



Dynamics of interaction and participation in English classrooms with advanced students: a systematization of experiences at the “Alianza” Foundation, 2026

Dynamics of Classroom Interaction and Student Participation in EFL Contexts: A Systematization of Pedagogical Experience

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Resumen:



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Este estudio examina las dinámicas de interacción en el aula y su influencia en la participación estudiantil en contextos de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), a partir de la sistematización de una experiencia pedagógica desarrollada en la Fundación Alianza. La investigación se llevó a cabo con estudiantes de nivel primaria que presentaban un dominio avanzado del inglés, pero evidenciaban patrones de participación heterogéneos durante las actividades en clase.

Desde un enfoque cualitativo sustentado en la sistematización de experiencias, el estudio se apoya en la observación participante, los diarios de campo y el análisis de la interacción para reconstruir e interpretar críticamente el proceso de enseñanza. Los hallazgos muestran que la participación no depende únicamente de la competencia lingüística, sino que está significativamente mediada por factores afectivos, relacionales y contextuales, como la motivación, la confianza comunicativa y la dinámica entre pares.

Si bien la implementación de metodologías activas —como la gamificación, el trabajo colaborativo y las actividades comunicativas— incrementó el nivel general de involucramiento, estas no garantizaron de manera consistente una participación equitativa. En este sentido, los resultados evidencian la necesidad de una mediación pedagógica intencional que estructure la interacción y favorezca la inclusión.

El estudio aporta a la pedagogía del EFL al reconceptualizar la participación como un fenómeno socialmente construido y al ofrecer orientaciones contextualizadas que contribuyen al diseño de prácticas docentes más inclusivas y reflexivas.

Palabras clave: Sistematización de experiencias, Enseñanza del inglés, Interacción en el aula, Participación estudiantil

Abstract:

This study examines the dynamics of classroom interaction and their influence on student participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts through the systematization of a pedagogical experience conducted at Fundación Alianza. The research



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involved primary-level students with advanced English proficiency who displayed heterogeneous participation patterns during classroom activities.

Adopting a qualitative approach grounded in the systematization of experiences, the study draws on participant observation, field notes, and interaction analysis to critically reconstruct the teaching process. The findings reveal that student participation is not solely determined by linguistic competence but is significantly shaped by affective, relational, and contextual factors, including motivation, communicative confidence, and peer dynamics.

Although active learning strategies such as gamification, collaborative tasks, and communicative activities increased overall engagement, they did not consistently ensure equitable participation. These results highlight the need for intentional pedagogical mediation to structure interaction and promote inclusion.

The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by reconceptualizing participation as a socially constructed phenomenon and by providing context-sensitive insights that inform the design of more inclusive and reflective teaching practices.

Keywords: Systematization of experiences, English language teaching, Classroom interaction, Student participation.

Introduction

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has undergone significant transformations over recent decades, moving away from traditional teacher-centered models toward approaches that emphasize communication, learner autonomy, and interaction as fundamental components of the learning process. Within this evolving pedagogical landscape, classroom interaction has come to be recognized not merely as a methodological resource, but



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as a central mechanism through which language learning is constructed. From communicative and interactionist perspectives, language is not acquired solely through exposure to input, but through active engagement in meaningful interaction, where learners negotiate meaning, co-construct knowledge, and develop communicative competence.

In this context, participation has gained increasing relevance as a key dimension of language learning, as it reflects the extent to which students engage with both the content and the social dynamics of the classroom. However, participation is not a straightforward or homogeneous phenomenon. Rather, it is shaped by a complex interplay of linguistic, cognitive, affective, and social factors that influence how learners position themselves within interactional spaces. Consequently, understanding participation requires moving beyond simplistic assumptions that equate engagement with observable verbal output or frequency of contribution.

Despite the widespread adoption of communicative and student-centered methodologies, ensuring equitable participation remains a persistent challenge in EFL classrooms. While strategies such as collaborative learning, gamification, and task-based instruction have been promoted as effective means of fostering engagement, their implementation does not inherently guarantee balanced interaction among learners. In practice, participation often emerges as unevenly distributed, with certain students consistently taking central roles in communicative activities, while others remain marginal or disengaged. This pattern raises important questions about the underlying dynamics that shape participation and about the extent to which current pedagogical approaches adequately address issues of inclusion and equity.

This challenge becomes particularly evident in classrooms where students demonstrate relatively high levels of linguistic proficiency. From a traditional perspective, advanced learners are expected to participate actively, given their greater command of the language. However, empirical observations and recent research suggest that this assumption does not always hold true. Even in contexts where students possess the linguistic resources necessary for communication, participation may vary significantly, influenced by factors such as communicative confidence, motivation, peer relationships, and classroom climate. This apparent contradiction points to a critical gap between theoretical expectations and classroom realities, highlighting the need to reconsider the factors that enable or constrain participation.

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is understood as a socially situated process in which interaction plays a mediating role in the construction of knowledge. Within this framework, participation is not merely an individual behavior, but a relational phenomenon that is shaped through interaction with others. Opportunities to participate are not equally distributed, but are negotiated within the classroom through patterns of interaction, implicit norms, and power



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relations. As such, the analysis of classroom interaction becomes essential for understanding how participation is constructed, who participates, under what conditions, and with what consequences for learning.

In addition to sociocultural perspectives, critical pedagogical approaches further emphasize the importance of examining issues of equity, inclusion, and voice within educational settings. From this standpoint, the classroom is viewed as a social space where power dynamics influence access to participation and where not all students are equally positioned to contribute. This perspective challenges educators to move beyond the mere promotion of interaction and to actively design learning environments that foster inclusive and equitable participation. In the context of EFL teaching, this implies recognizing that language learning is not only a cognitive process but also a social and affective experience that is deeply influenced by students' identities, relationships, and lived experiences.

Within the Latin American context, and particularly in Colombia, the teaching of English has gained increasing importance as part of broader educational policies aimed at promoting bilingualism and enhancing global competitiveness. However, the implementation of these policies often takes place in diverse and complex educational settings, characterized by variations in resources, institutional conditions, and student populations. In such contexts, EFL classrooms become spaces where multiple factors intersect, including socio-economic conditions, prior educational experiences, and affective variables, all of which shape the learning process and influence participation.

Educational initiatives such as Fundación Alianza play a significant role in expanding access to English language learning opportunities, particularly for students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. These contexts offer valuable opportunities to examine how pedagogical practices operate in real classroom settings and how interaction dynamics influence participation among learners with different experiences and characteristics. At the same time, they present unique challenges, as the heterogeneity of the student population requires flexible and context-sensitive approaches to teaching.

The present study is situated within this broader framework, drawing on a pedagogical experience developed during a teaching practicum with primary-level students who demonstrated an advanced level of English proficiency. While this level of proficiency might be expected to facilitate active participation, classroom observations revealed a more complex reality. Participation patterns were markedly heterogeneous: some students engaged actively and assumed leadership roles during communicative activities, while others remained peripheral, contributing minimally or hesitating to participate. This situation highlights the need to examine



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not only what students know, but how they engage within the interactional dynamics of the classroom.

In response to this challenge, the study adopts the systematization of experiences as a methodological approach, which allows for the critical reconstruction and interpretation of pedagogical practice. Rather than focusing solely on outcomes, this approach emphasizes the analysis of lived experiences, enabling the identification of patterns, tensions, and underlying processes that shape classroom interaction. Through this lens, teaching is understood as a reflective and transformative practice, where knowledge is generated from the systematic analysis of experience.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how interaction dynamics operate in EFL classrooms with advanced learners and how these dynamics shape students' opportunities for participation. By focusing on a specific pedagogical context, the research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of participation as a socially constructed phenomenon and to generate insights that may inform the development of more inclusive and responsive teaching practices.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to bridging the gap between theory and practice in EFL pedagogy. By foregrounding the relational and contextual dimensions of learning, it challenges traditional assumptions that equate linguistic competence with active participation and highlights the importance of intentional pedagogical mediation in structuring interaction. Ultimately, this research advocates for a reconceptualization of the EFL classroom as a dynamic social space in which interaction, participation, and learning are deeply interconnected, and where the role of the teacher extends beyond instruction to the facilitation of equitable and meaningful engagement for all students.

Research Problem and Question

Contextualization of the Problem

The research problem addressed in this study emerges within the broader field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, where interaction has been widely recognized as a central component of language learning. Contemporary pedagogical approaches emphasize the importance of communicative competence, learner-centered instruction, and active participation as key elements in fostering meaningful learning experiences. Within this paradigm, classroom interaction is understood as the primary space in which language is practiced, negotiated, and internalized.

However, despite these theoretical advancements, the implementation of interaction-based methodologies in real classroom contexts often reveals significant inconsistencies. One of the most persistent challenges lies in ensuring equitable student participation. While interaction



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is promoted as a universal pedagogical principle, its distribution within the classroom is rarely uniform. Instead, participation tends to concentrate among certain students, while others remain marginal, highlighting a discrepancy between pedagogical intentions and actual classroom dynamics.

Empirical Observation of the Problem

This study is grounded in a pedagogical experience developed during a teaching practicum with primary-level students who demonstrated an advanced level of English proficiency. From a theoretical perspective, such proficiency would suggest favorable conditions for active engagement in communicative activities. However, systematic classroom observations revealed a contrasting reality characterized by heterogeneous participation patterns.

Across multiple sessions, it was observed that a group of students consistently assumed active roles, leading discussions, initiating interaction, and engaging confidently in communicative tasks. In contrast, other learners, despite having comparable linguistic abilities, exhibited limited participation, hesitation, or passive engagement. These patterns were not isolated incidents but recurring dynamics that persisted throughout the teaching process.

This empirical evidence suggests that participation cannot be fully explained by linguistic competence alone, pointing instead to the influence of additional variables that shape how students engage within the classroom.

Theoretical Tension: Proficiency vs Participation

The observed disparity between linguistic competence and actual participation reveals a critical tension within EFL pedagogy. Traditional assumptions often posit a direct relationship between proficiency and engagement, implying that students who possess higher levels of language ability are more likely to participate actively. However, the findings from this pedagogical context challenge this assumption.

Recent research supports the idea that participation is a multidimensional construct influenced by affective, social, and contextual factors. Variables such as communicative confidence, motivation, anxiety, peer relationships, and classroom climate play a crucial role in shaping students' willingness to engage. From this perspective, participation is not merely a



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reflection of what learners know, but of how they position themselves within the social dynamics of the classroom.

This tension underscores the need to reconceptualize participation as a socially mediated phenomenon rather than a direct outcome of linguistic competence.

Limitations of Current Pedagogical Approaches

The growing adoption of active learning methodologies—such as collaborative learning, gamification, and communicative tasks—has been widely promoted as a means of increasing student engagement. While these approaches have demonstrated potential in creating dynamic learning environments, their effectiveness in ensuring equitable participation remains limited.

In practice, these methodologies often rely on the assumption that providing opportunities for interaction is sufficient to guarantee engagement. However, without intentional structuring and pedagogical mediation, interaction may become unevenly distributed. More confident or dominant students may take control of communicative spaces, while others remain passive or excluded.

This limitation highlights a critical gap in current pedagogical approaches: the need to move beyond promoting interaction as a general principle toward understanding and designing interaction as a structured and inclusive process.

Participation as a Socially Constructed Phenomenon

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is inherently a social process mediated through interaction. Within this framework, participation is understood as a dynamic and relational construct that is shaped through engagement with others. Opportunities to participate are not equally available to all students but are negotiated within the classroom through interactional patterns, roles, and implicit norms.

This perspective shifts the focus from individual ability to the collective processes that structure participation. It emphasizes the importance of analyzing how interaction is organized, how roles are distributed, and how certain forms of participation are enabled or constrained within specific classroom contexts.

Understanding participation in this way requires examining not only observable behaviors but also the underlying dynamics that influence who speaks, who remains silent, and why.

Contextual Relevance of the Study

The problem addressed in this study is situated within a specific educational context characterized by both advanced linguistic proficiency and socio-emotional diversity. The setting,



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a scholarship-based program, brings together students from diverse backgrounds, each with distinct experiences, motivations, and learning trajectories.

This context adds an additional layer of complexity to the analysis, as participation is influenced not only by individual factors but also by broader social and institutional conditions. As such, the study provides an opportunity to explore how interaction dynamics operate within a real educational setting and how they shape opportunities for participation among diverse learners.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research on classroom interaction and student participation, there remains a limited understanding of how these dynamics operate in contexts involving advanced-level learners. Much of the existing literature has focused either on lower proficiency levels or on generalized models of interaction, often overlooking the complexities of participation in heterogeneous classrooms.

Additionally, there is a lack of studies that integrate reflective methodologies, such as the systematization of experiences, to analyze classroom interaction from a practice-based perspective. This gap highlights the need for research that bridges theoretical frameworks with real pedagogical contexts, providing insights that are both empirically grounded and contextually relevant.

Research Question

In response to the issues outlined above, this study seeks to address the following research question:

How are interaction dynamics configured in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms with advanced-level students, and in what ways do these dynamics shape students' opportunities for participation?

This question reflects the study's aim to explore participation not only as an observable outcome but as a process shaped by interactional, social, and contextual factors within the classroom.

Despite the growing emphasis on interaction in EFL pedagogy, there is still a limited understanding of how participation is constructed within classroom dynamics. While communicative approaches promote active engagement, participation often remains uneven, even among students with advanced levels of language proficiency. This suggests that participation cannot be fully explained by linguistic competence alone but must be analyzed as a socially mediated process shaped by interaction patterns, classroom norms, and affective factors.



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Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine how these dynamics operate within specific educational contexts.

Literature Review

Classroom Interaction in EFL Contexts

Classroom interaction has been widely recognized as a central component of language learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Within contemporary pedagogical paradigms, interaction is not simply understood as an instructional technique, but as the primary medium through which language is constructed, negotiated, and internalized. This perspective represents a shift from traditional models of language teaching, which emphasized transmission of knowledge, toward more dynamic and learner-centered approaches that prioritize communication and participation.

From an interactionist perspective, language acquisition is facilitated through meaningful communication, where learners engage in processes such as negotiation of meaning, feedback exchange, and collaborative dialogue. According to Michael Long (1996), interaction creates opportunities for learners to process input, produce output, and modify their linguistic performance in response to feedback. This process is essential for language development, as it allows learners to identify gaps in their knowledge and refine their communicative competence.

Similarly, Rod Ellis (2012) highlights that interaction contributes to language learning by providing authentic contexts for communication, where learners can use language meaningfully rather than merely practicing isolated forms. In this sense, interaction is closely linked to the



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development of communicative competence, as it integrates linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions.

Recent research has further expanded this view by emphasizing that interaction is a multidimensional process shaped by cognitive, social, and affective factors (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Hiver et al., 2021). These studies suggest that interaction is not only about exchanging information, but also about building relationships, negotiating identities, and creating a shared learning environment.

Within classroom settings, interaction is structured through patterns such as turn-taking, teacher-student exchanges, and peer collaboration. These interactional structures influence how participation is distributed, determining who has access to communicative opportunities. Therefore, understanding classroom interaction requires not only analyzing its presence but also examining how it is organized and mediated within the learning environment.

Participation as a Socially Constructed and Multidimensional Phenomenon

Participation has traditionally been conceptualized as observable student behavior, often measured through indicators such as frequency of verbal contributions or involvement in classroom activities. However, this view has been increasingly challenged by contemporary research, which conceptualizes participation as a complex, multidimensional, and socially constructed phenomenon.

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is inherently social, and participation is understood as a process of engagement within a community of practice. Lev Vygotsky (1978) argues that cognitive development occurs through interaction with others, where learners construct knowledge collaboratively. Building on this framework, James Lantolf (2011) emphasizes that language learning is mediated by social interaction and cultural tools, highlighting the inseparability of cognition and context.

This perspective implies that participation cannot be reduced to individual ability or willingness to speak. Instead, it is shaped by relational and contextual factors, including peer dynamics, classroom norms, and power relations. Participation is therefore negotiated within interaction, rather than predetermined by linguistic competence.

Recent studies reinforce this view by conceptualizing participation as a dynamic process influenced by affective variables such as motivation, anxiety, and confidence (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). For instance, learners who experience fear of negative evaluation may avoid



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participation, even when they possess adequate linguistic skills. Conversely, supportive classroom environments can foster greater engagement by reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of belonging.

Additionally, participation can take multiple forms, including verbal, non-verbal, and cognitive engagement. This broader understanding challenges traditional notions that equate participation solely with speaking, recognizing that learners may engage in different ways depending on the context and their individual characteristics.

Interaction Patterns and Classroom Discourse

The analysis of classroom discourse provides valuable insights into how participation is structured and distributed. From a conversation analysis perspective, classroom interaction is organized through systematic patterns that regulate communication.

According to Paul Seedhouse (2004), the interactional architecture of the classroom is shaped by institutional goals and pedagogical practices, which influence turn-taking, sequencing, and participation. These structures define the roles of teachers and students, as well as the types of interaction that are considered appropriate within the classroom.

One of the most widely studied patterns is the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) sequence, which typically positions the teacher as the initiator and evaluator of discourse. While this structure can support controlled language practice, it may also limit opportunities for student-led interaction and reduce the diversity of participation.

As noted by Walsh (2011), even in communicative classrooms, interaction may remain teacher-centered or dominated by certain students. This highlights the need to move beyond the presence of interaction toward a more critical analysis of its distribution and quality.

Furthermore, interaction patterns are influenced by social dynamics within the classroom, including peer relationships and group structures. These dynamics can either facilitate or constrain participation, depending on how interaction is organized and mediated.

Pedagogical Approaches and the Structuring of Participation

The shift toward communicative and active learning approaches has significantly influenced EFL teaching practices. These approaches aim to create interactive learning environments where students actively engage in meaningful communication.

Jack C. Richards (2015) emphasizes that effective language teaching involves integrating communication, interaction, and learner engagement. Similarly, Leo van Lier (2014)



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highlights the importance of creating authentic learning environments that promote autonomy and participation.

Active learning methodologies, such as task-based learning, cooperative learning, and gamification, are designed to increase engagement and participation. This perspective is closely aligned with experiential learning principles, which emphasize learning through active engagement and reflection. As proposed by Dewey (1933), education should be grounded in experience, where learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment. In this sense, participation becomes a fundamental condition for meaningful learning rather than a secondary outcome of instruction. According to Johnson and Johnson (2017, 2020), cooperative learning requires structured interaction, positive interdependence, and individual accountability to be effective.

However, research indicates that these approaches do not automatically ensure equitable participation. As noted by Diana Boxer (2011), interaction is influenced by social norms and communicative practices that may privilege certain learners. Similarly, recent studies suggest that without intentional pedagogical mediation, active learning strategies may reproduce existing inequalities rather than reduce them (Fredricks et al., 2023).

This highlights the importance of the teacher's role in structuring interaction and ensuring that all students have opportunities to participate.

Contextual and Critical Perspectives on Participation

In Latin American contexts, EFL teaching is shaped by socio-cultural, institutional, and economic factors that influence classroom interaction. Research in the region highlights the importance of contextualizing pedagogical approaches to address local realities.

Studies by Usma (2009) and Bonilla and Tejada-Sánchez (2016) emphasize that participation is influenced by power relations, cultural norms, and socio-emotional factors. These elements shape how students engage in the classroom and may create barriers to participation.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, Paulo Freire (1970) argues that education should promote equity, inclusion, and student voice. This perspective is particularly relevant in EFL contexts, where participation is often unevenly distributed.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, participation is not only a matter of engagement but also of voice, agency, and inclusion within the classroom. In this sense, participatory approaches to curriculum development emphasize the importance of involving learners in



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meaningful decision-making processes. Auerbach (1992) argues that language teaching should be grounded in learners' experiences and social realities, promoting active participation as a means of empowerment rather than mere linguistic practice.

Latin American scholars such as Marco Raúl Mejía further emphasize the need for context-sensitive pedagogies that recognize the diversity of learners and promote social transformation. This approach highlights the classroom as a social space where participation is negotiated and where issues of inclusion and exclusion must be addressed.

Bridging Theory and Practice: Systematization of Experiences

Recent developments in educational research have emphasized the importance of methodologies that connect theory and practice. The systematization of experiences, proposed by Óscar Jara Holliday (2018), offers a framework for analyzing pedagogical practice through reflection and critical interpretation.

This approach involves the reconstruction and analysis of lived experiences, allowing educators to generate knowledge grounded in practice. In Latin America, scholars such as Alfredo Ghiso have highlighted the importance of systematization as a tool for producing pedagogical knowledge.

Despite its relevance, this approach has been underutilized in EFL research, where studies often focus on measurable outcomes rather than on the processes that shape learning. This gap highlights the need for research that examines classroom interaction from a practice-based perspective.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature reviewed demonstrates that interaction is central to language learning and that participation is a complex, socially mediated phenomenon influenced by cognitive, affective, and contextual factors. While significant progress has been made in understanding these processes, important gaps remain.

There is a need for research that examines how interaction dynamics operate in specific classroom contexts, particularly those involving advanced-level learners with diverse socio-emotional characteristics. Additionally, there is limited research that integrates sociocultural perspectives with reflective methodologies such as systematization.

In response to these gaps, the present study seeks to analyze how interaction dynamics shape participation within a specific educational context, contributing to a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of EFL teaching and learning.



Methodological Framework and Procedure

Research Approach and Epistemological Orientation

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in an interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the participants and within their natural context. Rather than measuring variables or establishing causal relationships, the research focuses on interpreting the meanings, interactions, and processes that shape classroom participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings.

Within this framework, participation is understood as a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon. Therefore, the study does not aim to quantify participation, but to analyze interaction dynamics, classroom discourse, and students' engagement as they emerge in authentic learning environments.

The epistemological foundation of this study is aligned with constructivist and sociocultural perspectives, which conceive knowledge as co-constructed through interaction. From this standpoint, classroom dynamics are not viewed as fixed or objective realities, but as processes that emerge through the relationships, practices, and meanings negotiated among participants.

In this sense, the use of systematization of experiences enables a reflective and interpretative analysis of pedagogical practice, allowing the researcher to examine how interaction and participation are constructed within a specific educational context. This approach is consistent with sociocultural perspectives that emphasize the role of context, mediation, and social interaction in learning.

Methodological Framework: Systematization of Experiences

The study is grounded in the methodological framework of the systematization of experiences, as proposed by Óscar Jara Holliday (2018). This approach represents a distinctive form of qualitative inquiry that focuses on the critical reconstruction and interpretation of pedagogical practice. Unlike traditional research methodologies that prioritize external



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observation, systematization places the lived experience of the practitioner at the center of the analytical process.

Systematization is not limited to describing what occurred in the classroom; rather, it involves a reflective and analytical process through which experience is organized, interpreted, and transformed into knowledge. This approach is particularly relevant in educational research, as it bridges the gap between theory and practice, allowing educators to generate context-sensitive insights grounded in real teaching experiences.

The methodological process is structured around four interconnected stages: recovery of the experience, organization of information, interpretation of findings, and transformation of practice. These stages provide a coherent framework for analyzing classroom interaction and understanding how participation is constructed within specific pedagogical contexts.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted within the context of a teaching practicum developed in collaboration with Fundación Alianza and Colegio General Santander IED. The participants were primary-level students aged between 12 and 15 years, enrolled in a scholarship-based program characterized by socio-economic diversity.

A distinctive feature of this group was their relatively advanced level of English proficiency, which, in principle, created favorable conditions for communicative interaction. However, as observed throughout the teaching process, this linguistic competence did not translate into homogeneous participation, making the context particularly relevant for examining the relationship between interaction dynamics and student engagement.

The classroom environment was shaped by a combination of institutional guidelines, pedagogical objectives, and the specific characteristics of the student group, including differences in motivation, confidence, and interpersonal relationships. These contextual factors played a significant role in shaping interaction patterns and were therefore integral to the analysis.

Pedagogical Experience as Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the pedagogical experience itself, conceptualized as a sequence of ten teaching sessions designed and implemented during the practicum. Each session lasted approximately three and a half hours and was structured around communicative objectives aligned with the development of oral skills.



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The lessons incorporated a range of active learning methodologies, including collaborative tasks, role-plays, gamified activities, and the use of audiovisual resources. These strategies were selected in accordance with contemporary approaches to EFL teaching that emphasize interaction and learner engagement.

However, rather than evaluating the effectiveness of these methodologies in isolation, the study focuses on how they contributed to shaping interaction dynamics within the classroom. In this sense, the pedagogical experience is analyzed as a dynamic process in which teaching strategies, student behaviors, and contextual factors interact to influence participation.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out through multiple qualitative instruments, allowing for methodological triangulation and enhancing the depth and reliability of the analysis.

First, participant observation was employed as a central method, enabling the researcher to engage directly with classroom dynamics and to document interaction patterns as they unfolded. This approach provided access to both verbal and non-verbal aspects of participation, including turn-taking, body language, and group interactions.

Second, field journals were maintained after each session, recording detailed reflections on pedagogical decisions, classroom atmosphere, and emerging patterns of interaction. These journals served as a key source of interpretive data, capturing the researcher’s insights and observations throughout the process.

Third, structured observation notes were used to systematically document specific aspects of participation, such as the distribution of turns, the roles assumed by students, and instances of engagement or exclusion.

Additionally, audio-visual recordings of selected activities—particularly communicative tasks such as role-plays and group work—were collected to allow for a more detailed analysis of interaction. These recordings enabled the examination of both linguistic and interactional features, providing a richer understanding of participation dynamics.

Data Organization and Analytical Procedures

The analysis of data followed an inductive process of categorization, in which patterns and themes emerged from the systematic review of the collected information. This process involved multiple stages of coding, comparison, and refinement, allowing for the identification of recurring interactional dynamics.



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Key analytical categories included patterns of participation, turn-taking distribution, leadership roles within groups, levels of engagement, and instances of marginalization or exclusion. These categories were not predefined but emerged from the data, reflecting the complexity of classroom interaction.

To support the organization of data, analytical matrices were used to compare findings across the ten sessions, facilitating the identification of consistent patterns and variations over time. This process allowed for a more structured and transparent analysis, ensuring coherence between the data and the interpretations derived from it.

Interpretation and Reflective Analysis

The interpretation of findings was conducted through iterative cycles of observation, action, and reflection, consistent with principles of reflective practice. This approach enabled the researcher to move beyond descriptive accounts and to develop a critical understanding of the factors shaping participation.

The analysis was informed by theoretical frameworks drawn from sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and EFL didactics, which provided conceptual tools for interpreting interaction dynamics. Through this process, participation was examined as a socially mediated phenomenon influenced by both individual and contextual variables.

Transformation and Pedagogical Implications

A key feature of the systematization approach is its transformative dimension. Based on the insights derived from the analysis, a set of pedagogical strategies was designed and implemented to address the identified challenges related to participation.

These strategies included the use of structured interaction techniques, role assignment within group tasks, and guided frameworks for communicative activities aimed at promoting equitable participation. The implementation of these strategies allowed for the observation of changes in interaction patterns and provided evidence of the potential for pedagogical intervention to influence participation dynamics.

This stage reflects the integration of reflection and action, highlighting the role of the teacher as both practitioner and researcher, and reinforcing the value of systematization as a tool for continuous professional development.

Methodological Rigor and Trustworthiness



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To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Triangulation of data sources allowed for the validation of findings across different types of evidence. Additionally, the use of detailed documentation and systematic analysis enhanced the transparency of the research process.

Reflective journaling contributed to the acknowledgment of the researcher’s positionality, allowing for a critical examination of potential biases. Furthermore, collaborative discussions with peers supported the validation and refinement of analytical categories, strengthening the reliability of the interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles related to educational research. Participation was conducted within an institutional framework that ensured respect for students’ rights and well-being. Data collection processes, including observations and recordings, were carried out with appropriate authorization, and all information was treated with confidentiality.

Students’ identities were protected through anonymization, and the analysis focused on interactional patterns rather than individual performance. The research was conducted with the aim of contributing to educational improvement, ensuring that the findings would be used to enhance pedagogical practice rather than to evaluate or label participants.

Results and Discussion



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The systematization of the pedagogical experience yielded a set of findings that provide a critical understanding of how interaction dynamics shape student participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Rather than presenting results as isolated observations, this section integrates empirical evidence with theoretical perspectives to interpret participation as a socially mediated and context-dependent phenomenon.

Linguistic Proficiency Does Not Guarantee Active Participation

One of the most significant findings of this study is that advanced levels of English proficiency do not necessarily lead to active or equitable participation. Despite the students' demonstrated ability to use the language effectively, participation patterns were markedly uneven. While some learners consistently engaged in communicative tasks and assumed leading roles, others remained peripheral, contributing minimally or avoiding interaction.

From an analytical perspective, this finding challenges traditional assumptions within EFL pedagogy that equate linguistic competence with communicative engagement. The data suggest that participation is not solely determined by cognitive or linguistic factors but is instead shaped by a broader set of variables.

This finding suggests that participation is not solely determined by linguistic competence, but rather emerges from social and interactional dynamics. This aligns with sociocultural perspectives (Lev Vygotsky, 1978; James Lantolf, 2011), which conceptualize learning as a socially mediated process.

Additionally, the observed interaction patterns reflect structured participation dynamics, as described by Paul Seedhouse (2004), where opportunities to contribute are not equally distributed among students.

This result is further supported by research emphasizing the role of affective and relational dimensions in language learning. Factors such as communicative confidence, fear of making mistakes, and perceived peer evaluation influenced students' willingness to participate. In this sense, participation must be understood not as a direct outcome of proficiency, but as a socially constructed process that depends on the interactional environment.

Participation as a Socially Mediated and Relational Process

A second key finding highlights the relational nature of participation. Classroom interaction was structured through patterns that influenced how students positioned themselves within communicative activities. Certain learners consistently occupied central roles, initiating dialogue and leading group work, while others remained in passive or supportive roles.



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These dynamics suggest that participation is negotiated through interaction rather than individually determined. From a sociocultural perspective, this can be interpreted as evidence that learning and engagement occur within social relationships, where opportunities to participate are distributed unevenly.

Moreover, the data revealed that peer dynamics played a crucial role in shaping participation. Students were more likely to engage when they felt comfortable within their group, while negative or hierarchical relationships tended to limit interaction. This finding reinforces the importance of considering the classroom as a social space in which participation is influenced by both explicit and implicit interactional norms.

The Role of Pedagogical Design in Structuring Interaction

The implementation of active learning methodologies—such as gamification, collaborative learning, and communicative tasks—had a noticeable impact on student engagement. These strategies created dynamic learning environments that encouraged interaction and increased overall participation.

However, the analysis also revealed that the effectiveness of these methodologies depended largely on how they were structured and facilitated. In activities where roles and interactional guidelines were clearly defined, participation tended to be more balanced. In contrast, when tasks lacked structure, more confident students dominated the interaction, while others remained passive.

This finding highlights the importance of pedagogical mediation. Interaction does not automatically lead to equitable participation; it must be intentionally designed to ensure that all students have opportunities to engage. This aligns with cooperative learning theories, which emphasize the need for structured roles, positive interdependence, and individual accountability to promote meaningful participation.

Affective and Contextual Factors Shaping Participation

The study also identified the significant influence of affective and contextual variables on participation. Elements such as confidence, motivation, anxiety, and classroom climate were found to directly impact students' willingness to engage in communicative activities.

Some students, despite possessing the necessary linguistic skills, showed reluctance to participate due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. Others were influenced by



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classroom dynamics that limited their opportunities to contribute, such as dominant group members or unbalanced interaction patterns.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, these findings underscore the need to create inclusive and supportive learning environments where all students feel valued and encouraged to participate. Participation, in this sense, is not only a pedagogical issue but also an ethical one, related to equity and access within the classroom.

Tensions Between Methodological Innovation and Participation Equity

Although the use of innovative methodologies enhanced engagement, the study revealed a tension between promoting interaction and ensuring equitable participation. Strategies such as gamification and collaborative tasks generated enthusiasm and increased verbal production; however, they did not automatically address underlying participation inequalities.

In some cases, these methodologies reinforced existing dynamics, allowing more active students to dominate interaction while others remained marginal. This finding suggests that innovation in teaching methods must be accompanied by intentional strategies to regulate interaction and distribute participation more evenly.

Therefore, the effectiveness of active learning approaches depends not only on their design but also on the teacher's ability to mediate interaction and respond to the specific characteristics of the student group.

Pedagogical Implications and Transformative Insights

The findings of this study have several important implications for EFL teaching. First, they highlight the need to reconceptualize participation as a socially constructed phenomenon rather than as an individual attribute linked to linguistic competence. This perspective calls for a shift in pedagogical focus from “how much students know” to “how students engage within interaction.”

This perspective is consistent with participatory approaches to language education, which advocate for the inclusion of students' voices and experiences in the learning process. As suggested by Auerbach (1992), meaningful participation emerges when learners are positioned as active contributors rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

Second, the results emphasize the importance of structured interaction. Strategies such as role assignment, guided participation, and explicit turn-taking can help create more equitable



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opportunities for engagement. These approaches enable teachers to regulate interaction and prevent the consolidation of dominant participation patterns.

Third, the study underscores the value of reflective practice. This aligns with the concept of the reflective practitioner proposed by Schön (1983), which emphasizes the importance of critically analyzing professional practice in order to improve it. Through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, teachers can better understand classroom dynamics and make informed pedagogical decisions that foster more inclusive and effective participation. By systematically analyzing classroom dynamics, teachers can identify patterns of participation and adapt their strategies accordingly. In this sense, the systematization of experiences emerges as a powerful tool for professional development and pedagogical improvement.

Finally, the study contributes to a broader understanding of EFL classrooms as complex social environments where learning is shaped by the interplay of cognitive, affective, and relational factors. Addressing these dimensions requires a holistic approach to teaching that integrates methodological innovation with a commitment to inclusion and equity.

Synthesis of Findings

In summary, the results of this study demonstrate that participation in EFL classrooms is a multifaceted and context-dependent phenomenon. Linguistic proficiency alone does not ensure active engagement; rather, participation is shaped by interaction dynamics, pedagogical design, and affective conditions.

By integrating empirical observations with theoretical perspectives, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how participation is constructed within the classroom. It highlights the need for intentional pedagogical mediation and reinforces the importance of viewing interaction not only as a means of language practice, but as a central element in the creation of inclusive and meaningful learning experiences.



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Conclusions

The findings of this study confirm that participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms cannot be understood as a direct consequence of students' linguistic proficiency. Instead, participation emerges as a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by interactional dynamics, classroom structures, and affective conditions. This perspective aligns with sociocultural approaches, which emphasize that learning is mediated through social interaction and influenced by the relationships established within the learning environment.

One of the central contributions of this study lies in challenging the assumption that advanced language proficiency naturally leads to active participation. The evidence shows that, even in contexts where students demonstrate high levels of linguistic competence, participation can remain uneven and stratified. This finding highlights the need to move beyond individualistic interpretations of learning and to consider the broader social and interactional processes that shape engagement.

Furthermore, the study underscores the critical role of pedagogical mediation in structuring participation. While interactive and active learning methodologies create opportunities for engagement, they do not inherently guarantee equitable participation. The results demonstrate that the effectiveness of these approaches depends on how interaction is designed, facilitated, and regulated within the classroom. Consequently, teachers play a fundamental role in creating inclusive learning environments that promote balanced participation through intentional strategies such as structured interaction, role distribution, and guided collaboration.

Another important contribution of this research is the recognition of affective and relational factors as key determinants of participation. Elements such as confidence, motivation, anxiety, and peer relationships significantly influence students' willingness to engage. This finding reinforces the need to view the classroom not only as a cognitive space but also as a social and emotional environment, where participation is shaped by both internal dispositions and external conditions.

In addition, this study highlights the value of the systematization of experiences as a methodological approach for understanding classroom dynamics. By bridging theory and practice, this approach allows for a deeper and more contextualized analysis of pedagogical processes, contributing to the generation of situated knowledge that reflects the complexity of real educational settings.



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From a broader perspective, the study contributes to the field of EFL teaching by offering a nuanced understanding of participation as a multidimensional construct. It emphasizes that fostering meaningful participation requires more than implementing innovative methodologies; it demands a deliberate and reflective approach to teaching that integrates interactional, affective, and contextual dimensions.

Finally, the findings point to the need for further research that explores participation in diverse educational contexts, particularly those characterized by high linguistic proficiency combined with heterogeneous engagement. Future studies could expand this line of inquiry by incorporating longitudinal designs or comparative analyses, in order to deepen the understanding of how participation evolves over time and across different settings.

Ultimately, participation should be understood not as an individual attribute, but as a dynamic process that is co-constructed through interaction. Recognizing this complexity is essential for developing more inclusive, equitable, and effective EFL pedagogies.



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