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FACTORS INFLUENCING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRST GRADE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1 SOLOK SELATAN IN ENGLISH CLASS

Abstract

This research is attempted to identify the factors that influence students' participation in English class. Specifically, this study is focused on exploring the factors that most influence English class participation of grade VII.1 students at SMPN 1 Solok Selatan. A quantitative descriptive research design was used in which data were taken from questionnaires distributed to 30 students of class VII.1 of Junior High School 1 Solok Selatan in English class. The results of this study showed that factors such as teacher traits (73.80%), class traits (41.42%), and student traits (27.61%) have their own influence towards students' English class participation. Related to the items most chosen by students from each factor, English teacher's friendly response of the teacher traits factor was the most chosen items by students, followed by friendship in English class of the class traits factor, and preparation for English class of the student traits factor.

Keywords

classroom participation, influencing factors, English class

A. INTRODUCTION

In the classroom, both teacher and students have a responsibility to create effective learning by building interactions between students–students and teacher–students. Especially in learning English, English learning process has a goal to develop students' communication skills to deliver their thoughts and feelings in order to maintain relationships with others (Brummelen, 2009). To achieve that goal, both teacher and students have their respective roles. The teacher delivers the lessons as effectively as possible to ensure the students understand what is being taught, while the students are expected to participate actively in understanding, exploring, and applying the knowledge delivered in learning activities. Wade stated that if students actively contribute in class, they could enjoy sharing ideas with their friends and learning more about the lesson (Abdullah, Abu Bakar, & Mahbob, 2012: 516). It can be said that students' participation is an important element in the learning process to make an effective learning process.

There are several reasons why participation is important in the learning process. Two studies conducted by Lim (1992) have shown that students' classroom participation is significantly related to the improvement in language proficiency (Nunan, 1999: 48; Tsou, 2005: 47). It can be seen from students' behaviors or actions during teaching and learning activities in class. When students speak up in class, they learn to express their ideas in a way that others can understand and when students ask questions, they correspondingly learn how to obtain information to enhance their own understanding of the topic presented. Therefore, students who actively participate in class show that higher academic achievement than those who passively participate in class.

Participation is also the way for students to show their involvement in the classroom. Besides, students' participation in class discussion also seems to be used as an indication of learning by most teachers. Responding to teacher questions, asking questions, sharing opinions, thoughts, and ideas in discussions are indications that prove students' engagement in the classroom (Fredricks, et al., 2011: 2).

The definition of students' classroom participation can be wider than just delivering ideas orally or in a speaking context. Participation can refer to all types that students use to engage in ongoing activities in class (Warayet, 2011: 3). Students' participation can include many forms of students' actions such as speaking, listening, reading, writing, body language and attitudes.

Regarding students' engagement in classroom participation, some students prefer to speak openly and participate orally in class, while others may just sit and follow what's going on in class, without being too active in the discussion. In this case, it cannot be claimed that passive students do not participate in class. However, it is important to investigate the factors why some students participate and others do not.

Although, many benefits of students' classroom participation above, many students still struggle with it and it is still very difficult for them to participate in class. In some classes, teachers still found that some students remain passive members even though teachers had tried their best by implementing various methods and strategies to enhance their participation.

The main problem of language teaching is considered complex and requires special efforts. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), one of the biggest challenges for

English instructors, whether teachers and lecturers, is to integrate students' participation in the classroom where English is taught as a foreign or second language.

Various studies have been conducted on the factors that influence classroom participation. Fassinger (1995:29) found that these factors come from class size, fear, perception of faculty authority, student preparation for class, and confidence.

There are various reasons identified as influence in students' classroom participation in previous studies. Specific factors, such as age, gender, students' willingness to speak, course level, student preparation, and students emotions such as confidence or fear, have been reported to influence their participation (Mustapha, Abd Rahman, & Md. Yunus, 2010:1080). In addition, pedagogical and educational environmental factors such as faculty authority, class size and class instructor communication variables have also proven to be influential.

The researcher also found a similar case at MTsN 2 Padang Pariaman, West Sumatera, Indonesia when the researcher conducted field practice. The researcher herself taught 7th and 8th graders for approximately 3 months. Based on the researcher's experience, the researcher observed that students tried not to attract the teacher's attention so that they were not asked questions or asked for their opinions.

Studies on English class participation in Indonesia remain very few. It then guided the researcher to study the factors influencing junior high school students' participation in English class.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research design is descriptive quantitative. The descriptive quantitative research design was used because the purpose of this study is only to explore what are the most influential factors on junior high school students' participation in English class, without comparing or relating to other variables.

This research was conducted at SMPN 1 Solok Selatan, West Sumatera, Indonesia. One whole class, class VII.1, was selected as the subject of this research. To obtain the results regarding the most influential factors on students' participation in English class, the researcher used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). A 'Neutral' option was provided if respondents were not sure whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Before the questionnaire was distributed, it had first passed a validation process by two validators to make sure that the questionnaire to be distributed to junior high school students was understandable and feasible.

The data obtained were then analyzed using simple descriptive statistics, i.e. percentages. In questionnaire with a 5 Likert-scale options, for each scale was assigned a point. The points assigned for each scale were 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Fassinger (2000) classifies the factors that affect students' participation into three major traits, class traits, student traits, and teacher traits. Class traits include interaction norms (pressure from peers not to speak, pressure to keep comments brief, peers attention, peers lack of respect); and emotional climate (friendships, students supportiveness of each other, students cooperation). Student traits are divided into three sub-categories; confidence, preparation, and intimidation. Fear of appearing unintelligent

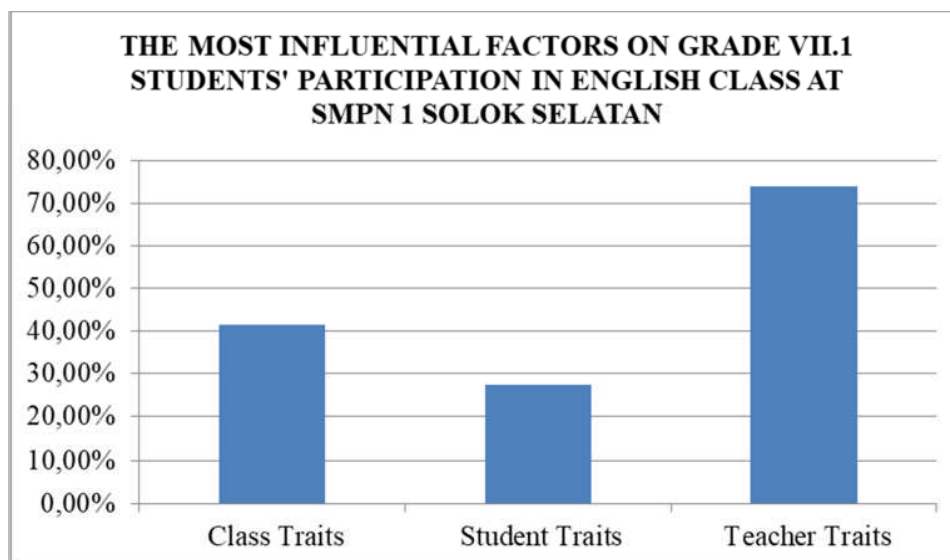
to peers or instructor, lack of organization skills, communication apprehension, fear of offending, and intimidation, are all considered as confidence trait. Teacher traits are linked to approachability, teacher supportiveness, as well as whether the teacher welcomes discussion.

In class traits factor, the total score obtained was 631 which ranked it into the second rank of the influential factors of students' oral participation in English class. Then, related to the items most chosen by students for each factor, S5 got the highest score among the items in the class traits factor, in which 90% of students agreed that friendships in class made them comfortable participating orally in English class, while 10% of them were neutral.

The last rank of the influential factors was the student traits factor. As shown in Table 4.2, this factor obtained 568 total score of each item and 27.61% the total scores of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" and 51.90% "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree". Then, S13 got the highest score among the items in the student traits factor, in which 76.66% of students agreed that they usually make preparations before English class begins, while 23.33% of them were neutral.

In teacher traits factor, the total score obtained was 841 which means this factor was the most influential factor for 7.1 graders of Junior High School 1 Solok Selatan to participate orally in English class. As shown in Table 4.3, 73.80% agreed that teacher traits had the strongest influence and otherwise 2.37% disagreed to the factor. Then, 96.66% of students agreed that "Our English teacher usually responds in a friendly way which makes comfortable to participate in class (S16)" was the item most chosen by students in the teacher traits factor and none of them disagreed. This assumed that it seemed that the students agreed that their English teacher was an approachable person and usually responded in a friendly way, which made them comfortable to participate orally in English class, while 3.33% of them were neutral.

Since the focus of this research question was exploring the most influential factors, the descriptions were arranged from the highest to the lowest score. So, among the three major traits, the most influential factors on grade VII.1 students' participation in English class at SMPN 1 Solok Selatan were "Teacher Traits" which got the higher percentage than the other factors (73.80%), followed by "Class Traits" (41.42%), and the lowest was "Student Traits" which got (27.61%). These findings were illustrated in the bar graph in Figure 4 below:



The findings of this study found that the factors that affect students' participation in class mentioned by Fassinger have also been shown to affect students' participation in English class. Mentioned by Fassinger (2000), the factors that affect students' participation in class were classified into three major traits; class traits, student traits, and teacher traits. Class traits included interaction norms and emotional climate. Student traits were divided into three subcategories; confidence, preparation, and intimidation. Teacher traits were linked to approachability, teacher supportiveness, as well as whether the teacher welcomes discussion.

This study found that, based on the three main factors, teacher traits, including approachability, teacher supportiveness, and whether the teacher (in this case English teacher) welcomes discussion, was the most influential factor in encouraging English class participation among grade VII.1 students of SMPN 1 Solok Selatan. The findings of this study were relevant to the findings of Honesty Trila's study in 2019. She found that the role of faculty including lecturer's trait and classroom climate were the most dominant factor in encouraging participation among college students. In addition, some of the lecturer's traits mentioned by students in her research were encouraging and approachable. This was also relevant to the findings of this study. For the teacher traits mentioned by students in this study, some of them were approachable, responded friendly, and were supportive. In addition, English teacher who responded kindly (S16 & S17) got the highest percentage (96.66%) among the items in the teacher traits factor.

The second ranked of the most influential factors was class traits. Class traits included interaction norms and emotional climate. Friendships, students supportiveness of each other, and students cooperation were considered as emotional climate in class. In addition, friendship in English class (S5) was also chosen as the most chosen item by students in the class traits factor, which was (90%). This finding was also relevant as Honesty Trila's did. As mentioned above, the classroom climate was also classified as a very strong influence on students' participation. Positive classroom climate displayed by classmates provided supportive passion to keep actively participate in class. Good

relationships with classmates also created a relaxed atmosphere that removes barriers to being active in class.

The last ranked of the most influential factors was student traits. Student traits were divided into three subcategories; confidence, preparation, and intimidation. Preparation for English class was stated in (S13) was the most chosen item by students in the student traits factor, which was (76.66%). This finding turned out to be relevant to the research findings of Howard, et al., (2002), which reported that some students did not participate in class if they did not prepare the subject matter before coming to class, therefore they felt uncomfortable engaged in discussions.

Since the focus of this research question was the most influential or the dominant factors, the researcher emphasized the discussion based on the highest score or percentage. Teacher traits, in this case approachability, were classified as the most influential factor, followed by class traits, in this case emotional climate, were classified as the second influential factor after teacher traits, and student traits, in this case preparation, as the last influential factor. This finding also confirms the research findings of Mustapha (2010), Susak (2016), and Fassinger (2000). They also found that classroom instructor and other classroom climate played an important role in shaping classroom participation.

D. CONCLUSION

This research identified factors influencing students' classroom participation as well as explored the most influential factors in encouraging English class participation among grade VII.1 students of SMPN 1 Solok Selatan. Regarding research findings, it is concluded that:

Three factors which influence English class participation among junior high school students. The most influential factors were teacher traits factor, followed by class traits factor ranked second, and student traits factor ranked last. Since the focus of this research question is on the most influential factor, related to the items most chosen by students, English teacher's friendly response of the teacher traits factor, friendship in English class of the class traits factor, and preparation for English class of the student traits factor sequentially become the most chosen items by students among the items of each factor.

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