

# THE BARRIERS OF AN ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: EFL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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## Abstract

Active learning provides students with self-confidence and builds their critical thinking in the discussion. This change provides numerous benefits for students learning English which are influenced by the academic lessons and their activeness in thinking. It requires students to engage directly by using critical thinking or higher levels of thinking such as analysis or synthesis. A qualitative study was employed. The participants were teachers and students in secondary school. The instrument was conducted in questionnaire forms and interviewed the students. The finding in this study appeared that barriers in active learning environments came up from student readiness, less motivation, students' understanding, and students' afraid. It showed that teachers needed to enhance the quality of the teaching and learning process to achieve students' activeness.

Keywords: Barriers, Active learning, Speaking performance, Teacher's perception.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Being active in the classroom increases the student's understanding compared to passively listening to the lectures. [1]. In this era, learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the transition from the traditional method of teaching which generally focuses on teacher-centered changes to student-centered. Students' roles are wider than just listening to the teacher's explanation. They are demanded to have critical thinking and increased innovation. Being a critical thinker means students should be in the context of 'active', not 'passive'. Having an active learning environment can be done by both teachers and students through many strategies and methods. The teacher needs to employ an active learning strategy to engage students' interest such as presentations, planned exercises, conversations in small groups, evaluations, interactive lecture clues, films, telling personal stories, outdoor activities, and games. [2] The specified activeness is actively speaking, expressing thoughts, discussing, and responding to the material presented by the teachers [3]. Those are the several sets of comprehension learning strategies. Those include how students are active from the beginning through activities that build teamwork and get them thinking about the subject matter. therefore, active learning refers to the student's interaction with the learning process rather than passively taking the information.

This change provides numerous benefits for students in learning English which are influenced in the academic lessons moreover for their activeness in thinking and problem-solving that is useful for their life. Yet, due to this transition, it is not necessarily easy for teachers to apply such methods or even strategies. Teacher qualifications and English proficiency, classroom size, student enthusiasm, class-oriented learning, and limited resources for learning are all critical success elements in EFL teaching and learning [4]. These factors tend to make it difficult to be implemented. Moreover, for the last three years during the pandemic, the learning process is carried out by conducting distance learning.

Teachers should be aware of and develop strategies in teaching combined with ICT. ICT as an educational instrument provides substantial meaning and helps the process [5]. Working with computers and other apps also becomes a barrier for teachers, and how students obtain the material is also burdening them since they are not directly directed. The sudden change from face-to-face to distance online learning drove teachers to employ technology. Not only do the schools have to ensure that teachers had the necessary facilities and infrastructure to operate home learning, but they also have to ensure that they had the necessary technical skills. [6].

The theory of learning describes how students acquire, analyze, and process information. Cognitive, psychological, and contextual influences, as well as previous interactions, all contribute to the acquisition or change of one's perspective or view of the world and the retention of information and abilities [7] This is a theory of how people learn, so they can comprehend the process of learning itself. There is much that can be taught, not just notification. Students need to be involved in the process. When the learning is going actively, the students use their brains to learn thoughts, they try to crack the matters and apply what they learn. Active learning helps them to listen, ask questions about particular lessons and discuss with others. The most important thing is students “do” solve the problem itself and find new ways and skills. Therefore, the best way for students in learning is by doing.

In other words, active learning provides students with self-confident and build their critical thinking in the discussion. It requires students to intellectually engage with the content using critical thinking or a higher level of thinking such as analysis or synthesis (2015) [8]. Moreover, beyond their participation in the class context, it has many benefits for students in their daily life. Students do not have to simply do things but additionally think about what they are doing, inside or outside of the classroom [9]. In addition, student activeness in learning is an activity during the learning process that links emotional abilities and focuses on the creativity of students [10]. Activeness in learning activities is very diverse, ranging from activities that are easy for the teacher to observe (physical activities) to those that are difficult for anyone to observe (psychological activities) [11]. Students' physical activities throughout the learning process can involve through reading book, listening to what the teacher discusses, and writing notes or tasks. These learning strategies promote comprehension in memory. While psychological activities performed by students during the learning process can be involve utilizing what they know and have to address learning-related challenges assigned by the teacher. Making observation, and other concepts to complete their projects. These levels of learning are linked to analysis, which are developed through problem-solving [12], [13], [14].

Learners can experience some obstacles and difficulties transferring knowledge and skills from one context to another [15]. Therefore, strategies that match students' interests are used so that they are interested and able to contribute well in class. However, the barriers both teacher or students should be considered. The indication of difficulties in implementing, can be determined by teachers' pedagogical backgrounds, and a lack of equality in the system of education, including the external reality of educational situations. They overcome educational barriers by recognizing the presence of external obstacles [16], [17]

In compiling and peeling the data, the previous studies conveyed that active learning provided much significance for students. Meanwhile, the studies were mainly focused on the effectiveness, and benefit. The design of teaching rooms can either maintain the weakness in teaching techniques or actively hinder the development of new pedagogies. Despite the fact that space does not change practice, people do [18]. However, there are clearly other obstacles that teachers experience in creating an active classroom ambiance. Therefore, this research tried to specify the difficulties, and barriers faced by the teachers in implementing an active learning environment in the class. In the study presented, the following questions are:

1. What are teachers' obstacles to implementing an active learning environment in the class?
2. What makes students difficult in participating an active learning environment in class?

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out by using a case study design, which belongs to the qualitative approach. The data was obtained from the teachers' perceptions and students' thought about the barriers and difficulties in implementing an active learning environment in the class. The target populations of the study were secondary school teachers and students as a participant in different schools. There were 32 teachers (23 female and 9 male teachers) involved. With an average of six to nine years of teaching experience. Teachers response to the survey items were measured using Likert scales that ranged from 1 to 4 (1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3- disagree, 5-strongly disagree [19]. The survey was doing through online platforms, by using Google-form. The questionnaire consisted of 37 questions and 1 brief answer with indicators about teachers' barrier that includes of teachers external and internal problems in implementing. Also students' attention, and students' activity within conducting learning process [9]. The participants were measured by asking the questions such as, "The teachers' obstacles to implementing an active learning environment in the class" and "The students' difficulties in participating an active learning environment in class". Interviewing students were also conducted. The interview using open-ended questions in the first language. There were four male students and two female students were questioning related to the topic of the discussion.

## 3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

*Table 1. Teacher's Grade percentage*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SMP	24	75.0	75.0	75.0
	SMA	8	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total		32	100.0	100.0	

*Table 2. Number of years teaching in secondary school.*

The table above explains how long the teacher has been teaching at the school. There are two criteria for teachers included in this study. Teachers in secondary schools are involved with different background, teaching experience, and differences in the scoop of teaching places. These differences are expected to produce results that are an obstacle for many teachers in teaching, especially in teaching an active learning environment.

*Table 2: Barrier in Teaching and Learning*

No.	Component	Criteria	Percentage
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readiness for students to take part in learning is lack</li> </ul>	- Strongly agree	12,5%
		- Agree	68,8%
		- Disagree	18,8%
		- Strongly disagree	0%
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less motivation in learning</li> </ul>	- Strongly agree	12,5%
		- Agree	68,8%
		- Disagree	18,8%
		- Strongly disagree	0%

3.	• Student's afraid to be involved	- Strongly agree	6,3%
		- Agree	53,1%
		- Disagree	37,5%
		- Strongly disagree	3,1%
4.	• Mastery and understanding of the material is still lack in the discussion process	- Strongly agree	9,4%
		- Agree	62,5%
		- Disagree	25%
		- Strongly disagree	3,1%
5.	• Uncontrolled classroom	- Strongly agree	18,8%
		- Agree	46,9%
		- Disagree	31,3%
		- Strongly disagree	3,1%

After researcher calculating the value and data of teacher's barriers above, the barriers here come up from the students' side. The factors such as readiness, less motivation, student's understanding, student's afraid, became the major problem faced by teachers in creating active learning atmosphere in the classroom. Teachers have difficulty managing students' discipline.

While conducting interview to the students, each student took time around five until seven minutes'. The questions are given in depth question so that the researcher find the findings. Most students mentioned that the class' ambience tend to be not conducive to involve the students in participating.

*Barrier 1: when our teacher gives such information and ask the students to convey their thoughts, for the first minute, the things went smoothly. But, for the next the class end up with noisy and the discussion was out of the topic.*

One of the obstacles that students experience when participating in active classroom learning is that the atmosphere of the class becomes noisy and inconsistent. For learners who are actively involved, this is an obstacle which hinders the conducive running of the class.

*Barrier II: When the teacher asks for having class discussion, only a few students who are smart and active join in, while the others are passive and only listen.*

As described in the first barrier, only a few students actively joined in, while others became noisy or even chose to remain silent. Constraints from both the teacher and the students naturally arise. Therefore, good coordination and direct involvement are necessary for this active class.

*Barrier III: Students only like certain subjects. When the subject was taught is their favorite subject, they show their interest.*

Students' interest in certain subjects greatly influences their activeness in learning and discussion. some students are only willing to contribute if the subjects taught are the ones they like. When students like the subject, the interest to learn more and ask questions will appear in class. However, the problem is that if the subject taught is less interesting and not the student's interest, they will tend to be passive.

In the context of learning and the obstacles listed above, the factors that cause learning problems arise from two kinds, namely internal and external factors from both students and teachers. In supporting the effectiveness of a learning process, there are several things. The attitude, readiness, attention and motivation of students in learning are needed and also the external factors that arise from the conditions of the student learning environment, student background, and the teachers as an embodiment in learning. In order to create a good classroom atmosphere, the teacher as a facilitator holds a lot of control in the smooth running of learning. Teachers are expected to be able to motivate

students and control the running of the class with proper guidance and direction. Another thing from teacher in teaching that needs to be improved is one of the professional abilities of qualified teacher. Combining learning with technology is often an obstacle because teachers are not competent with it. Therefore, the good quality and willingness to develop from teacher is very necessary.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

According to the result of the data analysis, which has been stated in the finding, the researchers underlined the barrier in the active learning environment come up from the students' readiness, understanding, motivation, and students' afraid. However, the obstacles from teachers in implementing an active learning environment are not only just on the students' side. Other factors such as teachers' preparation, quality of education, teacher professionalism, and management are very necessary. Both teacher and students factor affecting the active learning environment should be considered. This finding indicates that these constrains in the teaching-learning process must be improved by teachers. In seeing the shortcomings of each student along with other external factors. Since this study focused on barriers, it is suggested that further research can be done by centering on more strategies and techniques in teaching active learning that is crucial to boost student engagement.

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