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A Study on Students' Participation in Chinese Language Courses A Case Study of J.Y University

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Abstract

With the wide spread of the constructivist learning theory, the learner-centered teaching mode has gradually become the mainstream of higher education, and more and more educators have realized the importance of student participation in class. However, there is a lack of empirical research on students' participation in Chinese language courses in local universities. Taking J.Y University as an example, this paper analyzes students' participation in Chinese language classes from four aspects: behavioral participation, emotional participation, cognitive participation and agency participation. The results of quantitative analysis show that the overall participation level of students in Chinese language class is higher, with the highest level of emotional participation and the lowest level of agency participation. Students' major category has a significant impact on students' participation. Arts and sports students have the highest participation and science students have the lowest participation.

Keywords: Chinese Language Course, Student ’Participation, Major Category

Introduction

Under constructivist theory, learners do not passively receive information, but acquire it through participation and reflection (Chuang, 2021). Knowledge is not acquired by teachers, but by means of meaning construction with the help of teachers and learning partners and the use of necessary learning materials under certain circumstances. No knowledge exists independently of the learner's construction, so meaningful construction is the most important part of the learning process. Therefore, constructivism advocates learner-centered learning under the guidance of teachers.

In learner-centered pedagogy (LCP), learners are considered active participants in learning, and their education is shaped by their interests, prior knowledge, and active participation. The teaching process focuses on learners' metacognitive skills such as collaborative learning and questioning to prove and validate arguments. Students construct meaningful knowledge by engaging with teachers and peers, asking or answering questions, making comments, and working in groups. Diverse classroom participation improves their reasoning, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

With the popularity of LCP teaching mode, students' classroom participation has been placed in a very important position.

An ideal "student-centered" classroom also requires the full involvement of students, not just the "one-man show" of teachers (Precourt & Gainor, 2019; Rugambuka & Mazzuki, 2023). The essence of "learner-centered" teaching method is to emphasize the participation of learners, so that students can build new knowledge in the classroom scene and interact with teachers and classmates. This teaching mode inevitably calls for more forms of student participation, and also calls for teachers to change their roles from the protagonist to the guide and organizer of student participation.

The importance of student participation has also become a consensus in the educational community (Aguillon, 2020). Teachers have made various attempts in class to allow students to have more participation in class, including class discussion, group cooperation and sharing, flipped classroom and presentation (Kelsen & Liang, 2019; Yu, 2020).

In fact, the benefits of student participation have long been recognized by researchers. First, students' participation is related to their academic performance (Cayubit, 2022). Qureshi et al (2023) indicates that student participation is an important factor affecting students' academic achievement. Students who participate in the classroom are more actively engaged with the course content, creating a richer learning environment that promotes their academic achievement.

Second, classroom participation is also regarded as an important way for students to acquire knowledge and develop abilities (Bizimana, E.et al,2022). Students who participate will improve their communication skills and group interaction (Forsell, J.etal,2020.), especially when students participate in group work, students' improvement in interpersonal communication will be more obvious, which will be helpful for students to adapt to society in the future.

Thirdly, the improvement of student participation is also conducive to the improvement of classroom teaching quality. Cheon et al (2020) believe that when teachers learn to encourage students to participate in a self-supporting way, it is a win-win thing for both teachers and students. Teachers will benefit in teaching effectiveness and job satisfaction, while students will benefit in skills improvement.

But so far, student participation in public courses at local universities is not promising. According to the research of Yang et al (2020), more than 60% of students in Chinese universities do not actively participate in class. However, there is a lack of empirical research on students' participation in Chinese language courses.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate students' participation in Chinese language courses from four aspects: behavioral participation, emotional participation, cognitive participation and agency participation.

Literature Review

Although student participation is a topic that is often discussed by the education circle, the definition of it is vague. It seems difficult to have an accurate definition of "student engagement", so almost all behaviors, motivations and related variables related to learning become participation. In other words, participation is overgeneralized (Wong & Liem, 2022).

When the time came to the early 21st century, Fredricks et al (2004) began to pay attention to the nature of participation. They believed that participation was malleable, a response to the environment to adapt to the environment, that is, the adaptation to the school learning environment, and this response was divided into three different dimensions,

namely, behavior, emotion and cognition. Behavioral participation refers to compliance with school norms and participation in school academic activities and other activities. Emotional engagement refers to students' emotional responses in class, including boredom, sadness, anxiety, interest, etc. Cognitive engagement is learning strategy and academic engagement.

Although the understanding of behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement is not uniform, this trichotomy has been widely recognized in many studies. For example, Yuan (2020) believes that positive emotional participation and cognitive participation can improve students' second language acquisition. In addition, Bizimana, et al (2022) also recognized the rule of thirds in their study on the impact of cooperative learning, believing that cooperative learning can promote student participation.

Lyu, et al (2022) investigated the classroom participation of local college students from three dimensions of behavior, cognition and emotion, and the results showed that the three dimensions were affective participation, cognitive participation and behavioral participation respectively from high to low.

Appleton et al (2006), on the basis of the three-point method, proposed a four-point method, defining student participation as academic, behavioral, psychological and cognitive. Academic engagement refers to the student's effort towards academic tasks, and behavioral engagement refers to the student's overall participation in school activities (such as attendance, voluntary participation in class and extracurricular activities). Psychological engagement, on the other hand, includes relationships with peers, teachers, and schools. Finally, cognitive engagement describes students' self-regulation and the perceived relevance and value of school and learning in relation to their goals and aspirations. Reeve, et al (2020) then found a new subtype of participation, that is, active participation. Active participation is when students spontaneously ask for participation so that teachers understand what guidance they need.

Reeve, et al (2020) suggest that active engagement should be considered as a new element of engagement, and that the status of emotional engagement should be reconsidered. Reeve et al. suggested defining the four elements of student engagement as behavioral engagement, active engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. Although the participation of the four elements is not comprehensive, it is widely recognized as a suitable variable for measurement. It divides students' participation into four aspects: behavior, emotion, cognition and initiative, and basically covers students' various inputs to the course in class. Therefore, this definition is chosen in this study.

Research Methodology

Research Strategy

This study adopts quantitative research method. This study will use questionnaires to collect data, and then use SPSS software to analyze the collected data. The purpose of this study is to understand the student participation in Chinese language classes by calculating the mean variance and conducting correlation studies.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is all sophomore students of J.Y universities. They are required to complete a Chinese language course during their sophomore year. The students in each class are from the same major, but the students in different classes are from different majors, so the instructors face students with mixed majors. In this study, the total population was around 1,500. The sample size of the questionnaire is 350 people.

Data Collection Tools

The Learning Engagement Scale was set up by Rozinah Jamaludin et al. (2014). It has 21 questions and examines students' participation in class in four dimensions: behavior, agency, cognition and emotion. The scale adopts Likert four-point counting method, and students choose from 1 to 4 points compared with the participating behaviors listed. 1=strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree.

Reliability

Table 1

variable	item	Cronbach's alpha
Student' participation	21	0.966

The cronbach's alpha value of this questionnaire is 0.966, which indicates that the scale used in this questionnaire has good reliability. Detailed results are shown in Table 1.

Results and Discussion

Basic Information of the sample:

Table2

Sample basic information(N=350)

Category		Number	Proportion
Gender	male	164	46.9%
	female	186	53.1%
Age	18-19years old	60	17.1%
	20-22years old	290	82.9%
Major category	liberal arts	180	51.4%
	science	72	20.6%
	arts and physical education	98	28%
Urban-rural structure	rural	260	74.29%
	urban	90	25.71%
Nationality	ethnic Han	339	96.9%
	national minority	11	3.1%

As can be seen from Table 2, there are a total of 350 participants in this survey, among which 46.9% are male and 53.1% are female. 17.1% are 18-19 years old and 82.9% are 20-22 years old. There are three major categories: liberal arts (51.4%), science (20.6%), and arts and physical education (28%). 74.29% of the sample came from rural areas, 25.71% from urban areas, 96.9% from Han nationality and 3.1% from other ethnic groups.

Student' participation in Chinese language courses

Table 3
Student participation in Chinese language courses(N=350)

	N	least value	maximum value	average value	standard deviation
Behavioral participation	350	1.00	4.00	2.78	0.645
Agency participation	350	1.00	4.00	2.64	0.694
Cognitive participation	350	1.00	4.00	2.86	0.648
Emotional participation	350	1.00	4.00	2.93	0.667
Student participation	350	1.00	4.00	2.79	0.597

As can be seen from Table 3, in terms of the overall participation of students in the Chinese language course, the overall participation score of students is 2.79, which is in a medium and high state. The average score of emotional participation was the highest (2.93), followed by cognitive participation (2.86), behavioral participation (2.78), and agency participation (2.64).

Difference analysis of demographic variables

(1) gender difference

Table
The impact of gender on student participation in Chinese language courses(N=350)

	Male	Female	T	P
Behavioral participation	2.78±0.73	2.80±0.56	-0.344	0.731
Agency participation	2.72±0.74	2.58±0.65	1.865	0.063
Cognitive participation	2.86±0.75	2.88±0.55	-0.237	0.813
Emotional participation	2.85±0.75	3.02±0.58	-2.379	0.018
Student participation	2.79±0.68	2.79±0.51	-0.58	0.954

Table 4 shows that, from the perspective of gender, p of male and female students in overall participation, behavioral participation, agency participation and cognitive participation is greater than 0.05, and the difference is not significant. There was a significant difference only in emotional participation,P=0.018<0.05. The average score of female emotional participation was 3.02±0.58, while that of male emotional participation was 2.85±0.75. The score of female was higher than that of male, indicating that female emotional participation was more active than male.

(2) Age difference

Table 5

The impact of age on student participation in Chinese language courses(N=350)

	18-19 years old	20-22years old	T	P
Behavioral participation	2.72±0.72	2.80±0.63	-0.919	0.359
Agency participation	2.56±0.73	2.67±0.69	-1.110	0.268
Cognitive participation	2.82±0.64	2.88±0.65	-0.613	0.541
Emotional participation	2.89±0.73	2.95±0.66	-0.665	0.507
Student participation	2.72±0.64	2.81±0.59	-0.969	0.333

As can be seen from Table 5, P>0.05, the difference in all age groups is not significant, indicating that age has no influence on the participation of college Chinese class.

(3) The differences between urban and rural

Table 6

The impact of urban and rural on student participation in Chinese language courses(N=350)

	Rural	Urban	T	P
Behavioral participation	2.81±0.64	2.73±0.66	1.037	0.300
Agency participation	2.67±0.69	2.57±0.70	1.159	0.247
Cognitive participation	2.87±0.66	2.85±0.62	0.338	0.736
Emotional participation	2.94±0.66	2.92±0.68	0.237	0.813
Student participation	2.81±0.60	2.75±0.59	0.848	0.397

As can be seen from Table 6, P>0.05 indicates that the difference between urban and rural areas has no significant impact on college Chinese participation

(4) Nationality Difference

Table 7

The impact of nationality on student participation in Chinese language courses

	Ethnic Han	National minority	T	P
Behavioral participation	2.80±0.65	2.47±0.48	1.659	0.098
Agency participation	2.66±0.69	2.32±0.76	1.570	0.117
Cognitive participation	2.88±0.65	2.59±0.64	1.438	0.151
Emotional participation	2.95±0.67	2.58±0.62	1.808	0.072
Student participation	2.80±0.60	2.47±0.57	1.814	0.071

From Table 7, P>0.05 indicates that ethnic groups have no significant influence on college Chinese participation.

(5) Major category difference

Table 8

The impact of major category on student participation in Chinese language courses(N=350)

	Liberal arts	Science	Arts and physical education	F	P
Behavioral participation	2.81±0.64	2.65±0.62	2.85±0.66	2.353	0.097
Agency participation	2.61±0.70	2.46±0.65	2.86±0.67	7.555	<0.001
Cognitive participation	2.89±0.64	2.76±0.62	2.90±0.68	1.322	0.268
Emotional participation	3.01±0.65	2.70±0.62	2.95±0.69	6.375	0.002
Student participation	2.81±0.59	2.62±0.56	2.89±0.61	4.456	0.012

As can be seen from Table 8, P=0.012<0.05, the overall participation of students in Chinese language courses is significantly different in major categories. Art and sports were the highest (2.89±0.61), followed by arts (2.81±0.59) and science (2.62±0.56). In terms of agency participation, p<0.001, there were significant differences among different professional categories, art and sports had the highest participation (2.86±0.67), arts followed by 2.61±0.70, and science had the lowest participation (2.46±0.65). In terms of emotional participation, p=0.002<0.05, there was also a significant difference. The highest level was 3.01±0.65 in liberal arts, followed by 2.95±0.69 in art and sports, and the lowest level was 2.70±0.62 in science.

Conclusions

According to the results of this study, the overall participation level of students in college Chinese classes in local colleges and universities is above average, and most students are able to participate in class learning, especially girls, who score higher in emotional participation, indicating that more girls like this course and are more willing to participate in the course learning. However, from the perspective of other dimensions of participation, agency participation, which represents active participation and creative participation, has the lowest score, indicating that students' learning state is mainly passive acceptance, and the classroom has not mobilized students' initiative, which is still a long way from the "learner-centered" classroom we want to establish.

In addition, the results also show that there are significant differences in the participation of students in Chinese language classes among different major categories. Science students, in particular, are less engaged than students in other majors in any dimension. This may have something to do with the general lack of interest in literature among science students. This difference should attract the attention of educators. In future studies, the deep-seated reasons for this difference should be further explored, and further strategies should be made to improve the class participation rate of science students.

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