

A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT IN MINGZHI EXPERIMENTAL MIDDLE SCHOOL OF KUNMING, CHINA

Yaokai Ye^{1*}

Yanan Yang²

¹ Master Candidate in Educational Administration, Stamford International University of Thailand

² Lecturer, Stamford International University, Thailand, xiaoyarain@hotmail.com

* **Corresponding Author, E-mail:** 821657266@qq.com

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the level of English classroom participation of senior high school students in Mingzhi Experimental Middle School in Kunming, Yunnan Province. With convenient sampling, there were 700 students, 248 students were selected, and then descriptive statistics and independent samples t test, one-way ANOVA were applied to analyze the data. The results showed that the overall level of senior high school students' English classroom participation in Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School was at a medium level, with high classroom participation behavior and low classroom participation attitude. There was a significant gender difference in high school students' English classroom participation, with boys lower than girls. There was a significant grade difference in senior high school students' English classroom participation. Senior three and senior two students are higher than senior one. The high school students' participation in English class was significantly different in terms of the only child group. The only child group was significantly higher than the non-only child group. The high school students' English classroom participation in general was significantly different in terms of birthplace, and students in urban areas were significantly higher than those in rural areas. Suggestions on classroom participation attitude and behavior are proposed to improve senior high school students' English classroom participation.

Keywords: High School Students, English Classroom Engagement, Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, Kunming, China

Introduction

In the context of global economic and cultural integration, China, as an important member of the global community, the development of English language education and the improvement of students' learning level are of paramount importance. Learning English is not just about completing schoolwork or passing exams, but also about communicating effectively with people around the world. Therefore, China's new English curriculum reform emphasizes the value of student initiative and active

participation. With the progress of the times, the creation of a favorable language learning environment, the provision of various opportunities for classroom participation, the enrichment of classroom activities, and the innovation of teaching content are all embodiments of the concept of student-centered education, which is gradually rising in the status of the education system in various countries. The direction of educational reform has also begun to shift toward this concept, and the focus of academics and teachers has shifted from learning outcomes to the learning process (Du & Wu, 2017). As a result, the importance attached to student participation in the classroom has also changed.

In order to adapt to the rapid development of society, scholars around the world have reached a consensus that the ultimate goal of education should be to cultivate proactive and creative intellectuals. However, under the influence of traditional Chinese educational concepts and practices, students' subjective initiative is often neglected. English, as an important subject in basic and secondary education, has seen a gradual decrease in students' active participation in the classroom due to the test-oriented education model (Pei, 2000).

An's (2002) research showed that most Chinese students are passive in classroom participation, mainly relying on rote memorization, and only a few students can actively participate. English education should develop students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and enhance their comprehensive quality, which requires more interaction between teachers and students (Chen, 2023). However, the examination-oriented education system is against the original purpose of education, and many teachers are too concerned about improving the grades and neglecting the overall needs of students. Through in-depth research, strategies to enhance students' participation in the classroom should give full play to the role of students as the main actors in the education process and ensure that they can have a quality and efficient learning experience. This not only enhances students' learning ability and academic level, but also promotes education reform and improves the quality of school education, so that students can receive a better education, for which there is a need to strengthen the interaction and communication between teachers and students (Chen, 2023).

It goes without saying that it is imperative to give full play to the students' subjective position to ensure that they can have a good and efficient classroom learning experience, enhance their learning ability and improve their academic performance. Therefore, the study of senior high school students' English classroom participation can help to understand the situation of senior high school students' English classroom participation, make suggestions for the innovation of teaching methods in English and other subjects, help educators better understand students' needs, improve teaching quality, classroom efficiency and teaching results, and promote the reform of classroom processes and contents. In conclusion, students' participation in the classroom is one of the most important indicators for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and improving students' participation in the classroom plays a key role in further realizing the goals of education, responding to the call of the Ministry of

Education, and returning to the essence of education.

Research Objectives

(1) To identify the demographic background variables of high school students in Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming, Yunnan Province, including their gender, grade, only child, and birthplace.

(2) To investigate the current English classroom engagement level of high school students in Mingzhi Experimental High School, Kunming, Yunnan Province.

(3) To analyze the differences in the level of English classroom participation among high school students at Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming, Yunnan Province, with different demographic background variables.

Literature Review

The Connotations of Engagement in the English Classroom

Attitudes towards classroom participation. Regarding the concept of students' classroom participation attitudes, Cui's (2016) study revealed that students' classroom participation attitudes can be divided into cognitive participation and affective participation dimensions.

Han (2023) pointed out that classroom participation attitudes refer to students' emotional and attitudinal experiences in teaching and learning activities. Classroom participation attitudes include positive emotions (interest, happiness, curiosity, confidence), norm compliance (rule-following, docility) and negative emotions (isolation, anxiety, restlessness, boredom, anger). Attitudes toward classroom participation are strong precursors to student action. Students with positive attitudes toward classroom participation are confident and happy, enthusiastically, and attentively engaged in learning, and show a strong sense of creativity. On the contrary, students with negative classroom attitudes may show boredom, anxiety, rebellion, or anger in the classroom. This kind of positive emotional engagement is actually a kind of spiritual communion, based on the resonance of mutual knowledge and understanding between teachers and students. With similar results, Jiang, Guo & Chen (2023) suggested that classroom participation attitudes refer to students' attitudes toward learning, teachers, and classmates in the classroom, as well as their attitudes toward classroom rules and classroom activities. Students' attitudes toward classroom participation are important factors that affect their learning outcomes and development. Students' classroom participation attitudes can be divided into different dimensions, such as positive and negative attitudes, active and passive attitudes. Kou (2016) proposed that classroom participation attitude refers to students' psychological readiness to participate in teaching activities in the classroom, which reflects students' cognitive, emotional and behavioral tendencies towards classroom learning. Among students' classroom participation attitudes, positive

participation attitudes are conducive to stimulating students' motivation to learn, increasing their interest and commitment to learning, and thus promoting their cognitive and affective development.

Classroom participation behaviors. Xu (2010) believed that students' learning behaviors in the classroom teaching process, such as taking the initiative to answer questions, taking the initiative to discuss, taking the initiative to complete classroom exercises and other classroom participation behaviors is the students' classroom participation.

Similar research results, Li (2014) believe that classroom participation behavior is a basic form of participation, is the behavioral manifestation of participation, measuring the intensity of students' participation behavior in the classroom, can be specifically reflected through the two variables of concentration and study. To quantify this level of engagement, we can observe and record a range of specific student behaviors, such as their use of time allocation inside and outside the classroom, frequency of questioning, group work and discussion, and motivation to read outside the classroom. These behaviors have been chosen as variables for measurement because they have been shown to be closely related to learning outcomes and positive student development. Through careful observation and analysis of these variables, we can more accurately assess the level of student participation in the classroom, and thus provide a strong basis for improving the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, Lin (2023), based on the multidimensionality of classroom participation, stated that students' classroom participation not only includes behavioral performance, such as actively speaking and participating in discussions, but also cognitive and affective inputs, such as the depth of thinking about the problem and interest in the learning content, etc. These aspects together constitute the complete concept of student participation. These aspects together constitute the complete concept of student participation in the classroom.

From the analysis of the literature review, the research on classroom participation can be broadly divided into two aspects: classroom participation behavior and classroom participation attitude in classroom activities (Kou, 2016). Classroom participation behavior mainly refers to students' initiative in classroom activities to answer the teacher's questions, actively participate in classroom discussions and actively complete course-related tasks. Classroom participation attitude mainly refers to students' active participation in problem thinking and knowledge focusing on classroom activities, their interest in classroom and course activities, and their efforts in course academic evaluation.

Additionally, Cui (2023) defined students' classroom participation in classroom teaching as the comprehensive feedback of students' classroom participation behavior, cognitive participation, and emotional participation in the process of classroom teaching, which is an important part of students' learning process and one of the most important indexes for evaluating students' learning effects.

Measuring Engagement in The English Classroom

English classroom participation includes positive emotions and negative emotions. Students'

positive emotions can enhance students' classroom participation, while negative emotions can reduce students' classroom participation (Isen, 1984).

With the gradual enrichment of the research content of students' classroom participation, Fredricks et al. (2004) proposed that students' classroom participation is composed of and interacted with students' behavior, emotion, and cognition in the learning process. The level of classroom participation directly affects the learning effect and interest of students. Students with high participation can better understand and master knowledge and improve learning efficiency; At the same time, active participation can also enhance students' self-confidence and expression ability and cultivate students' team spirit and leadership ability. However, students with low participation are prone to learning fatigue, lack of interest and motivation, which will affect the learning effect.

Therefore, the measurement of students' classroom participation includes many important factors. First of all, in classroom education activities, students' participation behavior occupies the dominant position, followed by the behavior of keeping active, efficient, and creative learning of subject knowledge, and finally the result evaluation, that is, the proportion of the number of people who reach the learning goal, and other related content (Huang at al., 2015).

Teachers pay more attention to classroom fun and extracurricular activities, and students are more willing to actively participate in the classroom of new teachers. The results of Cui (2016) showed that students' classroom engagement has an important impact on learning outcomes. They divided students' classroom participation into classroom participation behavior, cognitive participation, and classroom participation attitude. Simple classroom participation behavior is not effective in promoting the development of students' high-level thinking ability, and it is more important for them to be emotionally engaged and cognitively in-depth, so as to achieve real learning and growth. In addition, Si &Ye (2011) found that in the course of curriculum learning, students actively participate in the classroom mainly through three ways: asking questions, answering questions and completing classroom exercises. These ways together constitute the core link of students' classroom participation, helping them to think deeply and explore actively in class, so as to better understand and master knowledge. However, teachers' classroom guidance ability, classroom environment and practice content have a significant impact on students' classroom participation.

Regarding the research on the influencing factors of English classroom engagement, Shi (2018) pointed out that a number of factors, such as family environment, social evaluation, teacher's style, classroom environment and students' self-efficacy, have an impact on students' classroom engagement.

Lu (2023) suggested that the factors affecting students' participation in the classroom mainly come from the external environment, especially the teacher and the classroom. In practice, there is a misunderstanding that "just moving is participation" in the classroom, which leads to the ineffectiveness of students' participation in the classroom.

In conclusion, students' classroom participation is affected by a variety of factors. Studies on classroom participation attitudes and classroom participation behaviors have their own focuses, all of which are branches of students' classroom participation, and students' active participation, cognitive participation and affective participation have important references. Wang (2020) divided students' classroom participation into different dimensions, such as behavioral participation, cognitive participation, and emotional participation. Sun (2021) showed that high school students' English classroom participation can be divided into three dimensions: behavioral participation, cognitive participation, and affective participation. Behavioral engagement includes students' behavior such as answering questions, participating in discussions, and completing classroom tasks; cognitive engagement includes students' cognitive activities such as thinking, analyzing, and summarizing; and affective engagement includes students' interest, motivation, self-confidence, and other emotional factors. These three dimensions interact with each other and together determine the comprehensive level of students' English classroom participation.

Studies Related to Students' English Classroom Engagement across Demographic Background Variables

According to the reference, the research results of demographic background variables on students' classroom participation are gradually increasing. Karp et al. (1976) studied the classroom participation and influencing factors of some primary school students in the region and found that students with different academic achievements will have different performances in the classroom, and there are significant differences in classroom participation (Goos & Geiger, 1995). Lamb (1996) conducted research on the factors affecting students' classroom participation from three aspects: the gender of junior high school students, the level of achievement and the type of school receiving education. Shu (2016) found that there were significant differences in class participation among students of different grades and genders. The level of senior one students' classroom participation behavior and attitude are stronger than that of senior two students, and the level of cognitive participation of senior two students is stronger than that of senior one student.

In contrast, Wang's (2023) findings showed that females outperformed males in terms of attentional focus, suggesting that females were more able to focus on the teacher and peers' explanations in the classroom. This difference may be related to the overall mindset of females. In general, females are better at listening, observing, and expressing themselves than males. In addition, females are better at engaging multiple senses in the classroom, thereby prolonging the duration of their intentional attention and improving their concentration.

In addition, Gong (2023) pointed out that whether or not to participate in the Olympic Games did not show significant differences in various dimensions of classroom participation. There may be two reasons behind this. First of all, classroom participation mainly focuses on the specific performance

and attitude of students in the classroom, while the level of learning does not seem to form a significant distinction in this regard. Secondly, considering that the number of students participating in the Olympic Games is relatively small, the sample size may not be enough to support the research to reach a significant conclusion. At the same time, Wu (2023) emphasized the key role of academic performance in influencing middle school students' classroom participation. In addition, students' grades, gender and other factors together constitute a multi-dimensional picture of students' classroom participation.

Through reviewing the literature, we found that the research, in short, about students' classroom participation research has achieved rich results in both theory and practice, but at the same time, there are some problems, for example, the previous research in the theory of students' classroom participation as a means of acquiring knowledge, did not think about students' classroom participation from the perspective of the full range of teaching and learning, and high school students' participation in the English language classroom is relatively homogeneous, and Most of the related literature focuses on the generalized group. In addition, previous studies have mainly focused on the study of students' classroom participation in classroom teaching of various disciplines, and the core of the research on the current situation of senior high school students' classroom participation is ambiguous.

Methodology

The population of this study was Mingzhi Experimental High School high school students, a total of 700 students, so choose 248 people as the sample size of the research (based on Morgan's table) to facilitate the sampling of the total number of 248 students, in line with the requirements of statistical standardization, and then the statistical analysis of the data. Finally, 248 valid questionnaires were collected and sorted out, all of them were recovered, and the effective recovery rate was 100%. Convenience sampling was used to categorize students by gender, grade, only child, and birthplace.

This study adopted the questionnaire from Kou's (2016) survey study on classroom participation of college English learners, which was adapted in this study to form the Questionnaire on Classroom Participation of High School Students in English, and then investigated the high school students' English classroom participation, including classroom participation attitudes: 1-16 questions, and classroom participation behaviors: 17-36 questions. The Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.896 and 0.908, both higher than 0.8. The Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.936, and the overall reliability level was higher than 0.9, which indicated that the reliability of the questionnaire meets the statistical standard of this study and had a strong reliability level. The KMO value of the questionnaire was 0.907, greater than 0.9 and significant at the level of .001, indicating that the questionnaire was suitable for factor analysis. It was found that two metric factors were extracted from the high school students' English classroom engagement questionnaire, and after rotated by the maximum variance method, the cumulative contribution rate was 61.129%, which shows that the questionnaire of the high school

students' English classroom engagement has a good structural validity.

Results

Demographic Analysis of Questionnaire Participants

In this questionnaire survey, senior high school students at Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming were surveyed, and 248 valid questionnaires were finally collected and finalized. The demographic variables of the surveyed demographic factors mainly included gender, grade, only child, and birthplace. Of the valid questionnaires, 130 were male, accounting for 52.4%, and 118 were female, accounting for 47.6%, making the ratio of male to female more balanced. In terms of grades, there were 83 students in the first year of senior high school, accounting for 33.5%, 88 students in the second year of senior high school, accounting for 35.5%, and 77 students in the third year of senior high school, accounting for 31.0%, with the tendency of students in the third year of senior high school to be surveyed due to the issue of further education being lower. As for only children, 139 students, or 56.0%, were from the only-child group, and 109 students, or 44.0%, were from the non-only-child group, so only children still accounted for the majority of students in the survey. In terms of birthplace, there were 141 students from urban areas, accounting for 56.9% of the total, and 107 students from rural areas, accounting for 43.1% of the total, with the Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming City including some students from rural areas.

Descriptive Statistics on the Level of English Classroom Participation of High School Students in Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming

The overall mean value of senior high school students' English classroom participation was 3.387, which was at a medium level, and the means of the two dimensions of classroom participation attitudes and classroom participation behaviors were 3.276 and 3.502 in that order.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistical Analysis of High School Students' Engagement in English Classroom

Dimension	M	SD	Analysis
Attitudes toward Classroom Participation	3.276	0.567	Medium
Classroom Participation Behaviors	3.502	0.599	High
Overall	3.387	0.467	Medium

Therefore, the overall level of senior high school students' English classroom participation in Mingzhi Experimental Middle School of Kunming City was at a medium level, of which classroom participation behaviors have the highest mean value and the mean value of classroom participation behavior was the highest, and the mean value of classroom participation attitude is the lowest, as Table 1 shows.

Differences Analysis on the Level of English Classroom Participation of High School Students in Mingzhi Experimental High School Compared with Demographic Factors

Through the statistical analysis of differences, it can reflect the differences of English classroom participation of high school students in Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School in terms of different demographic variables. To analyze the differences of middle school students in terms of gender, grade, only child, and birthplace. There were significant gender differences in the overall English classroom participation, classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior of high school students, with boys significantly lower than girls. Senior three students were significantly higher than senior one student, and Grade two students were significantly higher than grade one student. The only child group is significantly higher than the non-only child group. The classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior in terms of birthplace. Students in urban areas were significantly higher than those in rural areas.

Discussion

Current Status of English Classroom Engagement of High School Students in Mingzhi Experimental Middle School

The overall level of English classroom engagement of high school students in Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming City is at a medium level, with the highest mean value of classroom engagement behavior and the lowest mean value of classroom engagement attitude. The findings of Yang (2016) were basically consistent with those of this study, and the reason for this result may be that there may be differences in English foundation and language ability among high school students in Mingzhi Experimental Middle School in Kunming. Some students may not have a high enough level of English proficiency, which leads to less confident performance in class and unwillingness to actively participate in interactions, which may lead to lower attitudes toward classroom participation. In addition, a relaxed and cordial classroom atmosphere may also affect students' participation. If the classroom atmosphere is too tense or the teacher-student relationship is not harmonious enough, it may discourage students from actively participating in classroom activities (Yang, 2023).

In addition, the teaching methods and strategies adopted by teachers may also have an impact on students' classroom participation. Traditional teaching models may emphasize too much on the teacher's lectures, resulting in insufficient students' participation. Not to be overlooked, students' motivation and interest in learning may also affect their classroom participation, and there is also the possibility that they may lack motivation to learn and participate in the classroom (Yu, Ma, & Huang, 2023).

Differences in English Classroom Engagement of High School Students in Mingzhi Experimental Middle School across Demographic Background Variables

The gender difference test showed that in terms of high school English classroom participation

in Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, boys' mean participation in the classroom and the two dimensions (classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior) are significantly lower than girls. The possible reason is mainly related to personality differences. Boys tend to be more independent and autonomous; they may be more reluctant to participate actively in the classroom. While girls are more inclined to cooperative learning and actively participate in classroom activities.

Differences in terms of grade level. The mean of high school students' English classroom participation in Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School is significantly higher than that of senior high school students. The results showed that with the increase of grades, students are facing more and more academic pressure. Grade 1 high school students face the college entrance examination, and the pressure was greater, so they may focus more on classroom learning and participate more actively in classroom activities. Although Grade 2 students did not have the pressure of college entrance examination, they also need to work harder with the increasing difficulty of knowledge.

Differences with respect to only child (or not). In the high school English classroom of Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming, only children have higher participation and classroom participation behaviors. Only-child families may have a higher concentration of education and cultivate good study habits and classroom participation from childhood. While non-only-child families may have more siblings, which makes it difficult to give enough attention and guidance to each child. In a study by Zhao (2014), it was pointed out that only children may grow up to be more independent and confident, and willing to show themselves in the classroom. While non-only children may lack confidence due to competition with other siblings at home, resulting in lower classroom participation. In the Chinese cultural context, the one-child policy has led to more attention and value being placed on this group and may have fostered a more positive attitude toward learning and participation. Schools and teachers may also have an impact on the classroom participation of only children and non-only children. Teachers may pay more attention to the learning of only children and give them more opportunities to participate in classroom activities.

The test of differences in birthplace shows that in the English class of high school in Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, the mean value of students in urban areas in the two dimensions of classroom participation, classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior is significantly higher than that of students in rural areas. This conclusion will undeniably lead to the problem of educational resources (Liu & Qiao, 2019).

Conclusions

1) The overall level of English classroom engagement of high school students in Mingzhi Experimental High School in Kunming was at a moderate level, with classroom engagement behavior being the highest and classroom engagement attitude being the lowest.

2) In Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, there were significant gender differences in the overall English classroom participation, classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior of high school students, with boys significantly lower than girls.

In Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, there was an overall significant grade difference in high school students' English classroom participation. Senior three students were significantly higher than senior one student, and Grade two students were significantly higher than grade one student.

In Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, there were significant differences in the overall English classroom participation and classroom participation behavior dimensions of senior high school students in terms of the only child group. The only child group is significantly higher than the non-only child group.

In Kunming Mingzhi Experimental Middle School, there were significant differences in the two dimensions of senior high school students' English classroom participation overall, classroom participation attitude and classroom participation behavior in terms of birthplace. Students in urban areas were significantly higher than those in rural areas.

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