of students report that anxiety prevents them from fully engaging in class discussions and other activities when learning foreign languages. Teachers believe that the learning setting or subject is the primary driving factor, while students believe that the teaching technique used by the instructor is a determining factor.

Index Terms—classroom participation, foreign language learning, motivation, internal factors, external factors

I. INTRODUCTION

Participation and engagement on the part of students, especially in FL classes, are essential in fostering a productive learning environment for language acquisition. It's well acknowledged that student and teacher participation in teaching and learning is crucial to the success of both (Taraj & Jani, 2019). In any case, the lack of students' active engagement in class is a major obstacle for teachers while teaching FL. This occurs as it is not appropriate in an active learning environment if students are not engaged in class discussions or activities. In reality, students and teachers need to work closely together to master a new language. This is because the development of students' linguistic competence in all four primary areas (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) must be tracked closely as they go through the learning process. Students need up-to-date means of communication, fluency in a mutually understood foreign language, the ability to take in and process new information (via reading, listening, and comprehension), a wide range of innate abilities, and formal instruction (Hamidova & Ganiyeva, 2020).

Participation in the classroom has always played a vital role in ensuring students gain knowledge and improve their skills. Students may learn more, show they've comprehended the material, gain self-assurance, and put theory into practice via active participation. As a result, students learn to think for themselves (Garside, 2016) and contribute to class discussions by presenting well-reasoned arguments based on material covered in class. They'll need these abilities as they go on in school and prepare for their professional lives. According to Rocca (2010), students are less likely to memorize and more likely to use higher-order thinking skills like evaluation, assessment, and creativity the more actively they participate (Smith, 2020). Students who take part in these activities also demonstrate considerable enhancements in their capacity to communicate (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2015), work together (Armstrong & Boud, 1983), and engage effectively in a civilized environment. Despite the numerous advantages of active classroom involvement, many students have a hard time getting up and involved in class discussions. Personal characteristics and the internal and external arrangements of the classroom both have a role in students' difficulties with engagement (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Teachers have used a wide variety of tactics in response to students' low rates of involvement. Among these techniques is the practice of giving students a higher grade for actively participating in class discussions, randomly asking for student feedback, and modifying traditional lecture formats to include more time for student questions and answers. Despite these attempts, as stated in the widely recognized paper by Karp and Yoels (2016), approximately ten out of forty students engage in classroom conversation, and 5 of those 10 individuals dominate the debate that does occur. Researchers have shown that many students still avoid actively participating in class, missing out on valuable learning opportunities as a consequence (Myers et al., 2019; Weaver & Qi, 2015). There is still no general answer since students are not responding to the current strategies. The most important element influencing

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students' level of engagement in the classroom is not being given the attention they deserve. The finest classroom discussions are those in which all students take part, gain knowledge, and pay attention to one another's ideas.

Rationale for Study

The goal of this quantitative research is to find out how the classroom situation influences learners' participation. The participants include 20 randomly selected FL instructors and 150 FL students from various high schools. The study's primary motivation came from the necessity to identify difficulties faced by students of the foreign language (FL) in the classroom and to provide practical solutions to those difficulties.

Students pursue higher education to broaden and deepen their skill sets and prepare them for rewarding professional jobs. Both schools and teachers need to figure out how to provide students with the greatest chance of succeeding academically and helping them reach their objectives. Teachers may use the results of this study to better understand the elements that influence students' willingness to participate in FL class and to develop methods for accomplishing this goal. It will help teachers understand how their pupils feel about participating and what they can do to improve the situation. This will help learners in the long term by guaranteeing that they have access to the highest lifelong learning and therefore are prepared to immediately implement what they learn in their daily life communication with others.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Students' Participation in Foreign Language Classroom

One of the most effective ways to keep students interested in higher education is to encourage their engagement in the classroom. Young adults make up a large portion of today's college student population, and they need frequent human connections (Roehling et al., 2011). Looking at the available research may help teachers understand what elements, directly and indirectly, impact student engagement in the classroom as they seek to discover the best combination of techniques to increase participation rates.

There are many different ways to describe participation, but some common ones include "the percentage of unrequested reactions volunteered" (Burchfield & Sappington, 2019, p. 290), "the degree to which learners participate in classroom discussions," (Weaver & Qi, 2015, p. 581), and "any discussions or concerns that students provided or brought up in class" (Fassinger, 1995, p. 39). The aforementioned criteria place more emphasis on quantitative measures of involvement than on the quality of a student's replies. This is probably because it is hard to determine what constitutes a great answer across disciplines, and the end outcome may be subjective.

Student involvement, as described by Dancer and Kamvounias (2015), may be broken down into five sub-processes, including "preparation", "contribution to discussion", "group skills", "communication skills", as well as engagement. This interpretation is a little more all-encompassing since it takes into account not just how respectful members of the group are to one another, but also how engaged students are in class, as noted by Weaver and Qi (2015).

Teachers, students, and even researchers may all play a role in gauging the success of a course's participation requirements.

Numerous studies have shown that when students self-evaluate or get peer feedback, they tend to give themselves and each other greater marks than the professor would give (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2015; Gopinath, 2023). Fritschner (2000) notes that this occurs because teachers and students often have various conceptions of what constitutes "participation," which in turn leads to distinct grading standards and ultimately different outcomes. Tutors and outside observers are two examples of people who may potentially be included in a student's participation grade, although this is not often done (Armstrong & Boud, 2019).

B. Benefits of Effective Participation in FL Classroom

Many studies have pointed to the several general advantages of active engagement in the classroom, including its positive effects on the growth of the students and the satisfaction it brings to the instructors. Moreover, certain studies have especially emphasized the advantages of active classroom engagement in the process of learning a foreign language. If you get students involved in an active learning environment, it gives them the chance to become critical thinkers, which in turn makes them fewer passive learners. Critical thinking was characterized by Garside (2016) as thinking that is straightforward, concise, factual, meaningful, rational, and coherent.

The above definition demonstrates that rational reflection is an essential skill that learners need to cultivate since it is a capability that will take them all across their learning (regardless of the subject matter they study) and into their professions.

They are more enthusiastic, enhance their capacity to converse verbally (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2015), develop self-assurance, and gain knowledge by being able to implement theories and models in their personal lives (Roehling et al., 2011). These are just some of the other advantages of active involvement for learners in the process of learning a foreign language. Other advantages encompass minimal memorization, in that they become ready to comprehend via conversation and summarize the knowledge more efficiently (Smith, 2017).

While there are multiple advantages to involvement, according to the research that has been done, there are still relatively few students that engage, and there is not enough time in a class dedicated to classroom discussions (Fritschner, 2000). Students and teachers alike are aware of the many advantages that come with active engagement in

the classroom; yet, Wade (2014) found that students wish they had the option to participate more actively in their courses so that they might reap the benefits of active participation.

More students may choose not to take part in the conversation, and the students who do take part are the same ones who do so frequently, suggesting that they take the lead. The term "consolidation of responsibility" was used by Karp and Yoels (2016, p. 429) to describe this phenomenon.

C. Determinant Factors That Impact Active Participation in Foreign Language Classroom

Participation in discussions and other activities that take place in the classroom is essential to the development of students' knowledge of the concepts they are learning. If learners are unable to give the subject, they have studied their full devotion and participate in the teaching sessions as well as exercises in the classrooms, they will demonstrate a poor knowledge of the subject they have studied. According to research conducted by Abdullah et al. (2012), teaching is shown to be more successful when both instructors and students take an active role in the educational process. As a consequence of this, there are a lot of factors that have an impact on the amount of participation a student exhibits in the classroom. In the same way that multiple factors impacted learners' involvement in FL classes, several qualities influenced learners' engagement in DL courses. Al-Ghafri (2018) performed a study on the elements that impact learners' engagement in foreign language lessons, with a particular focus on tertiary learners. According to the findings of the research, three primary components have an impact on the degree to which students participate in English-language learning: first, the educator; second, the student; and third, external influences.

Teaching considerations comprised several aspects such as the educator's instructional methods and strategies in providing language classes, the diversity of activities and games used in FL learning, and the teacher's regulation and management of the class. Teachers also played a role in the administration of FL classes. According to Kawuryan (2021), teachers have developed a variety of instructional methods to engage learners in a positive and unforgettable educational experience. Some of these teaching strategies include assigning learners a task or critical capability in which learners can participate. This is done so that learners can acquire a diverse range of understanding experiences and viewpoints throughout the learning process. Next, there were a few variables that were centred on student aspects. These variables included things like a learner's degree of English proficiency, a learner's readiness and attitude to learning the English language, and a learner's incentive to engage in ESL sessions (Aziz et al., 2018).

Other factors that were brought up included the inability of students to form relationships with their instructors beyond the school environment to practice English and become more acquainted with them; the role of administrators within the educational establishment and their function in assisting English learning; and the support and encouragement of family members in the pursuit of English language proficiency.

According to the results of a study that was carried out by Al-Ghafri (2018), wherein his research results, there were multiple factors contributing to and impacting learner participation, in particular in the English classroom. Each component plays its function in influencing students' engagement in the ESL classroom, as each factor plays its role in affecting learner engagement in the English classroom. How well students are prepared for class is another factor that may affect how actively they participate in the learning process. When it involves learning and gaining an understanding of the material, the vast majority of students put an increased amount of importance on their instructors. As a direct consequence of this, people will come unprepared for a class. As a consequence of this, kids will have an unhealthy level of respect for their instructor since they are aware of the consequences that await them if they come to class ignorant of the material being covered. According to Weaver and Qi (2015), a large number of students feel anxiety either because they do not have access to relevant knowledge or because they are coping with worries in the classroom. According to the findings of many studies, some students have claimed that they do not attend classes if they have not done any previous preparation on the subject matter before attending, which results in a dearth of assurance in their ability to take part in discussions (Howard, 2020).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Study Design

This research is a quantitative investigation of critical factors that determine the level of active engagement of students in a Foreign Language classroom. The quantitative method was preferred to get the views of many students and many teachers, as the qualitative approach may not be able to achieve this.

B. Data Collection Instrument

The paper uses questionnaires as a data-gathering tool. The researcher developed questions that are both open-ended and closed-ended so that they may gather information from both the instructors and the pupils. The questionnaire is divided into three main parts. The first part elicits demographic information; the second part elicits questions about internal determinant factors that impact active participation in foreign language learning. The third part of the question, which is more teacher-focused, elicits information on the external determinant factors that impact the active participation of learners in the classroom.

C. Sampling and Sampling Technique

A total of 20 classroom instructors and 130 pupils took part in the research project. The questionnaires were developed to elicit answers on three distinct topical areas, namely, the method used by the instructors, the levels of motivation and gap shown by the pupils, and the atmosphere inside the classroom.

D. Method of Analysis

Quantitative analysis was performed on the information obtained from the questionnaire. After collecting all of the questionnaires, the results were analyzed statistically and expressed as a percentage. The researcher used a bar graph to illustrate how the participants responded to the questions that were posed by the researcher.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The findings of the study are presented here in three main subparts. The first part presents the result of the demographic variables. The second part presents the results of the internal determinant factors that impact the active participation of learners in the classroom. The third part presents the results of the external factors that impact the participation of learners in the classroom.

(a). Demographic Variables

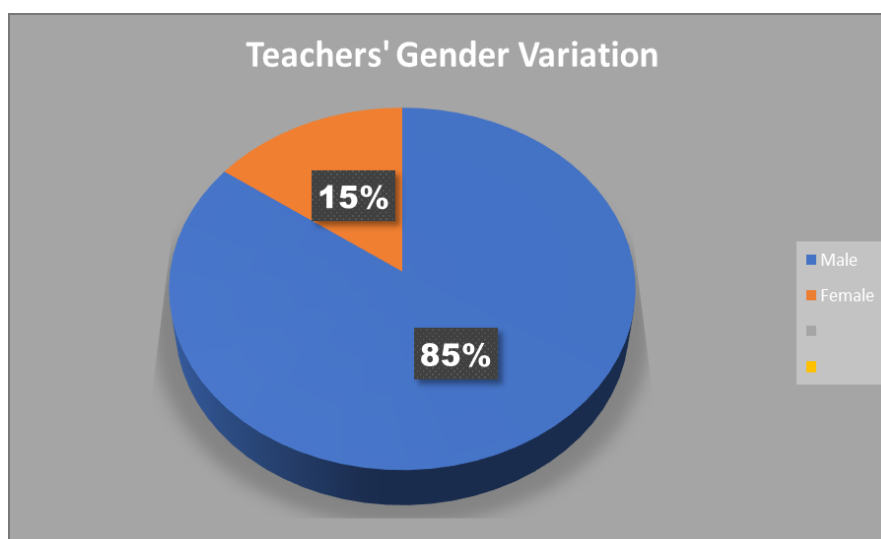


Figure 1. Gender Variation of Participants (Teachers)

As already stated, 20 teachers of foreign language (EFL) participated in the survey. The data above indicates that 85% of the sample size, which is about 17 male teachers, participated in the study. This is left with 15% of female participants, which is about 3 female teachers. Gender participation has a strong implication in terms of the discussion of the active participation of students in FL classrooms.

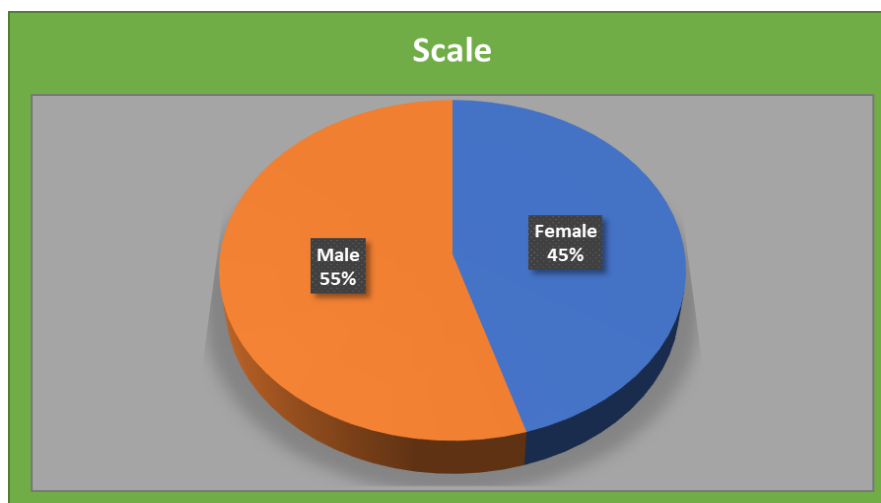


Figure 2. Gender Variation of Participants (Students)

Data in Figure 2 above indicates the active participation of both female students in the survey. A total of 55% of the students in the study represent the male population, whereas 45% are female participants. The two genders are equally represented in the study sample.

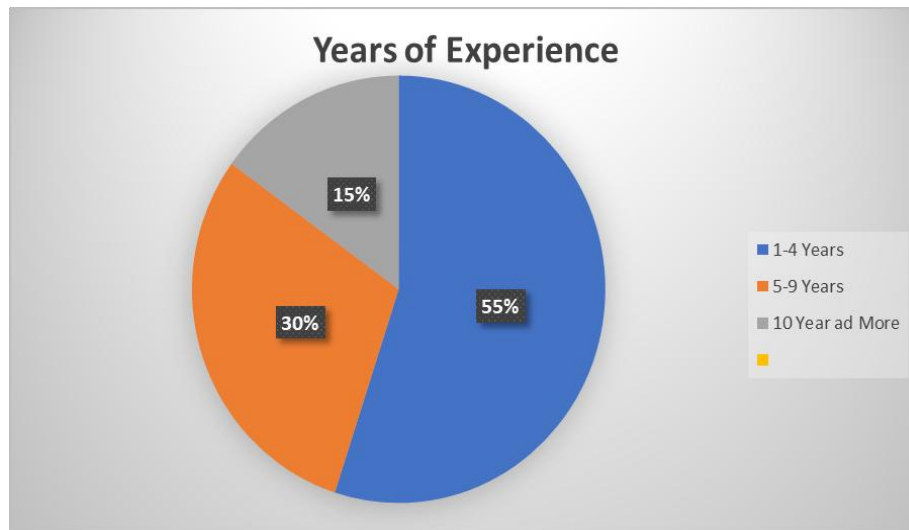


Figure 3. Teachers' Years of Experience

The questionnaire directed only teachers to participate in this section of the demographic information. The teachers participated, and the data in Figure 3 above indicates that teachers that have 1-4 years of experience dominated the study, with about 55%. This is an indication that the participant is not an older teacher in foreign language learning. About 30% of the study sample are those who have 5-9 years of experience in the profession. This is followed by those that have 10 years and above.

(b). Internal Factors That Determine Students Active Participation in FL Class

Four internal factors were identified from a review of arrays of studies on the nature of learners' participation in the foreign language classroom. The internal factors are those factors that emanate directly from the activities of the students as foreign language learners. The identified internal determinant factors include:

- a. Anxiety
- b. Fear of criticism by teachers and fellow students
- c. Lack of motivation
- d. Lack of effective stimulation practices

Both the teachers and the students participated in this part of the study. The table below provides the results of the findings of the questionnaire recovered from the 20 teachers who participated.

TABLE 1
INTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT FL LEARNER'S PARTICIPATION (TEACHERS)

Determinant Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Anxiety	7	35%
2. Lack of motivation	2	10%
3. Lack of stimulation practices	1	2%
4. Fear of criticism	10	50%
Total	20	100%

The data in Table 1 above indicates that half of the teachers affirm that the most significant internal factor that impacts the active participation of students in the foreign language classroom is the fear of criticism in the classroom. About 50% of the teachers affirm this, indicating the fear of criticism is a significant internal factor. Fear of criticism remains a factor that affects students even in a non-language classroom. Learners are always conscious of being called a failure when or when they participate in a class discussion or interaction. In terms of the foreign language class, the fear of criticism is more prominent in the consciousness of making mistakes in the grammar of the second language. As learners, the students are conscious of being rebuked or castigated for making mistakes in a foreign language.

About 35% of the teachers also affirm that anxiety is a significant factor in determining the active participation of learners in the classroom. The implication is that the fear of mistakes naturally leads to anxiety which will restrict the learner from participating in any form of discussion in the second language in the classroom. These factors are largely connected. Fear naturally leads to anxiety. This is an indication that the views of the teachers are supported by common psychological projections. When someone is afraid of something, the next system to activate is anxiety. Lack of motivation and lack of stimulation are also important, as seen in the table, but not as important as the fear and anxiety factors.

TABLE 2
INTERNAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN FL CLASSROOM

Determinant Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Anxiety	75	57.70%
2. Lack of motivation	9	6.92%
3. Lack of stimulation practices	1	0.76%
4. Fear of criticism	45	34.66%
Total	130	100%

The above data in Table 2 is slightly different from what is seen in Table 1. The students think that anxiety (57.70%) is the major factor that impacts the active participation of students in the foreign language classroom. Anxiety, as discussed in Table 1 data, remains a huge factor in students' participation. Again, it is emphasized that anxiety usually emanates from fear. It is common for students to be concerned about common mistakes in the second language. Such concerns may accumulate to form fear, which is capable of causing anxiety in the learners. This is evident in the percentile value of fear of mistakes by the students.

To a great extent, three things are common in the internal factors that affect students' participation in the classroom:

- The teachers and students collectively agree that among the four factors that were presented to them, anxiety and fear of mistakes are the most significant determinant factors.
- Whereas the teachers view fear of mistakes as the most determinant factor, the students think that anxiety is the most significant factor.
- Both the teachers and students accept that lack of motivation and stimulation are not major factors that determine the active participation of the students.

(c). *Results for External Factors That Impact on FL Learners*

The questionnaire also contains certain external factors that may determine the nature of the active participation of students in the classroom. These external factors are those factors that do not emanate directly from the students and the learners do not have direct control over these factors. Four external determinant factors were also included in the questionnaire to ascertain the degree of impact on the students. The four of them are listed below:

- Teachers' instructional strategy and style
- Class organization
- Learning context
- Lack of an effective reward system

TABLE 3
RESULT OF EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT FL LEARNERS (TEACHERS)

Determinant Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Teacher's instructional strategies and styles	4	20%
2. Classroom organization	3	15%
3. Learning context	7	35%
4. Lack of effective reward system.	6	30%
Total	20	100%

The above data unveils interesting permutations. A greater number of teachers do not consider the method and style of teaching they employ as a significant factor in motivating the students to participate in foreign language class activities. Over 35% of them consider learning context or topic as one of the major determinant external factors that impact learners' participation in the foreign language classroom. This is closely followed by an effective reward system for about 30% of the total teachers who participated. Only 20% of the teachers affirmed that teaching style and strategy are factors that determine the nature of students' participation in their classes.

TABLE 4
RESULT OF EXTERNAL FACTORS THAT IMPACT FL LEARNERS (STUDENTS)

Determinant Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Teacher's instructional strategies and styles	70	53.84%
2. Classroom organization	15	11.53%
3. Learning context	40	30.77%
4. Lack of effective reward system.	5	3.86%
Total	130	100%

The above result from the students shows distinct data from what is seen in Table 3. Over 53% of the students who participated in the survey affirm that the strategy the teacher employs in the classroom is the major determinant factor for classroom participation in foreign language learning. The teachers refuted this submission, but the students, who are

direct recipients of the impacts of the teaching methods, argue that the type of approach the teacher employs encourages participation or discourages any form of engagement.

Furthermore, over 30% of the students who participated in the survey affirm that the topic of discussion in the classroom is also a major factor. In Table 3, the teachers think that the reward system impact classroom participation, but Table four shows that less than 4% of the student state that reward is a factor. Classroom organization was the least factor in Table 3, but it is the third most significant factor, above the reward system, in Table 4.

B. Implications of Analysis

The presented and analyzed data is dispersed across the different dimensions. The views of the teachers seem to contrast with the views of the students both in internal and external factors. In the internal factors that affect students' active participation in the classroom, whereas the teachers think that fear of being criticized by fellow students is the major factor that affects active participation of learners in a foreign language classroom, the students think that anxiety is the most significant factor. It is important to also emphasize that although the views of the teachers and the students diverge on the internal factors that affect learner active participation, they collectively agree that lack of motivation and lack of stimulation are not major factors. Fear of criticism can be said to be a direct factor that leads to anxiety. As a learner, mistakes are common and can be corrected. However the student may be afraid of using the wrong grammatical forms of the second language in conversation. The fear of being chided may prompt the student to remain passive. This is exactly what happens when a student is filled with anxiety.

In the external factors, the students and the teachers also diverge. Whereas a majority of the teachers, over 34%, think that the topic in the classroom is the major external factor that impacts students' active participation, the learners insist that it is the teaching strategy adopted by the teacher. The students think that the type of strategy or method employed by a teacher is capable of stimulating or discouraging students from participating. This is followed by the type of topic discussed and then the classroom organization. Another significant contrast is the value of the external factor 'reward system'. Whereas the teachers assert that reward is a major factor that activates participation in the classroom, the students' reward is completely insignificant in stimulating them to participate in the FL classroom. The implication is that teachers must interact with students to understand the students' perspectives on the methods and strategies the teachers employ in the FL classroom. There seems to be a kind of disconnect in terms of what the teachers think and what the students feel.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Several variables affecting FL students' classroom participation were investigated in this research. The variables examined in this research included those that students themselves control and those that affect them externally. This research looked at internal causes, such as anxiety, lack of motivation, and apprehension of constructive feedback. Teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom arrangement, the nature of the subject being studied, and the absence of an efficient incentive system were all taken into account in the study as external variables.

The research shows that there are significant differences in how teachers and students perceive the variables. Instructors believe that students' lack of comfort with speaking up in front of their peers is the most significant internal barrier to their success in the FL classroom. The majority of students report that anxiety prevents them from fully engaging in class discussions and other activities when learning foreign languages. Teachers believe that the learning setting or subject is the primary driving factor, while students believe that the teaching technique used by the instructor is a determining factor.

The research verified that the addition of an involvement rating component will dramatically improve learners' activity. Students would be more engaged in class discussions if they understood their contributions counted toward their final score, as would be the case if such a requirement was stated in the syllabus. Teachers should think about including participation in their marking rules or offering additional credit for it. Learners may be more likely to contribute their thoughts and opinions during class if their involvement is factored into their ultimate score. Students need to have a firm understanding of the guidelines for participation, which can take many shapes.

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