



## Student Passivity and Classroom Participation in EFL Classrooms: Teachers' Perspectives on Contributing Factors and Instructional Strategies in Aceh, Indonesia

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### Abstract

*This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the factors contributing to student passivity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and the strategies they employed to promote active classroom participation in Aceh, Indonesia. Adopting a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five EFL teachers from two junior high schools in Southwest Aceh. The interview data were analyzed using the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that teachers generally conceptualized student passivity as limited behavioral engagement characterized by silence, reluctance to respond, and low involvement in classroom activities. Teachers identified psychological, linguistic, motivational, and contextual factors as contributing to student passivity. To address this issue, teachers reported implementing collaborative group work, game-based learning activities, and technology-enhanced instruction. These findings demonstrate how teachers interpreted the causes of student passivity and responded through instructional practices aimed at increasing participation. This study contributes to the EFL literature by providing context-specific insights into student passivity in Aceh, an underexplored educational setting, and by demonstrating how teachers interpreted and responded to passive participation. The findings offer practical implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers seeking to foster more active classroom participation.*

**Keywords:** Classroom Participation, EFL Teachers, Instructional Strategies, Student Passivity, Teachers' Perspectives.

### 1. Introduction

Student classroom participation contributes to the effectiveness of the learning process (Abdullah et al., 2011). Since the adoption of communicative language teaching in the 1970s, students' oral participation in EFL/ESL classrooms has become a growing concern, as students are expected to participate actively in interactive and cooperative activities (Tong, 2010). Oral communication has a crucial part in language development as a productive skill that facilitates meaningful interaction. Its importance lies in providing learners with opportunities to develop confidence and apply the target language in practical, real-life situations (Dewan & Sharma, 2025). Conversely, passive participation poses a significant challenge to second language instruction. When learners are hesitant to contribute, they may be unable to share their knowledge and ideas, which not only restricts their own learning opportunities but also reduces the potential benefits for teachers and peers who could learn from these contributions (Baktash & Chalak, 2015).

Despite the fact that EFL teachers have long been concerned with encouraging speaking and simulating classroom engagement to real-life conversation, silence does not

always signify a communication failure (Nunan, 1998); however, it can sometimes restrict conversation and limit student participation (Abedinpour, 2026). EFL teachers may have observed occasions when students are unresponsive and silent and avoid interaction or communication with the teacher (Yahyazade & Moghaddam, 2014). Such reluctance to communicate often frustrates teachers who seek to foster a communicative learning environment, this is particularly problematic because active language production is widely regarded as essential for both language acquisition and the development of higher-order cognitive and analytical skills (Mercer & Howe, 2012; Shea, 2017; Swain, 2000).

In certain Asian EFL classrooms, including Indonesia, students often show a marked reluctance to actively contribute to discussions or share their ideas with the whole class (Shea, 2017). This hesitation may stem from anxiety, a desire not to stand out, or self-imposed restraint. For example, when teachers direct questions to the class, many students deliberately avoid eye contact and remain silent (Shea, 2017). In certain instances, this silent behavior is compounded by students' disinterest in foreign language learning, further increasing their limited participation in classroom participation. Such limited participation may serve as a subtle response to the teacher's pedagogical approach (King, 2013; Rizki et al., 2025).

Student passivity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms remains a persistent yet underexplored issue in the Indonesian educational context. Existing studies have examined this phenomenon across diverse regions and instructional settings, highlighting both instructional challenges and pedagogical responses. Several studies conducted in Indonesia illustrate how teacher strategies vary across educational contexts. In West Java, Listianingsih (2025) investigated EFL teacher strategies and the challenges of managing passive students in junior high school, revealing contextual constraints that influence student engagement and specific strategies used by the teacher to deal with passive students. Similarly, research conducted in rural junior high schools in East Java by Nisa (2025) focused on the strategies employed by English teachers to encourage participation among passive students, emphasizing the role of teacher intervention in fostering classroom interaction. The issue of student passivity has also been explored in non-traditional learning environments. Sipahelut (2023), for instance, examined primary EFL teachers' challenges and strategies in addressing passive students during emergency remote teaching in Ambon, demonstrating how limited interaction and technological constraints exacerbated student passivity. Beyond instructional strategies, another study has investigated the impact of student passivity on learning outcomes. Styati and Latief (2018) analyzed the interaction between dominant and passive students in pair work and its effect on writing performance. Conducted in Madiun, East Java, their study found significant differences in writing performance between students assigned to dominant–dominant pairs and those assigned to dominant–passive pairs.

The studies reviewed above indicate that the existing body of research has primarily focused on regions such as West Java, East Java, and Ambon, as well as on particular instructional settings. To date, empirical research examining passive participation in EFL classrooms in the Acehese context remains limited. Given Aceh's distinctive sociocultural, educational, and linguistic characteristics, findings from other regions may not be fully transferable. As learning contexts may give rise to different patterns of student behavior and participation, this study addresses this gap by examining teachers' perceptions of students' passivity in EFL classrooms in Aceh, thereby providing a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of the phenomenon. From a pedagogical standpoint, teachers'

perspectives are crucial because they shape interpretations of student passivity and inform instructional responses aimed at fostering more active classroom engagement.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study pursues two primary aims. First, it explores the factors that teachers perceive to contribute to student passivity in EFL classrooms in Aceh. Second, it examines the strategies teachers employ to encourage more active participation. The study contributes to the existing literature by moving beyond a descriptive account of passive behavior to explain why student passivity persists and how teachers respond to it in a specific EFL context. By examining teachers' perceptions of the psychological, linguistic, motivational, and contextual factors associated with student passivity, together with the strategies they employ to foster classroom participation, the study offers context-sensitive insights for researchers, teacher educators, and EFL practitioners seeking to promote student engagement.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Conceptualizing Student Passivity in EFL Contexts**

A passive student is generally understood as one who avoids active participation, minimizes communication, and exerts limited effort in classroom learning (Ariebowo & Puspitasari, 2022; Smith, 2014). In language education contexts, students who are hesitant to speak English often adopt passive roles during instructional activities (Aripin & Umam, 2019). Such passivity may slow language development, as students who do not actively attempt to express themselves are less likely to notice the gap between their intended meaning and their actual linguistic production, thereby limiting opportunities for linguistic development. Furthermore, student silence provides teachers with minimal feedback on how instructional content is interpreted and processed (Sari, 2018; Swain, 1985). When passivity becomes widespread, it may influence overall classroom dynamics, weakening collaborative learning and diminishing the effectiveness of group work. In tasks requiring equal contribution, limited participation by some group members can negatively affect peer confidence and collective performance, even when other capable students are present (Mariappan, 2023).

### **2.2. Pedagogical Implications of Student Passivity**

Student passivity also has important pedagogical implications. Low engagement may undermine instructional effectiveness and reduce teachers' confidence in their teaching strategies (Mariappan, 2023). Consequently, lesson design should consider student-related factors such as students' preferences, perceived benefits of instructional activities, learning needs, and levels of competence (Mariappan, 2023). Traditional teacher-centered approaches have often conceptualized students as passive recipients of knowledge—"sponges" or empty vessels expected to absorb information transmitted by teachers (Alzahrani, 2018). This perspective tends to prioritize examination performance over critical thinking and creative engagement.

### **2.3. Typologies of Classroom Participation**

Participation, however, is not a fixed characteristic but rather a dynamic, context-dependent behavior. Liu (2001) classifies student involvement into four forms: full integration, participation in the circumstances, marginal interaction, and silent observation. In full integration, learners actively and spontaneously contribute to classroom discussions while demonstrating an awareness of appropriate participation. Participation in the circumstances is shaped by social, cultural, cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and environmental factors that may constrain active engagement (Abdullah et al., 2012). Marginal interaction is characterized by limited involvement, with students primarily adopting listening and note-taking roles. Silent observation involves refraining from oral participation

while engaging in alternative strategies such as recording lectures, writing notes, or discussing content after class (Abdullah et al., 2012). Through observational learning, students may acquire knowledge indirectly by observing the participation of more active peers (Smith & Smith, 2014). These categories suggest that participation patterns may shift across contexts rather than remain stable over time.

#### **2.4. Cultural Interpretations of Student Passivity**

Within discussions of student passivity, it is often assumed that Asian students are more inclined toward passive learning behaviors. Their quietness in classroom settings is often interpreted as a reflection of cultural norms emphasizing respect for authority and teacher-centered instruction (Ngoc, 2017). Limited verbal participation has thus been associated with politeness, obedience, and fear of making mistakes. In several Asian contexts, reluctance to speak has been linked to deeply rooted learning cultures that prioritize deference toward teachers, which may inhibit the open exchange of ideas (Ngoc, 2017). Students with limited language proficiency may experience heightened anxiety about making errors or being criticized, leading them to avoid oral participation in English classes (Shea, 2017).

#### **2.5. Rethinking Student Passivity Beyond Cultural Determinism**

However, the above cultural explanation has increasingly been challenged. A number of studies indicate that students do not necessarily accept the role of obedient listeners but instead seek more active engagement in the learning process (Ngoc, 2017). Scholars argue that the portrayal of Asian learners as inherently passive represents a reductive cultural stereotype (Cheng, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Empirical evidence suggests that student reluctance to participate is not confined to Asian classrooms. Research conducted in North American foreign language classrooms shows that English-speaking students may also limit classroom interaction due to foreign language anxiety (Chang, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Conversely, studies in Asian language classrooms have documented high levels of student engagement, with students actively contributing to discussions and responding enthusiastically to teachers' questions (Chang, 2011).

In a conclusion, these findings demonstrate that cultural background alone does not determine classroom passivity. Although certain instances of reticence have been observed (Chang, 2011; Cheng, 2000), it is inaccurate to generalize such tendencies to all Asian students across diverse educational settings. Participation is better understood as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by psychological, pedagogical, contextual, and sociocultural factors rather than as a fixed cultural trait.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative research is situated within the interpretive paradigm and informed by constructivist theory, which assumes that knowledge is subjective and constructed through individuals' experiences and interactions with their environment. Accordingly, qualitative research emphasizes individual perspectives and seeks to provide comprehensive and nuanced descriptions of phenomena (Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, 2020). A qualitative descriptive design is particularly appropriate when the aim is to obtain straightforward descriptions of participants' experiences and perceptions and to present findings that closely reflect participants' own perspectives (Doyle et al., 2019). Accordingly, this design was considered appropriate for examining teachers' perceptions of students' passive participation in EFL classrooms.

#### **3.2. Participants**

Five EFL teachers from two junior high schools in Southwest Aceh participated in this study. To maintain confidentiality, the schools were referred to School A and School B. Three participants (AD, PP, and RN) were from School A, and two participants (MWD and HMB) were from School B. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which individuals are intentionally selected because they possess characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Obilor, 2023). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) they were actively teaching English during the period of data collection; (2) they had a minimum of two years of EFL teaching experience, ensuring sufficient classroom experience in managing student learning and participation; (3) they taught students across junior high school grade levels, providing exposure to diverse classroom contexts and learner characteristics; and (4) they had direct experience teaching students who demonstrated passive participation during classroom activities. These criteria were established to ensure that participants could provide informed, reflective, and experience-based insights into learner passivity and the strategies employed to address it.

### **3.3. Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because they enabled the collection of rich perspectives from participants while maintaining a focus on the research objectives. The method also provided flexibility for probing and clarification while adhering to a structured interview guide that ensured consistency across interviews (Ruslin et al., 2022). An interview guide consisting of 10 main questions was developed based on the research objectives. The questions focused on teachers' perceptions of the factors contributing to student passivity and the strategies they used to promote active student participation. In addition to the main questions, probing questions were asked when necessary to clarify participants' responses and obtain more detailed information. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with five teachers at locations preferred by the participants, with each interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. After providing informed consent, participants took part in the interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized through the use of pseudonyms.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

Interview data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed several times to gain familiarity with the data. During the data reduction stage, statements related to teachers' perceptions of the factors contributing to student passivity and the strategies used to promote active classroom participation were identified, coded, and grouped into preliminary categories, whereas data irrelevant to the research objectives were excluded. The coded data were then organized into themes and presented narratively to facilitate interpretation and comparison across participants. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and relationships across the themes. The findings were continuously verified through repeated examination of the transcripts to ensure that the interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives and addressed the research questions.

## **4. Results**

The following section presents the significant patterns and relationships identified in the analysis, along with a discussion of the findings.

## 4.1. Findings

Before discussing the factors contributing to student passivity and the strategies used to address it, it is important to understand how teachers conceptualized passive participation. The interview data revealed that teachers shared a common understanding of student passivity as limited behavioral engagement, characterized by silence, reluctance to respond, and low involvement in classroom activities.

### 4.1.1. Passivity as Limited Classroom Engagement

Teachers consistently described passive participation as students' reluctance to engage in classroom interactions. The interview data indicate that the teachers described passive participation as students' lack of interest and unwillingness to respond during classroom instruction.

*I believe that most teachers share a similar definition of passive student participation during class. This similarity may stem from common influencing factors. In my view, passive participation refers to students' lack of interest or unwillingness to respond to the teacher during the teaching and learning process (HMB).*

*In my opinion, students' passive participation describes a student who does not respond when asked a question or requested to complete a task. Such students often show little interest, remain silent, and tend to sit quietly without engaging in classroom activities (MWD).*

*Teachers differed in how they characterized passive students. In my opinion, a student's passivity is reflected in a lack of enthusiasm for learning English (RN).*

*In my view, students demonstrate passive participation through low levels of engagement in classroom activities. Such behaviors include remaining silent when asked questions, not initiating questions, and failing to comply with the teacher's instructions (PP).*

Although teachers used different expressions, their descriptions reflected a shared understanding of student passivity as reduced behavioral engagement in classroom learning, characterized by silence, reluctance to respond, and limited participation. This shared conceptualization provides an important foundation for understanding the factors that contributed to student passivity and the strategies teachers employed to encourage more active participation in EFL classrooms.

### 4.1.2. Factors Influencing Students' Passive Participation in the Classroom

The findings indicate that student passivity is shaped by an interaction of psychological, linguistic, motivational, and contextual factors rather than by a single cause.

#### 4.1.2.1. Psychological Factors: Low Self-Confidence and Fear of Mistakes

Several teachers identified low self-confidence as a major reason students remained silent during lessons. For example, according to a teacher, students often avoided speaking because they feared making mistakes and being laughed at by their peers. This fear created anxiety and discouraged students from expressing opinions or responding to questions. The findings suggest that passivity functions as a protective strategy through which students avoided potential embarrassment and negative evaluation.

RN viewed the student's low confidence as a factor that led to passive participation in class. She pointed out the student's lack of English-speaking peers. Without friends to practice English with, the student had limited opportunities to develop fluency in a supportive and low-pressure environment. She highlighted the student's confusion when interacting with other friends. This confusion could create feelings of inadequacy. When students frequently felt that they did not understand others, they may begin to doubt their own ability.

*The student has no friends with whom he can speak English. Among his other friends, he does not understand them, so he feels confused. Therefore, he finds it difficult and lacks confidence when speaking in English. There should be a psychological approach to help him become more confident in speaking (RN).*

RN explained that her students' low confidence was strongly influenced by fear of negative peer reactions. She observed that many students were afraid of making mistakes because their classmates often laughed when someone answered incorrectly. Since this behavior happened frequently in the school, students associated speaking up with the risk of embarrassment.

*They are afraid of making a mistake and then being laughed at by the whole class. It happens a lot in this school; they think it's funny when their friends do wrong. And then they tend to be shy to speak or uncomfortable to express their opinions because of that (RN).*

According to RN, this fear of being laughed at lowered their self-confidence and created anxiety. As a result, students became shy and uncomfortable expressing their opinions. Instead of participating actively, they preferred to remain silent to protect themselves from possible ridicule.

#### **4.1.2.2 Linguistic Factors: Limited English Proficiency**

Teachers also reported that students' difficulties with vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension contributed to passive behavior. Students who struggled to understand or produce English often hesitated to participate because they doubt their ability to communicate successfully. The data suggest that linguistic limitations reinforced low confidence and increased students' reluctance to engage in classroom interaction.

MWD believed that the main reason students were passive was their difficulty with English. Being a foreign language, not their mother tongue or Indonesian, it was challenging for them to understand and use. This struggle reduced their confidence and led them to avoid speaking in class.

*The primary reason for their lack of active participation is their insufficient knowledge of English. This is likely because English is a foreign language, not their mother tongue or the national language, Indonesian (MWD).*

*I asked my students to read an English sentence and practice it aloud in front of everyone. They read hesitantly and did not understand the meaning. Sometimes, they did not know how to pronounce the letters at all (AD).*

AD noted that students' lack of English proficiency, including comprehension and pronunciation difficulties, reduced their confidence and led to passive participation.

#### **4.1.2.3 Motivational Factors: Lack of Interest in Learning English**

Teachers perceived low interest and motivation as important contributors to passivity. Students who viewed English as difficult or irrelevant were less willing to participate in learning activities. Rather than reflecting simple unwillingness to learn, the findings suggest that low interest may stem from repeated learning difficulties and limited success experiences.

HMB and RN perceived students' lack of interest as a key factor influencing passive participation. HMB directly stated that students were passive because they had no interest. This indicated her belief that when students were not interested in learning English, they were unwilling to engage in classroom activities.

*Students were passive because they had no interest (HMB).*

RN explained that lack of interest affects students' learning processes and performance and motivation differed among students; some were eager to learn, while

others were not. Those who lacked interest and motivation tended to withdraw from participation.

*Lack of interest is one of the factors. Sometimes students lack interest in English. They struggle with pronunciation and do not memorize vocabulary, so not all students are able to do the tasks well. Interest and motivation also play a role; some students are motivated, while others are not. We observe the students to see who lacks interest, then we approach them and ask what problems they are facing (RN).*

RN mentioned that teachers tried to identify students who lacked interest and approached them to understand their problems. This suggests that she viewed lack of interest not simply as laziness but as a factor that may stem from underlying learning challenges.

#### **4.1.2.4. Contextual Factors: Family Support**

Teachers also speculated that family-related factors may contribute to learner passivity. AD perceived limited parental involvement as a possible influence on students' engagement in learning. Similarly, PP suggested that some students' passive behavior might be associated with insufficient parental attention toward education. However, these interpretations were based on teachers' observations rather than direct evidence from parents or students.

*One significant factor contributing to students' passivity in class is the absence of family support, where their families typically show little concern for their children's academic challenges (AD).*

*Perhaps their parents were not very supportive of their child's education. When parents do not show concern for their child's education, the child may feel less obligated to study. Parents may send their children to school but fail to provide adequate attention and support for their learning (PP).*

The use of expressions such as "perhaps" indicates that teachers were inferring possible home-related influences on classroom participation. Therefore, these findings should be understood as teachers' perceptions of potential family factors rather than verified explanations of students' passive behavior.

#### **4.1.3. Strategies Used by Teachers to Address Student Passivity**

Consistent with the second research objective, teachers described the methods they employed to reduce student passivity and increase classroom participation. Three main strategies emerged from the interviews: group work, game-based activities, and the integration of technology into instruction. According to the participants, these approaches helped enhance engagement and create opportunities for interaction. However, teachers noted that passivity remained present to some extent, suggesting that these strategies served as ongoing efforts to encourage participation, without fully resolving the issue.

##### **4.1.3.1. Grouping Method**

The extract shows that MWD applied student-centered strategies to promote active participation. The use of group work encouraged peer interaction and increased students' confidence to contribute in class. Additionally, integrating modern technology, such as Canva and AI, enhanced engagement by making learning more interactive and relevant. These strategies reflected an effort to create a more participatory classroom environment.

*One of the strategies was the use of group work. Additionally, incorporating modern technology, such as Canva and AI, makes learning more engaging for students (MWD).*

HMB also fostered student active participation by intentionally structuring lessons around collaborative group work. In particular, group interaction gave students valuable

opportunities to practice pronunciation and experiment with new vocabulary in a more natural and communicative context.

*The strategy I used to encourage students' active participation in class involved grouping them. Group work made students feel more comfortable learning because they were with their peers, and it encouraged them to speak up, allowing them to practice their pronunciation and expand their vocabulary (HMB).*

Through this approach, HMB promoted a learner-centered classroom atmosphere where students actively constructed knowledge together, rather than passively receiving information.

#### **4.1.3.2. Game-based Methods**

PP perceived the use of games as a teaching strategy to address student passivity. PP appeared to recognize that traditional lecture-based instruction may not sufficiently sustain students' attention.

*I often incorporate games to make learning more interesting because students become bored with just video lectures (PP).*

RN regarded game-based learning as an effective strategy to engage passive students and encourage early participation in the classroom.

*Using a game-based method, for instance, at the beginning of a session, we introduced a short game to engage students. Even if they struggled at first, it encouraged them to participate alongside their peers, which helped them memorize vocabulary. The key was to use vocabulary games to keep them from getting bored (RN).*

RN intentionally used games as an entry activity to capture students' attention at the beginning of a lesson. This suggested an understanding that initial engagement was crucial in shaping students' participation throughout the session.

#### **4.1.3.3. Technology Usage**

Technology was reported by teachers as one of the strategies used to address student passivity by increasing attention, motivation, and opportunities for interaction in the classroom. AD viewed technology as an effective instructional resource for supporting passive students into more active learners. AD demonstrated a strong belief in the significant role technology plays in shaping classroom dynamics. She believed that multimedia resource such as videos and songs could stimulate attention and reduce passivity. The findings suggested that multimodal instruction, which integrated visual and auditory modes of communication, enhanced student engagement more effectively than traditional lecture-based teaching methods. In this context, the projector served as a tool for delivering multimodal learning experiences rather than as the primary factor influencing student engagement.

*Indeed, it exerts a profound influence. In today's technological era, students are naturally drawn to technology. Therefore, I believe technology significantly affects students' levels of activity and engagement in the classroom. I frequently use videos or songs displayed via a projector to stimulate students' interest (AD).*

MWD expressed a strong conviction regarding the effectiveness of technological tools in shaping classroom interaction.

*Certainly, the technology employed in the classroom has a substantial impact. When a projector is used, students are immediately intrigued by content that diverges from the routine lecture format. This dynamic increases their engagement compared to traditional methods of instruction. Presenting materials such as videos or PowerPoint presentations effectively stimulates their interest (MWD).*

In MWD's perspective, technology changed the classroom atmosphere. When a projector was used, students immediately shifted their focus because the presentation felt different from routine teaching. The visual display, moving images, and structured slides created a more dynamic learning environment. This shift in attention was particularly important for students who were previously passive, as it encouraged them to become more attentive and responsive during classroom activities.

## **4.2. Discussion**

### **4.2.1 Student Passivity as Limited Behavioral Engagement**

The findings of this study indicate that teachers generally conceptualized student passivity as limited behavioral engagement in classroom activities. From the teachers' perspectives, passive students were characterized by silence, reluctance to answer questions, failure to initiate communication, and low involvement in classroom tasks. This finding suggests that teachers primarily interpreted participation through observable classroom behaviors. Such a view is consistent with Ariebowo and Puspitasari (2022) and Smith (2014), who describe passive learners as students who exert minimal effort and avoid active communication during the learning process. However, this perception differs from Chung (2021), who argues that classroom participation should not be assessed solely through verbal contributions. According to Chung, nonverbal behaviors such as attentive listening, note-taking, and sustained concentration may also represent meaningful forms of engagement. The present finding therefore highlights a tendency among teachers to associate participation primarily with visible verbal interaction.

### **4.2.2 Student Passivity as the Product of Interacting Factors**

Teachers identified psychological factors as important contributors to student passivity. In particular, low self-confidence and fear of negative peer evaluation were perceived as major reasons students remained silent during classroom interaction. This study identifies the significant influence of low self-confidence and fear of negative judgment on student participation in the classroom. Teachers observed that many students tend to remain silent to avoid making mistakes or facing ridicule from their peers. This result supports the conclusions of Rahmi (2024) and Nurrohmah and Waluyo (2021), who found that EFL students' silence is often a defensive strategy to protect themselves emotionally, rather than a sign of disengagement. Arifin (2017) further explains that students with low self-confidence struggle to manage their emotions and behavior when speaking in front of the class, which can lead to feelings of insecurity, fears of peer judgment, and apprehension about making mistakes.

Teachers perceived low interest and motivation as important factors to student passivity. However, the findings suggest that teachers did not view lack of interest simply as unwillingness to learn. Rather, low motivation was often associated with students' difficulties in learning English, particularly when they experienced challenges with pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, or task completion. This interpretation supports motivational theories that emphasize the relationship between competence beliefs, perceived task value, and student engagement (Ames, 1992). Research on achievement goal theory further supports this, showing that goal-related messages influence students' motivation and engagement (Ames, 1992; Meece et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2019). Thus, students' motivation to participate decreases when they perceive tasks as irrelevant or challenging.

Another factor mentioned by teachers was students' limited linguistic competence, with many struggling with pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension, which in turn reduces their confidence in speaking English. This finding aligns with Rahmi (2024) and Zafarina (2022), who revealed that EFL learners often remained silent due to difficulties in

engaging with the assigned subject matter. This indicates that linguistic challenges not only hinder students' ability to communicate but also contribute to their reluctance to participate in class. As Mukundan and Hajimohammadi (2011) suggest, students may hesitate to engage because they lack understanding, fear they are unable to complete the task, find the textbook too challenging, or lack the prior knowledge necessary to relate the material to their own experiences.

Teachers also perceived family-related factors, particularly limited parental support, as possible contributors to student passivity. It is important to note that these interpretations were based on teachers' observations rather than direct evidence from parents or students. Nevertheless, teachers believed that insufficient parental involvement might reduce students' motivation and commitment toward learning. This perception is consistent with previous studies highlighting positive associations between parental involvement and student engagement (Chen et al., 2019; Gil et al., 2021). While the present study cannot verify the direct influence of family support on student passivity, it demonstrates how teachers interpreted home environments as potentially shaping classroom participation.

#### **4.2.3. Reducing Participation Barriers Through Classroom Practices**

The findings reveal that teachers actively employed a range of pedagogical strategies to address student passivity and encourage classroom participation. Teachers perceived instructional methods as an important factor shaping students' willingness to engage in learning activities. Whereas monotonous instruction was associated with disengagement, interactive approaches were viewed as creating greater opportunities for participation; collaborative activities, such as group work, were especially effective in promoting active participation, highlighting the role of instructional design in supporting engagement. These results are consistent with the study by Afzal and Rafiq (2022), which evaluated university students' class involvement and teachers' instructional techniques. Their research showed that teachers' teaching methods significantly influenced students' participation, and less engaging instructional approaches contributed to students' non-participatory behavior.

Teachers perceived small-group interactions as creating a less intimidating environment in which students could participate more comfortably. From their perspective, group work reduced the pressure associated with speaking in front of the whole class and provided additional opportunities for peer interaction. This aligns with McDonough (2004), whose study demonstrated that Thai EFL students' participation in collaborative and small-group activities was effective for practicing and enhancing oral communication skills. This approach aligns with communicative language teaching frameworks, which highlight peer collaboration as central to meaningful language use and interaction (Triwibowo, 2023).

The findings reveal that teachers employed game-based activities as a strategy to address student passivity and encourage participation. Teachers described games as useful for capturing students' attention, reducing boredom, and creating opportunities for early engagement in classroom activities. This aligns with previous studies, as Laksanasut (2025) highlights that gamification in EFL contexts promotes active participation, improves learning outcomes, and supports meaningful language acquisition. Similarly, Ardi and Rianita (2022) demonstrate that using games in EFL classrooms enhances participation by encouraging students to collaborate with their peers.

The study also indicates that teachers strategically used technology as a means of addressing student passivity and increasing opportunities for engagement. Through videos, songs, and multimedia presentations, teachers sought to capture students' attention and create a more dynamic classroom environment than traditional lecture-based instruction. By incorporating videos, songs, and multimedia presentations through projectors, they provided

visual and auditory stimuli that capture students' attention and break the monotony of traditional lecture-based instruction. This finding aligns with Gilakjani (2012), who emphasizes that multimedia-based instruction facilitates discovery and discussion, prompting a transition in the teacher's role from an information provider to a learning facilitator. This shift enables teachers to more effectively structure learning activities and foster student participation, as reflected in the present study where students demonstrated increased active engagement in the learning process.

The findings suggest that group work, game-based activities, and technology-enhanced instruction functioned primarily as mechanisms for reducing participation barriers instead of eliminating passivity altogether. While these approaches appeared to create more favorable conditions for engagement, teachers continued to observe some degree of passive behavior. This indicates that student passivity may be resistant to simple instructional solutions because it is shaped by multiple interacting influences both inside and outside the classroom.

#### **4.2.4 Overall Interpretation of Findings**

The findings highlight the multidimensional nature of student passivity in EFL classrooms from teachers' perspectives. Teachers attributed passivity to an interaction of psychological, linguistic, motivational, and contextual influences rather than to a single cause. At the same time, they described various pedagogical strategies, including collaborative learning, game-based activities, and technology-enhanced instruction, as efforts to address student passivity and encourage greater classroom participation. These findings support the view of classroom participation as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon (Harjunen, 2012; Wang & Hofkens, 2019). By focusing on teachers' interpretations and classroom practices, the study provides contextually grounded insights into how student passivity is understood and managed in EFL classrooms in Aceh.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This study explored teachers' perceptions of students' passive participation in EFL classrooms in Aceh and the strategies used to encourage engagement. The findings suggest that student passivity should not be understood simply as a lack of willingness to participate. Rather, it is a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by the interaction between learners' personal challenges and the classroom environment. From the teachers' perspectives, student passivity often reflects factors such as low confidence, anxiety, limited language proficiency, and low motivation, all of which may constrain classroom participation. The study also highlights the important role of teachers in shaping classroom participation. The findings suggest that increasing student engagement requires more than simply encouraging students to speak; it also requires creating supportive learning conditions that reduce anxiety, build confidence, and provide meaningful opportunities for interaction. Through collaborative learning, game-based activities, and technology integration, teachers sought to create learning environments that encouraged more active participation.

Teachers should adopt broader definitions of participation, create supportive classroom environments to reduce anxiety, and use interactive strategies such as group work, games, and technology to enhance engagement. Strengthening communication with parents may also help improve student motivation and participation. Institutions, in turn, need to support teachers through targeted training, adequate technological infrastructure, and policies that encourage active learning.

This study involved a small sample drawn from two schools and relied solely on teachers' perspectives collected through interviews. It did not include students' perspectives

or direct classroom observation, which may have limited the comprehensiveness of the findings. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, incorporate students' perspectives, and employ multiple data sources such as classroom observations or mixed-method approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of passive participation in EFL classrooms.

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