



FACTORS TO THE STUDENTS' LACK OF PARTICIPATION DURING CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS IN ELT METHOD COURSE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out the contributing factors to the students' lack of participation during classroom discussion in the ELT Methods class of the fifth-semester students of the English Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, registered in the 2025/2026 Academic Year. This study was qualitative research with a case study design. The informants were 10 students who followed the ELT Methods Course and indicated a lack of participation during classroom discussion. The informants were selected using the purposive sampling technique. The informants from the lecturer recommended. In this research, the researchers acted as the key instrument and the interview guide as a supporting instrument. In collecting the data, the researchers interviewed the informants. Furthermore, in analyzing the data, data reduction, data display, and data verification are used. To test the trustworthiness of the data, data triangulation is used to find clear information. The results of this research indicated that there were three contributing factors to students' lack of participation during classroom discussion in the ELT Method Course. There are Linguistic factors such as: lack of vocabulary, difficulty in constructing sentences, and difficulty pronouncing words. Psychological factors were a lack of understanding of the material, anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes, and cognitive factors like lack of preparation and lack of understanding of the material are also associated with students' participation in classroom discussions.

Keywords: *factors, students' participation, ELT method course*

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INTRODUCTION

In higher education, students are expected to take an active role in the learning process. In courses that emphasize discussion-based learning, active participation becomes an essential component because it facilitates communication, idea development, and deeper engagement with the subject matter. In English language learning, participation not only helps students understand theoretical concepts but also allows them to use the language in real communicative contexts. Through discussions and group work, students are encouraged to express opinions, ask and answer questions, and interact confidently using English (Benyo & Kumar, 2023).

Class discussions also play an important role in developing fluency, confidence, and understanding of learning concepts. Active participation can increase student motivation and engagement (Mohammed & Ahmed, 2021). In addition to improving speaking skills, discussions train students to think critically and understand learning materials more deeply (Jaya et al., 2025). Therefore, courses that rely on interaction require students to contribute actively so that the learning process becomes more communicative and effective.

Students' participation in class involves behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects. It means that students are not only present but also actively engage in learning activities such as asking and answering questions, giving opinions, and providing feedback (An et al., 2024). In courses that require discussions in English, participation also reflects students' readiness, engagement, and mastery of the material. Students who frequently participate are seen as active learners, while those who rarely contribute tend to be classified as passive learners.

In the English Teaching Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, there are several courses in the fifth semester. One of these courses is English Language Teaching (ELT) Methods. Students are required to speak in English. Based on the ELT Methods course contract, the lecturer has set a rule that all presentations and participation in class discussions must be conducted in English. This course is also a prerequisite for participating in microteaching and pre-service training. Through this course, students are expected to gain an understanding of various concepts related to approaches, methods, and techniques in teaching used in English language instruction, language skill development, as well as genre-based approaches, communicative approaches, and scientific approaches.

To achieve learning objectives, the lecturer implements discussion procedures in the ELT Methods course. Before the class schedule, students take part in small group discussions first. These discussions are held outside the class schedule or one day before the class. Students are expected to actively participate in the discussions for each weekly topic, either as presenters or respondents, so that they have a basic understanding and are better prepared to join the class discussion. In addition, students submit papers, discussion



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recordings, notes, and presentation materials to the class WhatsApp group as proof of their participation in the small group discussions. During class discussions, students are allowed to speak, respond, or ask questions in English, while the moderator helps facilitate the discussion. All forms of student participation are recorded using a special form, which is then shared via the class WhatsApp group. After the discussion, lecturers provide feedback in the form of clarifications and additional explanations to support student understanding and encourage more active participation.

This course aims to help students understand the basic concepts and methods of English language teaching and use them in teaching situations. In this course, student participation is very important, especially in class discussions, because it gives students opportunities to share ideas, engage with the learning material, and show their understanding of the topics.

A lack of active participation in class discussions can affect the development of students' critical thinking skills and English communication skills.

The researchers conducted three observations of the ELT Methods class. The first observation, conducted on September 24, 2025, showed that students' verbal participation in class discussions was still low. Some students seemed hesitant to express their ideas in English and relied heavily on their notes, indicating a lack of confidence in constructing their own sentences. Some students also seemed uncertain and reluctant to speak even when given the opportunity.

The second and third observations, conducted on October 2, 2025, showed that the situation remained unchanged. Student participation was still minimal, and many preferred to stay silent during discussions. Although the class activities were designed to encourage students to express opinions, ask questions, and respond to peers ideas, only a small number of students actively contributed, while others tended to remain passive. Additionally, most students only spoke when they were directly called upon by the moderator. The researchers also identified several factors that appeared to hinder participation, such as limited mastery of the material and difficulties in using English to express opinions.

There was previous research on the factors contributing to the lack of student participation in discussions. a study entitled "Causes of Students' Reluctance to Participate in Classroom Discussions" found that students often feel tense when forced to answer questions, nervous about speaking in front of the class, and insecure due to pronunciation problems (Ahmad, 2021). Another study entitled "Factors Affecting Students' English Speaking Performance in Classroom Participation," found that students face psychological challenges such as lack of motivation, anxiety, low confidence, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and classroom environment (Andriani et al., 2024)



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This research is essential because a lack of student participation in ELT Methods class discussions can hinder the development of their speaking skills and understanding of the material. Even though lecturers have used interactive learning strategies, there are still students who are not actively involved. This indicates that there are obstacles that need to be explored further. By understanding the causes, more appropriate steps can be taken to help students become more confident and ready to participate. Therefore, this research is very important to support more effective learning and improve students' language skills.

Based on the theories and phenomena above, the researchers is interested in conducting research entitled “Contributing Factors to the Students’ Lack of Participation During Classroom Discussions in ELT Methods Course of the fifth semester students of the English Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar registered in 2025/2026 Academic Year”.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study design. In qualitative research, data were collected mainly through interviews, where the researchers acted as the main instrument. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data, triangulation was applied by cross-checking information from different informants and supporting sources. The collected data were analyzed inductively and the results of the research focused on meaning (Sugiyono, 2013). In this research, the researchers examined the contributing factors to the students’ lack of participation during classroom discussions in the ELT Method class of fifth-semester students at the English Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar registered in the 2025/2026 academic year.

The informants of this research were students who took the ELT Methods class in the fifth semester of the English Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar registered in the 2025/2026 academic year. Informants were individuals who provided information about a situation or condition in a research study. They were selected because they had knowledge, expertise, or experience related to the research topic. Therefore, informants needed to understand the research topic in order to give useful information and answer the research questions accurately. To find the informants, the researchers used purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because it allowed the researchers to select samples based on specific goals and objectives (Kusumastuti & Utami, 2022).

In this study, the key instrument of the research was the researchers themselves. The researchers functioned as the key instrument because only human instruments were capable of understanding context, interpreting phenomena, and interacting directly with participants. Therefore, the researchers became the primary tool in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Sugiyono, 2013). To support the data collection process, the



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researchers used an interview guide as the primary tool. This guide helped the researchers explore the contributing factors to students' lack of participation in classroom discussions during the ELT Methods course. In addition, supporting instruments such as a voice recorder and documentation tools were also used to record and document the interviews and other relevant data.

The researchers collected the data through interviews. During the interview process, the researchers followed several stages, including preparing an interview guide as a reference, asking questions to informants based on the guide, and recording the interview results to ensure that the collected data could be stored and analyzed accurately. The researchers did observation to observe ongoing situations, interact with the informants, and study relevant documents or supporting data. To analyze the data in this research, the researchers used three activities, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984) in (Sugiyono (2013). In analyzing the data, the researchers used data triangulation to obtain more accurate and clear information. After collecting data from the informants, the researchers conducted re-interviews to ensure the accuracy of the information. If there were data that were incomplete or doubtful, the researchers conducted additional re-interviews.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Based on the research findings, there are three contributing factors of students' lack of participation during classroom discussions in ELT Methods course, namely linguistic factors, psychological factors, and cognitive factors. Linguistic factors are related to students' limited English proficiency, including lack of vocabulary, difficulty in constructing sentences, and difficulty in pronouncing words. These limitations cause students to hesitate and feel reluctant to express their ideas during classroom discussions. Psychological factors also influence students' participation. These factors include a lack of understanding of the material, feelings of anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Such conditions reduce students' willingness to speak and to take part actively in classroom discussions. In addition, cognitive factors, including a lack of preparation and a lack of understanding of the material.

1. Lack of Vocabulary

The interview data revealed that limited vocabulary was one of the most significant factors contributing to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions. Ten informants (I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, I-5, I-6, I-7, I-8, I-9, and I-10) reported that inadequate vocabulary hindered their ability to express ideas and opinions effectively in English.

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Although many students understood the discussion topics and possessed relevant ideas, they struggled to find appropriate words to convey their thoughts. Consequently, they tended to remain silent or participate minimally during discussions. The findings suggest that limited vocabulary reduces students' confidence in communicating orally and restricts their ability to engage spontaneously in classroom interactions. This result supports Hamouda's (2018) assertion that insufficient vocabulary knowledge can impede students' participation in communicative activities. Therefore, lack of vocabulary emerged as a major linguistic barrier that discouraged active involvement in classroom discussions.

2. Difficulty in Constructing Sentences

Another linguistic factor identified in this study was students' difficulty in constructing grammatically correct sentences. Six informants (I-2, I-4, I-5, I-6, I-7, and I-10) stated that they often struggled to organize words and formulate sentences appropriately when speaking English. They reported uncertainty regarding grammatical structures, sentence patterns, and the appropriate use of tenses. These difficulties caused students to spend considerable time thinking about sentence formation before speaking. As a result, they became hesitant to participate in discussions for fear of making grammatical errors. The findings indicate that inadequate mastery of grammatical structures negatively affects students' willingness to communicate, as they prefer to remain silent rather than risk producing incorrect sentences. This finding is consistent with Giantari et al. (2023), who emphasized that grammatical difficulties can inhibit students' oral participation in English-language classrooms.

3. Difficulty in Pronouncing Words

Pronunciation difficulties also emerged as a factor contributing to students' limited participation during classroom discussions. Two informants (I-3 and I-4) reported feeling concerned about pronouncing English words incorrectly. Their fear of mispronunciation often made them reluctant to speak during discussions. The findings indicate that students' concern about pronunciation accuracy may reduce their willingness to participate in oral activities. Fear of making pronunciation errors can create feelings of embarrassment and anxiety, leading students to avoid speaking opportunities. This result supports Lasabuda's (2017) argument that concerns about pronunciation can negatively influence students' oral participation in English learning contexts.

4. Anxiety

The findings revealed that anxiety was another factor influencing students' participation in classroom discussions. Three informants (I-3, I-6, and I-10) reported experiencing nervousness when speaking English in front of their classmates. They expressed concerns about making mistakes and being negatively evaluated by their



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peers. Students described feelings of nervousness and apprehension when required to speak during discussions, particularly in English. Some participants also reported fear of being laughed at or criticized by classmates. These feelings of anxiety often prevented them from contributing actively to discussions. Therefore, anxiety can be considered a significant psychological barrier that limits students' classroom participation. This finding aligns with Pratolo and Sakti (2024), who found that anxiety negatively affects students' engagement and willingness to communicate.

5. Lack of Confidence

Lack of confidence emerged as one of the most frequently reported psychological factors affecting classroom participation. Seven informants (I-3, I-5, I-6, I-7, I-8, I-9, and I-10) indicated that they lacked confidence when speaking English during classroom discussions. The interview data revealed that students doubted their language abilities and were uncertain about the accuracy of their questions, answers, and opinions. Their lack of confidence was often associated with limited vocabulary, inadequate understanding of the material, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes. Consequently, students tended to withhold their opinions and avoid active participation in discussions. These findings suggest that self-confidence plays a crucial role in determining students' willingness to engage in classroom interactions. Consistent with Hamouda (2018), the results demonstrate that students who lack confidence are less likely to participate actively in communicative learning activities.

6. Fear of Making Mistakes

Fear of making mistakes was identified as another important psychological factor contributing to students' lack of participation. Three informants (I-4, I-5, and I-6) reported that they were often afraid of asking questions, expressing opinions, or speaking English because they feared making errors. The participants expressed concerns about producing incorrect answers, asking irrelevant questions, or making grammatical mistakes. This fear led them to overanalyze their responses before speaking and often resulted in silence during discussions. The findings indicate that fear of making mistakes discourages students from taking risks in communication and limits their opportunities to participate actively in classroom interactions. This result is consistent with Gunawan (2019), who found that fear of negative evaluation can significantly reduce students' willingness to speak in English-learning environments.

7. Lack of Preparation

The findings also identified lack of preparation as a cognitive factor influencing classroom participation. One informant (I-1) stated that insufficient preparation before class made it difficult to participate in discussions. The participant explained that entering class without adequate preparation often resulted in confusion regarding the discussion topic and reduced readiness to contribute ideas. Consequently, the student



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became less likely to participate actively during classroom discussions. This finding supports Pradestina and Agustin (2020), who argue that inadequate preparation can limit students' ability to engage meaningfully in classroom activities.

8. **Lack of Understanding of the Material** Lack of understanding of the material emerged as one of the most prominent cognitive factors affecting students' participation. Seven informants (I-1, I-4, I-5, I-7, I-8, I-9, and I-10) reported that they often refrained from participating because they did not fully understand the discussion topics. Students explained that insufficient comprehension of the material made them hesitant to ask questions or express opinions. They were often uncertain whether their contributions were relevant to the topic being discussed. As a result, they preferred to remain silent rather than risk providing inaccurate or inappropriate responses. The findings indicate that comprehension of the subject matter is a prerequisite for active participation in classroom discussions. When students lack adequate understanding, they experience uncertainty and become reluctant to engage in classroom interactions. This finding is in line with Pradia and Bawa (2023), who emphasize that limited content understanding can significantly reduce students' willingness to communicate and participate in academic discussions.

The findings revealed three major categories of factors contributing to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions in the ELT Methods course: Linguistic Factors Lack of vocabulary Difficulty in constructing sentences Difficulty in pronunciation Psychological Factors Anxiety Lack of confidence Fear of making mistakes Cognitive Factors Lack of preparation Lack of understanding of the material Among these factors, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, and lack of understanding of the material were the most frequently reported by the participants, indicating that linguistic competence, psychological readiness, and content comprehension collectively play a crucial role in shaping students' participation in classroom discussions.

Discussion

Based on the results of the interviews, the researchers concluded that there are three contributing factors to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions in the ELT Method course: linguistic factors, psychological factors and environmental factors. Linguistic factors include lack of vocabulary, difficulty in constructing sentences, and difficulty in pronouncing words. Meanwhile, psychological factors include lack of understanding the material, anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Meanwhile, cognitive factors include lack of preparation and lack of understanding the material.



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Linguistic factors also become one of the factors contributing to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions. First, lack of vocabulary is one of the factors contributing to students' lack of participation in classroom discussions conducted in English. Based on the research findings, some students find it difficult to express their opinions, provide responses, or ask questions due to their limited vocabulary. This finding is in line with study that students' poor vocabulary was one of the main reasons why students were passive listeners rather than active participants in the oral English classroom (Murad & Jalambo, 2019). Second, difficulty in constructing sentences. Students often experience difficulties due to their lack of mastery of grammatical structures when expressing their ideas during classroom discussions. This limitation makes it challenging for them to construct correct and clear sentences, leading to hesitation in speaking and fear that their sentences may be grammatically incorrect or misunderstood by others (Giantari et al., 2023). Third, difficulty pronouncing words. Students often experience difficulty with English pronunciation during classroom discussions. This happens because students do not know how to pronounce English words correctly, which makes them afraid that their words will be mispronounced or misunderstood by others. This finding is in line with the study shows that lack of pronunciation skills is common among students and creates difficulty for them to speak English (Wilantari et al., 2021).

Psychological factors are among the factors contributing to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions. First, anxiety. when students are required to speak English in front of their peers. This finding is in line with the study that anxiety is also related to the task of answering questions, which requires students to think quickly and express their responses in English (Anggraini, 2024). Second, lack of confidence. Students experience difficulties in speaking English due to a lack of confidence in their ability to pronounce words correctly. This lack of confidence likely affects their willingness to speak and participate in English conversations or classroom activities. This finding is in line with previous study that they do not practice speaking English outside the classroom, students often encounter difficulties when using the language (Robinson & Seimon, 2020). Third, fear of making mistakes. Students often fear making mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, or the content they present. They may also worry about being laughed at by classmates or criticized by the lecturer, which can make them hesitant to ask questions or cause them to remain silent during discussions. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that many students are reluctant to use English due to the fear of making mistakes, which can ultimately limit their willingness to participate in classroom activities (Pradestina & Agustin, 2020).



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Cognitive factors are among the factors contributing to students' lack of participation during classroom discussions include lack of preparation and lack of understanding the material. First, lack of preparation. Students do not participate in discussions because they do not prepare the lesson in advance. This finding is in line with previous study that Students' preparation for the lesson influences their verbal participation; students tend to avoid verbal participation during the learning process if they do not have sufficient preparation for the lesson (Pradestina & Agustin, 2020). Second, lack of understanding the material. When students do not fully understand the subject matter, they have difficulty expressing their thoughts and ideas coherently in English. This finding is in line with the study that difficulty in understanding the topic in the context of an English only policy refers to an individual's difficulty or inability to understand written texts in English (Pradia & Bawa, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, students' lack of participation during classroom discussions in the ELT Methods course is influenced by a combination of linguistic, psychological, and cognitive factors.

The linguistic factors include lack of vocabulary, difficulty in constructing sentences, and difficulty in pronouncing words. Among these, limited vocabulary emerged as the most prominent linguistic barrier. Students frequently reported that although they understood the discussion topics and had ideas to share, they struggled to express themselves in English due to insufficient vocabulary. Difficulties with grammatical structures and concerns about pronunciation further reduced their willingness to participate.

The psychological factors consist of anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes. Lack of confidence was identified as the most dominant psychological factor affecting participation. Many students felt hesitant to speak because they doubted their English proficiency, feared making errors, and worried about receiving negative judgments from their peers. Anxiety and fear of mistakes further intensified students' reluctance to contribute to classroom discussions.

The cognitive factors include lack of preparation and lack of understanding of the material. Among these, lack of understanding of the material was reported most frequently. Students who did not fully comprehend the discussion topic tended to remain silent because they were uncertain about the relevance and accuracy of their responses. Insufficient preparation before class also contributed to students' inability to participate effectively. Overall, the findings indicate that students' participation in classroom discussions is not

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determined by a single factor but rather by the interaction of linguistic competence, psychological readiness, and cognitive preparedness. Among all identified factors, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, and lack of understanding of the material emerged as the most significant contributors to students' limited participation. Therefore, efforts to enhance classroom participation should focus on improving students' language proficiency, strengthening their self-confidence, creating a supportive learning environment, and ensuring adequate preparation and comprehension of course materials. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies with a larger number of participants and in different educational settings to gain a broader understanding of students' participation in classroom discussions. They may also use quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to examine the influence of linguistic, psychological, and cognitive factors more comprehensively. In addition, future studies can explore effective strategies to improve students' vocabulary, confidence, and understanding of the material, as these factors were found to be the main causes of low participation in this study. Finally, investigating lecturers' perspectives on students' classroom participation may provide additional insights into how classroom engagement can be enhanced.

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