How Language Competence and Anxiety Shape EFL Participation: Speaking Up or Staying Silent?

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated students' participation patterns and the factors affecting them in non-skill lessons in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) lessons with discussion as the primary method. Understanding engagement in these lessons is crucial for enhancing classroom interaction and achieving learning objectives. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving 34 fifth-semester students from an English Language Education program. Data were collected through twelve non-participation observations (examining participants' behaviour in different sessions based on Liu's theory) and a Guttmann scale questionnaire adapted from Hamouda assessing factors affecting participation. The observations revealed four participation patterns: marginal interaction (38.2%), silence observation (35.3%), conditional participation (18.7%), and full integration (11.8%). While the questionnaire identified language competence and psychological factors as two key factors influencing participation. The findings showed that students in full integration and conditional participation categories (30.5%) engaged more when having confidence in their vocabulary. In comparison, students in marginal interaction and silence observation categories (73.5%) were more hesitant due to concerns with grammar and a fear of making mistakes. Psychologically, full integration students were concerned with adverse outcomes, whereas those in marginal and silent categories struggled with shyness, low confidence, and uncertainty. This study contributes by exploring how linguistic and psychological factors shape participation, specifically in non-skill lessons in EFL. The findings suggest that teachers should foster supportive, low-pressure environments to encourage student engagement in addition to improving language competence. Curriculum designers can focus on activities that promote vocabulary development and confidence-building exercises to enhance participation in such lessons.

1. Introduction

Learning a language, whether a second or foreign language, offers more benefits than just learning its grammar, vocabulary, or any written explanations of the language. Nevertheless, while these elements are crucial, their significance lies in their application in communication. Furthermore, language learning is most effective when it can be applied in an authentic context rather than memorizing those elements during classroom interaction. This interaction plays an important role in shaping communication competencies, especially through active participation (Larsen et al., 2011). An effective language classroom requires students to interact in the target language. Consequently, student involvement is crucial to the effectiveness of language programs (Ho et al., 2023; Tahang & Yuliana, 2021).

Over the past decades, numerous studies have explored participation in the classroom's teaching and learning process. They concentrated on the factors that affected the students' unwillingness to speak, but fewer examined the participation patterns emerging in the classroom. Research revealed that lack of self-confidence, embarrassment, anxiety, fear, lack of motivation, and the environment had been the factors that influenced the students' unwillingness to communicate (Rusdiyanti & Andanty, 2023). Another research study (Al-Ghafri, 2018) concluded that teachers' and classmates' roles could shape students' participation in the classroom. Additionally, the subsequent two research investigated the causes of students' participation based on psychological factors (Abebe & Deneke, 2015; Hsu, 2015). This research revealed that fear, teachers' teaching strategies, and the lack of preparation before class were the causes of

students' participation. Those studies focused only on finding out the factors that affected willingness or unwillingness to communicate in the classroom. However, they still need to fully address the participation patterns underlying the students' behaviour, especially in the discussion-based EFL classroom method.

This gap is important to explore, especially in the context of Southwest Papua, where students often face cultural and educational challenges that can influence classroom participation. Southwest Papuan context is characterized by its cultural and linguistic diversity, with many students speaking indigenous languages as their first language and learning English as a foreign language. This can create additional barriers for students to participate in the EFL classroom, including anxiety and a lack of confidence in using the target language (Bensalem & Thompson, 2022). These factors make it essential to examine the reasons for disengagement and the participation patterns that emerge in these classrooms (Malik & Nayab, 2024). By investigating these patterns, this study aims to suggest appropriate teaching methods for lecturers in EFL classrooms to address the challenges students face in Southwest Papua.

This research is vital for advancing the educational goals of Southwest Papua, aiming to explore why increasing student participation in English language learning is key to improving academic outcomes and promoting social mobility in the region. English proficiency often unlocks greater economic and social opportunities, so understanding how students engage in EFL classrooms can help identify strategies to boost participation. This, in turn, can lead to academic success and contribute to the broader development goals of the region. The study categorizes participation into four patterns based on Liu (2001) framework: full integration, conditional participation, marginal interaction, and silent observation. These categories help clarify how students engage or disengage in classroom activities. The research specifically focuses on factors influencing participation in non-skill lessons, which heavily rely on discussion methods. These lessons present unique challenges and opportunities for engagement compared to skill-based lessons like speaking or listening. By understanding participation patterns in these lessons, the study aims to improve classroom dynamics and enhance the effectiveness of EFL teaching strategies in Southwest Papua.

Preliminary observations at the University of Muhammadiyah Sorong revealed that many students were hesitant to speak English in class, often due to anxiety about making mistakes (Wahidah et al., 2022). This reluctance poses a major challenge, as effective language learning requires active communication in the target language. In Southwest Papua, the region's linguistic diversity and cultural factors further complicate participation, with social pressures and

language barriers contributing to students' lack of confidence and fear of errors. These challenges highlight the need to understand the causes of disengagement and the specific participation patterns in this context. Research supports the connection between student participation and academic success. For example, Safiullah et al. (2023) emphasized that active class engagement is key for effective language learning, while Gomes et al. (2020) found that students who actively participated in class generally achieved better academic outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of fostering active participation, particularly in regions like Southwest Papua, where external factors may hinder engagement.

The current study aims to address these challenges by examining the participation patterns in the EFL classroom and the factors influencing these patterns. This research will provide insights into improving student engagement in these contexts by identifying the specific participation patterns in non-skill lessons and the factors that affect them. This research seeks to determine how the University of Muhammadiyah Sorong students participate in non-skill lessons and what factors influence their participation. The study will provide unique insights into student behaviour by focusing on these lessons with discussion as the primary teaching method.

This study brings attention to non-skill EFL lessons, a rarely explored area in classroom participation research, particularly in the linguistically and culturally diverse context of Southwest Papua. It identifies four participation patterns: Full Integration, Conditional Participation, Marginal Interaction, and Silent Observation. These patterns offer insights into how psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual factors shape student engagement in discussion-based lessons. The study broadens the concept of participation beyond willingness to communicate and provides a practical framework for EFL teachers to address challenges such as language anxiety, low confidence, and indigenous language barriers. It also recommends strategies to improve engagement by fostering supportive environments and incorporating activities that build confidence and language competence. These findings underline the importance of instructional methods that support gradual involvement, peer collaboration, and a positive classroom climate. By applying these approaches, educators can help students overcome participation challenges and enhance their confidence, communication skills, and overall language proficiency.

Therefore, this research's findings will suggest strategies for EFL teachers to create opportunities for students to practice the language freely without fear of making mistakes. This will contribute to a more effective and inclusive language learning experience, empowering students to overcome psychological and social barriers and engage fully in the learning process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Participation Pattern

Student participation is crucial in acquiring the target language in EFL classroom (Maulina, 2024). A literature (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005) defines participation as an active engagement process that can be categorized into five aspects: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance. Active engagement, such as producing utterances and negotiating meaning, enhances language learning (Sadiqzade, 2025). Research highlights that students who voluntarily contribute in class without being prompted demonstrate better application of language skills (Permatasari, 2016). Moreover, a positive correlation exists between participation and academic performance, with more engaged students achieving higher grades (Argudo-Serrano et al., 2023; Mahdikhani et al., 2016).

Four distinct participation patterns emerge in EFL classrooms. The most engaged students fall under full integration, displaying high motivation, adaptability, and spontaneous contributions (Sayadi, 2014; Schnitzler et al., 2021). Conditional participation students are motivated but constrained by language competence and fear of making mistakes, limiting their interaction (Al-Munawwarah, 2021; Giantari et al., 2023; Warayet, 2011). In marginal interaction, students primarily listen and take notes rather than actively speaking (Aslan & Şahin, 2020; Javed et al., 2013; Liu, 2006; Marliana & Yayu, 2023; Nguyen, 2024; Noguchi, 2019; Toubot et al., 2018) Silent observation students avoid oral participation entirely, preferring passive learning methods like note-taking or recording lectures. Understanding these participation patterns allows educators to implement strategies that promote engagement and improve learning outcomes.

2.2 Factor Affecting Participation

Multiple factors influence student participation, including cognitive, psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual elements. Cognitive factors, such as prior educational experiences, learning preferences, and enthusiasm for the subject, also affect participation levels (Han, 2021;Liu, 2001). Understanding these factors is key to explaining why some students engage more actively than others (Zhang & Kim, 2024).

One common issue in language classrooms is student silence. Although studies show active participation can improve academic performance, some students remain silent due to various psychological factors (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). These include lack of engagement, anxiety, social discomfort, and a fear of making mistakes (Tatar, 2005). Identifying these factors is essential for fostering greater student involvement.

Psychological barriers such as anxiety, shyness, and self-esteem significantly impact students' willingness to engage in classroom discussions. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a major factor causing students to hesitate due to fear of making mistakes or facing negative evaluation from peers and instructors (Javed et al., 2013; Liu, 2006; Marliana & Yayu, 2023; Noguchi, 2019; Toubot et al., 2018). Low self-esteem further discourages participation, as students may feel inadequate in their language proficiency (Krismanti & Siregar, 2017; Savaşçı, 2014; Susak, 2016)

Linguistic competence is another key factor influencing participation. Students with lower fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammatical knowledge may need help participating verbally. Research has shown that fluency is a significant factor in verbal engagement, and students who need more vocabulary or help with pronunciation are less likely to speak in class (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). This is because some students might realize they needed more vocabulary and could pronounce them correctly (Normawati et al., 2023). Grammatical errors also contribute to participation anxiety, as students often fear making mistakes in front of others (Bakar & Hashim, 2022).Pedagogical factors influence student participation, such as teaching strategies and classroom environment. Studies have found that instructors' methods can significantly impact student engagement (Latifah et al., 2020; Pakpahan et al., 2017; Sjaifullah & Laksmi, 2022; Zhong, 2024).

In particular, teaching approaches encouraging active involvement such as group discussions or problem-solving tasks can motivate students to participate. On the other hand, a teacher's negative traits, such as being overly critical, can discourage students from engaging (Abebe & Deneke, 2015; Sjaifullah & Laksmi, 2022). Furthermore, practical factors like class size and seating arrangements can influence the level of interaction, with smaller classes and more flexible seating arrangements fostering more participation (Abdullah et al., 2012; Barus et al., 2022).

This study advances prior research by examining not only the distinct patterns of student participation in EFL classrooms but also the underlying factors that shape these behaviors, with the goal of translating these insights into more effective and responsive teaching strategies. (Ma et al., 2024). While earlier studies have explored the influence of psychological factors such as confidence and anxiety on student participation, they often fall short of examining how these elements interact with specific classroom contexts and participation patterns. (Katiandagho & Sengkey, 2022; Krismanti & Siregar, 2017), this study explores these factors within non-skill EFL lessons context. By categorizing participation into four distinct patterns and identifying the factors influencing them, this research suggests a suitable approach to improving student engagement in the EFL classroom.

3. Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore student participation patterns and the factors that influence them in EFL classrooms. This method allowed for an in-depth understanding of classroom dynamics in non-skill lessons and provided insights into students' engagement and behavior. Data were collected through non-participant observation, enabling the researcher to objectively record verbal participation without disrupting the classroom environment. An observation checklist, adapted from Liu (2001) theory, guided the process by categorizing student behaviors into four types: Full Integration, Conditional Participation, Marginal Interaction, and Silent Observation. These categories helped capture the range of engagement, from active discussion to silent listening, shaped by factors such as confidence, preparedness, and cultural preferences.

The checklist included both verbal behaviors, such as asking questions and responding to discussions, and non-verbal cues like attentiveness and peer interaction. To enhance accuracy, classroom sessions were video-recorded, allowing the researcher to cross-check observations and ensure reliability. Over three weeks, twelve sessions were conducted across four subjects: Second Language Acquisition, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Semantics, and Psycholinguistics. This variety ensured coverage of different instructional contexts. Data collection concluded when saturation was reached, meaning no new participation patterns or themes emerged. According to Guest et al., 2006, saturation can be achieved with a relatively small number of observations when specific patterns are consistently observed, which in this study contributed to the overall validity and reliability of the findings.

To identify the factors influencing student participation in EFL classrooms, the researcher administered a Guttman scale questionnaire based on Hamouda (2012), which included 58 agree/disagree items addressing psychological factors such as confidence and anxiety, language competence, pedagogical aspects like teaching methods, and broader contextual influences such as peer dynamics. The instrument was validated by four experts from Qassim University's College of Arabic Language and Social Studies, who assessed its content and clarity, resulting in minor revisions. Its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.89. To avoid misunderstandings, the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia and distributed after the observation phase. Participants were selected from fifth-semester students in the English Language Education Department, enrolled in four non-skill courses: Second Language Acquisition, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Semantics, and Psycholinguistics. From an initial group of 46 students, 34 (four males and 30 females aged 19 to 21) met the criteria of consistent attendance and were chosen using

purposive sampling to ensure reliable and representative data. This sample size was deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation and meaningful insight in qualitative research (Vasileiou et al., 2018; Young & Casey, 2019). Ethical principles, including Respect for the Person, Beneficence and Non-Maleficence, and Justice (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber, 2014), were upheld by informing participants of the study's purpose, risks, and their right to withdraw, while confidentiality was strictly maintained. The questionnaire responses were analyzed using a percentage formula, allowing the researcher to identify patterns and connect them with observed participation behaviors, thus offering a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of the factors shaping student engagement.

The researcher employed Miles and Huberman's qualitative analysis framework (Mustachim, 2014) to examine the data. Observation notes from 12 classroom sessions were transcribed and coded using Liu's participation framework, categorizing student behaviors into Full Integration, Conditional Participation, Marginal Interaction, and Silent Observation. Non-relevant data were removed during the reduction phase to ensure focus on participation-related behaviors, and video recordings were used to validate the coded data. Questionnaire responses were tabulated and analyzed to identify patterns and correlations between participation types and influencing factors. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the frequency and percentage of agreement for each item, enabling clearer interpretation of student engagement trends. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories aligned with the research questions to generate thematic conclusions. While the study yielded meaningful insights, several limitations were noted. The focus on fifth-semester students who consistently attended four non-skill courses may have introduced selection bias, although this criterion ensured reliable participation data. The three-week observation period may not fully reflect long-term participation patterns influenced by instructional style or classroom dynamics. The small sample size, though sufficient for qualitative research, may limit generalizability. Additionally, the researcher's presence could have affected student behavior, although this was mitigated through video validation and data saturation. Despite these constraints, the study contributes valuable understanding of EFL participation patterns and influencing factors, and it opens opportunities for future research involving broader samples and longer observation periods.

4. Result

This study aimed to investigate the fifth-semester students' classroom participation pattern in non-skill lessons classroom in the English Language Education Program and to reveal the factors that affected them to participate based on the pattern found. Data were gathered from 12 times of the non-participant

observation done in non-skill-lesson classes to find the students' participation patterns. The observations were conducted across four non-skill courses, consisting of Second Language Acquisition with four sessions, Teaching English as a Foreign Language with three sessions, Semantics with three sessions, and Psycholinguistics with two sessions. Following these classroom observations, a close-ended Guttman scale questionnaire was distributed to the participants. This instrument aimed to explore the underlying factors that influenced students' classroom participation, aligning the responses with the participation patterns identified during the observation phase.

4.1 Students' Participation Pattern

The researcher conducted a three-week classroom observation to determine students' participation patterns in the classroom. The participation pattern concluded based on students' behaviours in different meetings with different lectures with discussion method. The observation was concluded after 12 sessions because it reached the saturation.

The behaviours of 34 students observed were classified based on Liu's indicators. The results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Participation Pattern Based on the Observation Result

No.	Percentage	Initial	Participation Pattern	Observation Result
1.	11,8 %	ASH, AN, KNN, SMN	Full Integration	Engaging in class discussion actively and knowing what to say and when to speak or not, participating spontaneously, and occurring naturally.
2.	14.7 %	AJP, CTK, IFH, NYB, RR	Conditional Participation	Students less likely to speak and speaking only at the appropriate time; figuring out when to speak; very careful in their attempts to participate verbally or speak.
3.	38,2%	AR, EL, EP, FAS, HER, KAR, KMM, ODD, RRH, SSA, SW, ZW, ZL	Marginal Interaction	Acting more as listeners and spoke out less or were involved in class discussions; preferring listening and taking notes, thinking carefully, and having internal rehearsal before attempting to speak.
4.	35.3%	ADM, CNT, IT, ISR, LM, MM, MRP, PSA, SM, STA, SIS, WAT	Silence observation	Refraining from oral participation during the class; only receiving materials given by taking notes using various strategies such as tape recording, writing, or capturing pictures on the screen.

Table 1. shows the students participation patterns based on the behaviours observed. It reveals that students participated variously in EFL classroom that engaged discussion as the main method, either they were silent or participating actively.

Based on the Table 1., the smallest proportion of students, 11.18%, categorized into full integration, which actively participating in EFL classroom. They demonstrated confidence in speaking, participating naturally and spontaneously when needed. These students likely benefited from the discussion strategy, where they could participate and think quickly. In contrast, the 14.7 % of students were grouped as conditional participation, in which they are more reserved. They only spoke in selected moments and sometimes demonstrate caution in their speaking performance. They needed a certain strategy, instead of discussion, to build their confidence or to prepare them structure speaking opportunities.

The majority of students (73.5%) exhibited two last categories. Firstly, Marginal interaction students (38.2%), these individuals tended to only listen than speak through classroom discussion, preferred to take notes, and sometimes tried to speak with a long rehearsal before that. They required more time to process and organize their thought before participating verbally. So, this group needed activities that promote gradual participation, such pair or group work, or providing speaking from with appropriate time before starting to speak. Lastly, the group with silent participation consisted of 35.3 % of the students. They observed the class during the discussion session and rarely to participate verbally. They focused on receiving information by note taking, writing or picturing the material by phone. For this group, EFL teachers required to find a low-pressure environment where students could feel safe when making a mistake in speaking, it can be peer discussion or integrating teaching method.

4.2 Factors Affecting Students' Participation

After conducting the classroom observation, the participants were administered the questionnaires with fifty-eight close-ended items to determine the factors affecting the students' verbal participation. Each item represented each factor and its sub-factors. The factors were grouped into four categories, they are: Psychological Factors (confidence, shyness, fear, anxiety, and self-esteem); Language Competence (vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical errors); Pedagogical Factors of the lecturer (material mastery, given feedback, teaching strategy); and Other Factors (class size and time allocation).

Based on the data analysis of the questionnaires, it was found that four participation factors affected the students' participation, ranked from the highest to the lowest rate. They were Language Competence (53.73%), Psychology (51.88 %), Other Factors (47.9%) and Pedagogical factors (47.06 %). The data yielded that the students experienced different participation patterns effected by each factor. The details of every participation pattern can be seen further in Chart 1 below.
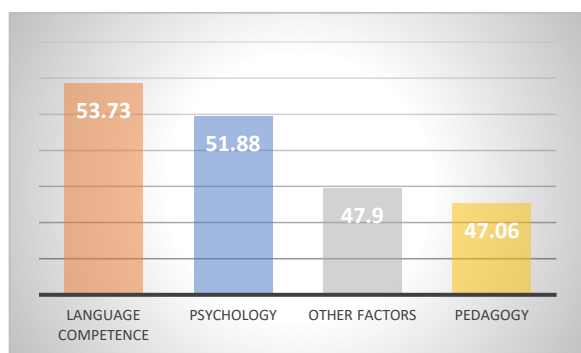

Chart 1. Percentage of four participation factors

Generally, Among the four factors presented in Chart 1., two significant factors had important impact on the students' participation, Language Competence and Psychological factors. Both factors reached more than 50% agreement from the students, with 53.73 % of students agreed with language competence, and 51,88 % agreed that psychological factors also played important role.

Language Competence factors were divided into four subcategories: vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical errors. Among them, vocabulary was the main factor affecting students' Participation, with over 50% of students choosing this category, which was 63.87%. The grammatical errors then followed, it was agreed by 61.34% of students. The next type also became a notable factor because it was still decided by more than half of the students' percentage; they were fluency, with 55.88% agreeing. In comparison, pronunciation was seen as the lest sub factor that agreed by 33.82 % of students as factor affected their participation in EFL classroom. It can be seen from Chart 2.
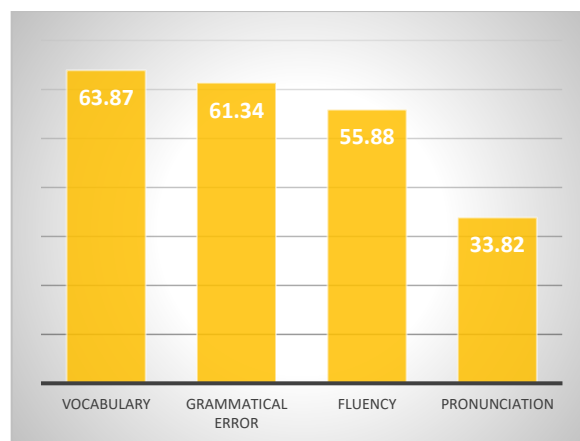

Chart 2. Percentage of language competence sub-factors

The third key factor identified from the questionnaire results was psychological, with 51.88 percent of students agreeing that this element affected their classroom participation. The detailed breakdown of psychological sub-factors is illustrated in Chart 3. Among these, anxiety was recognized as having the greatest influence, with 55.08 percent of respondents acknowledging that it hindered their participation. Confidence and shyness followed closely, with 52.45 percent of students indicating that these emotional states impacted their willingness to speak. Self-esteem was also seen as a contributing factor, with 51.18 percent of participants reporting that their self-perception influenced their classroom involvement. Fear was the least selected sub-factor, with 48.82 percent agreeing that it affected their participation. In comparison, the final two categories, labeled as Other Factors and Pedagogical Factors, received agreement from fewer than half of the students, with 47.9 percent and 47.06 percent respectively, suggesting that while still relevant, these external influences were viewed as less significant than internal psychological barriers.

Chart 3. Percentage of psychological sub-factors

Extensively, the detailed participation factor based on the student's participation pattern can be seen in Chart 4 below.
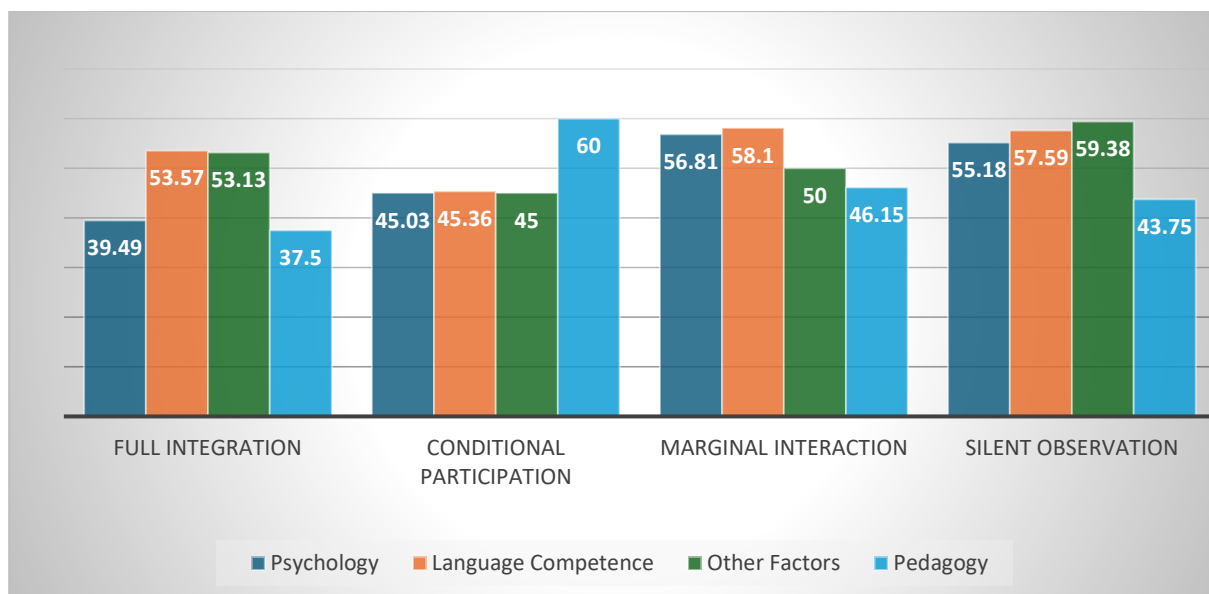
Chart 4. Participation factors based on participation pattern

Chart 4 illustrates that each participation pattern is associated with a distinct primary influencing factor. Students in the Full Integration and Marginal Interaction categories were primarily influenced by language competence. Those in the Conditional Participation group were most affected by pedagogical elements, while students categorized under Silent Observation were predominantly influenced by other external conditions, such as classroom setting and time allocation. These findings suggest that language barriers continue to hinder students' ability to engage verbally, even among those who are motivated to participate. For students showing marginal or silent engagement, environmental and instructional factors appear to pose significant obstacles. This emphasizes the importance of fostering a classroom atmosphere that is both supportive and inclusive, enabling all learners to feel secure and encouraged to participate without fear of judgment or failure. Research (Aidinlou & Ghobadi, 2012) has also shown that teaching strategies can influence student participation, so teachers should not assume that a student's reluctance to speak in an EFL classroom is solely due to the student's condition but also depends on the teacher's management and the classroom situation.

4.2.1 Language Competence Factor

Language competence has been the first factor chosen by students with full integration and conditional participation patterns. The difference was only provided by the difference in the percentage gathered from the questionnaire data.

The details of language competence factors that affected most students' engagement in the classroom have been provided in Chart 5. Below:
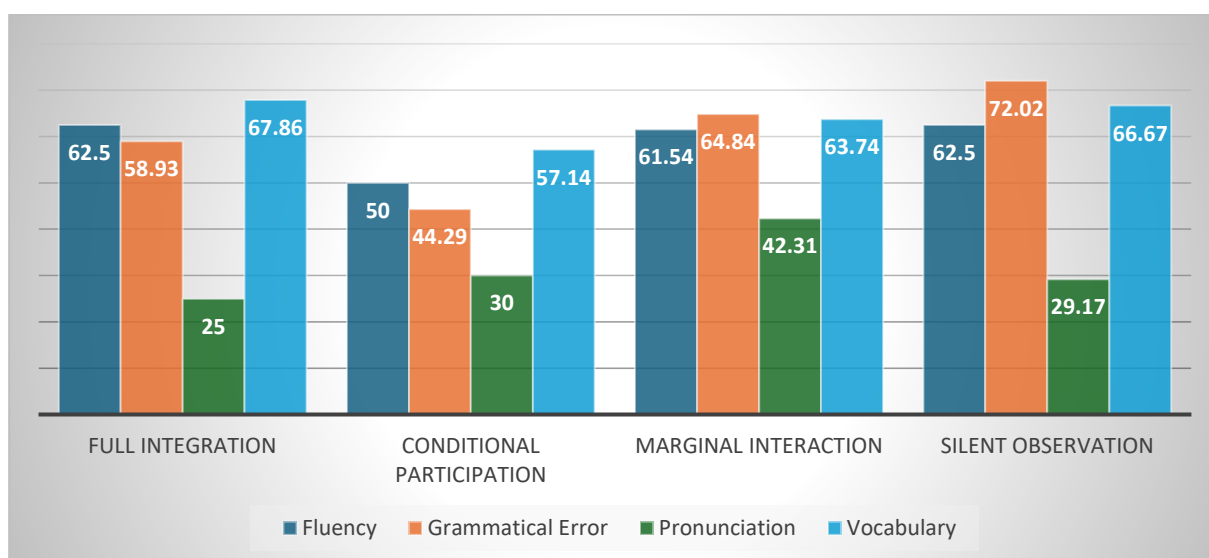

Chart 5. Percentage of language competence sub-factors

Chart 5 shows that students in the Full Integration category identified vocabulary as the main factor affecting participation, with 67.87 percent agreeing that limited vocabulary made them hesitant to join discussions. Many felt nervous when they struggled to find the right words, leading to frustration in expressing ideas or understanding others. Fluency was the second key factor, cited by 62.5 percent, who noted the importance of speaking smoothly and forming coherent sentences. Grammar followed, with 58.93 percent expressing fear of making mistakes that discouraged them from speaking. Pronunciation was seen as the least influential, with only 25 percent viewing it as a major barrier.
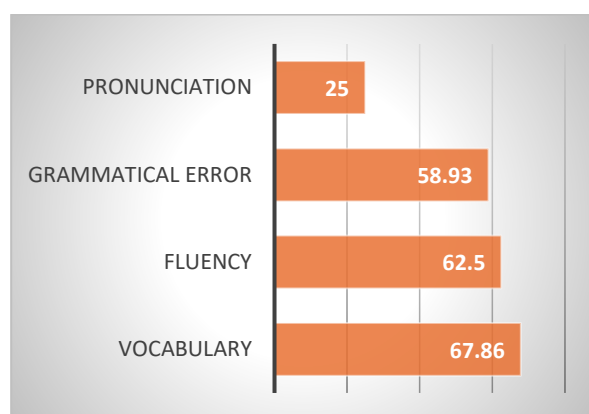

Chart 5. Percentage of language competence sub-factors of full integration students

Chart 6 shows that vocabulary was the main concern for students in the Conditional Participation category, with 57.14 percent agreeing that limited vocabulary hindered their ability to engage in discussions. Many felt hesitant to speak when they lacked the right words or struggled to understand the lecturer's explanations. Fluency ranked second, with 50 percent noting that the ability to construct sentences and speak smoothly influenced their participation. Grammar was third, with 44.29 percent stressing the need for accuracy before feeling confident to contribute. As with Full Integration students, pronunciation was considered the least significant barrier, with only 30 percent identifying it as a factor affecting their engagement.
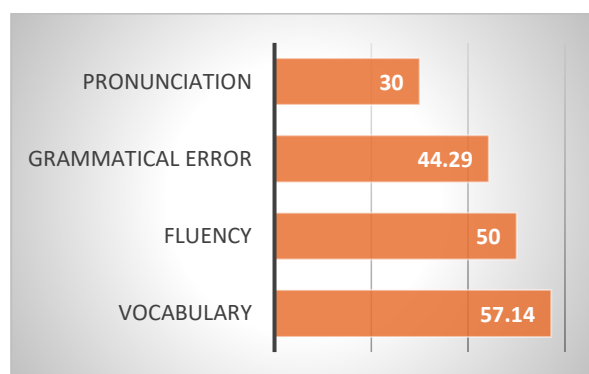

Chart 6. Percentage of language competence sub-factors of conditional participation students

Chart 7 indicates that grammar was the main barrier for Marginal Interaction students, with 64.84 percent agreeing that concerns about grammatical errors, especially tense usage, limited their participation. Vocabulary followed closely, with 63.74 percent stating that a limited vocabulary affected their ability to engage. Fluency was also significant, with 61.54 percent emphasizing the importance of speaking smoothly. Pronunciation was the least influential factor, noted by 42.31 percent as affecting their decision to participate in classroom discussions.
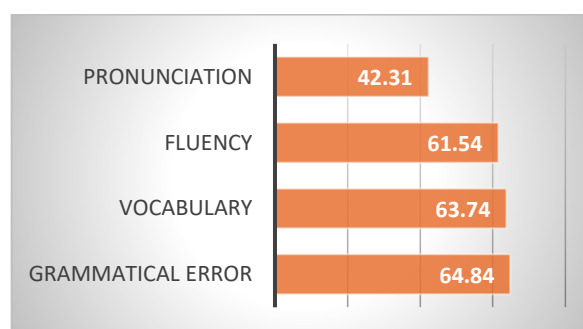

Chart 7. Percentage of language competence sub-factors of marginal interaction students

On the contrary, in Chart 8, Silence Observation students agreed that grammar was the most significant factor, with 72.02% chose concern about grammatical accuracy, particularly with tenses, influenced their participation. These students identified making grammatical mistakes made them reluctant engaging in classroom discussions. Vocabulary then followed as the second most significant factor by 66.67% of them selected that a lack of vocabulary affected their ability to participate. Additionally, fluency was also a major factor for Silence Observation students, more than 50% students (62.5%) identified that fluency in speaking was important for participation. Finally, Pronunciation, however, was the least significant factor for this group, with only 29.17% of students selecting it as a barrier to participation.
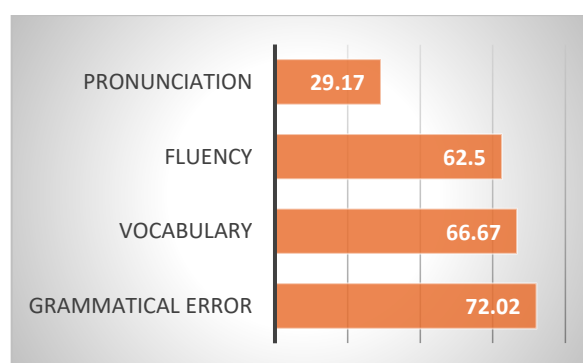

Chart 8. Percentage of language competence sub-factors of silence observation students

The conclusion of language competence factors that affected most students' engagement in the classroom have been provided in Chart 9. below:
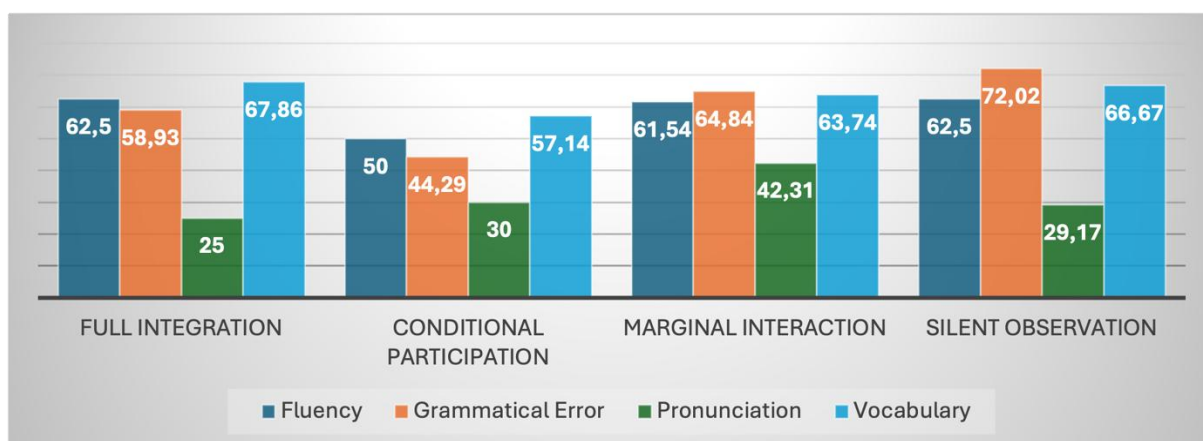
Chart 9. Percentage of language competence sub-factors

4.2.2 Psychological Factor

Unlike the language competence factors, each participation pattern exhibited a different order of subfactors related to the psychological factor (See Chart 10). 50% of Full Integration students' main psychological subfactor was self-esteem. For 48% of

Conditional Participation students chose fear, anxiety was the main concern for 60.84% of Marginal Interaction students, and confidence and shyness were the main psychological factors affecting 46.67% of the Silence observation pattern students
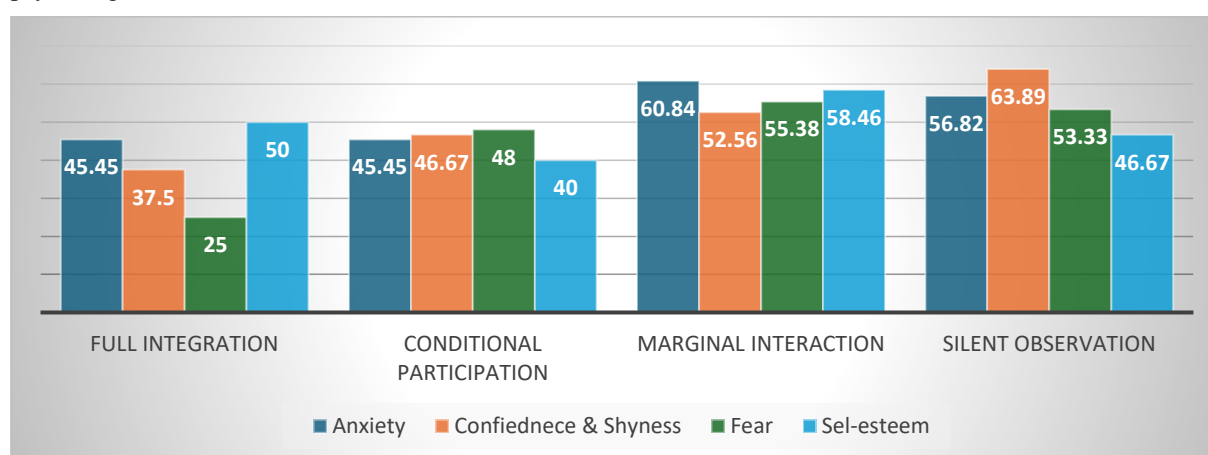

Chart 10. Percentage of psychological factor

Full Integration students agreed that considering negative consequences and feeling insecure with other people with better competence became the main factors affecting participation in the classroom.

The next most significant psychological factor was anxiety. 45.45% of students agreed with it. According to the questionnaires' responses, their anxiety tended to arise in situations such as being corrected by the lecturer, being asked questions without preparation, facing oral tests, and when the topic was uninteresting to them. Unprepared students chose to remain silent or passive because they had nothing to say or they were fearful of being questioned by lecturer.

The next was confidence and shyness, with 37.5% students selecting them. The students agreed that feeling unconfident and feeling of uncertainty prevented them from participating in the classroom. Full Integration students mainly chose fear as not a

factor that must be a concern when participating. Only 25% of students agreed with the statement related to fear as a factor to be concerned when participating in EFL classroom. See Chart 11 for detail information.

Chart 11. Percentage of psychological sub-factors for full integration students

Based on the questionnaire data gathered in Chart 12., 48 % of Conditional Participation students identified fear as the primary factor affecting their classroom participation. They expressed concerns about being afraid of making mistakes, being unable to understanding the lecturer's explanation, as well as afraid of speaking in front of the class. In addition to fear, confidence and shyness were selected by 46.67% of them. They indicated that feeling shyness, confidence, and uncertainty about what to say affecting their classroom participation. The next was anxiety, which was agreed by 45.45% of students reporting that they were feeling a heartbeat, anxious, and nervous before participating or talking in the classroom. Finally, 40% of them also agreed that Self-Esteem became the last subfactor that affected participation. They picked worrying about failing the subject became the primary consideration to participate in the classroom.
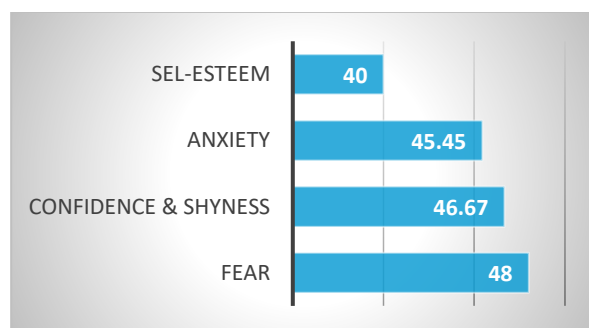

Chart 12. Percentage of psychological sub-factors for conditional participation students

Most marginal interaction students in Chart 13 indicated that over 50% of the psychological factors influenced their participation, suggesting that psychology was a big concern for them before participating. The questioners' answers revealed that anxiety became the primary factor preventing them to participate. They reported feeing tense and nervous when speaking, feeling a heartbeat when calling to participate, feeling anxious when correcting, feeling nervous when being asked by the lecturer, feeling anxious during oral tests and class presentation, and feeling apprehensive about participating when the topic discussed was uninteresting.

Following anxiety, self-esteem was the second subfactor of psychological participation, with 58.46 % of students selecting that being afraid of being laughed at when speaking, worrying about the negative consequence, and feeling insecure compared to other students' competence affected their willingness to participate. The next factor for these students was fear, with 55.38% of students were afraid to volunteer to participate, feared being judged as foolish by others, worried of making mistakes, and feared of not understanding the lecturer's explanation. All these concerns contributed to their reluctance to speak in the classroom discussion.

The last factors were confidence and shyness, with 52.56 % of students agreeing that these factor impacted their class participation. Feeling of shyness, discomfort when speaking in the classroom, feeling anxiety, and uncertainty became significant reasons considered before participating in the classroom discussion.
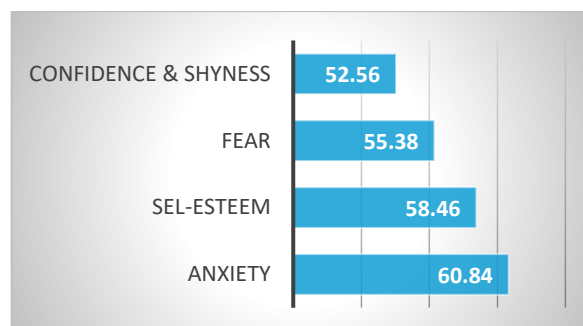

Chart 13. Percentage of psychological sub-factors for marginal interaction students

For students identified under the Silence Observation pattern in Chart 14, the most influential psychological subfactor affecting classroom participation was confidence and shyness, with 63.89% of respondents attributing their reluctance to speak to feelings of embarrassment, fear of being wrong, lack of confidence, and uncertainty during verbal expression. Anxiety followed closely, with 56.82% reporting experiences such as nervousness while speaking, elevated heart rate when called upon, and apprehension when presenting, being corrected, or asked by the teacher. Fear emerged as the third subfactor, with 53.33% of students indicating concerns over making mistakes, hesitation to volunteer, and confusion in understanding lecturers' explanations. Finally, 46.67% of these students identified low self-esteem as a barrier to participation, expressing worries about being less capable than peers, potential negative outcomes, and the fear of being laughed at.
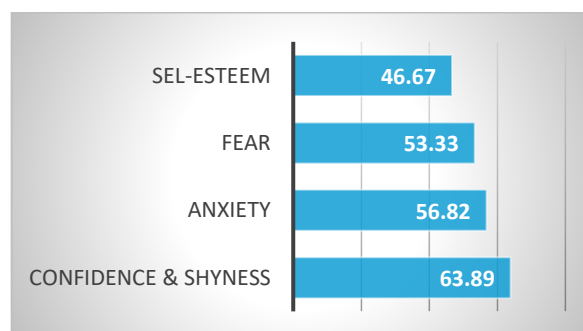

Chart 14. Percentage of psychological sub-factors for silence observation students

Based on the result above, it is implied that teachers should also pay attention on students' psychological aspect when teaching by providing some activities that can triggers students comfortable feeling so they can participate freely.

4.2.3 Other Factors

Among a half percentage of marginal interaction students agreed with preparation, sitting in the back rows, class size, interest in the topic, and time allotment affected their participation in the classroom. Lastly, based on the Questionnaire data, Silence observation showed the highest rate, with 59.38% of students indicated that they panicked when being asked to participate when unprepared. Topic interest also played a significant, as they felt reluctant to speak when the topic was unappealing. Hence, applying a creative method that can prepare students before coming to the class and creating a comfortable situation that can accommodated all the students' differences can be done to overcome such this factor.
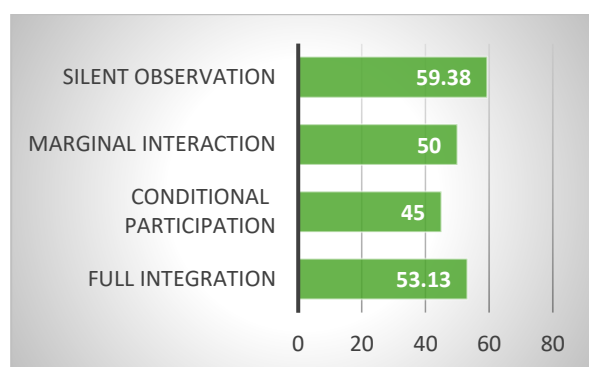

Chart 15. Percentage of another factor

4.2.4 Pedagogical Factor

Chart 1 shows that 47.06 % of students agreed that the pedagogical factor was the fourth position. Specifically, 37.50% of full integrated students reported that they felt relaxed when being responded to the lecturer (See Chart 16,). They also felt more comfortable during pair or group work in the classroom discussion. Nonetheless, students got bored because of the teaching method used by the lecturer.

In the conditional participation group, student selected different statements for pedagogical factors. 60% of them agreed that they were reluctant to speak due to the fear of harsh comments from the lecturer. Additionally, they also felt anxious when the lecturer assigned mark for participation during classroom discussion. For Marginal Interaction students, 46.15% of them indicated that pedagogical factor affected their participation. They mostly felt nervous when speaking in front of the lecturer. They also liked a friendly response from the lecturer. Moreover, Marginal Interaction students also decided to relax when working in pairs or groups in classroom discussions. Silence observation students also showed unique responses on pedagogical factors. 43.75 % of them disliked participating when the lecturer appeared impatient and also got anxious when the lecturer gave participation mark. Like the other participant pattern students, group and pair work also felt relaxing for students with Silence observation.

Based on this result, it cannot be denied that, teacher's pedagogical competence would also play an important role to resolve students' unwillingness participation factor. Since the interaction in the classroom involve both teacher and students, the resolution would not only come from the students but also from the teacher. So, the teachers should improve their pedagogical competence that can create comfortable classroom situation that can motivate students to participate in the classroom.
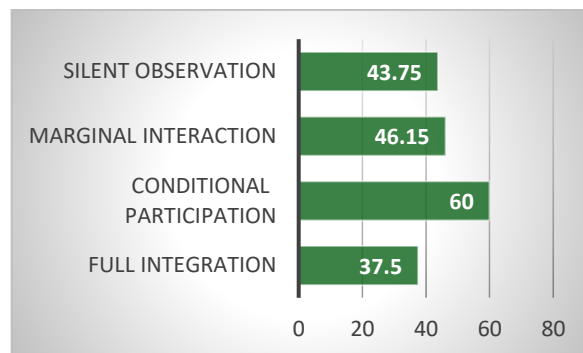

Chart 16. Percentage of language competence sub-factors

5. Discussion

This study set out to investigate the patterns of classroom participation among fifth-semester EFL students and to examine the factors influencing their verbal engagement in non-language-skill classes. Employing both questionnaires and classroom observations, the findings revealed that students demonstrated four distinct patterns of participation, namely Full Integration, Conditional Participation, Marginal Interaction, and Silent Observation, in alignment with Liu's typology, (2001) . These patterns were not fixed; rather, students' roles were fluid across class meetings, suggesting that multiple internal and external factors dynamically influenced their participation (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011).

The findings of the classroom observation showed that 11,8% of students were categorized in the first type of classroom participation pattern, Full Integration. These students could be the most active because the students knew exactly what they should say and how to deliver their ideas. They showed a high motivation and natural willingness to participate in the class. The student's participation in this pattern was also spontaneous and natural since they used the opportunities provided during the discussion. This finding was in line with research, which found that the most active students in their research-initiated interaction with the lecturer and classmates whenever appropriate by asking or answering questions and giving comments on ideas (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011). Similarly, the students whose pattern was Full Integration in this research also showed the same reaction when they participated in the classroom. They knew exactly when to speak or deliver their ideas.

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The second type of classroom participation pattern was Conditional Participation. There were 14,7% of the total students who fulfilled the criterion of this pattern. The students in this category were motivated and willing to participate verbally in the class. However, it was constrained by some hindrances like language competence, cognitive, affective and environmental. A finding stated the same result in their research: the students in this category might be highly motivated to learn, but their participation was hindered due to language competence and the fear of showing their weaknesses (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011). This type of student tended to be more careful in their attempts to speak because of the hindrances mentioned before. As a result, these students might need more interaction with the lecturers or even their classmates in the class discussion.

The third type of participation pattern was marginal interaction. 38,2% of students were categorized in this pattern. The students in the classroom participation pattern were attentive listeners and seldom spoke up in class. These students preferred listening and taking notes on the materials given by the lecturers or the ideas offered by their classmates without participating for some reason. The students also tended to be very careful in thinking and having an internal rehearsal in their minds before attempting to speak. This type of pattern was supported by one of the classroom participation patterns found by A.S.L. Dunningham, which was called whisperers in the dark or those who discussed with the classmates who sat beside them but did not speak up in the class discussion (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011).

The last type of classroom participation pattern was the silent observation with 35,3% of the total students fell into this category. This type of student tended to be passive since they tried to avoid speaking due to some factors. These students received the materials by taking notes using various strategies such as writing, sound recording, or even taking pictures of the slides. This type of student needed clarification from the teacher and other students because although they understood the topic, they usually chose to remain silent, which was only sometimes good in certain situations. This pattern was almost the same with cave sleepers or those who mainly did nothing but only received materials from the lecturers during the class found by A.S.L. Dunningham. These students tended to be the least active in the classroom (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011).

The factors influencing student participation also revealed that the fourth participation pattern was shaped by four key factors. Among these, two were particularly significant: language competence and psychological factors. Specifically, the subfactor related to language competence was vocabulary, while anxiety emerged as the primary psychological subfactor. Additionally, the other factor an pedagogical

factors also played a role in affecting students' willingness to engage in classroom activities.

In Chart 3, the researcher identified language competence as the most influential factor affecting students' verbal participation in the classroom. This was followed by psychological factors, which played a significant role in determining whether students actively participated. Other contextual elements, such as students' preparation, class size, and pedagogical strategies employed by lecturers, were also impactful but ranked lower in comparison. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of participation, where linguistic and psychological readiness intersect with environmental and instructional dynamics to shape students' classroom engagement.

Concerning language competence, the researcher identified vocabulary limitations and grammatical inaccuracies as the primary challenges for students categorized as marginal participants or silent observers. These factors significantly hindered their ability to engage verbally in the classroom.

Regarding the vocabulary aspect, it was consistent with the theory that most Indonesian EFL students believed the lack of vocabulary was the main obstacle to their oral participation (Juhana, 2012). This was because the lack of vocabulary could confuse the students when choosing what words or expressions they had to use to convey their intentions. This was also supported by the questionnaire findings, which showed that 63,87% of the majority of the respondents considered that vocabulary was one of the factors that could limit their verbal participation during the class. It differed from the rest of the 33,13% of respondents who disagreed that vocabulary could influence their verbal participation. It must be accepted that students need to have enough vocabulary to succeed when they want to utter their ideas. As research (Marliana & Yayu, 2023; Ratnasari, 2020; Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021) reported that the lack of vocabulary was the main obstacle to students' oral participation. The lack of vocabulary could make the students more straightforward when choosing words or expressions to convey their intentions or thoughts. Since the students intend to learn a specific language, they must be prepared with more vocabulary in the target language to communicate using it.

Another factor found was the grammatical error factor. This was also confirmed by the questionnaire results, where 61,34% of the respondents assumed that grammatical errors they became the other factor affecting their verbal participation in the classroom. At the same time, speaking became the other factor affecting their verbal participation in the classroom. On the other hand, the other 49,66% of respondents had different perspectives and did not agree that grammatical errors were one factor limiting their classroom participation. This finding was consistent with the literature (Abebe & Deneke, 2015), which

revealed that more than half of their participants chose not to verbally participate in the classroom because they were scared that they would make noticeable grammatical errors, which eventually led them to become more insecure with themselves or feel more unconfident. Research reported that the students in his study experienced grammatical difficulties as well. Those grammatical difficulties might make the other students think anxious students were not able to communicate in the L2 (Hamouda, 2012).

The last two factors of the language competence were fluency and pronunciation. The questionnaire findings showed that 55,88% of respondents considered that non-fluency in speaking could limit their interaction during the class. In comparison, 44,22% of respondents did not think fluency influenced their class participation. This finding was consistent with the literature published by a researcher who found that most students needed help with their English fluency. They stated that they were unwilling to participate because they needed help to respond quickly and fluently (Hamouda, 2012). The Second main factor found was the psychological factors chosen by the students, as 51,88% of respondents agreed. Based on the collected data from the questionnaire, the majority of the respondents showed a high agreement on how each psychological factor might influence their verbal participation.

Meanwhile, the first factor under the psychological factor was anxiety. It could be seen that 55,08% of the respondents agreed that the anxiety they felt during the English class could become one of the factors that hindered their verbal participation in the classroom. In comparison, the rest, 44,92%, did not think that anxiety could affect them to participate verbally in the classroom. This was consistent with the literature, where a study also proved that students felt more anxious when asked to answer questions before their friends and might worry about giving wrong answers, especially regarding verbal tests (Zhu & Zhou, 2012). This was in line with the other study, which found that anxiety could be an obstacle for students in speaking or rehearsing the L2 because it led to the feeling of nervousness, which was also interrelated with other factors, such as the student's language competence. It was able to affect each other (Juhana, 2012). According to the literature, language anxiety manifested or could be seen when students avoided conveying complex messages in a foreign language (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Sahan et al., 2022; Toubot et al., 2018). It could be triggered when the students need more confidence or freeze up in-class activities, especially verbal-oriented ones, and forget the previously learned vocabulary or grammar in the test. So, both students' vocabulary mastery and language anxiety were connected because when the students forgot the target language vocabulary, they could create language anxiety as well.

Those whose participation patterns were categorized as Full Integration and conditional participation felt positive and confident so that they were able to take the initiative to participate or use the opportunity given by the lecturer. It differed from those whose participation patterns were silent observation and marginal interaction. They tended not to actively take the initiative to participate or use the opportunity given by the lecturers due to the feeling of being unconfident and shy. It was in line with research (Permatasari, 2016) asserting that students whose personalities were shy and often felt unconfident felt uncomfortable if they had to speak up in front of many people. It was supported by the results of the questionnaire, where 52,45% of respondents agreed that confidence and shyness were influential for their verbal participation, while the rest, 47,64%, disagreed. The students in the marginal interaction and silent observation needed help with the feeling of being unconfident as a factor as well.

Another factor of psychological factors was students' self-esteem. As a theory (Hamouda, 2012)found in their study that students with low self-esteem participated less in class compared with the other students with high self-esteem, the researcher also found that students in Conditional Participation indicated positive self-esteem, which could trigger them to participate verbally in the classroom even though sometimes hindered by some constraints like language competence. This finding was consistent with the result of the questionnaire, where 51,18% of respondents indicated positive self-esteem while 48,82% indicated negative agreement on the premises provided in the questionnaire.

The researcher also found fear as the last factor under the psychological factor. Consistent with the literature asserted that students of English were not highly competent in speaking because of their fear of making mistakes, the researcher noted that fear became the influential factor for the students in Marginal interaction and Silent Observation. The researcher found that those students tended to avoid verbal interaction in class because they were afraid of making mistakes. It was different with the students in Full Integration and Conditional Participation, where fear was not considered an influential factor for them. It was also supported by the results of the questionnaire, which showed that 48,82% of respondents agreed that fear was influential for their verbal participation, while the rest of 51,18% disagreed.

The third main factor found by the researcher was the other factors, such as the students' preparation before coming to class, whether the material was exciting or not, the level of difficulty of the task given, the personalities or mood of the lecturers, the class size, and the limited time allocated to practice. The findings reported that 47,9% of respondents agreed that factors such as those mentioned above only allowed some students to have the opportunity to participate verbally

in the discussion. Research (Savaşçı, 2014) revealed that when something was not attractive, most people were unwilling to talk about it, while one could talk as much as he could about his interests. This aligned with the recent research result that the discussion topic or materials provided or designed by the lecturers influenced the students' verbal participation. Thus, lecturers should not perceive that the students' involvement only exclusively depended on the students' conditions but also relied on the lecturers. The lecturers were recommended to adjust their teaching strategies to promote their students' participation. A previous study also indicated that the teaching strategies could also significantly influence the student's participation (Aidinlou & Ghobadi, 2012; Permatasari, 2016). Those were other factors that affected students' participation in the classroom.

In addition, a researcher (Hussain & Abbas, 2018) revealed in his study that classroom conditions such as the class size, the seat arrangement and classroom social environment were the three main common factors affecting students' active verbal participation. It was supported by a finding (Mustapha & AbdRahman, 2011) that lack of preparation, fear of appearing unintelligent to their classmates or instructors and feeling intimidated made students less inclined to participate. The other factor that could affect students' participation was the difficulty level of the task. This sometimes hindered them from participating because they could not wholly complete or understand the task, so they chose to be silent. The research concluded that the EFL students were unable or reluctant to participate at some points because they did not know what to say during the class discussions (Abebe & Deneke, 2015).

The last main factor revealed in this research was the pedagogical factor. The technique or method used in teaching the students, the topics or materials provided, and the feedback given regarding the students' performances were the factors found. As revealed by the questionnaire, 47,06% of respondents indicated that the pedagogical factors of the lecturers became the other influential factor for their participation. The teacher also needs to pay attention to how they respond to the students when they speak in the classroom. Because it would also result differently for the students. Many past researchers mentioned that negative lecturers' traits discouraged students from participating (Abebe & Deneke, 2015). For example, students could feel insecure about classroom participation due to lecturers' traits in giving comments or showing gestures in their classroom performance that might be interpreted as negative responses (Pakpahan et al., 2017). So, the lecturers' and even classmates' traits significantly promoted students' participation. Consequently, the lecturer should prepare the best pedagogical aspect that can encourage the students to speak more by giving positive feedback or encouraging every student who tries to speak using the target language.

The lecturer's verbal feedback towards the students might also be influential for some students. Although many past researchers mentioned that the negative lecturers' traits discouraged students' participation (Abebe et al., 2015) the researcher did not take that as the only consideration to judge the research findings. For example, a finding (Liu, 2005) revealed that students could feel insecure about participating in the classroom due to lecturers' traits in terms of giving comments or showing gestures on their performances in the classroom that might be interpreted as negative responses to their performance. Even though the researcher found that many of the students considered the verbal feedback given by the lecturer as one of the influential factors for their participation, it was undeniable that there were many of the students as well who did not take the verbal feedback given by the lecturer as a hindrance for them to speak up. This proved that some of the theories of previous studies differ from the findings of this research.

This study provides a comprehensive mapping of verbal participation patterns in non-skill EFL classrooms, a context that remains under-explored in comparison to skill-based courses like speaking or listening. The flexible categorization of student behaviors across different participation types offers a novel contribution to the literature by demonstrating that student engagement is dynamic and situation-dependent rather than static. The alignment between observational and self-reported data enhances the robustness of the findings, and the detailed analysis of psychological, linguistic, and contextual factors adds a multidimensional perspective to the existing research. The findings suggest that language instructors must adopt more differentiated instructional strategies that account for students' varied levels of readiness, confidence, and motivation. Pedagogical interventions should focus on building vocabulary and fluency, reducing anxiety through supportive feedback, and creating psychologically safe classroom environments. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to track how participation patterns evolve across semesters and how targeted interventions affect participation. Additionally, further exploration is warranted into the role of peer dynamics, cultural norms, and digital learning platforms in shaping EFL students' verbal engagement. Finally, replicating this study in skill-based or online EFL classrooms could yield comparative insights that strengthen understanding of participation across learning contexts.

In conclusion, this study identified various factors influencing EFL students' verbal participation in non-skill classroom settings, highlighting that students encountered these factors throughout the teaching-learning process, which significantly shaped their classroom engagement. The research revealed that each participation pattern corresponded to a distinct hierarchy of influencing factors. For instance, Full Integration students were mostly influenced by

language competence, followed by contextual, psychological, and pedagogical aspects. Conditional Participation students were primarily shaped by pedagogy, while Marginal Interaction students were most affected by language competence and psychological barriers. In contrast, Silence Observation students were influenced predominantly by language competence, followed by psychological and pedagogical factors. These findings suggest that EFL instructors, particularly those teaching discussion-based non-skill lessons, need to recognize and address the varied barriers that deter students from participating. Consequently, they must implement tailored instructional strategies that foster a supportive environment, accommodate diverse participation needs, and encourage gradual engagement. Ultimately, this research offers practical insights and serves as a valuable reference for educators and future studies aiming to enhance student participation and develop effective classroom practices in EFL contexts.

6. Conclusions

Language competence plays a key role in classroom participation, with 73.5% of students displaying marginal or silent participation patterns due to challenges such as psychological and pedagogical factors. Strengthening vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation is essential to fostering active engagement. However, this study has limitations that future research can address. Since the participants were mainly English education students, the findings may not fully apply to students from other academic backgrounds, making it important to include a more diverse sample. Similarly, focusing only on fifth-semester students narrows the scope, so expanding the study to different year levels could provide richer insights. Incorporating interviews and faculty perspectives also helps uncover deeper reasons behind participation patterns. Additionally, future research should examine the quality of student participation and explore strategies to address barriers, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of how to enhance engagement in EFL classrooms.

5. Acknowledgement

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