



## Causes of Students' Reluctance to Participate in Classroom Discussions

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### ABSTRACTS

The main purpose of this study is to find out the causes of the respondents' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions among college students at Notre Dame of Tacurong College (NDTC), enrolled during the academic year 2016-2017. The descriptive method of research is employed to determine the causes of the respondents' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. The study is conducted at Notre Dame of Tacurong College (NDTC) with 273 respondents of whom 114 are males and 159 females coming from all courses and year levels. Convenient sampling is utilized to identify the individual respondents from each course included in the study. A researcher-made survey questionnaire that is formulated by the researcher after a review of literature and studies was used to gather data for this study. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to treat the data. Findings disclose that out of 273 respondents, the majority (58.24%) are female against 41.76% male. As to course, most (18.32%) of the respondents are BSCrim students. As to year level, most (34.43%) of them are second-year students. As to the ethnicity of the respondents, most (47.99%) of them are Ilongos. Further findings show that generally, the investigated causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions are moderately prevalent. The top three causes are being tensed when forced by teachers to answer a question; getting tensed and nervous to speak in front of the whole class, and having faulty pronunciation in English. Also, the most popular strategy used by students to participate in classroom discussions is to think carefully

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about what to communicate before they participate. Based on the major findings of the study, it can be concluded that there are moderately prevalent causes that hinder the participation of some students in the classroom. As a result, several recommendations are offered to academic leaders, teachers, counsellors and students to address the issues so students feel more capable, confident and comfortable to actively participate in their classroom discussions.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Participation is important for the success of the class. Many researches about participation have been cited in the study of [Mahdikhani, Soheilhamzehloo, Maryamshayestefard, and Mahdikhani \(2015\)](#). Accordingly, participation can be seen as an active involvement process which can be divided into five classifications, namely; preparation, contribution to discussion, group works, communication skills, and attendance. The faculty perceive several levels of participation from students, moving from simply attending class through giving oral presentations. Participation has been seen in different forms, including students' questions and comments, and it can take a short while or an extended period of time. Additionally, the ideal class discussion is one in which almost all students participate and are involved, learning, and listening to others.

Discussion methods are a variety of forums for open-ended, collaborative exchange of ideas among a teacher and students or among students for the purpose of furthering students' thinking, learning, problem solving, understanding, or literary appreciation. Participants present multiple points of view, respond to the ideas of others, and reflect on their own ideas in an effort to build their knowledge, understanding, or interpretation of the matter at hand ([Sadeghi et al., 2014](#)).

Discussions can be an excellent strategy for enhancing student motivation, fostering intellectual agility, and encouraging democratic habits. They create opportunities for students to practice and sharpen a number of skills, including the ability to articulate and defend positions, consider different points of view, and enlist and evaluate evidence ([Mainwaring et al., 2010](#)). Effective classroom discussions promote higher-order thinking skills by encouraging students to invent, create, imagine, take risks, and dig for deeper meaning ([Wassermann, 2010](#)).

Classroom discussions are carried out for the many benefits that students may get from them. Participation of students in classroom discussions is expected in all subjects. [Stanulis \(2012\)](#) enumerated ten benefits of getting students to participate in classroom discussions. Participation adds interest, engages students, provides teachers and students feedback, promotes preparation among students. It can be also used to control what's happening in class, to balance who's contributing in class and how much, and to develop important speaking skills. Participation also encourages dialogue among and between students, and it gives students the opportunity to practice using the language of the discipline.

Moreover, according to [Parks-Stamm \(2017\)](#), [Herstentein, and Platt \(2017\)](#), more than 70% of students involved in their study perceived a positive relationship between their own participation and learning and also discussed the value of other students' comments for their learning. A number of students verbalized that when participation is required, they prepare more, and this preparation actually increases their learning. The students further articulated five ways that participation enhances learning. To summarize, participation: increases engagement; helps students retain and remember information; confirms what they have already learned; provides clarification of prior learning; and deepens their understanding especially through hands-on and application-based learning opportunities. Hence, students are encouraged or required to actively participate in classroom discussions to get the positive outcomes needed to develop their skills.

There are various factors that affect students' participation in classroom discussions. [Dukuzumuremyi and Siklander \(2018\)](#) divide interactions between students and their teacher

in an inclusive classroom into four categories, namely; non-verbal, verbal, emotional, and kinaesthetic and indicate that their interactions are triggered by the social intimacy, teaching strategies, feedback, and classroom facilities. Other factors like the size of a classroom, personalities of the instructor and students and the perception of peers influenced the students to speak up in class (Abdullah *et al.*, 2012). Students' motivational orientation and their participation in the classroom are found to be related. Brigui (2017) found that almost all the respondents have an intrinsic/integrative motivation orientation, a fact that has a noticeable positive effect on their classroom participation.

Reasons for participation may differ between sexes. Aziz *et al.*, (2018) concluded that students exhibit significant level of classroom participation where girls were influenced by motivation in their classroom participation as compared to boys. Boys' participated more due to high self-esteem. Teachers, parents and peers and curriculum are important external factors which supported boys' classroom participation more than girls who in turn are more influenced by classroom environment.

(Precourt and Gainor, 2019) discovered that logistics, student traits, classroom climate, and the professor impact the level of participation within the classroom. Participation levels were identified to be higher in classroom environments that were smaller in size, provided students with support, respect, constructive feedback, and involved theory being related to real-life situations.

Further, the personality or behavior of teachers may affect students' participation in class. Immediacy behaviors of college professors influence student participation as shown by the results of the study of Roberts and Friedman (2013) which indicated that teachers who were more immediate had both greater frequency and breadth of classroom participation upon the students. More specifically, warmth of the professor (a composite of four immediacy behaviors) was a primary factor in explaining student participation. Similarly, the study of Rocca (2009) indicated that students who perceived their teachers as higher in immediacy were more likely to participate in class, and students who perceived their instructors as verbally aggressive were less likely to participate in class.

AlKandari (2012) reported that many students were also interested in those instructors that mainly focused on students' participation, which resulted in gaining desirable outcomes in terms of developing skills such as communication, intellectual curiosity, and critical thinking. The students perceived that faculty members work to engage them in various classroom activities and enhance their participation through discussions, debates, dialogue, group work, and presentations; and that students understood these methods as ways of increasing their learning and communication.

While there are some students who participate in classroom discussions, there are more students who are reluctant to participate for various causes or reasons. Some students do not participate in class because they are introverts. They just do not like talking out loud and feel uncomfortable being the center of attention. For an introvert, talking in class is a major point of anxiety. They do not feel confident in their understanding of the subject. Another reason is that they do not know how to participate in class discussions. Physical environment does not encourage participation, just like having super spread or clustered in groups which may not be discussion friendly. Lastly, they just do not like the class (Bernales, 2016).

Moreover, students do not participate in class discussions because they have not done their assignment, and have not focused on the relevant aspects of reading. Students' individual styles or personalities, or their cultural values or norms may have inhibited their participation. Students may not have experienced participating in discussions, and may not have general background on how to participate. Students come to class late. The instructor

have not clearly articulated the goals of the discussion, defined the structure, and/or effectively managed the process within the defined structure. The intellectual environment is not conducive to participation (Frambach *et al.*, 2014).

Hajimohammadi and Makundan (2011). cited Mudore (2002) when he argued that failure to contribute to a discussion or hesitancy to offer answers in class should never be used as a diagnostic conclusion that a person is introverted. There are many reasons students may be resistant to speak in class. First is introversion where individuals have a preference for doing things alone, or with a very small group of individuals they know very well. They also prefer to take time to reflect before sharing a position or decision with others. These individuals often interact very well with others, but doing so may well be exhausting. Second reason is shyness where individuals feel apprehensive and get a sense of awkwardness and lack of comfort around others. Third reason is English as a Second Language where these individuals may be self-conscious about their accent or fearful that others will not be able to understand what is being said.

Fourth reason is cultural differences where the social norms of conversation vary by greatly due to cultural influences. For instance, many cultures disapprove of speaking over, interrupting or contradicting someone else in public. Fifth reason is previous bad/embarrassing experience where a student who is resistant to speak in class may have been embarrassed previously by faculty members or other students. Sixth reason is peer pressure/appearances. For some students, appearing to be interested in the course material may well result in negative social pressure from peers. Seventh reason is Cues or responses from instructor where the teacher's subtle head nods, disapproving looks, or turning away from a person who is talking may impact student participation. Instructors who uses sarcasm in class may get a good response from some students while completely shutting down other students.

Eighth reason is lack of knowledge for response. Some students will not speak because they have nothing of value to contribute. This may occur due to a failure to complete the homework assignment, finding the textbook difficult to read, or having no context to relate the material to their own experience. The ninth reason is lack of interest. A student who is simply not interested in the material is unlikely to contribute to a class discussion or engage enthusiastically in a small group discussion. The tenth reason is generalized fear of failure where some individuals are simply more concerned with making a mistake in public than are other individuals.

Several researches were done to find out what makes the students reluctant to participate in classroom discussions. Choi (2015) found that reasons of his Korean students in a US graduate school for silence in the class included poor command of the English terms relevant to their discipline, influence of Korean classroom mannerisms, and face saving. Dawit and Deneke (2015) examined too the causes of first year students' limited participation in the EFL classrooms with reference to Ethiopian public universities. It was concluded that different factors like learners related, teachers teaching methods, physical environmental and others limited students' participation in the classroom. Alshoraty (2014) found in his study that the reasons related to faculty members played a more important role in preventing students from participating in class discussions than the reasons related to students. Also, the results revealed that the main reasons for students' non - participation in class discussions were student's feeling of boredom, student's preference to listen only, the change of faculty making mistakes, fanaticism of faculty members to their opinions and ideas, quick anger of

faculty members, lack of dialogue instruction, and students' shyness. The results of Savasci (2013) indicated that several factors such as anxiety, fear of being despised, teacher strategy, and culture were found to influence the reluctance problem among speakers.

Further, Eddy-U (2015) explored what English language learners at two universities in Macau, a Special Administrative Region of China, say on what motivates them to participate or not participate in group tasks. Interest, perceived effectiveness, good groupmates, good classroom social situation, personal vision and self-confidence were themes identified as both motivating and also, when in inverse form or absent in student experience, demotivating. Marks were also identified as a motivating influence. Overall, Macau students mentioned that social factors and task-related factors significantly influenced task-situated Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in addition to self-confidence and L2 learning motivation, which are part of general L2 WTC models. Additionally, the findings of Zarrinabadi (2013) indicate that teachers' wait time, error correction, decision on the topic, and support exert influence on learners' WTC.

Furthermore, perceived competence of students may affect their level of participation in class activities. Results of the study of Patall, Hooper, Vasquez, Pituch, and Steingut (2018) revealed that on days when students perceived their science classwork to be more difficult than usual, they experienced a decrease in perceived competence, which was in turn associated with an increase in disengagement. In addition, the decrease in perceived competence and subsequent decrease in engagement as a function of perceived difficulty was minimized when students perceived their teachers to provide autonomy support.

Participation in classroom discussions is greatly affected by the facility of the language used. Many researchers worked on to find out causes or factors affecting speaking anxiety. The primary purpose of the study of Tom et al. (2013) was to investigate the factors which lead to communication apprehension in the EFL classroom among non-English major EFL students at An-Najah University in Palestine. The findings of the study revealed that most students had either fear, or uneasiness about their learning experience which has hindered the language learning process. Similarly, the qualitative study of Sari (2017) was designed to investigate the speaking anxiety factors in EFL classes. Findings of this study indicated that communication apprehension factors lead to 71% of students' speaking anxiety followed by fear of negative evaluations, 53%; then test anxiety, 48%, and the lowest was 39% for anxiety about English classes.

The study of Weda and Sakti (2018) identified some contributing factors to students' anxiety in the English as a Foreign Language classroom at higher education in Indonesia. These factors are students' self-confidence, lecturers' role in the classroom, students' beliefs about material, and lecturers' arrogance in the teaching-learning process in which the teacher presents the material very quickly without considering students' situation. Specifically, highest response on how anxious students feel when they learn English was "They worry that they will fail their English course." Other influencing factors on students' anxiety were the statements "They get nervous when they do not understand what their English teacher says," "The students get nervous when their English teacher asks them questions that they are not able to prepare in advance," "Their English class move on quickly that they worry about being left behind," "In their English class, they forgot things they know when they get nervous," and "It frightens them when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in the EFL classroom".

The research findings of Hamouda (2013) indicate that a considerable number of students were reluctant to respond to the teacher and remained silent in oral English language classrooms due to many causes such as low English proficiency, fear of speaking in front of

others, negative evaluation, shyness, lack of confidence and preparation, and fear of making mistakes. The study also indicated some strategies used by students to participate in the class such as rehearsing what they say and preparing the ideas and questions; writing down and saying what they have written; asking their friends who were sitting next to them what to say before they could participate; not minding if their grammar was wrong; preparing some before the class begin; preparing some questions to be asked during the lessons; and listening to other students' responses in order to form their own opinions or ideas on what to contribute to the discussions.

In the locale of the locale where the current researcher works as a college instructor has observed that a few of the students participate in classroom discussions. The greater bulk of students in the classrooms are contented to be listeners only during class discussions. Considering the importance of student participation in class discussions, being a component of assessing student performance aside from the accepted notions that participation in class discussions may develop their skills in public speaking or communication skills, critical thinking skills, and in boosting their self-confidence, the current researcher was motivated to conduct this study to find out the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions.

### **1.1. Statement of the problem**

The main purpose of this study was to find out the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions at Notre dame of Tacurong College during the first semester of academic year, 2016 -2017. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following research problems:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of (a) sex, (b) course, (c) year level, and ethnicity?
2. What are the causes of the respondents' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions?
3. What are the strategies used by the students when participating in classroom discussions?

### **1.2. Significance of the study**

For the Dean or Program Heads, the findings of this study may inspire them to re-evaluate the teaching strategies specially including lessons for students to learn on how to ask questions or deliver their answers effectively. Anent to this, the language teachers may be encouraged to motivate students to speak the English language everyday so that words will just come out spontaneously, thus making them comfortable in speaking out their ideas in or out of the classroom.

The findings of this study will try to give information on the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions to make teachers aware of the factors that lead to non-participation in class and for them to find ways and means to help their students overcome their problems. If the cause is on their behavior in class or teaching methods, then hopefully the teachers would consider modifying them to encourage students to participate in classroom discussions.

The findings of this study may serve as basis of the program that Guidance Office may formulate to address problems on developing the self-confidence and overcoming shyness among students. Hopefully, the students will overcome their nervousness in talking in front of the class. Their study strategies can be enhanced to improve their competence in class.

For students, to see for themselves that their problems on how to contribute ideas in classroom discussions are also experienced by other students who were directly involved in this study. It is hoped that they cooperate with the encouragement given by their academic heads and class instructors.

For future researchers, to investigate on the strategies used by the teachers to stimulate students to participate in classroom discussions using other methods of gathering data in addition to survey questionnaires.

### **1.3. Scope of the study**

This study is focused on finding out the causes of the reluctance of the college students to participate in classroom discussions. There were 273 from second to fifth year students across courses who served as respondents to this study. They were enrolled at Notre Dame of Tacurong College during the first semester of academic year 2016 -2017 when this study was conducted.

### **1.4. Definition of terms**

Participate in classroom discussions refer to the verbal expression or sharing of ideas, facts or opinions of the students to answer questions posed by the instructor or by classmates if having a presentation of oral reports in the class, or contributing ideas to resolve an issue in a small discussion group in the classroom.

Reluctance means unwillingness or lack of enthusiasm on the part of the respondents to participate in classroom discussions.

Classroom discussions refer to a variety of forums for open-ended, collaborative exchange of ideas among a teacher and students or among students for the purpose of furthering students' thinking, learning, problem solving, understanding, or literary appreciation ([Sadeghi et al., 2014](#)).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Research design**

This study used the descriptive method of research to determine the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. It also described the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, course, year level and ethnicity; and the strategies used by the student respondents in order to participate in classroom discussions.

### **2.2. Locale of the study**

The study was conducted Notre Dame of Tacurong College (NDTC), a Catholic institution located at the City of Tacurong, lone component city of the province of Sultan Kudarat. NDTC offers complete elementary, junior and senior high schools, and college education. The college department offers academic programs which include Bachelor of Arts (AB), Bachelor in Elementary Education (BEED), Bachelor in Secondary Education (BSED), Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW), Bachelor of Science in Criminology (BSCrim), Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS), Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering (BSCpE), Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA), Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA), Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM), Bachelor of Science in Accounting Technology (BSAct), Bachelor of Science in Office Administration (BSOA), and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). The technical -vocational courses offered are Diploma in Computer Technology, and Diploma in Hotel and Restaurant Services.



### **2.3. Respondents**

The respondents of the study consisted of 273 students from Notre Dame of Tacurong College, Tacurong City. There were 114 males and 159 females coming from all courses and year levels who are enrolled during the first semester of academic year 2016 -2017. It must be noted that due to the implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum in the Philippine educational system, there were no regular first year students in 2016-2017.

### **2.4. Sampling**

Out of 856 students of Notre Dame of Tacurong College, 273 served as respondents to the study. To determine the sample, Slovin's formula was used. The number of respondents per course was allocated based on the computed sample size of the total population of the respondents. Convenient sampling was utilized to identify the individual respondents from each course included in the study.

### **2.5 Instrumentation**

A researcher-made survey questionnaire that was formulated by the researcher after a review of literature and studies was utilized to gather for this study. The draft was submitted to the Office of the Research Development Officer for comments and suggestions. It was further presented to an expert in the field to ensure that the questionnaire can provide answers to the research problems of this study.

Part I of the questionnaire deals with the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, course, year level, and ethnicity. Part II consists of 15 items indicating possible causes of respondents' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. The respondents indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on the statements pertinent to causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions by encircling the number in a 4-point Likert scale where 4 means Strongly Agree, 3 is Agree, 2 is Disagree, and 1 is Strongly Disagree. In Part III of the questionnaire, the respondents may check one or more of the given five strategies which they practice when participating in classroom discussions.

### **2.6. Data gathering procedure**

The researcher asked permission from the Offices of the Deans to conduct the study through a letter noted by the Research Development Officer and duly approved by the Office of the School President. The current researcher solicited the assistance of the Program Heads and some teachers in administering the questionnaire to student respondents. The accomplished questionnaires were retrieved immediately.

### **2.7. Statistical treatment**

The data gathered from the questionnaires were treated statistically using the following tools: For the profile of the respondents, the researcher used frequency and percentage distribution. For the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, mean and standard deviation were used. For strategies used by the respondents in order to participate in classroom discussions, frequency counts and percentage distribution were used.

### **2.8. Data analysis**

To analyze the data to answer the research problem on the profile of the respondents, the highest and lowest frequency counts and percentage distribution were highlighted in the discussion of the findings. Further, to analyze the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, the top three and the lowest mean ratings of items were focused in the presentation and interpretation of findings.

To analyze the results on the strategies used by the respondents to participate in classroom discussions, the highest and lowest number of frequencies were highlighted in the discussion of findings.

To describe the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, the following ranges of means in a 4-point Likert scale with corresponding description and interpretation were utilized:

Ranges of Means	Description	Interpretation
3.25 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Prevalent
2.50 – 3.24	Agree	Moderately Prevalent
1.75 – 2.49	Disagree	Less Prevalent
1.00 – 1.74	Strongly Disagree	Least Prevalent

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Profile of the respondents

The first research problem deals with the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, course, year level, and ethnicity. **Table 1** presents the findings.

As shown in **Table 1**, out of 273 respondents, majority (58.24%) of them are female against 41.76% male. As to course, most (18.32%) of the respondents were BSCrim students, and the least percentage (1.47%) was that of BSOA. As to year level, most (34.43%) of them were second year students and the least (0.73%) were the fifth year students. As to ethnicity of the respondents, most (47.99%) of them were Ilongos, and the least in percentage (0.37%) was Maranao.

**Table 1** Profile of the respondents (n = 273)

Profile		f	%	f	%
<b>Sex</b>	Male	64	78.0		
	Female	18	22.0		
<b>Year Level</b>	First Year	50	61.0		
	Fourth Year	91	39.0		
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Ilongo	32	39.0		
	Ilokano	25	30.5		
	Cebuano/ Bisaya	4	4.9		
	Maguindanaoan	20	24.4		
	Others	1	1.2		

### 3.2. Causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions

The second research problem deals with the causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. **Table 2** presents the findings.

**Table 2** shows that out of 15 items the mean ratings range from 2.80 (SD = 0.71) to 2.06 (SD = 0.77) and interpreted as Moderately Prevalent to Less Prevalent respectively. Ten items obtained mean ratings interpreted as Moderately Prevalent and five items as Less Prevalent. Of these items, Item 2, I get tensed when I am forced by my teachers to answer a question, obtained the highest mean of 2.80 (SD = 0.71) and interpreted as Moderately Prevalent. This finding indicates that many of the respondents are sometimes reluctant to participate in classroom discussions because of the tension they felt when they are forced by their teachers to answer questions in the class. For many students, the thought of getting called on in class and speaking in front of their classmates can be terrifying (Leonard *et al.*, 2018). This is very possible when students are not prepared to answer the question and fear that their answers might be wrong and be despised by their classmates. These views are supported by Weda and Sakti (2018) who reported that the students get nervous when their English teacher asks them questions that they are not able to prepare in advance, and with what Hajimohammadi and Makundan (2011). stated that generalized fear of failure where some individuals are simply more concerned with making a mistake in public than are other individuals can inhibit them from participating in classroom discussions.

**Table 2** Causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions (n = 273)

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I am worried of my faulty pronunciation in English.	2.92	0.68	Moderately Prevalent
2. I get tensed when I am forced by my teachers to answer a question.	2.84	0.72	Moderately Prevalent
3. I get tensed and nervous to speak in front of the whole class.	3.0	0.75	Moderately Prevalent
4. I feel embarrassed if I am corrected while speaking English in front of the whole class.	2.81	0.87	Moderately Prevalent
5. I feel that my mistakes in speaking English will make appear incompetent.	2.80	0.83	Moderately Prevalent
6. My classmates would laugh at me if my answer to the question is wrong.	2.59	0.87	Less Prevalent
7. I cannot speak English well.	2.70	0.83	Less Prevalent
8. I lack confidence to recite.	2.70	0.86	Moderately Prevalent
9. I have inadequate English vocabulary.	2.71	0.85	Moderately Prevalent

10. I am afraid of my teachers' harsh comments and negative gestures.	2.51	0.95	Moderately Prevalent
11. I feel inferior because my other classmates have better English ability than me.	2.56	0.83	Less Prevalent
12. I am afraid to express my views in a big class size and to face a large number of classmates.	2.65	0.78	Moderately Prevalent
13. I cannot answer the teachers' questions immediately.	2.75	0.86	Moderately Prevalent
14. I am not interested in the topics discussed.	2.29	1.04	Less Prevalent
15. I do not know what to say because I lack understanding of what to say.	2.40	0.99	Less Prevalent
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>0.71</b>	Moderately Prevalent

Further, Item 3, I get tensed and nervous to speak in front of the whole class, obtained the second highest mean of 2.80 (SD = 0.76), and interpreted as Moderately Prevalent. This finding indicates that many of the respondents are sometimes reluctant to participate in classroom discussions because they get stressed and nervous to speak in front of the whole class. Hamouda (2013) commented that to speak in front of the whole class is potentially a risky business and the most anxiety provoking among students. In his study, it was found that 62.2% of the students are afraid of speaking in front of others in class.

Furthermore, Item 1, I am worried of my faulty pronunciation in English, obtained the third highest mean of 2.71 (SD = 0.74) and interpreted as Moderately Prevalent. This finding indicates that many of the respondents are sometimes hesitant to participate in classroom discussions because they are worried of their faulty pronunciation in English. Hamouda (2013) explained that previous researches had shown that in countries adopting English as Second Language or studying English as a Foreign Language, pronunciation appeared to be a big cause of stress among the learners. Pronunciation is an important issue across language groups because of its immediate effect on interaction. Misunderstanding of what is meant by the speaker can happen in this situation. In Hamouda's study, 71.70% of his Saudi learner respondents get worried about their pronunciation when they speak in the class, and 55.97% of them expressed that they are embarrassed if they mispronounced English words. In addition, students may be self-conscious about their accent in pronouncing English words or fearful that others will not be able to understand what they are saying (Hajimohammadi and Makundan 2017).

Conversely, Item 14, I am not interested in the topics discussed, obtained the lowest mean of 2.06 (SD = 0.77) and interpreted as Less Prevalent. This finding indicates that few of the respondents are occasionally reluctant to participate in classroom discussions because they are not interested in the topics discussed in their class. Lack of interest is one of the factors found by the study of Eddy-U (2015) as demotivating students' willingness to communicate during class discussions. According to Hajimohammadi and Makundan (2011) a student who is simply not interested in the material is unlikely to contribute to a class discussion or engage enthusiastically in a small group discussion.

Further, Item 15, I do not know what to say because I lack understanding of what to say, got the second lowest mean of 2.28 (SD = 0.71) and interpreted as Less Prevalent. This finding signifies that few of the respondents are occasionally unwilling to participate in classroom discussions because they do not know what to say because they lack understanding of what to say. This reason for reluctance to participate in classroom discussions points to lack of knowledge for response. Some students do not speak because they have nothing of value to contribute. This may occur due to a failure to complete the homework assignment, finding the textbook difficult to read, or having no context to relate the material to their own experience (Hajimohammadi and Makundan (2011)).

In general, the investigated causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions are Moderately Prevalent as indicated by the overall mean of 2.50 (SD = 0.71).

### 3.3. Strategis used by students when participating in classroom discussions

The third problem deals with the strategies used by students when participating in classroom discussions. **Table 3** presents the findings.

**Table 3** Strategies Used by Students to Participate in Classroom Discussions (n = 82)

Items	<i>f</i>	%
1. I think carefully about what to say before I will participate	58	70.7
2. I write and then say what I have written	37	45.1
3. I confer to my friend who is sitting next to me my answer to the question before I will participate	24	29.3
4. I just participate without minding if my grammar is wrong	36	43.9
5. I prepare notes and questions before the class begins	32	39.0

**Table 3** shows the frequency counts for each statement with 58 counts as the highest and 24 as the lowest. Item 1, I think carefully about what to say before I will participate, obtained the highest frequency counts of 58 (70.7%) out of 82 respondents. This result indicates that a big majority of the respondents would think carefully before participating in classroom discussions. This finding is congruent to the finding of Hamuoda (2013) who reported that out of 159 students, 125 (78.62%) of them agreed to the statement, "I think carefully about to say and then say it loud." Liu (2005) was cited by Hamouda (2013) to have reported that some students need more time to think and organize their thoughts before they can participate.

On the other hand, Item 4, I just participate without minding if my grammar is wrong, got the lowest frequency counts of 36 (25.64%) out of 273 respondents. This finding indicates that these students are more concerned of their participation in classroom discussions to earn credits even their statements may not be grammatically perfect. This is a courageous act and an expression of willingness to learn as teachers usually coach students on how to state their answers in correct sentences.

The present finding on students participating without minding if their grammar is wrong with 25.64% of the respondents doing it is quite different from the result of Hamouda's (2013) study which reported that 70.44% of his respondents did not mind if their grammar was

wrong when participating in classroom discussions as for them the contents of their answers were more important than how they were worded.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the data provided by second to fifth college students coming from academic courses studying at Notre Dame of Tacurong College, it can be concluded that there are moderately prevalent causes that hinder the participation of some students in their classroom discussions. There are causes which emanate from their personal thoughts or feelings take the form of being tensed and nervous when called by the teacher to answer a question in front of the whole class; embarrassed and feel incompetent when corrected while speaking English; being unable to answer the teacher's question immediately; lack of confidence to recite; and being afraid to express their views in a big class, and being afraid to face a large number of classmates.

There are also moderately prevalent causes that come from their perceived proficiency in the use of the English language. They are reluctant to participate in classroom discussions because of their faulty pronunciation, and inadequate English vocabulary which are essential in communicating their ideas in group discussions. They are also turned off due to teacher's harsh comments and negative gestures.

With the existence of many moderately prevalent causes of students' reluctance to participate in classroom discussions, it is recommended that academic heads refresh teachers on how to encourage students to participate through their teaching styles or strategies and their behavior manifested in their words and gestures. A seminar-workshop may be facilitated to address this concern. The Guidance Office may take care of the issues related to overcoming nervousness and tensions when facing a large number of people, and developing self-confidence among students. Teachers especially language teachers can help in the problems in the correct pronunciation of words, and in enriching students' vocabulary in English. Students, most importantly, should be personally determined to overcome hindrances to participate in classrooms by studying their lessons seriously, and cooperating with their counselor and teachers' suggestions to improve their strategies when participating in their class discussions.

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