The Correlation of Classroom Participation and Students' English Achievement at Higher Education in Banten

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Article Info	Abstract
  *Corresponding author: ezis.j.sidik@untirta.ac.id	As a lingua franca, English plays an important role in most aspects of human lives, but acquiring fluent English is very challenging particularly for students in English as a foreign language (EFL) context such as Indonesia. The students rarely obtain learning opportunities and language exposures outside but inside classroom context so that maximizing their time in the classroom through their academic engagement is imperative. This study investigated how the students' engagement in the classroom contributes to their English academic achievement. The study took a survey involving sixty college students from two universities in Banten. The data was analyzed using the Spearman Rank Correlation using the SPSS program. The finding confirmed that the students' academic participation in the classroom significantly correlates to their English achievement as proven by the value of sig. at 0.001 which was higher than α value at 0.05 (0.00 > 0.05). Moreover, the correlation between the two variables is strong as the value of *correlation coefficient* equal to .621. This result suggests that teachers need more efforts to encourage their students participating in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era, English is an essential attribute that every person has to possess. Needless to say, English has invaded most areas of human life such as politics, social, economics, technology and the like; therefore, it has been used as the medium of communication (a lingua franca) among people across countries and continents (Harmar, 2007). Due to its importance, many countries including Indonesia acknowledge English as an integral part of their educational system either in English as a foreign language (EFL) or as a second language (ESL) context.

In Indonesia, English functioning as a foreign language has become an obligatory subject in both Junior and senior high schools. It means Indonesian students will spend no less than six years learning English in the classroom when they graduate from senior high schools. In spite of this, many students have experienced many difficulties in

acquiring and mastering the language. Consequently, there are still many high school graduates who are not yet capable of using English effectively and efficiently in practical communication (EF, 2017).

This has raised a question whether a six-years spending at school is insufficient for students to acquire good English skills. This question is, of course, not easy to answer because learning times is not always a primary matter for many students to have good English skills. For example, the students who learn English in the EFL context, six-year period is likely more than enough to have fluent English because they can access more exposure to the language than those who learn in the EFL context (Mitchell and Myles, 2004).

Having sufficient exposure to the language is, indeed, only one factor. Another important factor that can lead to successful language mastery rests on students' attitudes in learning English. According to Ur (1991), acquiring languages including English depends on a number of aspects, especially relating to pupils' internal and external aspects. Students' external aspects such as good learning resources, experienced teachers and supportive environments are all important in English learning, but these facilities will not contribute much without good responses from the students themselves. Therefore, positive responses from the students toward English are imperative for successful English learning. For example, easy access to language exposures will be meaningless when the learners do not have interest and motivation to the language (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Many suggest that the success or failure in language learning can be predicted in accordance with the individual differences in intelligence, aptitude, lifestyle, personality, motivation, attitude and the like (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). However the presence of these characteristics is not always required to be good acquirers. Of the important attributes for successful English learning activities is motivation and interests toward English itself. This attribute is assumed as a determinant for students to invest their time and engagement in learning. For example, research carried out by Gardner and Lambert (Harmer, 1998) revealed that students' motivation takes an important role in their language learning qualities. The authors further suggested that types of motivation can also provide different impacts to the final results such as students with integrative motivation will perform better than those with instrumental motivation.

The existence of this motivation will make students willing to spend the amount of time for learning not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. By means of motivation, desires for learning are not only driven by other persons such as teachers, but can also be driven by the students themselves. The students who are fully motivated to acquire English will participate more actively during classroom learning then those who are not. Such students will always take benefits from any opportunities they have including in

the classroom through active participation during lessons.

Students participating during classroom lessons become obvious evidence that the students have good interest and motivation in learning English. Considering its importance, the teachers should take into account once the classroom lacks students' participation. When this condition cannot be anticipated, it could be a contributing factor for a students' failure in mastering English.

Unfortunately, many teachers still assume that students' participation is simply an expected rather than obligatory characteristic of classroom instruction. As a matter of fact, existing research has found an important contribution of classroom participation to students' academic, social and economic success (Johnson et al., 2011). Therefore, the teachers are not only recommended but also required to make sure that the students are actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. The level of engagement can be estimated or inferred from indirect indicators such as the amount of participation in academic works (attendance, portion of tasks completed, amount of time spent on academics works, intensity of student concentration, enthusiasm and interest) and the degree of care shown in completing the work (Newmann et al., 2002).

Therefore, this paper is intended to investigate whether or not students' classroom participation can contribute to more successful achievement in English.

METHOD
Research Design

Research design refers to the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction (Khotari, 2004; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). In order to fit with aim of this study, a quantitative survey method was employed in order to find out the relationships between the variables as well as to identify the causes of the relationships. According to Ary, et. al. (2010: 8), "survey research is a type of quantitative research which allows the researcher to summarize the characteristics of different groups or to measure their attitudes and opinions towards some issues". The type of survey used is a non-parametric regression correlation as one of the data survey was in ordinal data.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This research was conducted based on the following research question and hypotheses.

Question: Is there any correlation of the students' classroom participation and the students' English academic performance?

Apart from that, this study was intended to test the following h*ypotheses:*

Ho: There is no significant effect of students' classroom participation (X) on students' English achievement (Y).

H1: There is a significant effect of students' classroom participation (X) on students' English achievement (Y).

Sample

This research was conducted at two state universities in Banten involving the students from English program who sat at the fifth to seventh semester of their study. There were sixty students selected as the sample representing thirty students from respective institution.

Data Collection and Analysis

There were two data collection instruments that were applied namely the students' English achievement (Y) as the independent variable and classroom participation (X) as the dependent variable. The instrument used to gather data on the students' English achievement was the document of' students' academic transcripts containing their academic grades (Grade Point Average) that the students have achieved until the latest semester. On the other hands, the instrument used to gather data on students' classroom participation (X) was the questionnaires distributed to all selected sample.

The data was analyzed and interpreted using the non-parametric Spearman's Rank Correlation regression with the help of the SPSS program. For this reason, the data was not required to have normal and linier distribution.

RESULT

Data Description

The research data was obtained from 60 samples of two high education institutions in Serang-Banten. Having collected the data, the data were then calculated and analyzed with the help of the SPSS. The results of the analysis are summarized in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Participation	60	1.45	4.64	3.3525	.68634
English GPA	60	2.50	3.87	3.3312	.28837

The table shows the brief description of data from two research variables of students' classroom participation (X) and students' English learning achievement (Y). First, the mean score of students' classroom participation is equal to 3.35 with the standard deviation equal to .686. From the mean score of the participation, it can be said that the students' classroom participation is considered *good* since the score is higher than the possible average score from a 1 to 5 scale of the questionnaire. The students obtain 1.45 as the lowest score in this variable and 4.64 as the highest score with its range 3.19. The students' scores in the classroom participation are not much different as the value of the standard deviation is equal to 0.686 (SD = 0.69).

Moreover, the mean score of students' English achievement is equal to 3.87 with the standard deviation equal to 0.288. From the data, the students receive above the possible average score of 0 to 4 scale achievement

good achievement in English. Meanwhile, the Minimum score of the achievement is 2.50 and the maximum score is 3.87.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing was carried out using the non-parametric Spearman's Rank correlation since the pre-assumption of data linearity was not met.

Before testing the hypothesis, it is necessary to state that the study was aimed at finding out whether or not there is a significant effect of students' classroom participation (X) on students' English achievement (Y). The result of the analysis using the SPSS is shown in the table 2.

Based on the data from the table 2, it is found out that the value of sig. at 0.001 is lower than 0.05 (sig. 0.001 < 0.05). This indicates that there is a significant effect of the independent variable (X) on the independent variable (Y). Thus, the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant effect of the students' classroom participation (X) on students' English achievement (Y)" is not accepted. Consequently, the alterative hypothesis stating that "there is a significant effect of students' classroom participation (X) on students' English achievement (Y)" is accepted.

Table 2: Spearman's Correlations Test Result

			X	Y
Spearman's rho	**X**	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.621**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	60	60
	Y	Correlation Coefficient	.621**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Furthermore, the table also shows that the value of *correlation coefficient* is equal to .621 indicating that the correlation of the students' classroom participation and the students' English learning achievement is strong (between 0.60 – 0,799). It means that the students' English achievement could improve when they could also enhance their classroom participation.

DISCUSSION

Having analyzed the research data, the results show that the students' classroom participation correlates to the students' English learning achievement. This is proven by the value sig. at 0.001 which is lower than 0.05 (sig. 0.001 < 0.05). Moreover, the value of the *correlation coefficient* is positive at 0.621 which indicates that the correlation is linier. Therefore, the students can improve their English achievement when they could also improve their classroom participation.

The finding has confirmed that the independent variable has strong correlation with the dependent variable with the value of *correlation coefficient* at .621. This means that students' classroom participation has provided an impact on their English learning achievement. To sum up, it is suggested that the improvement that the students can make in their classroom participation will be followed by the improvement in their English achievement or this case the score of the student *grade point average (GPA).*

CONCLUSION

Based on the result in the discussion, it can be concluded that "there is a significant effect of students' classroom participation (X1) on the students' English achievement (Y) as proven by the value of sig. at 0.001 which is lower than 0.05 (sig. 0.001 < 0.05).

Since there is a significant contribution of students' classroom participation on students' English achievement, it is very important to take into accounts the importance of the participation in English instruction. Teachers are expected to consider this in their language classroom such as by creating classroom atmosphere/ environment which can facilitate the students to participate during instruction in the classroom. Apart from this, the students are also expected to realize the importance of classroom participation in their language acquisition process.

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