

WHAT MAKES STUDENTS GO QUIET?: STRUGGLES IN ORAL PARTICIPATION

by:

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Students' engagement in classroom activities was significant to determine student achievement and the lack of it. According to Frymier and Houser (2015), oral participation is generally highly valued in American classrooms and is often thought to be a good indicator of students' engagement in learning. Thus, it is often assumed that learners are more likely to be more proficient. And that students thoroughly understood the concepts in the discussion if they raised their hands to answer a question compared to those who do not. That is why oral participation is being graded by most teachers.

In earlier studies, the learners' competence in communication was considered as an important set of rules, which when learned and followed, the students will be able to comprehend and participate in classroom context. Thus the learners can effectively communicate with others in the classroom. On the other hand, if they won't comprehend the classroom communication system their learning might get affected and they learn comparatively less. Due to language barriers, participation in classroom activities will become passive. Difference between home language and classroom language also reflect upon the development of students' communicative competence. If these both languages are identical somehow, students are motivated to learn literacy events taken place in classroom (Morrow, 1993).

But the problem arises in the question whether these students who are not answering orally really never did understand the lesson. And if lack of students' oral participation equally means lack of learning. There might be some factors that hinders them in not engaging themselves like non-fluency in the language used by the teacher in

throwing questions and the language expected to be used in answering. Like there were “English Only Policy” in English classrooms and “Filipino Only Policy” in some Filipino classes. These might be the sources of the problem of students especially if they aren’t proficient enough with the language.

Moreover, in most cases, other factors like negative student traits which refers to limiting one’s self , having fear of making mistakes, loss of focus and confidence, feeling of intimidation, and health related issues, can also be contributors for students to be discouraged.

Meanwhile, Other outside forces like the teacher’s communication variables such as his way of encouraging, supporting, understanding and approaching learners can affect the students motivation to participate. In addition, teaching strategies and presentation of lesson also can be factors. Classmates behavior are also believed to be influential and therefore a good classroom environment that foster support must be established.

Indeed, motivating learners are one of the most challenging role for a teacher. In order to do so, making the students contributions in class valuable can uplift their confidence to speak up in class. It is an extra mile for educators, but exerting greater effort in researching and providing strategies that can enhance their participation and can overcome their fear will definitely make a difference in the long run.

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