



The Level of Participation Among Non-English Major Students in English Classroom Activities

Helena Tada¹, Chairil Anwar Korompot², Geminastiti Sakkir^{*3}

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia

helenatada@gmail.com¹, cakorompot@unm.ac.id², geminastitisakkir@unm.ac.id³

^{*}Corresponding Author: geminastitisakkir@unm.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: English Classroom Activities; Non-English Major; Student Participation; Higher Education</p> <p>Received: 19 Mar 2025 Revised: 12 May 2025 Accepted: 19 May 2025</p>	<p>This study investigates the level of classroom participation among non-English major students enrolled in English language courses. Employing a quantitative descriptive approach, data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 20 randomly selected first-semester students from the Faculty of Sports and Health Sciences at Universitas Negeri Makassar. The results indicate that 80% of the participants demonstrated active (65%) or very active (15%) involvement in classroom activities, while 20% remained neutral. No students were categorized as passive. The mean participation score of 50 falls within the "active" category. Further analysis shows that students are more engaged in interactive activities such as asking questions (65%), expressing opinions (50%), and participating in discussions (60%). In contrast, passive indicators like sitting quietly or merely listening were less frequently reported. While 45% of students stated they mainly took notes, another 45% were unsure whether they only took notes or also engaged in discussion. These findings suggest that, despite not majoring in English, students exhibit a high level of participation in English classroom activities. This highlights the potential of incorporating interactive strategies to further enhance engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction.</p>

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1. INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as a global language, owing to its widespread use across various domains. Today, it plays a crucial role as the primary language of communication in education, scientific research, aviation, information technology, diplomacy, and the tourism industry (Atmowardoyo & Sakkir, 2021; Xhemaili, 2022). For individuals seeking to excel and be recognized in these fields, proficiency in English is essential. Mastery of the language significantly increases the likelihood of securing desirable jobs, obtaining scholarships, and accessing international opportunities. As a result, English has been firmly integrated into the academic sphere. According to Rostan (2011), data from the CAP (Changing Academic Profession) survey showed that 51% of academic institutions use English for research purposes, while 30% incorporate it for teaching.

In Indonesia, English has become a key component of the curriculum at both junior and senior high school levels. Its importance extends beyond these stages, as it is also a critical requirement for students in higher education. Many Indonesian universities and institutions offer English programs and courses to students across various disciplines, including those who are not majoring in English. This group, known as "Non-English Major Students," plays a pivotal role in the advancement of English proficiency within the country (Isma et al., 2022, 2023). Many of these students are required to take English courses



as part of their academic programs, which helps them apply their language skills in their future careers. However, when examining the involvement of non-English major students in English classroom activities, certain challenges come to light. These students often exhibit lower levels of participation in such activities due to limited proficiency in the language.

Research by Anum (2018) highlights that non-English major students often participate less actively in class due to their lower language proficiency. However, interviews conducted with students from various disciplines in Makassar reveal that some remain engaged in English lessons despite not being highly fluent. This observation raises the question of the actual level of participation of non-English major students in English classroom activities. Several studies have explored the experiences of non-English major students. One such study, conducted by Jamilah (2015) titled English Learning Needs of Non-English Major Students in Higher Education, investigates the specific language learning needs of non-English major students at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. This study employed a triangulated survey approach, using questionnaires alongside interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to gather data.

Another study by Zhang (2019), titled A Survey on the Causes of Non-English Majors College English Learning Burnout at Anhui University of Science and Technology, focused on the factors contributing to burnout among first- and second-year students in a Chinese university. It used a survey methodology, collecting data through questionnaires and interviews. Similarly, Bahar and Husain (2021) conducted a study titled Non-English Major Students' Perceptions Toward the Teaching of English as a Compulsory Subject, employing a cross-sectional descriptive design and using surveys to gather data. Trang (2022) also explored the issue of engagement in Investigating Non-English Majored Students' Engagement in EFL Online Classes using a survey-based approach. Finally, Zulkarnain (2023) conducted a study titled Non-English Majored Learners' Perceptions, Expectations, and Difficulties Toward ELT Classroom, utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach involving questionnaires and interviews.

Despite the valuable insights provided by these studies, gaps remain in the literature. While existing research has covered topics such as learning needs, speaking challenges, burnout, perceptions, expectations, and engagement, there is a noticeable lack of studies that focus on the extent of participation of non-English major students in English classroom activities. This research, centered on universities in Makassar, seeks to fill this gap and further contribute to the existing body of knowledge. Hence, this research aims to address the following question: What is the level of participation among non-English major students in English classroom activities?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the level of participation among non-English major students in English classroom activities. A survey method was used to collect numerical data from participants through a structured questionnaire. This approach was deemed suitable because it allowed the researchers to quantify students' participation patterns and identify the prevalence of active and passive engagement behaviors within a defined sample. The study focused on measuring existing conditions rather than manipulating variables, thereby offering an objective snapshot of students' classroom involvement.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at the Faculty of Sports and Health Sciences, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Indonesia, during the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, specifically from November 1st to November 8th, 2024. This faculty was selected because, although its students are not English majors, they are still required to attend English classes as part of the university's general



education curriculum. The context provided an appropriate environment to investigate how students from non-linguistic backgrounds engage in English language learning activities. The population consisted of 163 first-semester students enrolled in the Health Administration program. From this group, a random sampling technique was employed to ensure each student had an equal chance of being selected. The researchers utilized the *Wheel of Names* website as a digital randomization tool to select 20 students as the final sample. While the sample size is relatively small, it was manageable for detailed analysis and reflects the scope of a preliminary investigation.

2.3 Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed to measure both active and passive indicators of participation. It consisted of 14 items, equally balanced between positive (e.g., “I actively participate in discussions”) and negative statements (e.g., “I just sit quietly during class”), allowing for a nuanced understanding of student behavior. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from: 5 = Strongly Agree (SA); 4 = Agree (A); 3 = Neutral (N); 2 = Disagree (D); 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent expert validation by two language education specialists to ensure content clarity and relevance. However, due to time and access limitations, formal pilot testing and statistical reliability analysis (e.g., Cronbach’s alpha) were not conducted, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the study.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms, which facilitated quick and accessible responses from participants. The procedure involved the following steps:

1. Designing and finalizing the questionnaire items.
2. Creating the online version of the questionnaire.
3. Distributing the form to the selected 20 students through institutional email and class group chats.
4. Monitoring responses and sending reminders to ensure full participation.
5. Downloading and organizing the collected data for analysis.

The survey was conducted anonymously, and participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was collected and that all data were used solely for academic purposes.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected responses were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, focusing on frequency distribution, percentage, and mean scores. Each student’s total participation score was calculated by summing the Likert-scale values for the 14 items. Based on the total score, students were categorized into five levels of participation, as shown below:

Table 1. Level of Participation

Category	Score Range
Very Active	57–70
Active	43–56
Neutral	29–42
Passive	15–28
Very Passive	0–14

The mean participation score of the entire sample was also calculated to provide an overall measure of student engagement. Furthermore, responses to individual items were analyzed using percentage



formulas to determine how students responded to specific indicators of active and passive participation. The findings were then interpreted to identify patterns and tendencies in classroom behavior.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the questionnaire administered to 20 non-English major students to assess their level of participation in English classroom activities. The analysis focuses on both individual indicators of active and passive participation and the overall distribution of participation levels based on cumulative scores.

3.1 Overall Level of Participation

Based on the total scores derived from 14 questionnaire items, students were classified into five categories: *Very Active*, *Active*, *Neutral*, *Passive*, and *Very Passive*. The classification used predetermined score ranges, with the results shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Students' Participation Levels

Participation Category	Score Range	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very Active	57–70	3	15%
Active	43–56	13	65%
Neutral	29–42	4	20%
Passive	15–28	0	0%
Very Passive	0–14	0	0%
Total	-	20	100%

As shown, 80% of the students were classified as either *Active* or *Very Active*, suggesting a relatively high level of engagement in English classroom activities. The mean participation score was 50, which falls within the *Active* category (range 43–56).

3.2 Participation in Specific Classroom Activities

The following subsections detail students' responses to items measuring specific forms of participation. For clarity, results are grouped into three categories: active indicators, passive indicators, and mixed behaviors.

3.2.1. Active Participation Indicators

Students generally reported high engagement in interactive learning behaviors.

Table 3. Active Participation Behaviors

Participation Indicator	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)
Asking questions	65%
Providing viewpoints	65%
Participating in discussions	70%
Answering or asking questions in lectures	75%

These results suggest that a significant number of students are comfortable expressing opinions, engaging in discussion, and interacting with instructors during class sessions.

3.2.2. Passive Participation Indicators

Students were less likely to report behaviors associated with passivity.

**Table 4.** Passive Participation Behaviors

Participation Indicator	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)
Sitting quietly without participating	0%	85%
Only listening without asking/answering questions	15%	45%
Performing unrelated tasks during class	20%	50%

These results indicate that most students reject the notion of being passive observers and instead consider themselves actively engaged. However, a small percentage did express uncertainty about whether they remained passive, suggesting room for further exploration.

3.2.3. Mixed Behaviors: Note-taking vs. Interaction

One of the most interesting findings relates to notetaking, which may be viewed as both active and passive depending on context.

Table 5. Note-Taking Behavior

Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)
"I tend to only take notes during English class."	55%	20%	25%
"I take notes and also participate in discussions."	45%	45%	10%

Although 45% agreed they engage both in notetaking and discussion, another 45% responded neutrally, indicating uncertainty about their level of interaction. This could reflect a transitional phase in participation, students are engaged cognitively but may not yet fully express themselves orally.

The data demonstrate that most non-English major students actively participate in English classroom activities. The majority engaged in questioning, sharing opinions, and interacting during lessons. Passive behaviors were uncommon, and most students rejected descriptors like "sitting quietly" or "doing unrelated tasks." However, the ambiguity surrounding notetaking indicates the need for instructional strategies that transform passive academic behaviors into interactive learning moments.

These findings challenge assumptions that non-English majors are typically disengaged in English learning and provide evidence that, when placed in supportive environments, they exhibit a high potential for communicative participation.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a generally high level of classroom participation among non-English major students enrolled in English courses at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Contrary to commonly held assumptions that these students tend to be passive due to limited language proficiency or perceived irrelevance of English to their major fields (Bahar & Husain, 2021; Zulkarnain, 2023), the data suggest otherwise. A combined 80% of participants were categorized as either active or very active,



with a mean score of 50, positioning them solidly within the active participation range. This is a promising indication that, when provided with appropriate learning environments and pedagogical support, non-English majors are capable of engaging meaningfully in EFL contexts.

A closer analysis of student behaviors supports this conclusion. The majority of students reported engaging in interactive classroom practices, including asking questions (65%), offering viewpoints (65%), and participating in discussions (70%). These forms of active participation are consistent with what Abdullah et al. (2012) describe as behaviors that foster deeper cognitive engagement and contribute to more effective language learning. Similarly, Jannah (2021) emphasizes that active involvement, whether verbal or non-verbal, encourages emotional connection and a sense of ownership in the learning process, both of which appear evident in this study. Furthermore, students largely rejected passive behaviors such as sitting quietly, merely listening to lectures, or doing unrelated tasks. These findings resonate with King's (2013) argument that perceived classroom safety and support can reduce student silence and promote risk-taking in EFL communication. The presence of student participation, even among those with potentially lower confidence or linguistic ability, supports Sardiman's (2019) assertion that classroom engagement is not merely a function of language competence, but also of psychological readiness and instructional scaffolding.

One particularly nuanced finding relates to notetaking. While 55% of students indicated they often take notes without necessarily participating in discussion, an equal percentage either disagreed with this statement or were unsure. This suggests a tension between passive academic behaviors and active cognitive engagement. As Tatar (2005) and Liu & Jackson (2008) note, note-taking can serve as a means of cognitive processing and attention, even if it is not outwardly interactive. The high level of neutral responses may reflect students who are mentally engaged but hesitant to participate vocally, perhaps due to linguistic insecurity, fear of judgment, or cultural tendencies toward classroom reticence. These results are aligned with Trang's (2022) study, which found that non-English major students may remain engaged in language learning even if they do not express it through overt verbal interaction. Likewise, Zhang (2019) identified that while burnout and disconnection are present in some contexts, engagement levels can remain high when students perceive the course content as relevant and the classroom climate as supportive.

This study contributes to the field of English language education in several keyways. First, it offers empirical, data-driven insight into the actual participation behaviors of non-English major students—an understudied demographic in EFL research. Second, the study challenges prevailing assumptions that these students are predominantly passive, demonstrating instead that they are capable of and willing to engage actively when the classroom environment is conducive. Third, the findings inform pedagogical practices by highlighting the types of activities that elicit the most engagement—such as discussions and opinion-sharing, which can guide instructors in designing more interactive and responsive EFL instruction.

While the findings are valuable, this study is not without limitations. The sample size was relatively small ($n = 20$), which limits the generalizability of the results to broader populations. Moreover, the self-report nature of the questionnaire may introduce social desirability bias, with students potentially overstating their participation levels. Additionally, the study lacked triangulation with qualitative data such as classroom observations or interviews, which could have provided richer insights into students' engagement patterns and motivations. Finally, instrument reliability (e.g., internal consistency) was not statistically tested due to resource constraints. Future research should consider expanding the sample across multiple faculties or institutions and incorporating mixed methods designs to capture both the observable and perceived aspects of student participation. A longitudinal approach may also provide insights into how participation evolves over time and in response to different instructional strategies.



5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the level of classroom participation among non-English major students in an English language course at an Indonesian university. The findings indicate that the majority of students demonstrate active involvement in classroom activities, with 80% categorized as either active or very active participants. Students reported frequent engagement in interactive behaviors such as asking questions, sharing opinions, and participating in discussions, challenging the assumption that non-English majors are generally passive learners in EFL contexts. Although passive indicators such as sitting quietly or merely listening were reported by a minority, the responses suggest that most students do not view themselves as disengaged. The results also revealed a nuanced pattern in students' note-taking behavior, highlighting the coexistence of cognitive engagement and hesitance toward verbal interaction. The study contributes to a more accurate understanding of student engagement among non-English majors and underscores the importance of creating supportive and interactive classroom environments. These findings can inform English language instructors and curriculum designers in developing strategies that promote participation across diverse student populations. While the study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its small sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research with larger and more diverse samples, complemented by qualitative methods, is recommended to build on these findings and explore the factors that sustain or hinder participation in greater depth.

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