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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**EQUALIZING CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION:  
PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEXTS IN THE EGYPTIAN EFL CLASSROOM**

A thesis submitted to

The English Language Institute  
Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

by

Mariah J. Fairley

May/2010

The American University in Cairo

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A Thesis Submitted by **Mariah J. Fairley**

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the degree of Master of Arts

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Date

## DEDICATION

*To my father*

*James Hurst Fairley*

*who joined the women's liberation movement in the 1960s  
and ever since has been a strong supporter of their empowerment*

*and*

*To my daughters*

*Alenka May, Farida Clare, and Leyli Amina*

*God willing, in a short time, women will become the same as men; they will  
take a leading position amongst the learned, will each have a fluent tongue and  
eloquent speech, and shine like unto lamps of guidance throughout the world.*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research has shown that about one third of the students in a given classroom are silent, as defined as those students taking fewer than half the class average number of turns. Further, more of these silent students tend to be female than male, an imbalance that has been strongly linked to the phenomenon of male conversational dominance, expressed through: taking more and longer turns; interruption, especially of female students; calling out; topic control; and even the ignoring and insulting of others' contributions. The causes of male conversational dominance and the tendency towards female silence have been theoretically linked to socialization factors, as supported by evidence of female deference to male speakers, male interruption of female students, and a gender imbalance in teacher attention. This socialization may negatively affect female students' willingness to communicate, and therefore their SLA. The identification of techniques to equalize participation is therefore of great importance to the EFL field.

The purpose of the present study was to determine: first, if there were silent students in the Egyptian EFL college classroom; second, if there was a gender imbalance in this silence; and third, if the techniques of preparation and structure related to changes in student participation in the public speaking contexts of whole class discussion and team debate.

The study took an exploratory and qualitative approach, using a convenience sample of five intact Egyptian EFL college classrooms, totaling 51 students. The techniques of preparation and structure were used as interventions. Video recordings of class sessions together with student and teacher questionnaires were used to collect data.

Qualitative analysis of the data show that 35% of the students were silent before interventions, and 14% were dominant. More female students were silent than male, which may be attributable to a chilly classroom climate. Further, male students took more turns than female students, which was not perceived by the teachers. Participation was more equal in the sessions using interventions, implying that silence need not be viewed as a fixed trait. Students differed by gender on which techniques they found most helpful, suggesting that male students may need to be treated differently than female students, and that the combined use of several techniques to equalize classroom participation may be more effective than the use of just one.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Current EFL research shows that output, or speaking practice, is a requirement for successful SLA to occur (Doughty & Long, 2003; Schmidt, 2001; Swain, 2005). However, many teachers face the problem of silent students in their classrooms, where some learners participate much less than others, especially in public speaking activities such as whole class discussion. If some students are not taking their fair share of linguistic space, they place themselves at a distinct disadvantage to their more vocal counterparts. Research has shown that more of these silent students tend to be female than male (Jones & Wheatley, 1990; Jule, 2001; Sunderland, 1998). Furthermore, some research has suggested that this gender disparity may be because silent female students are silent for different reasons than silent male students.

Literature provides clear evidence for this explanation: first, that the nature of silence differs by gender, in some cases due to socialization (Coates, 2004; Decker-Cornill, 2006; Key, 1975; Maltz & Borker, 1982); and second, that in other cases, where the cause of silence is the same by gender, it differs in degree, such as in levels of anxiety, which are higher for females than males (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Alansari, 2006; Holmes, 1995; Mills, 2006), a phenomenon which may also be linked to socialization.

Theory suggests that in some cases, girls are being socialized into silence through the simultaneous processes of male conversational dominance (Coates, 2004), and the traditional value judgment that silence is the proper behavior for girls and women in public (Romaine, 1999), which Coates suggests consciously or unconsciously manifests itself in the behavior of society, including that of many teachers, parents, peers and students themselves.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

The issue of silent students needs to be addressed in order to help all learners maximize their benefit from EFL classes. However, since the nature of female silence has been shown to differ from that of males, it follows that different interventions to increase their participation may be required. In other words, what may work to increase silent female students' participation may not work for silent male students, and vice versa. Therefore, the silence of female students needs to be treated as a separate issue, and for this reason, the present study confined itself to strategies targeting silent female students, as opposed to all silent students in general.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The present study aimed first to determine whether there were silent students in the Egyptian EFL college classroom, and if there were, the extent, if any, that this silence represented a gender imbalance in participation. The study's second, and perhaps more important purpose, was to find ways to increase silent female students' participation in public speaking contexts in the Egyptian EFL college classroom, understanding that the nature of their silence is both complex and distinct from that of male students. Although some have suggested that classroom speaking activities need to become more cooperative or 'feminized', to accommodate for females' different interaction style (e.g. Swann & Graddol, 1995), this may not be possible in many teaching situations, such as in the case of the present study, where half of the students' grade is based on oral presentation performance. In this case, the students need to develop their public speaking skills, and learn to overcome any anxieties or fears that they have, in order to do well in the course. In addition, some would go further to say that public speaking is a necessary skill that needs to be taught (Baxter, 1999, 2002; Holmes, 1992; Mills, 2006). In other words, speaking contexts should not be avoided

just because some students feel uncomfortable with them. Also, if preference were the criteria for solving the problem, it would follow that since many boys feel more comfortable in the public speaking contexts (Coates, 2004), then they should not do pair work or group work. This does not seem realistic or recommended. Rather, it should be the goal of education, and of the language-learning classroom specifically, to familiarize all students with a range of speaking contexts, and develop their skills in each. For these reasons, the interventions chosen to help increase female students' participation in the EFL classroom did not include avoiding the public speaking contexts altogether, but rather looked at techniques to help them speak out more *within* these contexts.

The present study was exploratory in nature, since to the researcher's knowledge, no prior research had been conducted on this issue. For this reason, also, studies such as the present one are much needed. It is of special import to the language-learning field in particular, since it is partly through speaking that learners learn, and so interventions to increase or equalize participation urgently need to be identified.

## **Research Questions**

### **Rationale for the Research Questions**

Since the causes of female students' silence have theoretically and empirically been shown to be based on both socialization and individual learner difference (IDs) factors of willingness to communicate (WTC) and anxiety, interventions need to address all of these factors. Therefore, several techniques were investigated, including various types of *structure* and *preparation*. Types of *structure* included the use of cooperative group worksheets, task parameters requiring a fixed turn order, and

direct invitation to speak. Types of *preparation* included individual and cooperative group note-making and discussion. Because the factors may not be mutually exclusive, and may be interconnected – for example a female student socialized into silence may also have high anxiety or low motivation, and sometimes in part *because* of socialization – it was deemed that a successful intervention needed to combine techniques together, rather than testing each technique in isolation.

### **The Research Questions**

1. Are there silent students in the Egyptian EFL college classroom?
2. If there are silent students in the Egyptian EFL college classroom, are more of them female than male?
3. How does silent students' participation in whole class discussion (WCD) on a controversial topic using the techniques of *structure* and *preparation* compare to silent students' participation in WCD without these techniques in the Egyptian EFL college classroom?
4. How does silent students' participation in team debate (TD) on a controversial topic using the techniques of *structure* and *preparation* compare to silent students' participation in WCD without these techniques in the Egyptian EFL college classroom?

### **Theoretical Definitions of Terms and Constructs**

**CL group preparation time:** A type of preparation and structure where students work in small teams to plan and organize their thoughts about a topic together, using brainstorming and guided worksheets (Kagan, 1994).

**Direct invitation to speak:** A type of structure where the student is asked explicitly by name or non-verbal gestures, or implicitly by the structure of the activity, to make

an oral contribution to the whole class.

**Enforcing the hand-raising rule:** A type of structure where it is made clear to students that they must raise their hands before speaking and wait to be called on, and the teacher consciously ensures that students comply.

**Participation:** Taking part (talking) in a speaking activity (Caspi, Chajut & Saporta, 2008).

**Preparation:** The provision of time before a speaking activity where students are able to plan and make themselves ready to speak.

**Pre-task planning time:** A type of preparation where part of a lesson is allotted for the students to strategically prepare for the subsequent speaking task. This consists of the student considering the content to be included and how it will be expressed, but not rehearsal. This can be guided or unguided (Ellis, 2005).

**Silent student:** A student who does not interact at all, or very little (fewer than half of the class average of speaking turns), as determined by the total number of turns taken by the students divided by the number of students) during simple whole class discussion (WCD) (Jones & Gerig, 1994).

**Structure:** The systematic design of an activity, such that certain rules and organization constrain it, for example requiring that each person speak for one minute (adapted from Ur, 1981).

**Team debate:** A speaking activity that requires group collaboration to prepare and deliver arguments to defend or refute a proposition (Johnson & Johnson, 1985).

**Whole class discussion:** A teacher-led general speaking activity about a designated topic, characterized by a series of teacher-student interactions, directed at all the students in the class (Myhill, 2002).

## **Operational Definitions of Constructs**

**Long turn:** A speaking contribution of 6 words or more.

**Participation:** The number of turns taken, whether long or short, by a student during a whole class activity; and during timed portions of the team debate, the amount of talk time of a student speech.

**Short turn:** A speaking contribution of 5 words or fewer.

**Silent student:** A student who takes fewer than half of the class average number of speaking turns during simple whole class activities, as determined by the total number of turns taken by all students divided by the number of students in the class.

**Talk time:** The number of seconds a speaker uses to interact verbally with others.

**Turn:** The uninterrupted verbal contribution of a speaker. This can consist of as little as a single word or phrase, to a whole series of clauses and sentences (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974).

## **List of Abbreviations**

**AUC:** American University in Cairo

**CD:** conversational dominance

**CL:** cooperative learning

**CLT:** communicative language teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELI:** English Language Institute

**FL:** foreign language

**ID:** Individual differences

**IEP:** Intensive English Program

**L1:** first language

**L2:** second language

**LLA:** language learning anxiety

**NS:** native speaker

**NNS:** non-native speaker

**SL:** second language

**SLA:** second language acquisition

**SS:** Study Skills

**TD:** team debate

**WCD:** whole class discussion

**WTC:** willingness to communicate

### **Delimitations**

The present study looked only at combined techniques to equalize participation, and not at the effect of each individual technique, since it addresses the interconnected factors causing female silence, which cannot be separated from one another. Also, because the study was conducted on intact classes, there was a need to preserve course integrity to provide the best possible lessons. The study was not concerned with fluency, accuracy or complexity of oral contributions. Rather, the concern was on quantity of participation, not quality, and therefore it restricted itself to what could be counted objectively, in terms of number of contributions, number of words in contributions, and talk time. Further, the study did not look at the number of interruptions or attempts at topic control, since these are more subjective and harder to identify, and also because the study was concerned with increasing silent females' quantitative participation, and not in identifying the degree of male dominance behaviors being used. Finally, several intervention techniques were excluded, such as teacher awareness-raising, student awareness-raising, and rehearsal, simply because they were beyond the scope of the study, and/or because some of these techniques had



already been tested in previous research (e.g. Drudy & Chathain, 2002; Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Whyte, 1984).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Current theory concludes that oral practice is a requirement for learners to succeed in acquiring a second language (Ellis, 2008). This is not just because ‘practice makes perfect,’ although this adage cannot be under-emphasized, since it is precisely through practice that declarative knowledge may gradually become proceduralized, or automaticized (DeKeyser, 2001, 2007; McLaughlin, 1990), but also because research strongly suggests that it is the acts of speaking and interaction themselves that cause learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage and be “pushed” to produce ever more target-like forms (Doughty & Long, 2003; Mackey, 1999; Schmidt, 2001; Swain, 2005). In other words, it is the struggle to produce language rather than just comprehend language that activates the necessary processing in the brain required for second language acquisition (SLA) to take place.

As a result of the aforementioned research, along with the failure of some previous methods to succeed at producing competent second/foreign language (SL/FL) speakers, teachers all over the world began to adopt the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Over the last several decades, many language classrooms have increasingly focused on developing communicative competence in their learners, or the ability to communicate for real purposes, as the main goal of a CLT based program (Savignon, 1991, 2001). However, this method presupposes that all students will actually talk as much as possible in class, thereby improving their communicative competence. The reality is that many students do not talk. In fact, it is quite common for many students to be “language learners” but not “language speakers” (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 573). This silence does not afflict only a small number of students. It has been shown that on average about one third of the students in any

given class are silent (Jones & Gerig, 1994, p. 169).

Upon closer inspection of this phenomenon, it has been found that, at least in some contexts, most of the non-speakers, or less-participating students, are female (Jones & Wheatley, 1990; Jule, 2001; Sunderland, 1998). Understanding some of the possible reasons behind this imbalance in participation is important in order to design interventions that might help silent students, and silent female students in particular, to use a more equal share of linguistic space, and thereby lead to more efficient SLA.

The goal of the present literature review, then, is to provide: (a) a thorough summary of the nature of silent female students' silence; and (b) a review of some of the possible interventions presented in the literature to help silent students to speak out in public speaking contexts in the classroom, in the hopes that some of these interventions might be transferred to silent female students in the Egyptian EFL classroom. In this way, the review provides the theoretical backdrop to situate the present study in the context of present research.

### **The Nature of Silent Females' Silence**

The nature of silent females' silence has already been established to differ from that of silent males, partly in cause, and where similar in cause, partly by degree. A summary of the findings on this issue is presented here. It is divided into the following sub-topics: (a) conversational dominance (CD), a characteristic behavior common to many males, but not females, which has been linked to females' silence but not males'; (b) theories developed to explain the causes of male CD and female silence along with support for these explanations as provided by evidence from the literature; and (c) an investigation into the possible interventions proposed in the literature to equalize participation, which might be transferred to silent female students in Egyptian college EFL public speaking contexts.

## **Conversational Dominance**

Conversational dominance (CD) is the behavior of violating the normal rules of conversation, which stipulate that each speaker should have roughly an equal share of the talking time, with a roughly equal share of talking turns, and the right to finish each turn completely (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). When someone takes too many turns, overly long turns, interrupts other speakers, controls the topic, or uses non-response to indicate disinterest, then this is said to be CD. In that sense CD is a behavior that infringes on others' right to speak, and therefore effectively silences other speakers. Looking purely at the implications of CD for the language classroom, this behavior can severely retard others' progress since oral practice is such an important component of the SLA process.

A substantial body of research conducted over the last four decades has documented a pronounced and systematic pattern of male CD in all arenas. Understanding the nature of this CD, together with the nature of male talk and female talk, is an important first step to developing techniques that can lead to more equalized participation in the language classroom, and specifically for silent female students. The findings on male CD and characteristics of male and female talk provide this understanding, and have been divided into three subtopics, of talk in: (a) society in general; (b) the general classroom; and (c) the language learning classroom.

**Conversational dominance and characteristics of male/female talk in society in general.** Briefly, extensive research into CD in society in general began intensively in the 1970s, through the 1980s, and ended in the 1990s. To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have been conducted after the mid-1990s, presumably since male CD has been so well established to exist that further research has been deemed unnecessary. The research covers a wide range of contexts,

including mixed-sex and same-sex talk, and investigates factors such as level of intimacy, age, professional status, type of “floor,” and situation. In all contexts, evidence of male CD has been clearly documented, with few contrary findings.

***How males dominate conversation.*** Zimmerman and West’s (1975) seminal qualitative study of conversation of 31 dyads recorded in natural settings, including same- and mixed-sex pairs, found that of 48 identified interruptions, 46 were by males, suggesting that interruption is a largely male behavior. In addition, males used more delayed minimal response, which is considered a technique of topic control, since it indicates disinterest in the other partner’s contribution, and thereby discourages further contributions on that topic. This study spawned a host of other studies (e.g. Holmes, 1992; Natale, Entin, & Jaffe, 1979; West & Zimmerman, 1983), some larger in scale, and others more controlled in setting, almost all of which present similar findings. Fishman (1983), in another seminal qualitative study looking at conversation between 3 young married couples recorded in their private homes over the course of several days, found that men not only interrupted more and used more minimal response, but that they also responded very often with silence at female attempts to initiate conversation. Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz (1985) in a much larger scale quantitative study of conversation between 300 intimate couples, conducted in a laboratory setting, confirms the same findings. The response of silence is a clear CD technique of topic control since without a response, a topic necessarily dies. In contrast to the male dominant behaviors, females were found to commonly use supportive techniques such as immediate minimal response to continue a conversation initiated by males (Fishman, 1983; Kollock et al., 1985). Fishman concludes that women are therefore doing most of the conversational “shitwork” of keeping a conversation going, while men are providing most of the substance, and in

this way, women's voices are being effectively silenced. Of important significance is that all three men participating in Fishman's study claimed that they believed in women's liberation and were strong supporters of equal rights, yet they still exercised CD behaviors. This suggests that men are dominating women at least partly unconsciously. If no one is very aware of the problem, it may be because people are socialized to unconsciously expect certain behaviors from men, and therefore not notice them when they occur (Fishman, 1983). Only by objectively measuring behaviors, is the bias caused by these expectations removed, and the extent of male CD made apparent.

In addition, Hirschman (1994) found in her small study conducted in 1973 of dyadic conversation between 4 young adults, 2 male and 2 female, paired into all possible combinations, that the women were much less likely to interrupt the men than to interrupt each other, which she concludes, shows that women do not feel they have equal right to the speaking floor. Further, Octigan and Niederman's (1979) and Eakins and Eakins' (1979) slightly larger scale studies found that men were far more likely to interrupt a woman than another man, even where the men stated that they supported women's rights. They conclude that men feel, whether consciously or unconsciously, that they have more right to the speaking floor than women, and for this reason exercise dominant behaviors more with women than with each other. These three latter studies suggest that societal beliefs may be influencing how men and women behave, which implies that one intervention might be to address these beliefs, whether directly or indirectly. If teachers and students are made aware of the tendency for males to dominate conversation, they might consciously be able to address the issue. Several studies looked at just such an intervention, and are summarized in later sections.

*Differences in male and female talk.* Two studies looked further at the nature of boys' and girls' talk. In four all-girl, triadic conversations among children aged 9, 10, 11 and 12, respectively, Van Alphen's (1987) qualitative study found that the talk was smoother, and characterized by more agreement and less interruption than boys' talk. In contrast, four all-boys' triadic conversations of the same four ages were characterized by interruption, challenge, dispute and ignoring, which intensified with age, such that the 12-year-old boys' conversation exhibited more and stronger CD behavior than that of the 9-year-olds. In a similar qualitative study that looked at the conversation of several young boys in a rural Lebanese setting, Abu-Haidar (1995) found boys' conversation to be further characterized by rivalry, competition, aggression and self-centeredness. Both Van Alphen and Abu-Haidar conclude that boys tend to dominate in conversation, whereas girls do not, which suggests, as does Zimmerman and West's (1975) initial study, that CD is a mainly male phenomenon. In addition, Van Alphen's study found that the older girls used quieter voices than the younger girls, which was not the case for boys, suggesting that girls are gradually being "muted," as they learn that dominant talk is not acceptable behavior in girls.

In the same vein, Esposito's (1979) study of conversation between 40 pre-school age children of mixed gender, conducted in a natural playroom setting, found that boys interrupted others twice as often as girls did, but that both girls and boys at this young age talked for roughly equal amounts of time. They draw two important conclusions relevant to the present study: first, that boys dominate conversation much more than girls; and second, that girls are not by nature more silent than boys. This second conclusion suggests that factors other than nature may, at least in part, be causing girls to become more silent than boys in later years.

Swacker (1975) in her study of the differences between male and female

monologic talk, conducted in a laboratory setting with 34 participants, found that when provided with a monologic speaking prompt, men talked on average 13.0 minutes, compared to women's average of 3.17 minutes. She is quick to point out that these results are not skewed by two or three overly long male talks, since each speaker was allowed a maximum of 30 minutes to speak. She concludes that the commonly held assumption that women talk too much is a myth – a myth simply because *any* amount of talk by a woman has traditionally been considered too much. If society perceives women as 'tongue-waggers,' it is perhaps because of the traditionally-held belief that proper women are not supposed to talk at all.

Edelsky (1981) in her often cited study of larger group conversation in meetings, introduces the concept of different types of "floor," proposing that the speaking floor is dynamic in nature, subject to constant change. She identifies two different types of floor: the monologic, 'one-at-a-time' speaking floor, which is characterized by lengthy monologues displaying knowledge and/or the sharing of lengthy personal anecdotes; and the cooperative floor, which is characterized by short contributions that build on the contributions of others. She found that males dominated the monologic speaking floor, but they did not dominate the cooperative speaking floor.

This revolutionary idea of different types of speaking floor was the impetus behind several other studies that were conducted shortly thereafter (Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, & Gibson, 1988; Roger & Schumacher, 1983), which looked further into the idea of the distinctiveness of male and female styles of talk, investigating a wide range of features of conversational behavior. Almost all of these found that men dominate conversation in all ways while women's talk is characterized by other features, none of which can be categorized as CD.



Edelsky's (1981) and Swacker's (1975) findings suggest that men's talk differs from that of women, such that men tend to talk for longer and take longer turns, which are both classic CD behaviors. They conclude that both men and women do not feel that women have as much right to the speaking floor as men, which may explain why girls begin speaking equally as much as or more than boys at first (Chambers, 1992; Esposito, 1979) and then gradually speak less with age as they learn that their talk is less welcome or valued. This conclusion is further supported by Gleason and Greif's (1983) study of conversation between parents and children, which found that daughters were twice as likely as sons to be interrupted by their parents, suggesting that children learn from society that girls' talk is less valued than boys'.

***Other factors affecting the degree of conversational dominance.*** Several studies have looked at the factor of professional status in its relation to gender and CD. They all found that although status can predict CD, gender is a much stronger predictor, such that a woman of a higher professional status, such as a doctor, is likely to be interrupted more than her lower-status male speaking partner (Eakins & Eakins, 1979; West, 1984; Woods, 1988). West goes further in her study of doctor-patient conversation, to suggest that this interruption is a means of undermining the professional woman's authority, which could lead her to feel less important than her professional male counterparts. The implication is that even where a female has more knowledge about a particular subject, her gender label may discourage her from sharing her knowledge publicly.

***Inconsistencies.*** Although some few studies have obtained findings inconsistent with all those cited above, for example those listed in James and Clarke's (1992) literature review on CD, these inconsistencies could be due to differences in definition of dominance, or the crudeness of the coding methods, since often

distinctions are not made, for example, as Chan (1992) explains, based on *type* of interruption, whether supportive (e.g. a minimal response without taking the floor from the speaker), or antagonistic (e.g. to disagree and/or take the floor).

To clarify this point, Ahrens (1997) asserts that interruption is not always used to dominate. In fact it can be used to agree with the other speaker, and is not necessarily an attempt to steal the floor. This is a crucial point to be made, and may explain, at least partly, why there are a few inconsistent findings in the literature, since women have been found to commonly use immediate minimal response, but not interruption or delayed minimal response. Therefore, if immediate minimal response is counted as interruption, this would likely skew the findings. Another possibility could be that male CD is less pronounced in these studies, showing that it may depend in part on the context or situation (e.g. Willett, 1995), a theme which will be investigated further in later sections.

***Conclusions on CD and differences in male and female talk in general society.*** Several insights can be gleaned from the literature on CD in general society. First, CD is a behavior characteristic of males, not females. Second, the nature of male talk is characterized by several CD behaviors, including interruption, overly long talk time, and topic control, while female talk is not. Third, males tend to dominate females much more in conversation than they dominate males, and females tend to allow this domination. Fourth, girls are not more silent by nature than boys, but rather gradually become so with age. Fifth, male CD may be a largely unconscious behavior, so unconsciously accepted by society as to go unnoticed until measured objectively. Finally, the research suggests that due to traditional beliefs about women and their lack of right to speak, some girls are gradually being socialized into silence. A large part of this silencing may be attributed to male CD

(Coates, 2004).

Since CD has been shown to be almost exclusively a male behavior, and additionally to play a role in the silencing of females, it can be concluded that the causes of females' silence differs at least partly from the causes of males' silence. Interventions to equalize participation in the language classroom therefore need to focus largely on how to reverse the negative effects of CD on female students. Interventions to increase silent male students' participation, in contrast, may not need to look at CD.

**Some relationships between gender and classroom interaction.** The pattern of male CD is replicated in the classroom context as well, as found in an overwhelming number of studies. The literature covers all educational levels, from the nursery age up through the doctorate classroom, even in one case with mature students (Kelly, 1991), and are mainly based on data collected in English-speaking, American and British classrooms, although several more recent studies have been conducted in Scandinavian (e.g. Aukrust, 2008), Mediterranean (e.g. Tsouroufli, 2002), and Far Eastern (e.g. She, 2000) countries. They vary widely from large-scale quantitative studies, of as many as 200+ classrooms, to smaller scale and ethnographic studies, of as few as 1 student, and look at many different characteristics of and factors relating to classroom interaction. Relevant findings from several of the most important studies are presented here.

**Early studies.** Numerous early studies on gender differences in classroom interaction appear in the literature. Many of these are summarized in Kelly's (1988) meta-analysis of 81 studies that presented quantifiable data on teacher-student and student-teacher interaction. The studies included in this meta-analysis ranged from large quantitative studies that classified over 5000 total interactions, to smaller

studies, many qualitative in nature, that analyzed much smaller numbers of interactions. She found that compared to males, in almost all of the studies females participated less in classroom interactions, and attributes this to many of the male CD behaviors investigated in studies on general conversation, such as longer and more turn taking. This suggests that if females are participating less than males, they are at a disadvantage since even in the general classroom, participation has been shown to be a major predictor of achievement (Sadker & Sadker, 1985). One of the CD behaviors investigated in more detail was that of unsolicited contributions or call-outs. Kelly found that males were far more likely to engage in this behavior than females, and further, that this behavior went unchecked by teachers. In addition, she found that females received fewer teacher-initiated interactions, including response opportunities and questions, despite the fact that they volunteered and raised their hands slightly *more* often than males. This suggests that females are not participating less because they are unwilling, but rather because they are being provided with fewer opportunities to speak, and further that males are often taking by *force* more opportunities to speak. The implications of this are that females do not need to become more willing to speak, but rather that they need to be *allowed* to offer their contributions.

Kelly (1988) then goes on to look at other situational factors in their relation to gender disparity in classroom interaction, including subject, nationality, age, gender composition of the class, socioeconomic background, achievement level, race, teacher gender and even the study year, and author gender. She found that across all variables, the gender imbalance in amount of interaction existed, but that most of these factors affected the degree of the imbalance. In regards to subject, she found that females were most underinvolved in science and social studies, and most involved in reading.

Australian and Swedish studies reported the most pronounced imbalance, which suggests that culture may play a role. It is important to note that almost all of the studies included in the meta-analysis were conducted in American and British classrooms, and therefore the Australian and Swedish studies report more pronounced imbalance relative to American and British classrooms only, and not in comparison to countries all over the world. In addition, females were most likely to be ignored where they were in the slight minority in class composition. Very young girls received the least interaction compared to very young boys, whereas girls aged six to nine received almost equal amounts of interaction, but thereafter it steadily declined with age. The gender imbalance was more pronounced in classrooms of working class socioeconomic background, and white females were more disadvantaged than black females. Further, females received many fewer interactions in classes taught by male teachers than in those taught by female teachers, showing that teacher gender may play a significant role in regards female participation. The year of publication of the study did seem to relate to the degree of imbalance, but without any definite pattern. Finally, the author gender seemed to relate to findings, such that male authors tended to find more difference in interaction by gender than female authors. Further, Kelly notes that where studies looked at teacher awareness, it was found that teachers were largely unaware of gender bias, and that most believed they had equal participation by gender in their classrooms. Additionally, they felt that if there was any discrepancy, it could only be due to student behavior, not teacher behavior, suggesting again that teachers need to be made aware of the issue of their own possible gender bias. In relation to this, Kelly looked at teacher training, or awareness-raising. She found that where teachers were trained to address the issue of gender bias, it helped them significantly to reduce the imbalance.

Several of the earlier studies on CD provide further insight into the nature of male dominance in the classroom. Perhaps the most famous of these, is that of Sadker and Sadker (1985), so often cited because of its large scale and comprehensiveness. This quantitative study looked at classroom interaction in over 100 fourth, sixth and eighth grade American classrooms in schools across four states. Data were collected through non-participant observation and coding by field researchers. Of all the measures of CD studied, Sadker and Sadker found that call outs or unsolicited contributions showed the most pronounced difference by gender, such that boys were eight times more likely than girls to engage in this behavior, a finding also presented by Kelly, albeit to a lesser degree. However, in addition, in regards these unsolicited contributions, they found, as did other studies (e.g. French & French, 1984), that teachers allowed boys to call out, but that when a girl tried to do so, she was more likely to be stopped and reminded by the teacher of the hand-raising 'rule'. They conclude that this sends a strong social message that boys should be assertive and that girls should be quiet. This suggests that males not only dominate more than females, but that this behavior intensifies because it is considered acceptable in males, and so, goes unchecked. In contrast, since it is not acceptable in females, females are effectively being excluded from this opportunity at interaction, therefore contributing to the imbalance, such that females end up receiving fewer opportunities to speak in class.

Another often cited early study is that of Brooks (1982), which looked at CD behaviors in six graduate classes at an American university. Sixteen class periods were observed and audio-recorded, and data were collected through paper-and-pencil counts of quantifiable measures of participation. This study found that males not only took more and longer turns than females, as Kelly (1988) found, but that the male

students also interrupted much more than female students, and that 90% of these male-initiated interruptions were directed at female students. This is another technique where males take more linguistic space by *force*, this time not from the teachers, as with call-outs, but from the female students themselves, who already had fewer opportunities to speak. This further contributes to the imbalance, and suggests that males may feel that females have less right to the speaking floor, a conclusion reached by several of the studies on conversation in general society summarized earlier.

Clarricoates' (1983) study provides more information on the theme of teacher differential treatment by gender. She found in her study of classroom interaction in four different schools, that 72% of the teachers stated that they *preferred* to teach boys rather than girls. Additionally, she found that the teachers tended to encourage creativity more in boys than girls, and to give the highest achieving boys most attention, but that in contrast high achieving girls went virtually unnoticed. This suggests that societal belief, whether conscious or unconscious, does not always agree with pedagogically ethical practice, such as the importance of providing equal amounts of attention to all students, as evidenced by teacher behavior and attitudes.

Whyte (1984) found in her action based study of 34 classrooms in six schools, with data collected through observation and simple counting of contributions, that boys not only dominated in interaction, but that their dominance also extended to the use of much more physical space, higher voice volume or noisiness, and resource hogging. The implications of these findings are that perhaps boys feel they have more right to be in the classroom. Additionally, she found that where teachers were made aware of gender bias, and trained in methods to alleviate it, that many of them were able to succeed in almost equalizing participation by gender, a finding also reported by Sadker and Sadker (1985). She concludes from this finding that interventions to

increase female participation need not include the segregation of classrooms by gender. Rather, interventions could include some kind of teacher awareness-raising, since it has been found that teachers often do not perceive gender differences in the classroom. She found that techniques such as restricting call-outs and directing questions to specific students (i.e. silent females) effectively eliminated the unequal participation by gender.

Another important finding from the earlier studies on CD in the classroom is that where data of individual students were analyzed separately, it was noted that most of the CD behavior could be attributed to a smaller subset of male students, and not to *all* male students (e.g. Croll, 1985; French & French, 1984; Karp & Yoels, 1976). These studies included data from 34 college classrooms, 1 fourth grade classroom, and 10 college classrooms, respectively. This finding suggests that CD is a more complex matter than simply a binary one by gender, perhaps affected by additional factors, and implies that interventions to equalize participation need to consider this complexity, a theme that will be pursued further in later sections of the review.

***More recent studies.*** Many more recent studies have been conducted since Kelly's (1988) meta-analysis, and almost all of these confirm her findings that male students continue to dominate classroom interaction, and that many teachers exacerbate this dominance by giving males preferential treatment. Some of these studies provide further insights that build on Kelly's and other early research findings, the most important of which will be summarized here.

*Dominance, floor, and age.* Smith-Lovin and Brody (1989) found in their study of 31 adult classroom discussions involving 42 students divided into 6-person groups, that men not only interrupted more often than women, but that they interrupted women more often than they interrupted other men, by double the number.



Two video cameras behind one-way mirrors were used to collect the data, which were then transcribed in full and analyzed for type of interruption. An interruption was defined as an attempt to break an utterance of the speaker at a place that was not deemed a possible place of transition. Backchannels (i.e. minimal responses) were excluded. They found that male interruptions of other men were more supportive than their interruptions of women, i.e. agreeing with the interrupted speaker rather than opposing him/her. In contrast, women were three times as likely to yield the floor to interruptions than were men. This suggests that men are taking more than their fair share of the speaking floor by force, most often from women, and not necessarily because the women have nothing to say, which can also be concluded from Kelly's (1988) meta-analysis which found that females raised their hands more than males. To provide further evidence that women are not silent because they have nothing to say, a recent study conducted by Caspi, Chajut and Saporta (2008) compared interaction by mode. They used classroom observation to count the number of contributions by each student in 136 lessons including a total of 1,368 students, and mechanical counting of total number of posts by each student, in a number of online asynchronous discussions. They found that males participated more in the face-to-face interaction mode, whereas females participated more in the online mode of interaction. This suggests that female students may have as much to say as male students, but that they do not share their ideas as much as male students in whole class speaking activities.

Aukrust (2008) conducted a study in 26 first, third, sixth and ninth grade classrooms in 20 different Norwegian schools. She used video-tape and observation of one teacher-led conversation in each classroom to collect the data, which were then transcribed in full. A total of 12,458 teacher utterances and 4,983 pupil utterances were identified and analyzed for various characteristics of interaction. She found that

although boys participated more than girls in all grade levels, this dominance increased significantly with age, such that the ninth grade boys dominated by a much larger margin than the first grade boys, which confirms the findings of Kellys' (1988) meta-analysis. In addition, she found that boys often interrupted or overlapped with teacher talk, and *took* the floor, whereas girls' contributions were almost always elicited by the teacher, such that they were *given* the floor, a finding echoed by Sadker and Sadker (1985) several decades earlier, reviewed above. This could explain why the boys ended up participating more than the girls, even if the teacher was inviting contributions equally by gender, and further, why girls might be participating less with age, as they consistently receive fewer opportunities to speak than boys. This gender bias may affect girls over time, as they begin to conclude that their participation is less valued than boys'. The fact that girls took the floor when they were given it, provides evidence that the technique of direct invitation to speak could be a viable intervention in helping silent female students increase their participation.

Kelly (1991) conducted a small-scale study of three lessons totaling 1 hr 30 min of recorded conversation in an adult classroom with students ranging in age from 22 to 56 years. The number of turns and the length of turns were counted for each student. She then analyzed the recordings for qualitative patterns. She found that not only did a subset of male students talk much more, and take many more turns than the female students, as some of the earlier studies found, but that the male students also tended to ignore what was said before their turn, in favor of making their own points, and making abrupt topic shifts. In contrast, the female students tended to use their turns to support the contributions of others. Since this male behavior is clear evidence of topic control, it shows, as did Fishman's (1983) and Kollock's et al. (1985) studies on CD in general conversation, that women's voice is not only being silenced in

amount of participation, but also in choice of topic, which effectively relegates women to a dependent supportive role to men's independent main role. Kelly suggests that as a result of the male behavior, the female students may have been opting out of the discussions because of discouragement at their points being ignored. This could provide insight into why many girls participate less with age, such as Aukrust's (2008) study found, although they had been participating more equally at younger ages (Chambers, 1992; Esposito, 1979). The question is, why do girls participate less with age? The answer to this question may lie in the individual learner difference (ID) factor of willingness to communicate (WTC).

*Willingness to communicate.* Recent research into IDs in relation to oral production has focused on the complex and *elusive* concept of "willingness to communicate" (WTC), or "the intention to initiate communication, given a choice" (Ellis, 2008, p. 697), and its relationship to actual oral production (Dornyei, 2005; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Donovan, 2003). That is to say, where a student has low levels of WTC, he/she is far less likely to participate than a student with high levels. Here, a difference in gender has been noted, where female WTC seems to decrease with age, whereas it increases with age for males (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). Ellis states that under normal circumstances, WTC is a prerequisite of speech. Therefore, the development of WTC ought to be the aim of any CLT-based approach (Dornyei, 2005). To achieve this aim, the factors affecting females' WTC need to be identified. Two factors have been found to be strong predictors of WTC: motivation and anxiety (Peng, 2007).

Peng's (2007) study found that the single strongest predictor of WTC is motivation. However, so far, research suggests that if there is any difference by gender in motivation for second language learning, it is *males* who are less motivated,

at least in some contexts (e.g. Batters, 1986; Csizer & Dornyei, 2005; Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006; Mori & Gobel, 2006). In the Egyptian context, initial studies, including one conducted in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at the American University in Cairo (AUC), show that there is no difference by gender in motivation for learning English (Demian, 1989; Ghaly, 2005). Further, another study suggests that a student who is highly motivated to learn the language, may not necessarily speak, or have high levels of WTC (MacIntyre, 2007). To the researcher's knowledge, however, no studies have looked at motivation, WTC and gender *together*. In terms of gender and language learning only, however, it would appear that lack of motivation, while it may have a strong effect on WTC, and therefore needs to factor into interventions to increase WTC, it cannot account for the WTC discrepancy by gender.

Another strong predictor of WTC has been found to be anxiety (Peng, 2007; Woodrow, 2006). Alansari (2006) found that Egyptian female university students have higher levels of anxiety than males. Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) found that different types of anxiety seem to predict female WTC versus male WTC. They found that communicative apprehension, or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communicative events, predicts female WTC, while males' WTC is predicted by self-perceived competence. That is to say, where a female has communicative apprehension, or speaking anxiety, she will have lower levels of WTC. In contrast, where a male has lower self-perceived competence in the language, he will have lower levels of WTC. This is not necessarily true the other way around. Mills' (2006) findings, among findings of several other studies (e.g. Holmes, 1995), suggest that women in general do have much higher levels of anxiety when it comes to public speaking, such as in whole class discussion.

Here, a promising reason for lower female WTC may have been identified,

especially in light of the fact that many female students are only silent when it comes to whole class activities, but may speak easily in smaller groups (Corson, 1997; Holmes, 1995; Townsend, 1998), or in online discussion (Caspi, Chajut, & Saporta, 2008). The question is, why are they more anxious than males in these contexts? The answer to this question may be found in looking at a more specific type of anxiety presented in the literature: that of peer-anxiety, or the fear of peer judgment (Stroud & Wee, 2006, Townsend, 1998).

*Fear of peer judgment.* Dornyei (2001) discusses how learners' prior negative experiences with peer judgment, as manifested by laughter at or ridicule of contributions made to conversation, may strongly impact some students' subsequent participation, because they fear how their talk will be received (Baxter, 2006). This is perhaps especially relevant to the present study which deals with older adolescents, since adolescence has been identified as being particularly characterized by high levels of peer anxiety (Bjerrum Nielsen & Davies, 1997). The emotional environment, then, would appear to have a strong impact on oral participation, at least for some students, and especially for females (Fassinger, 1995). If students do not feel secure that their contributions will be received in a respectful manner, they may be less inclined to participate (Cao & Philips, 2006). Perhaps silent students fear peer judgment so much that it keeps them from speaking out in whole class activities. Clearly, there is a need to look at the nature of silent students more closely.

*Silent students and peer judgment.* Jones and Gerig (1994) conducted a quantitative and qualitative study of 101 students in several classrooms. Data were collected through 14 classroom observations over several consecutive days, and subsequent interviews with 30 of the students. They found that 32 of these students, or approximately one third, did not participate at all in whole class activities. The

implications of such a finding are devastating if transferred to the language classroom where oral participation is so vital to SLA. If one third of a given class are not participating at all, then a large number are not going to succeed in acquiring the language. Jones and Wheatley (1990) conducted a quantitative study in 60 science classrooms involving 1,332 students. Data were collected through observation and coding of one 30-minute segment in each classroom, and quantitatively analyzed with statistical analysis of variance. They found that not only did boys dominate through more call-outs and louder voices, but that girls tended to be self-conscious and quiet, especially in whole class activities; i.e. more silent students are female than male. Since one third is not a small number, interventions to rectify this situation are urgently required, and involve looking more at the nature of silent students. Jones and Gerig report that the silent students identified in their study were found to be characterized by shyness, lack of confidence, and prior negative experience with peer ridicule.

Townsend (1998) used a very different approach in her study of silent students. She conducted ethnographic case studies on 3 identified silent students in one 11<sup>th</sup> grade English classroom, using data collected from student interviews. She found that these silent students were not silent all the time. Rather, several factors were identified that directly impacted on their participation, one of which, fear of peer judgment, is relevant to the present discussion. She suggests an intervention to help address this factor; that of preparing in small groups and pairs, because this may be less face-threatening to these silent students, building their confidence to then speak out in subsequent whole class speaking activities.

The issue of fear of peer judgment has been explored in several other studies. One of these, Howard and Henney's (1998), looked more at dominant and silent

students in college classrooms, involving 1,836 students. Data were collected through non-participant observation, student surveys and student and instructor interviews. They found that the non-participating students said that they were silent because they feared peer judgment. This implies that since more females are silent than males, that fear of peer judgment may be much higher in females than in males. What could be the cause?

*Possible causes of fear of peer judgment.* Gunnarsson's (1997) study looked at the nature of contributions by gender in the classroom, and found that boys not only interrupted more often than girls, but that their comments tended to be more critical, whereas girls tended to contribute more supportive comments. If students begin to expect criticism at their contributions, this might create fear, and it seems logical to assume that this could cause them to remain silent.

Baxter (2002) in her 3 month ethnographic study of a British year 10 class of 24 students, provides further insight into this issue of critical attitude exhibited by some male students. Data were collected through observation and video-taping of a series of lessons, and subsequent detailed interviews with 4 of the students. She found that girls experienced more difficulty in gaining access to the whole class speaking floor, even when they tried to, due to male heckling and disrespect, behavior which was not ever noted to be directed at other boys, or to come from any girls. This suggests that it is the female students who are the recipients of more critical comments, and that therefore, it is the females who are more likely to fear peer judgment, and hence participate less. These boys used humor to steal the floor from the girls, which, she concludes, effectively disempowered the female students in the class.

Allan and Madden (2006) conducted a study on college students in six fields

of study on whether or not a “chilly climate” existed for female students in the classroom, a finding that had been reported many years earlier by a famous study by Hall and Sandler (1982, as cited in Allan & Madden, 2006). They took both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to answer this question. In analyzing data from student questionnaires, they found that 25% of the female students reported having experienced some form of male dominant behaviors, including males taking more lead in small group discussions; making sexual remarks and disparaging comments towards them; interrupting; ignoring; and staring and leering; and that these behaviors occurred more in male majority classrooms.

While these findings are based on reported and not actual measured behavior, they still provide evidence that some female students may be feeling dominated. The reported negative behaviors provide possible cause for fear of peer judgment. In addition, from observation data they found that certain professors were more prone to “sexism” than others, which they defined as treating female students as invisible and marginalizing them. This may contribute to the fostering of a chilly classroom climate for female students. Madhok (1992) in his 22 case studies of small group classroom interaction, which looked at the effect of gender composition on participation, found that in majority female groups, the girls deferred to the boy, such that he took twice as many turns as the girls. In contrast, in the male majority groups, the boys ignored and even insulted the girl, such that she took almost zero turns. Fassinger (1995) conducted a study in 51 college classrooms involving 1,059 students. Data were collected using a student survey of self-perceptions on a number of factors relating to classroom participation and gender. She found that two factors were important in predicting female participation: confidence level and the emotional climate of the classroom.



All of these studies seem to point to fear of peer judgment as being caused by real, prior negative experiences, a fear that most likely intensifies with age as these negative experiences accumulate. As fear increases, it seems logical to assume that participation decreases, and could account at least partly for the decline in female WTC and participation with age. This suggests that interventions need to address the negative criticism, insulting, and ignoring that have been associated with the behavior of some male students towards female students, such as that found in Gunnarsson's (1997), Baxter's (2002), Allan and Madden's (2006), Madhok's (1992) and Fassinger's (1995) studies just reviewed. In its stead, focus could be placed on creating a warmer, more positive classroom climate, possibly by raising students' awareness about the issue.

Drudy and Chathain (2002) looked at just such an intervention in their study of 136 Irish classrooms taught by student-teachers. These teachers underwent a rigorous 5-week training course in data collection and discourse analysis. They then audio-taped their own lessons, and used self-analysis to analyze classroom participation by gender. After establishing that male students dominated in almost all of these classrooms, especially where there was a male majority, Drudy and Chathain explored the technique of direct self-confrontation, where students carried out self-analyses and reflection on the issue. Although they do not mention by how much, they did find that this technique helped to reduce male dominance.

*Individual learner differences as a complex dynamic system.* To enrich the discussion on WTC and fear of peer judgment, useful insight can be gained from Dornyei's (2009) latest book on IDs. Dornyei has perhaps revolutionized the field of study of IDs, by focusing on their highly situation-dependent nature. He says that rather than viewing each ID as fixed and isolated from other IDs, it would be more

appropriate to view them in sum as a “complex dynamic system” (p. 195). That is to say, each ID is affected in turn both by other IDs and by constantly changing environmental factors, and so cannot be viewed as stable traits. The implications of this revolutionary view are tremendous for the language teaching and learning field. Rather than working with the IDs as a ‘given,’ and therefore entirely catering to them, by for example, allowing students labeled as introverts to work in small groups instead of whole class activities, Dornyei’s theory would suggest that the teacher might also endeavor to affect the situational factors affecting IDs, and thereby allow previously labeled introverts to function effectively in the eschewed whole class activities. One possibility would be, for example, in creating a secure environment where students feel safe to speak. This does not mean that IDs are *completely* situation-dependent, as Dornyei is quick to point out, since natural proclivities towards certain dispositions do exist as well, such that an individual may tend to *usually* be introverted, for example, but it does imply that a natural introvert can also be drawn out to be more extroverted, in situations where such behavior would be more conducive to SLA.

This insight provides the rationale for the final section of the literature review, in that IDs such as anxiety *can* be influenced by situation. A silent student, then, is better not labeled as silent all the time, with no possibility of change. Instead, interventions that focus on creating situations that encourage more participation from silent students, and silent female students in particular, could, in theory at least, bring about vast change, and are therefore worthy of further investigation.

***Inconsistencies.*** While some studies report no significant differences in dominant behavior with respect to gender, these studies are few and far between. Nevertheless, it is worth investigating some of these studies, to present a more

complete picture of the research.

Kennedy and Camden (1983) conducted a quasi-experimental study on a graduate classroom of 17 male and 18 female students. They collected data through video-taped sessions, and identified 255 interruptions. Although they did find that women were interrupted more frequently than men, they found no difference in type of interruption by gender. That is to say, males were not found to use more disagreement than females. This refutes the findings of aforementioned studies that women are more supportive in their conversational style than men. Brady and Eisler (1999) conducted a quantitative study in 24 college classrooms across 8 departments, involving 570 students. Data were collected through observation and a 30-minute audio-taped session in each classroom, using a timed-sampling method to count turn numbers by student and gender. They found no significant difference in participation by gender, but the females participated slightly less. Since it was quite a large sample size, these findings cannot be easily discounted. Similarly, Duffy, Warren, and Walsh's (2001) large scale study of 597 high school students in 18 schools in Canada found no difference by gender in who answered questions asked by the teacher in whole class discussion. This study was again quantitative, and analyzed data collected through one observation in each classroom, using a standard coding method.

While these studies are few in comparison to the overwhelming evidence of male CD found in all the other classroom studies, they do suggest that male CD may not be present or may not be as pronounced in all classrooms or contexts. That is to say, the particular situation may affect the degree of CD. The fact that inconsistencies exist lend support to the possibility that situation influences CD. The implications of this possibility are that rather than accepting CD behavior as a given, or a non-changing trait, CD behaviors might be reduced through manipulating the situation,

leading to more equal participation by gender.

*Conclusions on conversational dominance in the general classroom.* From the above findings, it can be concluded that in general, as was found in general conversation, male students dominate conversation in the general classroom, regardless of any discernable factors. In some cases this is done by taking more and longer turns, and taking the floor through call-outs rather than raising a hand and waiting to be called on. In other cases, this is done through the direct silencing of others, especially female students, through interruption, ignoring and topic control. In the most disturbing cases, this is done through not only interruption and ignoring, but through insulting female students and making derogatory comments towards their contributions. However, that being said, not all male students have been found to dominate, and hence CD cannot be said to be a characteristic of all male students. Clearly, gender is not a simple binary matter, especially given that not all females have been found to be silent. However, CD has not been shown in any studies to be a characteristic of female behavior. Further, males have been shown to dominate females in ways that they do not dominate other males, for example through more interruption, and even insults, which has been linked to fear of peer judgment and hence a decrease in participation of silent female students. This adds support to the conclusion that in many cases, female silence differs from male silence, at least in regards to CD. That being said, the contrary findings of a few studies suggest that male CD may not be present in all contexts, which suggests that it need not be accepted as a fixed trait. Rather, the situation might be manipulated to decrease male CD, which studies such as Whyte (1984) and Sadker and Sadker (1985) have shown to be possible, in their studies on teacher awareness-raising, and Drudy and Chathain's (2002) study on student awareness-raising.

**Male conversational dominance in the language learning classroom.** Alcon's (1994) study of an EFL classroom of 24 (12 male and 12 female) native Spanish speakers taught by 2 non-native teachers, establishes that male CD functions in much the same way in the language learning classroom as it does in the general classroom. Specifically, she found that males took more turns, called out more, interrupted more, hogged the floor more, introduced more topics and received more teacher attention than females. Additionally, she found that they dominated regardless of their language proficiency level. In contrast, she found that females tended to accept topics, to listen more, and use more minimal response to sustain male-initiated topics of conversation. As found in the studies cited in earlier sections, she also found that females were more likely to interrupt each other than to interrupt males, which again suggests that females do not feel they have as much right to the speaking floor as males. She concludes that females take a subordinate role, which puts them at a disadvantage since this leads them to take far fewer opportunities to talk than males.

Several other studies (e.g. Hruska, 2004; Jule, 2001; Rahimpour & Yaghoubi-Notash, 2007; Sunderland, 1998) have documented similar findings in regards to CD in the language learning classroom. Although these studies are smaller in scale, and less extensive than those conducted in the general classroom, they cover a wide range of contexts, from young children to adult learners, in various countries with various student nationalities. Since almost all of them are similar to studies conducted in the general classroom and present similar findings, such as Alcon's (1994), an exhaustive review of them is unnecessary. However, several of the studies do provide further insight into the nature of CD in general, and specifically to the language learning context. These studies are reviewed here.

***Proficiency level.*** Itakura (2002) found in her study of 4 first year Japanese

undergraduate students, 2 male and 2 female, that the incidence of male CD was less in the second language (L2) than in the first language (L1), and attributes this to the students' lack of proficiency in the L2. That is to say, Itakura goes on to explain, dominant behavior requires certain skills, such as display of expertise, or story-telling, which are underdeveloped in the L2. Although male CD was found to exist regardless of proficiency level, as Alcon's (1994) study also found, it appears the proficiency level does affect the *degree* of CD, such that male CD increases with proficiency. This implies that in more advanced level classrooms, such as three of those investigated in the present study, male CD may be more acute, and therefore interventions to equalize participation by gender are most required in these contexts.

**Culture.** Jule (2001) found in her study of 40 hours of interaction recorded over the course of one academic school year in a second grade ESL classroom in Canada, composed of Punjabi Sikh students, that the girls spoke for only a fraction of the time. She found that the boys spoke nine times more than the girls in number of turns, and took longer turns and called out more. She attributes this in part to Punjabi culture that traditionally discourages public speaking by females, and in part to the teacher's behavior, since she allowed boys to call out and consistently gave much more attention to the boys. This suggests, in addition to the importance of the teacher role, that cultural beliefs are acutely affecting girls' participation in the classroom. The implications of this for the present study are that cultural beliefs need to be identified, and where they discourage female participation, these beliefs need to be addressed. This issue is investigated further in a later section of the review.

**Inconsistencies.** Only Yopez (1994), Ilatov, Shamai, Hert-Lazarovitz, and Mayer-Young (1998), and Willett (1995) did not find any or consistent evidence of male CD in their studies. This could be due to the situational nature of CD, which can

be illustrated by a number of ethnographic studies conducted on the issue. These studies confirm the theory that CD is highly situation-dependant, and suggest that therefore, broad generalizations should not be made without looking at the situation.

***Supportive classroom atmosphere.*** In Willett's (1995) study, it was found that out of 4 Spanish-speaking ESL students, 1 male and 3 female, struggling to integrate into the mainstream classroom, the male student was more silent than the female students, and labeled as "needier" by the teacher. Willett concludes that this is because the girls formed a kind of support network with each other, whereas the boy could not because he was the only ESL boy in the class, and so felt alienated from his peers. Hirst's (2007) study of 1 Aboriginal girl in a language classroom, found that the emotional climate dramatically impacted this girl's oral production. Because of an incident where she was insulted by male classmates for trying to speak, she withdrew from being quite active in oral participation, to adopting the role of "invisible, Aboriginal woman" (p. 167). These two studies echo findings of other studies conducted in the general classroom cited earlier (e.g. Townsend, 1998), that many students require an emotionally supportive environment in order to participate in classroom activities.

***Boys must be dominant.*** Hruska (2004) conducted a year-long ethnographic study in an American kindergarten classroom, documenting the integration of 6 native Spanish speakers into a mainstream English-speaking classroom. She found that boys called out more and engaged in more competitive discourse, characterized by interruption and confrontation, while the girls did not. From her observation field notes she concludes that the boys were being socialized to be identified as boys, and cites as evidence a particularly insightful case of one boy who was less dominant in nature being criticized for his "girlish" behavior. After this criticism, he struggled to

adopt a more competitive style of interaction, in an effort to assert and prove his male identity. The implications of this study are that some boys may be being socialized into dominance, even where it is not in their nature to be so.

***Right to speak.*** Norton Pierce (1995) found in her ethnographic study of 3 adult female ESL learners, that they felt they did not have the right to speak in many situations, but that when helped to claim their right, or in situations where they did feel the right to speak, they did. This suggests that females are not necessarily silent because they have nothing to say, but rather because they do not feel they have the right to speak.

***Conclusions on conversational dominance in the language learning classroom.*** As is illustrated by these ethnographic examples, gender should not be seen as a simple binary matter of silent females and talkative or dominant males (Sunderland, 2000). This is further illustrated in another study (Sunderland, 1998), where when taken as a whole, boys were found to dominate conversation in the classroom, but when looked at individually, it was found that most of the dominant behavior could be attributed to only 2 boys in the class of 27 students. Clearly, there is a need to look at individual behavior, in addition to the ‘average boy’ and the ‘average girl’.

Similar to the conclusions drawn from the studies on CD in general conversation and in the general classroom, the studies on CD in the language learning classroom have found that where CD exists, it is attributed only to male behavior, not female, which again lends support to the theory that female silence is affected by certain factors that do not affect male silence. In addition, they also provide further insight and support for the theory that CD should not be seen as a unilateral behavior characteristic of all male students in general. Further, since male CD was found in



most, but not every situation, it is important to note that the situation may play a role in the extent of CD present, which provides rationale for the present study, such that situation might be manipulated to increase silent female students' participation.

**Explanations for gender differences.** In light of the aforementioned, overwhelming preponderance of evidence of male CD and disproportionate level of female silence, explanations are clearly needed, in the hopes that in identifying causes for these gender differences, appropriate interventions might be prescribed. Several theories have been proposed in the literature, and these can be divided into two categories or paradigms: a) the four models paradigm; and b) the nature versus nurture paradigm. These two paradigms offer different ways to understand the causes of male CD, and when looked at together, provide a more comprehensive understanding.

*The four models paradigm.* Coates (2004) has summarized several models that have been developed to explain the pattern of male CD, the understanding of which might help to identify appropriate interventions for the EFL classroom: the deficit model, the dominance model, the difference model, and the dynamic model.

*The deficit model.* The deficit model describes women's language as inherently weaker, or deficient compared to men's language, and therefore men's language somehow overrides it (Lakoff, 1975). This model proposes that women's language is weaker simply because they have been provided fewer opportunities to express themselves in public, and therefore have not been able to develop the 'proper' skills needed for effective communication in public speaking contexts. This view has been largely rejected, however, as an androcentric model that sees men as the "norm" and women as "other" or "deviant" who need to learn to speak more like men to solve the problem, such as Tannen (1990) proposes.

*The dominance model.* The dominance model sees women as the oppressed group, or victims of men's abuse of power (West & Zimmerman, 1983). This model proposes that women are being dominated not because they are inferior or deficient, but rather because men hold the power and do not allow them to speak. Proponents of this view advocate the need for women to be proactive and take back their fair share of linguistic space, and that men need to relinquish it to them.

*The difference model.* The difference model underplays the concept of power, and instead focuses on the fact that males and females have very different styles of speech, such that the male style is competitive and the female style is cooperative (Maltz & Borker, 1982). However, unlike the deficit model, this model stresses that one style is not better than the other, but that the male competitive style easily overcomes the female speech style. Indeed, as cited earlier, Edelsky (1981) found that men dominate the one-at-a-time speaking floor, but that they do not dominate the collaborative speaking floor. Advocates of this model propose, therefore, that talk needs to become more 'feminized' (Swann & Graddol, 1995), since the cooperative speech style automatically equalizes participation.

*The dynamic model.* Coates (2004) then goes on to propose the dynamic model, which sees identity as socially constructed through conversation, and that by nature it is constantly changing depending on contextual variables. This model explains why in one case a person might speak more, or dominate, and in another, speak not at all, or very little. This model allows for the complex nature of gender, which cannot be seen as a simple binary matter of males as talkative and females as silent (Pica, Berducci, Holliday, Lewis & Newman, 1990; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). Rather, the situation becomes the primary variable influencing the degree of equalization of participation, a theory supported by Dornyei (2009).

*Critique of the four models.* Each of these four models, perhaps with the exception of the first, do not, in the researcher's view, need to be in competition. Rather, when taken together, they can more richly inform the understanding of why more female students tend to be silent in class than male students, and thus help to identify viable interventions. The dynamic model would support the current trend that views WTC and anxiety as situation-dependent factors, rather than fixed, or trait-like ones (Dornyei, 2009; Ellis, 2008). Therefore any intervention to help silent female students to speak more, would need to focus on the specific situation(s) where females tend to have lower WTC, such as in whole class activities, and find ways to manipulate those situations. The difference model would suggest that the *mode* of communication needs to be changed, from competitive, one-at-a-time speaking to collaborative, jointly built speaking, in order to suit female conversational style. While this may be true, and certainly, many are now adopting the cooperative learning (CL) approach, which emphasizes small group work and equal participation as a built-in element of CL structures (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2007; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1996), public speaking is still an integral part of many classroom activities, and is a skill that students need to develop (Baxter, 1999). Language classes often require it, and in the researcher's case, half of the students' grade is based on oral presentation performance. Rather than rejecting male-dominated styles of interaction, a more favorable option might be that males and females be trained in those styles of conversation in which they are less skilled, since life requires skills in both styles, not just one. Finally, the dominance model shows that if girls and women are being silenced by boys and men, to whatever degree, then perhaps some sort of awareness-raising might be in order, for both teachers and students (cf Sunderland, 2000). Indeed, three aforementioned studies have already confirmed the efficacy of these

techniques (Drudy & Chathain, 2002; Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Whyte, 1984). While the latter three of the four models presented above provide viable theories in regards the causes of male CD, they only indirectly address the issue of nature and nurture.

**Nature or nurture?** This section of the review on explanations for gender differences would not be complete without some research into the debate on ‘nature’ versus ‘nurture’. There are some who would postulate that the phenomenon of male CD and differences is solely due to nature. Others claim that nurture is to blame; that boys and girls are socialized into certain roles. A brief review of these two theories is presented here.

*The rejection of the nature theory.* Perhaps more girls are just quieter or more introverted by nature than most boys. Perhaps they are more biologically predisposed to trait and public speaking anxiety. Or could it be linked to socialization, such that boys are taught to speak out and girls are taught to keep quiet in public? At first glance this explanation seems easily rejected, since there are always those female students who *do* talk in class, and silence is not a purely female phenomenon – there are plenty of silent male students who do not speak much in class either (e.g. Jones & Gerig, 1994). It is tempting to accept the theory of innate personality differences, then. However, what about the findings of Chambers (1992) that girls are more verbally precocious than boys at first, and that young boys and girls share more equal amounts of talking time than older children (Aukrust, 2008), or Hirst's (2007) case study that documents an Aboriginal girl's classroom journey from active participant to silent observer? There is also the aforementioned finding that WTC is more gender equal in childhood, but gradually decreases for females with age (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). Further, it has been found that teachers tend to give more attention to males in their classrooms (e.g. Jones & Dindia, 2004). While biology may explain

some incidence of silence, perhaps to equal in extent that found in silent males, such findings as cited above cannot be accounted for by the nature theory, and *do* suggest the possibility of nurture or socialization factors.

***The nurture theory: Socialization.*** Traditionally, women have long been discouraged from participating in the public sphere (e.g. Chambers, 1992). Further, silence has been valued for centuries as the proper comportment for women. An exhaustive review of the history on this issue is unnecessary, but the following quotations clearly illustrate the point: “What becometh a woman best, and first of all: silence. What second: silence. What third: silence. What fourth: silence. Yea if a man should ask me til’ dowmes day, I would still cry, silence, silence.” (Wilson, 1533, as cited in Romaine, 1999, p. 151); “It is a shame for women to speak in church.” (Corinthians, as cited in Romaine, p. 151); “Let few see her and none at all hear her.” (Vives, as cited in Romaine, p. 151); “Silence gives the proper grace to women.” (Sophocles, as cited in Key, 1975); and an English proverb, “Silence is the best ornament of a woman.” (Coates, 2004). Even Aristotle refers to silence as a “woman’s glory” (as cited in Romaine, 1999, p.151).

While many in the modern world no longer hold this view (but see Jule, 2006; She, 2000), at least consciously, the residue of this tradition is still apparent, in the fact that females have higher anxiety levels in public speaking (Mills, 2006), and are heckled by males in their attempts to contribute to public speaking activities in the classroom (e.g. Baxter, 2002), and in the pervasive existence of male CD. This tradition may shed light on why males tend to interrupt females more often than they interrupt males, and why they are less likely to yield the floor to an interruption from a female than from a male. It is important to note that this is not necessarily being done consciously, but is rather due to the unconscious influence of socialization.

That being said, the denial of female access to the public sphere is still consciously promoted by many in the Middle East. One more extreme example of this is illustrated by this quotation: “Women cannot be seen by outsiders and they are not to be heard even in their homes, where they must wear silent shoes and obey and serve silently” (quoted in Githango, as cited in Chamberlin, 2006, p. 5). Al-Mahadin (2004), El-Sawi (1981), Harik and Marsten (1996), Joseph and Slymovics (2001), Moghadam (1989), Mohamed (1998), and Stowasser (1993), among others, have found that in Middle Eastern culture, women are still commonly expected to be confined to the home, to be shy and silent, speak modestly, obey and not talk back. In the Egyptian context, Mensch, Ibrahim, Lee, and El-Gibaly (2003) found in a large scale quantitative study of a cross-section of society, that Egyptian adolescents still believe that women are less important than men, and that women should adopt a role of dependence, submission and deference to men. Further, they are expected to avoid public situations. Rather, it is generally believed that the public domain should be reserved for men (Harik & Marston, 1996; Mensch et al., 2003). Naguib and Lloyd (1994), and more recently Haddad (2009), point out that women are still subjected to practices of inequality, even in Egyptian law.

Further, it has been asserted that Arabic itself marginalizes women through its biased, gendered language. El-Sawi (1981) cites several examples of this in her thesis. For example, “*Da kalam riggala,*” or “It’s a man’s word” (p. 13), is a phrase used to confirm a promise, which implies that a woman’s word cannot be trusted. In contrast, another phrase “*Da shuġl niswan,*” or “women’s affairs” (p. 13), is used to label something as ‘gossipy’ or worthless. She goes on to compare “*ya mara*” (“you woman”) and “*di ragil*” (“this is a man”), the former which is used as an insult to a man, and the latter which is used as a complement for a woman. It is perhaps these

types of findings that prompt Hijab (2001) to state that the “invisibility of women in the Arab world appears to be more serious than that of women in the rest of the world” (p. 41).

This is not an exhaustive review of the literature on the topic, but it does provide some insight into the nature of traditional beliefs about women, and their silence in the public speaking context, particularly in the Middle East.

**Evidences of the ongoing influence of tradition.** How does the influence of tradition manifest itself in relation to the present issue of silent female students in the classroom? The answers to this question can be found in: (a) the behavior of male students; (b) the behavior of female students; and (c) the behavior and attitudes of teachers.

***The behavior of male students.*** The behavior of male students shows the influence of traditional beliefs in three ways. First, it has been found that males interrupt females more often than they interrupt other males (Brooks, 1982; Eakins & Eakins, 1979; Gleason & Greif, 1983; Kelly, 1991; Octigan & Niederman, 1979; Smith-lovin & Brody, 1989), and further, they are more likely to yield the floor to an interruption from another male than from a female (Smith-lovin & Brody, 1989; Woods, 1988). Second, several studies have found that males are sometimes openly derogatory towards females’ contributions in class (Allen & Madden, 2006; Baxter, 2002; Hirst, 2007; Madhok, 1992). Third, male CD becomes more pronounced with age (e.g. Aukrust, 2008). Finally, Sunderland (1995) points out that in her study, boys would be insulted to be called “girls,” which implies that they consider girls to be inferior. In contrast, girls called out “We’re boys, Miss!” when the teacher asked for boy volunteers, suggesting that girls have no such misgivings. Further, Hruska’s (2004) insightful ethnographic findings on the boy that was ridiculed for not being

dominant enough, and his subsequent struggle to conform because of peer pressure, suggest that boys are actively being socialized into a dominant role. Finally, Coates (2004) notes Spender's (as cited in Coates, 2004) finding that the upper limit for female percentage of talk time is 30% before males begin to feel dominated by females. All of these findings suggest that males are not just dominant by nature, but that they are specifically being socialized to dominate, and especially to dominate females.

*The behavior of female students.* First, it has been found that female students are more likely to interrupt another female student than a male student (Chan, 1992; Hirschman, 1994; Octigan & Niederman, 1979). Second, in small groups composed of one male and several females, females tend to defer to the male (Smith-lovin & Brody, 1989; Webb, 1984). Third, girls start out as more precocious in speaking as children (Chambers, 1992), and speak as much as boys (Esposito, 1979), but gradually speak less with age, and lose this precocity (Chambers, 1992). Further, they gradually speak in quieter voices as they approach adulthood (Van Alphen, 1987). In addition, WTC decreases with age for females, but increases for males (MacIntrye, 2007). Finally, females are more anxious about speaking in public than males, because they fear how their contributions will be received (Mills, 2006). This fear appears to be based on real prior experience, as corroborated by the fact that boys are often openly derogatory towards girls' contributions in class (Allan & Madden, 2006; Baxter, 2002; Hirst, 2007; Madhok, 1992). All of these findings suggest that girls are not more naturally silent than boys, but are rather gradually socialized to become so.

*The behavior and attitudes of teachers.* Perhaps the most troubling evidence of the influence of tradition is in regards to teacher behavior and attitudes. Here, again, in connection to male conversational dominance in the classroom, an



overwhelming number of studies have found that most teachers, regardless of gender, collude in the unconscious silencing of females. Studies show that on average teachers give more attention to male students than to female students (e.g. Alcon, 1994; Allan & Madden, 2006; Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Einarsson & Granstrom, 2002; Jones & Dindia, 2004; Jule, 2001; She, 2000; Tsouroufli, 2002). Specifically, these studies, among many other earlier studies, found that in general, male students receive more of all types of attention, including: praise and reprimands; academic and non-academic interactions; feedback, including sustained feedback; and questions or elicits, including more higher cognitive processing questions. One study even found that teachers' gaze is more often directed towards male students, especially at critical points, for example when the teacher asks a question (Swann, 1998). Kelly (1988), in her meta-analysis, found that teachers give more attention to males, even where females raise their hands as much as males. As cited earlier, Sadker and Sadker (1985) found that teachers allow call outs much more often from boys than from girls and that the teacher often accepts or acknowledges their contributions, but when a girl does likewise, the teacher is inclined to 'remember' the rule that students need to raise their hands and wait to be called on. Two recent studies confirm that this tendency is still prevalent (Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Jule, 2001).

In addition, Clarricoates (1983) found that 73% of the teachers questioned in her study stated that they preferred to teach boys, a finding which is supported by She's (2000) study. Further, teachers tend to encourage creativity in boys more than in girls, and may believe that boys are more creatively inclined (Clarricoates, 1983; She, 2000). Another study found that many teachers perpetuate sexist ideas in the classroom (Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001). Further, Spender (1980, as cited in Coates, 2004) found that teachers tend to choose topics that will interest boys rather

than girls.

Finally, to support the theory that this preferential treatment of male students is often unconscious, two studies found that awareness-raising helped some teachers to reduce this behavior (Spender, 1982, as cited in Sunderland, 2000; Whyte, 1984), sometimes even succeeding in equalizing participation by gender, but not always (Spender, as cited in Sunderland, 2000; Whyte, 1984). However, where this more equalized participation was achieved, the teachers stated that they *felt* as if they had given much more attention to girls and that girls had dominated the interactions, suggesting that their perceptions are being influenced by socialization.

***Inconsistencies in teacher behavior.*** Some studies found no difference in the amount of attention given to students by gender, or only in some of the classrooms studied (Allan & Madden, 2006; Altermatt, Jovanovic, & Perry, 1998; Ilatov, Shamai, Hertz-Lazarovitz, & Mayer-Young, 1998, Sternglanz & Lyberger-Ficek, 1977; Tsouroufli, 2002; Yepez, 1994). In addition, it is important to re-iterate that in most cases this teacher behavior is unconscious, rather than consciously intentional. That is to say, teachers lack awareness of the existence of their preferential treatment of male students (Tsouroufli, 2002). It may be precisely because of the unconscious nature of this preferential treatment that makes it so difficult to measure, because it can be so subtle.

***Conclusions on evidences of the ongoing influence of tradition.*** It seems clear from the above-mentioned evidence, that tradition still influences female students' participation in the classroom, especially in public speaking contexts. That is to say, in many cases female silence is caused not by innate gender differences, but rather by the forces of socialization. This is not necessarily the case for males. These findings lend further support to the theory that the nature of female silence differs

distinctly from that of males, in cause. The implications of these findings are that interventions to increase silent female students' participation may necessarily need to differ from those that might work with silent male students. Indeed, although no other studies appear to address this issue, Fairley's (2009) preliminary study into the issue found that silent female students responded to interventions specifically designed to increase their participation, whereas silent male students did not respond as much to the same interventions.

### **Possible Interventions**

The challenge then, is in identifying methods that increase silent female students' WTC enough to overcome whatever barriers keep them from speaking out in public contexts, like whole class discussion (WCD), and team debate (TD), that are typical activities in many language classrooms. Research suggests that this can be accomplished by reducing their anxiety, and boosting their motivation, or as Norton Pierce (1995) proposes, their "investment" to speak in a given situation, since these have been shown to be strong predictors of WTC (Peng, 2007). Various ideas have been proposed, some more backed by empirical evidence than others. Both Dornyei (2009) and MacIntyre (2007) note that since the factors affecting IDs in general, and WTC and anxiety more specifically, are multifaceted and interconnected, the adoption of several simultaneous techniques may be more effective in increasing a silent student's participation than the use of just one technique. The results of the research on the various techniques found in the literature to increase silent students' participation in public speaking contexts, are presented here.

Since no research has been conducted investigating measures to increase silent female students' participation in the classroom, apart from consciousness-raising, the researcher was obliged to look instead at the literature on good pedagogical practice

in regards to speaking activities, and drew on these ideas to build a set of techniques to be used as interventions in the present study.

### **Clear Purpose and Topic Choice**

In general, a good speaking activity is one that has a clearly defined purpose for speaking (Brown, 2001; Scrivener, 1994; Ur, 1981) and is based on a carefully chosen topic. A good topic is one that is interesting, relevant, and personalized in some way for the students (Brown, 2001; Dornyei, 2005; Julkunen, 2001; Scrivener, 1994; Ur, 1981). It may be that controversial topics generate more participation as well (Chi, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Shehadeh, 1999; Swann, 1992; Ur, 1981), and particularly topics that are not too culturally inhibiting (Rahimpour & Yaghoubi-Notash, 2007). Topics of a human, social, or cultural nature have been shown to generate most interest from females (Bjerrum Nielsen & Davies, 1997; Shehadeh, 1999). In the researcher's own classroom, it was found that the topic itself was not so important as long as it was somewhat interesting to most of the students (Fairley, 2009).

### **Pre-Speaking Activities**

Another important technique commonly used to make speaking activities more effective is to begin with a pre-speaking activity. There are many options for pre-speaking activities.

**Input.** The use of input, in the form of reading texts or video clips are a good way to activate schemata, which helps the learner access their prior knowledge of a topic, and make links to new information presented about the topic (Cao & Philps, 2006; Scrivener, 1994; Tomitch, 1990). This can help to prepare the student to speak, by generating content to speak about.

**Planning and preparation time.** Another common pre-speaking activity is

the provision of *preparation* or planning time. This is a good way for students to organize their thoughts and prepare to speak during the main activity, and helps many students to reduce their anxiety levels (Baxter, 1999; Ellis, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Ortega, 1999, 2005; Prabhu, 1983; Scrivener, 1994; Tavares, 2009; Tomitch, 1990; Townsend, 1998; Ur, 1981; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Research has shown that allowing a good 10 to 15 minutes is optimal in generating the most effective speaking in the main activity (Foster & Skehan, 1999; Ur, 1981). In addition, guided planning time with instructions has been shown to be more effective than unguided time (Foster & Skehan, 1999). One effective way of doing this is to provide worksheets with guiding questions to help direct the students' preparation (Sangarun, 2005; Townsend, 1998). Townsend also suggests that giving students time to rehearse their speech may help to reduce anxiety.

**Cooperative learning team work.** To create a positive emotional environment to promote security and hence reduce peer anxiety, pre-speaking activities conducted in small groups have been shown to be effective (Corson, 1997; Dornyei, 2001; Duff, 1986; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1985; Julkunen, 2001; Kagan, 1994; Townsend, 1998; Young, 1991). This provides a good opportunity for students to pool their knowledge and ideas. When speeches are co-constructed in this way, it may reduce the threat to face that often increases anxiety. The use of group worksheets is a good way to direct the group work (Dornyei, 2001). Howe (1997) additionally notes that the composition of such groups should be equal by gender, to maximize participation by all students, and to avoid some of the negative behavior that has been shown to increase where the group is made up of more males than females (e.g. Smith-lovin & Brody, 1989).

### **During-Speaking Activities**

The speaking activity itself can be more or less structured. *Structure* has been shown to be an excellent way to equalize participation by reducing dominant behaviors, such as floor hogging, often associated with unstructured speaking activities (de Bie, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1999; Howe, 1997; Ur, 1981). This is because it can rely on built-in mechanisms that require everyone to participate. For example, if the teacher directly invites students to speak, some students, particularly silent female students, may be more inclined to participate (Aukrust, 2008; Fairley, 2009). Certain speaking activities are by nature more structured, such as formal debates, since speaking follows a highly structured order of timed turns. In contexts where this structure is absent, such as in whole class discussion, this element can be added, for example by calling on students in turn, and by including turn time limits, or limiting the number of turns allowed by each student (Ur, 1981).

### **Awareness Raising**

Another technique that has been shown to increase female participation is teacher awareness raising. Both Whyte (1984) and Spender (1982, as cited in Sunderland, 2000) found that when the teacher was made aware of the issue of male CD in the classroom, and consciously tried to address it, some success in reducing the CD was achieved. Another idea presented in the literature is that of student awareness raising (Stroud & Wee, 2006). It is possible that if students are made aware of the existence of CD and asked to reflect on it, it might help to reduce the problem as well. Indeed, Drudy and Chathain (2002) found this technique to be effective.

### **Gaps in the Research**

While many of the techniques reviewed above have been shown to increase WTC, and engender more equal participation, only the techniques of awareness

raising have looked at how these specifically affect the subgroup of silent female students in question. To the researcher's knowledge, none of the task-manipulation techniques have been investigated in any of the literature in regards silent female students' participation. However, since female silence has been shown to be affected by factors that are at least partly situational in nature, it follows that appropriate changes to the situation may allow silent female students to speak out more. Therefore, there is good reason to believe that task manipulation may achieve this aim.

Since such a large number of possible interventions have been identified, and it was not possible to investigate all of them in a single study, the researcher was obliged to narrow the scope of interventions to a more manageable number. The decision for which interventions to include in the study was based on two main factors: previous research findings, and the researcher's intuition as to how far previously tried interventions might transfer to the Egyptian EFL classroom, and specifically to silent female students. Since previous research already supports the efficacy of using teacher and student awareness raising, these interventions were excluded. This narrowed the focus to looking only at task manipulation. Pre- and during-speaking activities were chosen since theory and research suggest these are good methods to increase participation in general. These techniques were divided into *preparation* and *structure*.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the literature review provide the rationale for the present study. First, the findings on male conversational dominance in the classroom, and their link to socialization, suggest that female silence differs from that of males, partly in terms of cause. Second, the theories that CD and anxiety are situation-dependent suggest

that both *can* be influenced by manipulating the situation. Finally, although a number of interventions to equalize students' participation have been proposed, no studies have been conducted to date that looked specifically at increasing silent female students' participation.

These three main findings provided the rationale for the present study, in that they explain why there is a need to focus specifically on silent female students, and that silent female students' silence *can*, at least in theory, be affected by interventions that manipulate the situation. Further, since to the researcher's knowledge no such studies have been conducted to date, and given that the importance of oral practice has been shown to be so vital to language learning, more studies such as the present one are sorely needed. Finally, this literature review provided the rationale for the methodology of the present study, which took an exploratory approach, since so little is known about which interventions might most strongly predict silent female students' participation in the language learning classroom.



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

The present study took an exploratory approach because so little prior research had been conducted on the research questions, and therefore, it was looking to find possible solutions for the problem of unequal participation in the EFL classroom, and not to confirm any hypotheses. It was applied with a focus on a real classroom problem needing a solution. Further, it was qualitative in nature with the focus being on information-rich data, rather than on quantitative data. Video recordings and questionnaires were the instruments chosen to collect the kind of data needed to answer the research questions. The main data came from recording classroom talk during whole class activities, but two questionnaires were also administered, because useful information could also be gleaned from insights provided by the participants and teachers, which could then be triangulated with the recorded data to form a richer, more accurate picture.

### **Participants**

The participants came from a convenience sample of five intact AUC pre-undergraduate IEP Study Skills (SS) classes, ranging in age from approximately 16 to 22 years, and predominantly Egyptian. The three larger classes of 12 students each were advanced level, and the two smaller classes of 7 and 8 students respectively were intermediate level. Each SS class was taught by a different teacher: four female and one male. To avoid researcher bias, none of the classes were taught by the researcher. Although other variables might have affected participation, such as teacher gender, amount of teacher experience, teacher beliefs, class size, and proficiency level, these variables could not be controlled for, since intact classes had to be used.

## **Materials**

The materials used in the classroom included one video-clip (The Qatar Foundation, n.d.), a group worksheet of comprehension and speaking preparation questions (see Appendix A), and a group worksheet for debate preparation (see Appendix B). Teachers were provided with a lesson plan for each of the two lessons using interventions (see Appendix C).

## **Method of Collecting Data**

The data were collected through a video camera recorder, an audio recording device as back-up, two one-page questionnaires, and research journal notes taken by the researcher over the course of the study and analysis.

## **Procedures**

1. Written consent agreeing to participate in the study was obtained from all 51 participants (see Appendix D).
2. A whole class discussion (WCD) was recorded (15 min.) in each of the five classrooms. At this stage, the teachers were asked to conduct a WCD, with no other instructions provided. The purpose was to get an accurate picture of participation in WCD, before any interventions were conducted.
3. A second WCD on a different day was recorded (15 min.) in each of the five classrooms. The purpose of this recording was to be able to have two recordings to compare, to ensure participation was typical of each student in general and not due to circumstances of a particular day.
4. The ten recordings of the WCDs without interventions were analyzed to answer the first and second research questions – i.e. to determine if there were silent students, and if so, if there was a difference by gender in the number of

silent students. Also, these recordings provided a general ‘feel’ for the dynamics of each classroom.

5. A brief session was held with the teachers to train them in the techniques proposed as task interventions, where they were each provided with a detailed lesson plan, with clear instructions as to the exact procedures to be followed, in the two coming recorded classroom sessions.
6. In the third session, for the first part of the session, students were informed that they were going to watch a video-clip of a debate on women's right to choose a marriage partner (The Qatar Foundation, n.d.). A WCD (15 min.) was video recorded on the question of what students thought the debaters on the video-clip might say, with the teacher recording ideas in a chart on the board of “for” and “against”. The technique of *preparation* was used to conduct the WCD, such that teacher asked students to first think and write down their ideas before sharing them with the class.
7. For the second part of the third session, students watched a video-clip (first 10 min.) of a recent Doha debate about women’s right to choose their marriage partner (The Qatar Foundation, n.d.). They were asked to take notes in chart form individually, of arguments for and against the proposition. This formed another part of the technique of *preparation*.
8. For the third part of the third session, the technique of *preparation* continued, along with *structure*. Students were placed in groups of 3 or 4. They were asked to summarize on a joint worksheet (see Appendix A) the main arguments of each speaker, using CL round-table structure, i.e. taking turns to write, and to brainstorm their opinions on women’s right to choose a marriage partner (10 min.).

9. For the fourth part of the third session, the technique of *structure* continued.  
The students were informed that they should all participate, and the teacher led a WCD on what points might be added to the board chart, and on what students thought about the issue of women's choice (15 min.). S/he took turns by group, rotating around the room once, and then allowing hand-raisers to be called on, still trying to alternate by gender. S/he was instructed to ask if those who had not spoken yet had something to say, pointing at each group, but without putting any one student 'on the spot'. This WCD was video recorded.
10. To begin the fourth session of TD, held as near to the third session as possible, the technique of *preparation* was used. Students in the larger classes were divided into four teams of 2 or 3, and in the smaller classes into teams of 3 or 4, trying if possible to ensure a heterogeneous mix by gender. Two debate propositions related to marriage were written on the board for the three larger classes: "Early marriage is a good idea" and "Couples should date before marriage." For the smaller classes, the teacher chose only one of the propositions. Each team was assigned for or against one of the propositions. Each team was given a guided worksheet to prepare their arguments for the debate (see Appendix B), and conduct a brainstorming and organization session (15 min.). They were informed that the debates should be conducted similar to the Doha Debate.
11. For the second part of the fourth session, the technique of *structure* was used. The students were informed that the debates would be conducted in the same manner as the Doha Debate they had watched. Each proposition was to be debated (18 min. each, maximum) and video-recorded. Each speaker was allowed 1 minute to speak, with up to a maximum of ten seconds over one

minute. After all had spoken, time was allowed for speakers to rebut each other's arguments, following no formal turn order. Meanwhile, the audience was asked to write down comments, to keep them focused and listening. The teacher could then optionally assign homework to write about their opinion on the two propositions.

12. In a fifth session, the students completed a one-page questionnaire (10 mins.) on which type of public speaking activity they felt most comfortable in and why, and what might cause them to participate or not, etc. (see Appendix E).
13. The teachers were asked to fill out a one-page questionnaire on their perceptions of student participation in their classrooms, and how far they felt each session encouraged the silent students to participate and why, and if they felt there was a difference in participation by gender, etc. (see Appendix F).

### **Method for Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis for determining the silent students in the class and how their participation in whole class discussion (WCD) without using any techniques compares to WCD and team debate using techniques of *preparation* and *structure*, was based on a simple counting method, using a tally sheet (see Appendix G). All of the class sessions were video recorded, and then viewed by the researcher. A simple counting method was used to determine the number of turns taken by each student and the length of each turn taken. In the case of the debate speeches, the length of time in seconds for each speech was counted to determine how far each student used the whole minute allocated to them. The counts were recorded in a simple tally chart for each recorded class session (see Appendix G).

## **Procedure for Data Analysis**

**Method of analysis for the video recordings.** In order to organize the video-recorded data, each of the 25 recordings was viewed, and the data recorded in tally-chart form (see Appendix G). Each student was labeled by gender and given an identification number. The researcher then recorded the turn frequencies in terms of how many turns each student took, whether short (5 words or fewer) or long (6 words or more). Silent students were identified as those who took fewer than half of the average number of turns taken by the whole class, regardless of turn length. To calculate the average number of turns taken during the recording, the total number of turns taken was divided by the number of students present in class during the recording. In some cases, a student was absent for one of the first recordings, in which case, the data from the other recording were used to determine silence. In two cases, a student was absent for both of the first two recordings, in which case recording 3a (a lead-in WCD to activate schemata before watching a video) was used to determine silence, since this was the recording where the least, if any, interventions had been implemented.

After the five recordings were tallied in this way for each class, a second rater repeated the process for one recording taken from each class, in order to check for inter-rater reliability. The recordings for second rating were chosen such that one of each type of recording was rated by the second rater, and each class was rated once also. The total inter-rater reliability was calculated to be 0.932 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1  
*Inter-rater reliability calculations for each class*

Class	Recording	Inter-rater reliability
C1	1	0.78
C2	3a	0.96
C3	2	0.99
C4	4	0.98
C5	3b	0.95

C1 = Class 1; C2 = Class 2, etc; Recordings 1& 2 = WCD without techniques; 3a = WCD with minimal technique of preparation being used; 3b = WCD with techniques; 4 = TD with techniques.

It was noticed that Class 1 had slightly less than 0.8 inter-rater reliability. Upon closer investigation, it was found that the second rater had counted for the whole recording, while the first rater had only counted for the first 15 minutes of the recording. This explains the poor reliability. Still, taken as a whole, the inter-rater reliability was well above 0.8. Therefore, further second-rating was deemed unnecessary. Once inter-rater reliability was established, the five tally charts for each class were organized into one summary chart for each class to compare results. The five summary charts were then summarized into one master chart for further analysis.

In addition to the tally chart data, various notes were taken by the researcher during the first viewing, to record any information that might have shed further insight on the results, such as the nature of class dynamics in a particular recording, or any noteworthy behavior that may have occurred, such as particular students that seemed to be dominant, or incidents of negative comments directed at particular students, that might not appear in the counted data. These data were used to add support and detail to some of the findings.

One way to look at participation is a simple counting of the number of turns

taken by each student, such as described above. Silence and dominance can easily be determined in this way. However, another way is to look at the length of each turn taken. Turn length is important in regards SLA because it has been shown that longer turns lead to more negotiation of meaning and integration of language into the interlanguage of language learners (Doughty & Long, 2003; Swain, 2005). Therefore, it should be the goal of an EFL lesson to create the types of environments that will generate longer turns.

The present study looked at turn length in terms of short and long turns, where a short turn was defined as a turn of 5 words or fewer, and a long turn was defined as a turn of 6 words or more. All of the turns taken were then identified as either short or long. The data were then analyzed to check for differences across classes, between each type of lesson, by gender, and by silent versus average student.

To answer the second research question of whether there was a difference by gender in silent students identified, the summary chart for each class was again consulted to determine how many silent students were female and how many were male. Then totals were converted to percentages of the total number of male students and female students. Additionally, totals were calculated to determine average number of turns taken in each class, and these totals were compared to the average number of turns taken by each gender. These totals were used to determine the extent, if any, of male dominance in each individual class, and across all the classes together.

To answer the third and fourth research questions, the data from the videos of the whole class discussions (WCDs) and team debates (TDs) that used the techniques of *preparation* and *structure* were compared to the data from the first two recordings of each class, to see if the participation of each student changed, and if it did, by how much. Further, the changes in each individual student were compared to see if there



were any differences, in terms of amount of change by gender, change by silent students versus other students, and by silent female students' change versus silent male students' change.

**Method of analysis for the student questionnaires.** The student questionnaires were categorized by class and within each class by gender. The results for the Likert scale questions were tallied by class and gender. The results were then compared by gender, to determine any differences in perceptions and beliefs.

For the open-ended questions, the answers given were grouped by theme and responses for each type of theme were tallied by gender. Differences were again compared by gender.

The results of the questionnaire were then compared to the results of the video-recorded data to look for similarities or differences. Additionally, the results of the questionnaire provided possible explanations for the findings of the video-recordings.

**Method of analysis for the teacher questionnaires.** Since there were so few teacher questionnaires, it was decided to look primarily at each individual questionnaire on its own, in order to compare each teacher's perceptions to the video recorded findings taken from that teacher's class. Additionally, responses to some of the questions were compared across the five completed questionnaires, in order to check for recurring patterns, and to identify any differences among responses. The results of these two methods of analysis additionally provided possible explanations and support for the findings of the video-recorded data.

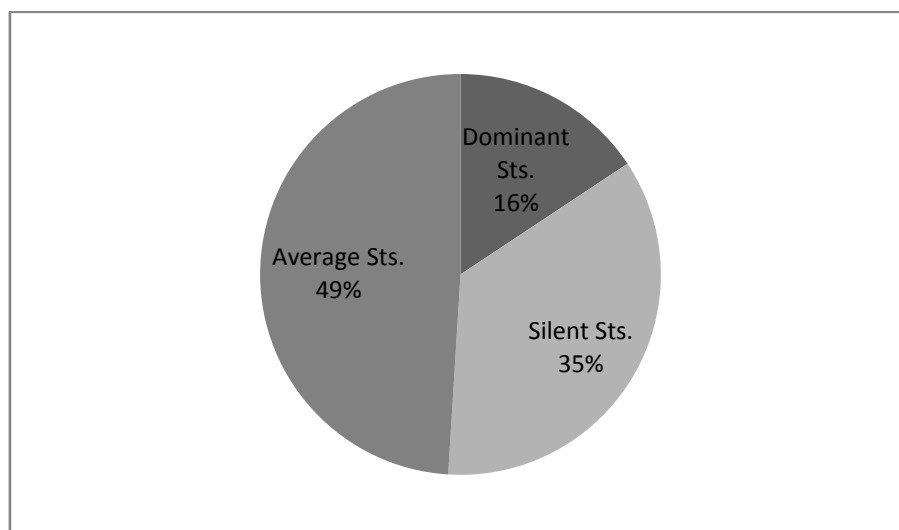
## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Introduction

The results of the study are presented here. The chapter is organized by research question and subtopics pertaining to each question. Where possible, the visual aids of figures and tables have been used, in order to complement the written description.

### Identification of Silent and Dominant Students

The first research question asked if there were silent students in the Egyptian EFL college classroom. In analyzing the data taken from the first two sessions (whole class discussion sessions where no interventions were employed), using the simplest method of comparison of total number of turns taken per student, regardless of turn length, it became clear that there were many silent students. Silent students, as well as dominant students, were identified, with a breakdown by percentage as illustrated in *Figure 4.1*.

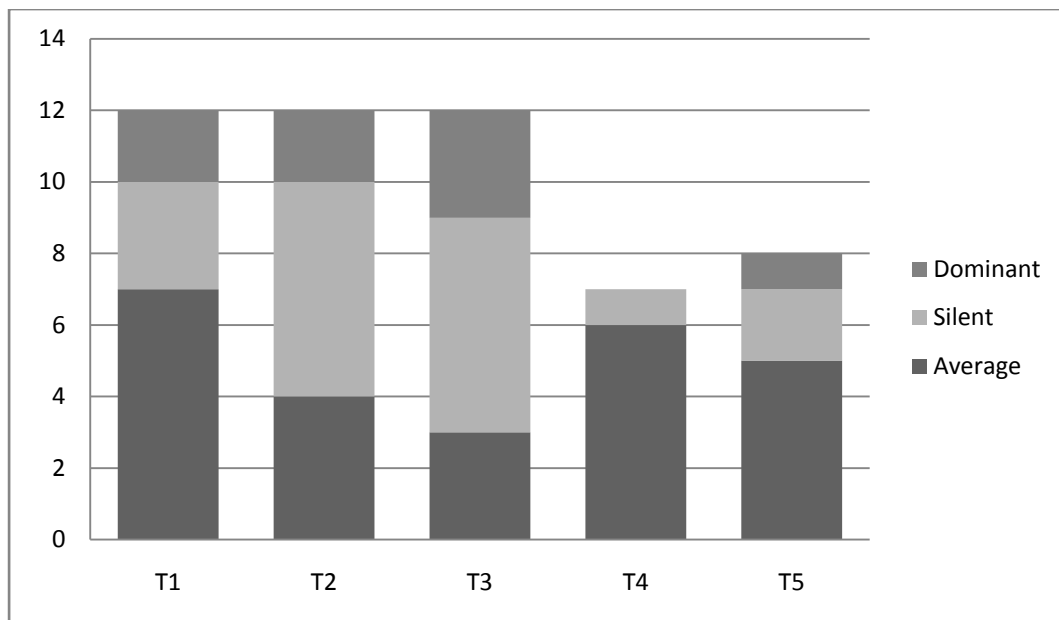


*Figure 4.1.* Identification of dominant and silent students (Sts.) across all 5 classes.

*Note.* Silent = taking fewer than half the average number of turns; dominant = taking more than twice the average number of turns.

Of a total of 51 students participating in the study, 18 (35%) were identified as silent and 8 (16%) were identified as dominant. These were defined as those students taking fewer than half and more than twice the average number of turns respectively, regardless of turn length. Of these 18 silent students, 11 (22%) were identified as severely silent, as defined as those students taking fewer than a quarter of the average number of turns. In some of these cases, no turns were taken at all.

In looking at individual classes, it was found that silent students were present in all five classes (see *Figure 4.2*), and dominant students were present in four classes.



*Figure 4.2.* Breakdown of dominant and silent students for each class.

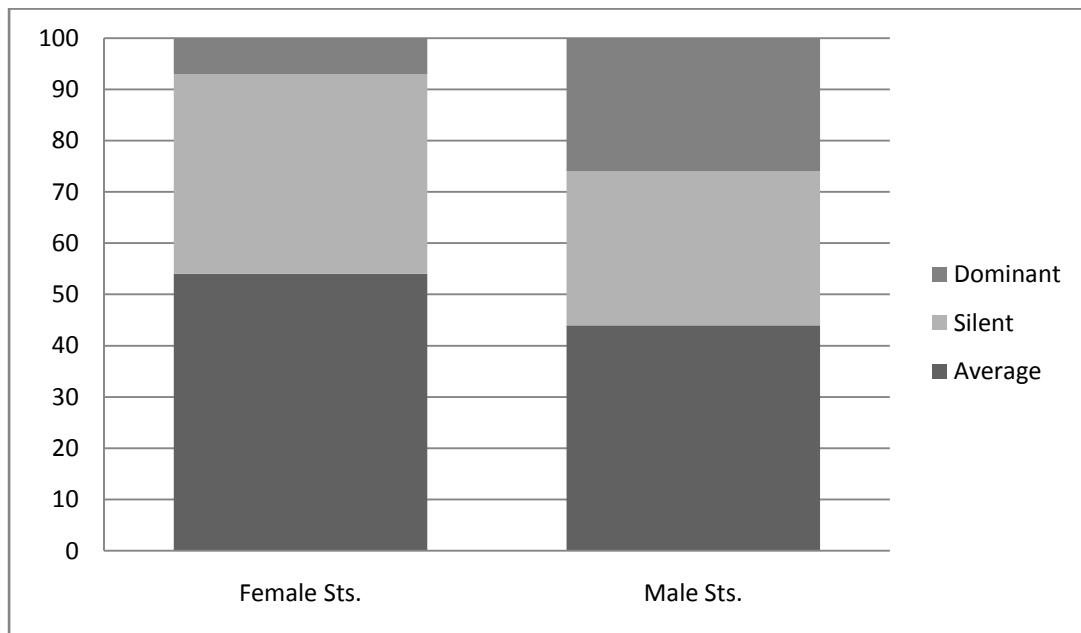
T1 = Teacher 1's class; T2 = Teacher 2's class, etc.

Of the 8 dominant students, it was found that 7 belonged to the three larger classes, which consisted of 12 students each, as illustrated in *Figure 4.2* above. These 7 students were distributed relatively evenly over the three larger classes, such that there were 2 dominant students in two of the classes, and 3 in the other. Only 1 student was identified as dominant in the two smaller classes, which consisted of 7 and 8 students respectively.

## Characteristics of Silent and Dominant Students

### Silent Students and Gender

Of the total 51 students participating in the study, 23 were male and 28 were female. Of these, 7 male students and 11 female students were identified as silent, or, 30% and 39% respectively. This represents a difference in silent students by gender, though not very considerable (see *Figure 4.3*).



*Figure 4.3.* Silence and dominance by gender across all five classes.

Sts. = students.

As can be seen in *Figure 4.3*, there are more silent females than silent males. In contrast, there were more dominant males than dominant females. In looking at silent students by class, however, it was found that in the three larger classes, the percentage of silent students overall was much higher than in the smaller classes (see *Figure 4.4*). In a breakdown by gender, in the larger classes, the silent female students represented 47% of the total number of female students, versus silent male students, who represented 29% of the total number of male students. This gender gap is more

considerable than when looking at all the classes together. In the two smaller classes, in contrast, there were fewer silent students overall, with 25% of the female students and 17% of the male students identified as silent.

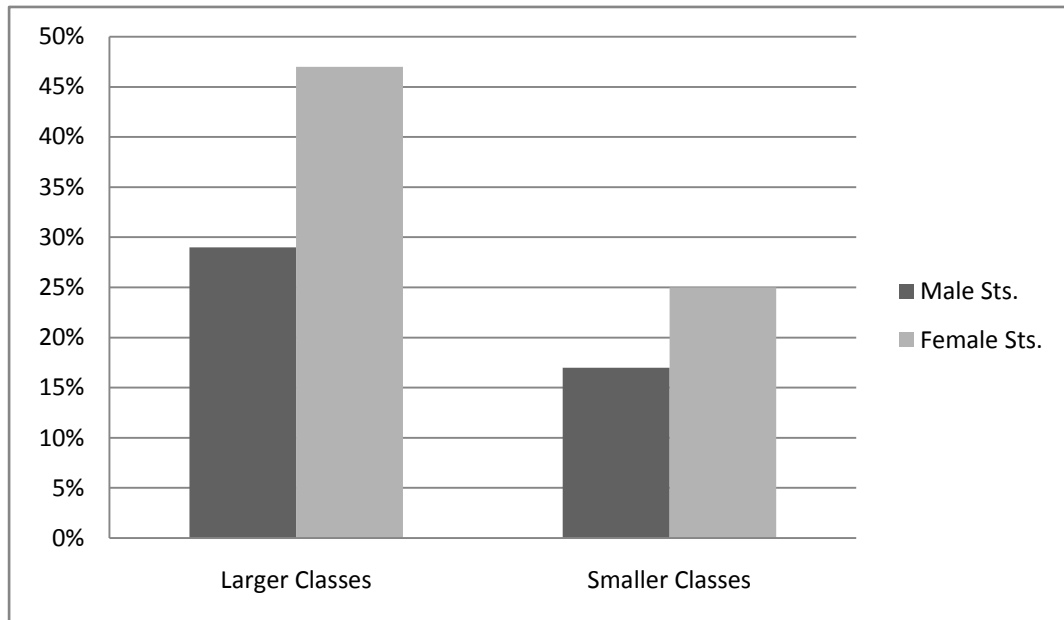


Figure 4.4. Gender breakdown of percentage of silent students (Sts.) by class size. Larger classes = classes of 12 students each; Smaller classes = classes of 7 or 8 students each.

Of the 8 identified dominant students across the five classes, 6 were male, and 2 were female. Interestingly, the 2 dominant female students came from the same class.

**Excluding short turns.** It is important to note that for the purposes of the present study, silent students were identified by the total number of turns taken by each individual student compared to the class average number of turns taken by all the students together. Turn length, whether long or short, was not considered, due to time and resource constraints. However, turn length does have a very close connection with male conversational dominance, such that males have been found to take not just more turns, but *longer* turns (e.g. Swacker, 1975). In contrast, female talk has been

found to be characterized by shorter turn taking (e.g. Edelsky, 1981; Swacker, 1975). In looking at the turns divided by length, it was found that the silence by gender became more pronounced when short turns were excluded. There were 17 (61%) female students who took fewer than half the class average number of *long* turns (i.e. silent). In contrast, the percentage of silent male students remained almost the same, at 35%.

In looking more closely at turn length and gender for all the students together, a gap was also noted, in that male students were found to take a ratio of 1.4 turns to 1 female turn. In two of the larger classes, this gap was much more substantial. In Class 1, the male students took 4.6 long turns for every long female turn, and in Class 2, they took 4.4 long turns for every long female turn. In Class 5 there was almost no gap, and in the remaining Classes 3 and 4, the female students were found to take more long turns on average than the male students. In Class 3, especially, this gap was more noticeable, with the female students taking 1.8 long turns for every long male turn. However, this gap is still much smaller than the gap in Classes 1 and 2.

### **Silent Students and Absence**

In looking at individual silent students, a high incidence of absence was noted. Upon further investigation, it was found that of 37 total absences across the 25 recordings, silent students were responsible for 21 of the absences. Of these 21 absences, silent female students were responsible for 17 of the absences. That is to say, the average student was absent on average 0.5 times over the five recordings, and silent students were absent on average 1.2 times. In a breakdown by gender, however, it was found that a silent female student was absent on average 1.4 times, whereas a silent male student was absent on average only 0.6 times. In other words, silent male students were not much more likely to be absent than the average student; however,

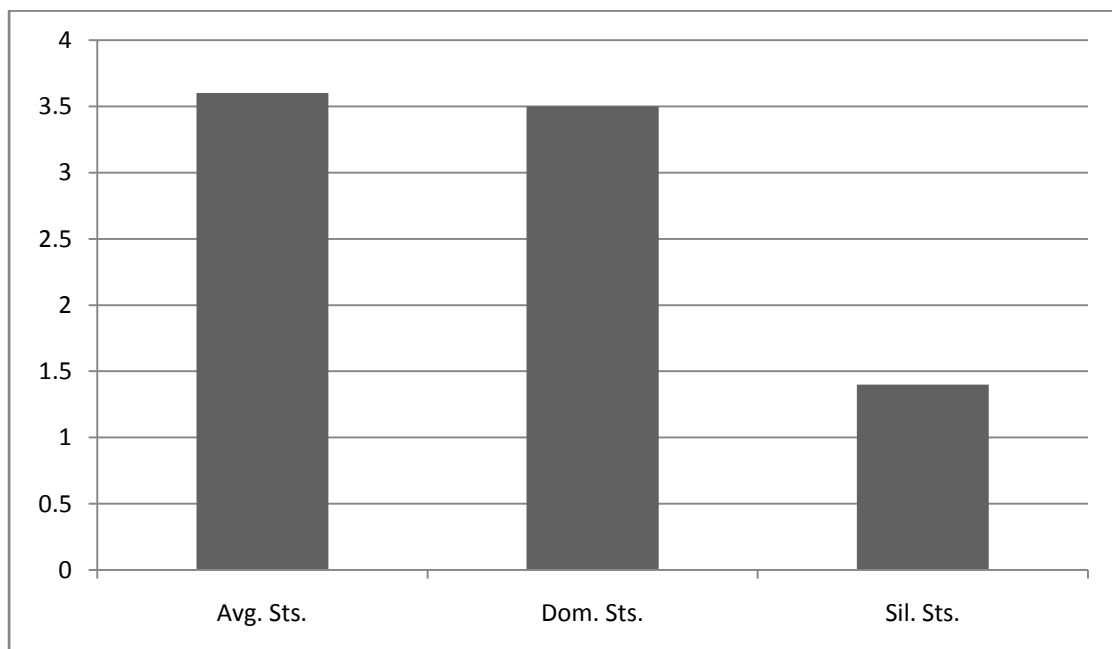
silent female students were absent almost three times more often than other students.

### Silent Female Students and Dress

In looking closer at the characteristics of the silent female students, it was found that 7 out of 9 (78%) female students wearing head scarves were silent. Of the 19 female students not wearing head scarves, only 4 (21%) were silent.

### Teacher Calls and Silent Students

In looking more at silent students, it was found that there was a pronounced difference in how often the teacher called on dominant and average students versus silent students (see *Figure 4.5*). Of the total 135 identified times that a teacher called on a student across the 25 recordings, it was found that the dominant students were called on an average of 3.5 times. In contrast, the silent students were called on an average of only 1.4 times. The students who took an average number of turns were called on an average of 3.6 times, which is comparable to the dominant students.

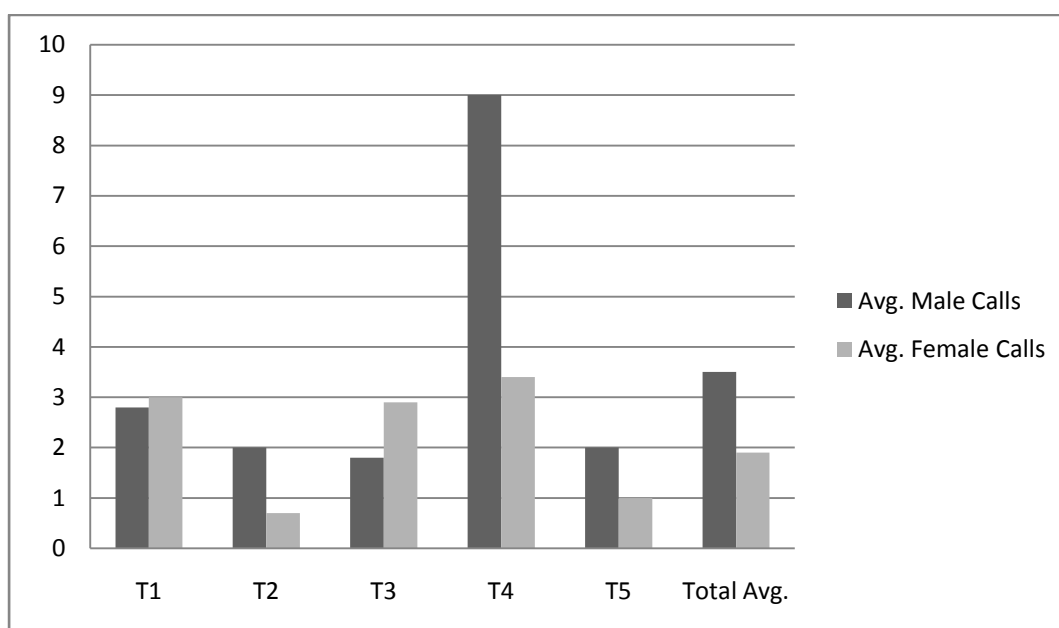


*Figure 4.5.* Average number of teacher calls and silent (Sil.) students (Sts.).

Avg. = averagely participating; Dom. = dominant.

## Inconsistencies

**Teacher calls.** It will be remembered from the literature review that by and large, teachers tend to call more often on male students than female students (Allan & Madden, 2006; Alcon, 1994; Jones & Dindia, 2004; Kelly, 1988). In three of the classes participating in the study, this finding can also be noted, such that the teacher called on male students more often than female students; in one class by as many as three times more (see *Figure 4.6*). In Class 1, the teacher called on males and females almost equally. However, in Class 3 where the 2 dominant female students were identified, it was found that the teacher favored female students, such that she called on female students one and a half times more often than on male students.



*Figure 4.6.* Average (Avg.) number of teacher calls and gender.

T1 = Teacher 1; T2 = Teacher 2, etc; Total Avg. = Average no. teacher calls across all five classes.

**Average number of turns and gender.** In the first two recordings of whole class discussion (WCD) without techniques (used to identify silent students) it was found that male students took an average of 6.6 turns, with female students taking an



average of 5.5 turns. This represents a clear difference, although not dramatic. In looking at a breakdown by session for each class, it was found that the male students took more turns in seven of the ten sessions, with the female students taking more turns in three, as illustrated in Figure 4.7. In Classes 1 and 2, the difference is quite considerable.

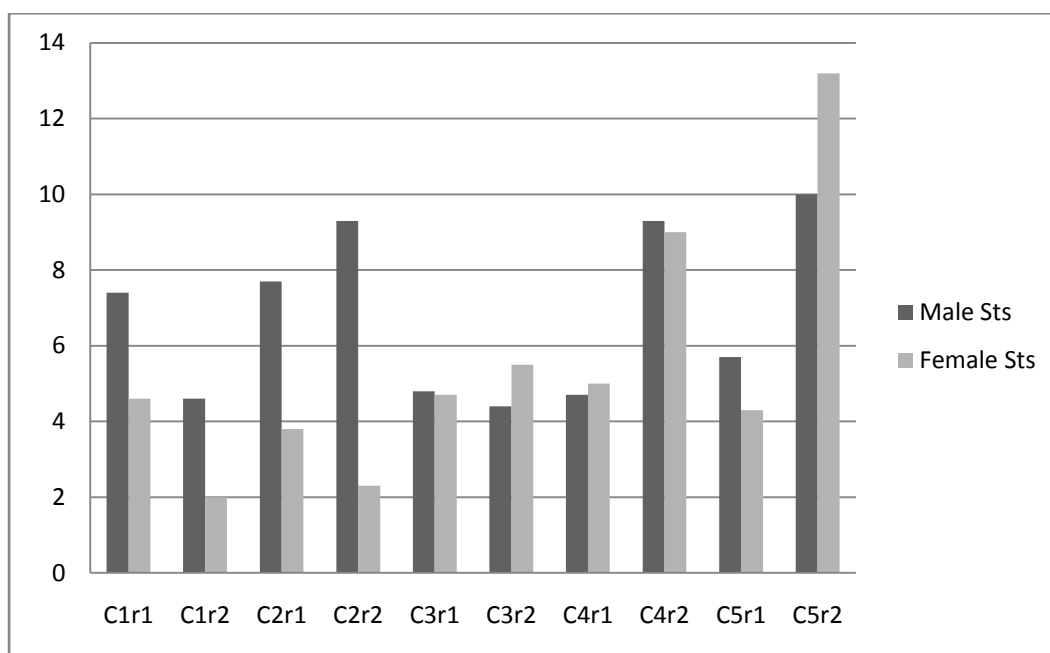
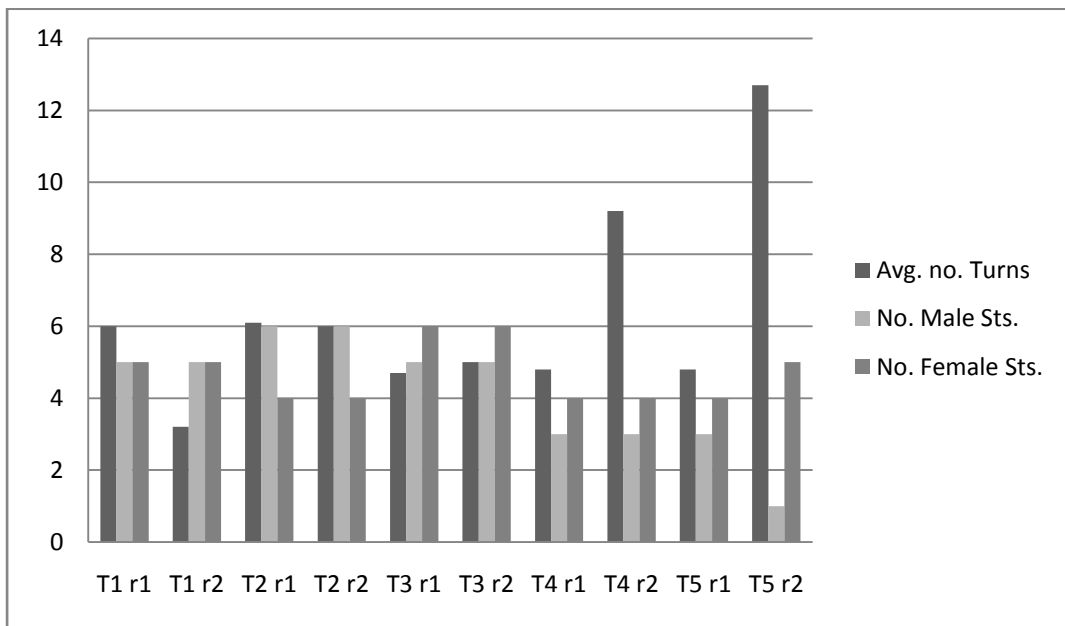


Figure 4.7. Average number of turns per session by gender

Sts = Students; C1r1 = Recording 1 from Class 1; C1r2 = Recording 2 from Class 1, etc.

In looking closer at the first two recordings, it was noted that in the second recording of Teacher 5's class, the average number of turns was much higher than in the other 11 recordings (see *Figure 4.8*). Upon closer investigation, it was found that of the 6 participating students in the recording, 5 were female and only 1 was male. The male, interestingly, did not take fewer than the average number of turns. In terms of turn length for this session, most of the contributions were short, with students taking an average of 7.2 short turns compared with 3.8 long turns. However, across the five classes for the first two recordings it is important to note that there were more short turns taken than long (see *Figure 4.14*. Ratio of long to short turns across the 5

recordings for all classes. *Figure 4.14*).



*Figure 4.8.* Average (Avg.) number of turns per class for each WCD without techniques to equalize participation and no. of female/male students per recording.

Sts. = students. T1 r1 = Recording 1 of Teacher 1's class; T1 r2 = Recording 2 of Teacher 1's class; T2 r1 = Recording 1 of Teacher 2's class, etc.

## The Interventions of WCD and Team Debate with Techniques

### Overall Changes in Participation

Overall, it was found that the techniques used to equalize participation in the two public speaking contexts of whole class discussion (WCD) and team debate (TD) were effective, albeit to varying degrees. The equalization of classroom participation presumes the reduction in both dominance and silence. *Figure 4.9* illustrates the overall change in classroom participation.

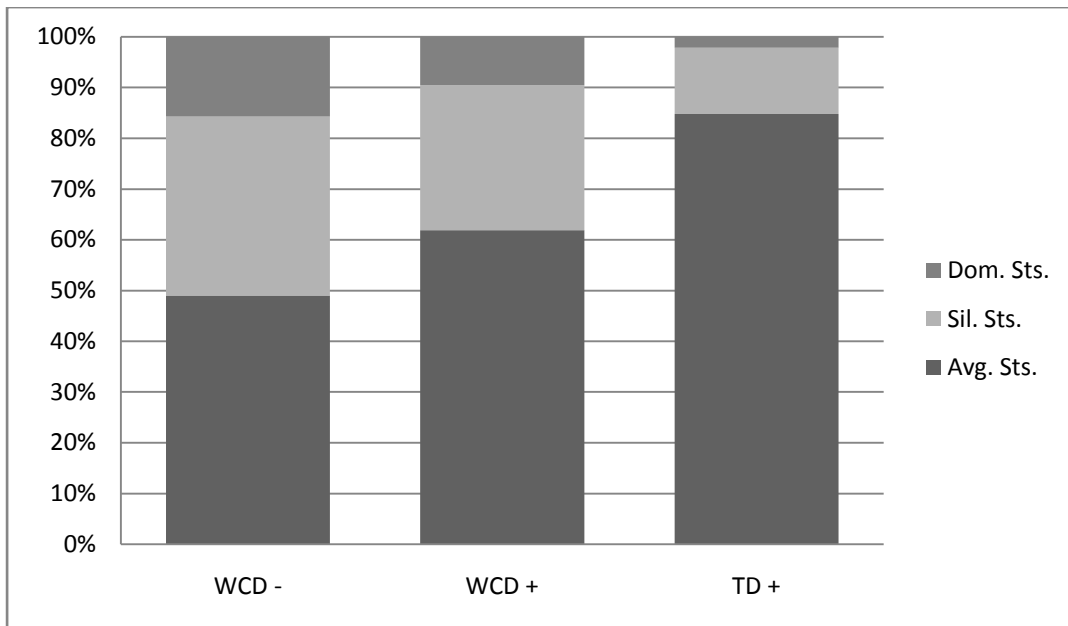


Figure 4.9. Changes in participation with interventions.

WCD - = WCD without techniques; WCD+ = WCD with techniques; TD + = TD with techniques (structure & preparation) used to equalize participation; Sts. = students; Dom. = dominant; Sil. = silent; Avg. = average.

It can be seen that in the data from the first two recordings, where no techniques were used, that only 49% of the students took an average number of turns, with 37% taking fewer than half the average number of turns, and 14% taking more than twice the average number of turns. In other words, roughly half of the students were not participating equally.

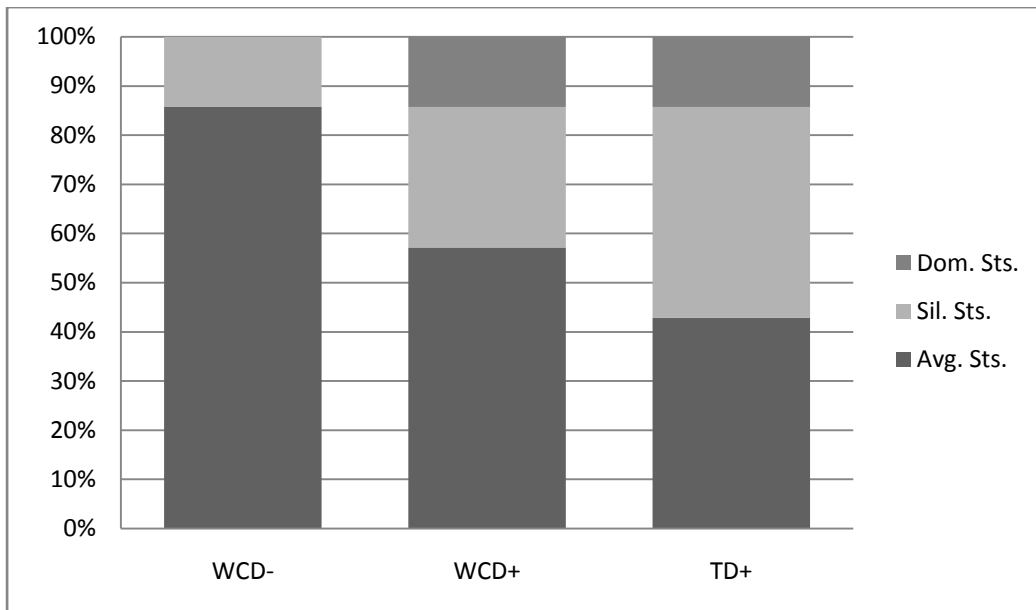
In the first public speaking context of WCD, where the techniques of preparation and structure were used, equalized participation increased, such that 62% of the students participated equally, with 29% taking fewer than half the average number of turns, and 10% taking more than twice the average number of turns. In other words, roughly 3/5 of the students participated equally. This is a clear decrease in both silence and dominance.

In the second public speaking context of team debate (TD), where the techniques of preparation and structure were used, equalized participation increased

more dramatically, such that 85% of the students participated equally, with only 13% taking fewer than half the average number of turns, and 2% taking more than twice the average number of turns. In other words, roughly 5/6 of the students participated equally, showing a dramatic drop in the number of both silent and dominant students over the WCD without techniques.

### **Changes in Participation by Individual Class**

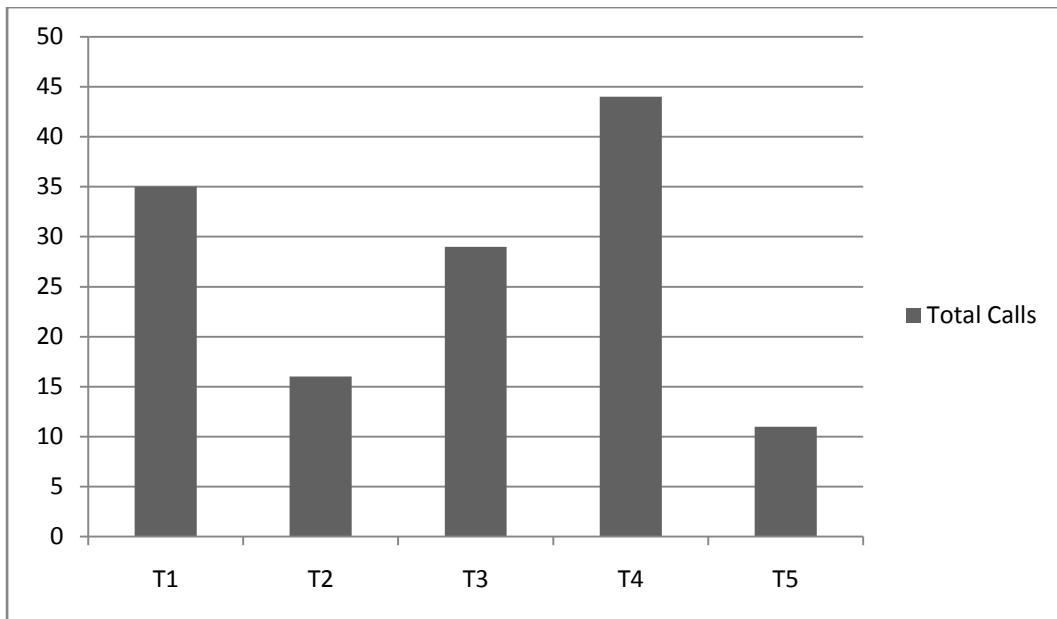
In looking more closely at the changes in participation by individual class, it was found that one class, Class 4, stood out (see *Figure 4.10*). This class showed a dramatic *decrease* in equal participation. This class started out with almost equal participation, with 6 students taking the average number of turns, and only 1 taking fewer than half the average number of turns. This changed in the whole class discussion (WCD) with techniques to only 4 students participating equally, with 2 taking fewer than average and 1 taking twice the average number of turns. This is a clear decrease in equal participation. Similarly, in the team debate with techniques, 3 students took an average number of turns, with 3 taking fewer than average and one taking twice the average number of turns. In other words, fewer than half of the students participated equally in the team debate with techniques.



*Figure 4.10.* Changes in individual participation for Class 4.

*Note.* Sts. = students; Dom. = dominant; Sil. = silent; Avg. = average; WCD- = WCD without any techniques being used to equalize participation (recordings 1 & 2); WCD+ = WCD with techniques to equalize participation (recording 3a); TD+ = TD with techniques to equalize participation.

Upon closer investigation of this inconsistent class, it was found that in the first two recordings used to identify silent students, unlike in the other 4 classes, Teacher 4 appeared to rely heavily on the method of calling on students directly by name to generate participation (see *Figure 4.11*). In the two recordings of the WCD and team debate (TD) using techniques to equalize participation, she was not allowed to call on students directly by name, except for inviting speakers to speak during the TD.



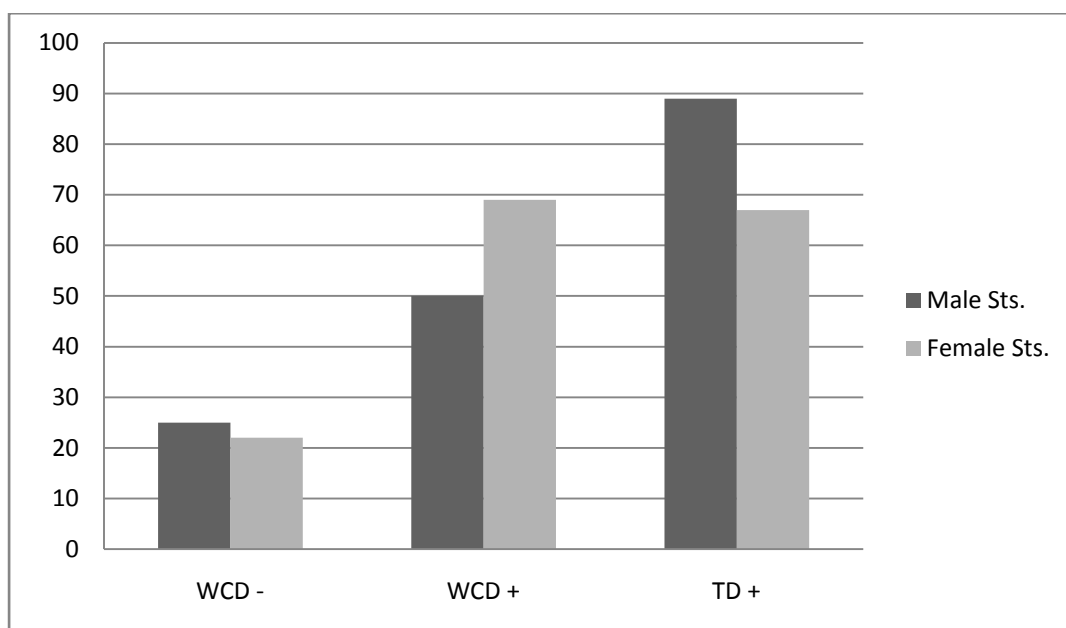
*Figure 4.11.* Total number of teacher calls per class.

T1 = Teacher 1; T2 = Teacher 2, etc.

### **Changes in Silent Students**

Changes in silent student participation were tracked over the five recordings, first by gender groups. In the whole class discussion (WCD) without techniques (recordings 1 and 2), it was found that both genders on average took about a quarter of the average number of turns. This clearly marks both genders silent. However, it was found that in both the WCD and the team debate (TD) with techniques, both the male and female silent students increased their participation to a level where they could be no longer labeled silent. That is to say, for both the WCD and the TD with techniques, both genders increased their participation to taking at least half the average number of turns (see *Figure 4.12*). In looking more closely at each gender, it was found that silent male students clearly increased their participation much more during the TD than they did in the WCD. During the WCD with techniques, the silent male students were borderline silent, taking exactly 50% of the average number of turns. In contrast, during the TD with techniques, their participation increased to almost the average, to 89%. This represents a dramatic difference between the two

public speaking contexts for silent male students. The silent female students, on the other hand, increased their participation by almost the same amount for both the WCD and the TD with techniques, to 69% and 67% of the average respectively. In both cases the silent female students were well above the cut-off mark for being labeled silent, taking about two thirds the average number of turns.



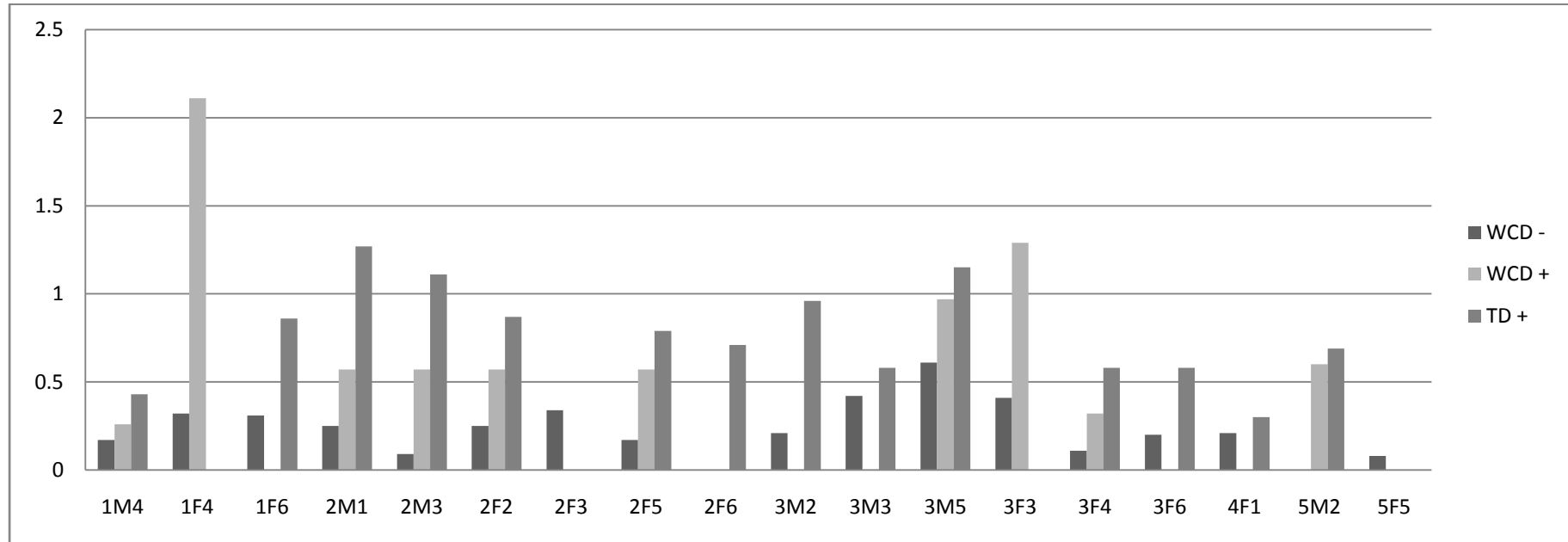
*Figure 4.12.* Silent student (Sts.) participation by gender, as a percentage of the average number of turns taken by all students.

WCD- =WCD without techniques; WCD+ = WCD with techniques; TD+ = TD with techniques to equalize participation.

The changes in participation of each individual silent student were tracked across the five recordings, in order to measure differences in participation (see *Figure 4.13*). It was found that of the 18 identified silent students, 5 were absent in the WCD with techniques. Of the remaining 13 silent students, 6 took an average number of turns, 6 took fewer than half the average number of turns, and 1 actually took more than twice the average number of turns. Of the 18 identified silent students, 4 were absent in the TD with techniques. Of the remaining 15 silent students, 13 took an average number of turns, and only 2 took fewer than half the average number of turns.

In both interventions then, there was a marked decrease in silence, especially in the TD with techniques.





*Figure 4.13.* Changes in individual silent students for the interventions.

*Note.* Some silent students were absent for some of the lessons. This is why there are gaps in the chart.

WCD - = WCD without techniques; WCD + = WCD with techniques; TD+ = TD with techniques to equalize participation; 1M4 = Male student 4 from Class 1; 2F3 = Female student 3 from class 2, etc.

In looking at each individual silent student, it was noted that in almost every case, participation increased during TD with techniques, but not during WCD with techniques (see *Figure 4.13* above). In only one case was no change noted during the TD. This student was investigated more closely, by reviewing the five recordings in which she was a participant. In total, she took 6 turns across the five recordings. It was noticed that on three of these occasions, the other students laughed at her attempts to contribute to the discussion. In fact, during her debate speech, she was only able to make a contribution of 6 words in length, and this only after three attempts to start her speech. After all three attempts, other students laughed at her, despite the fact that the teacher was urging her to speak. During the first recording, she began a long turn, but was interrupted by laughter, after which she refused to continue, even though the teacher called on her twice to do so.

### **Other Changes in Participation**

#### **Turn Length**

**Differences in turn length by type of lesson.** In comparing the five classes as a whole across the five recordings, a distinct difference can be noted in turn length, such that in whole class discussion (WCD) without techniques, short turns were more common than long turns, whereas in the WCD and team debate (TD) with techniques, long turns were more common (see *Figure 4.14*).

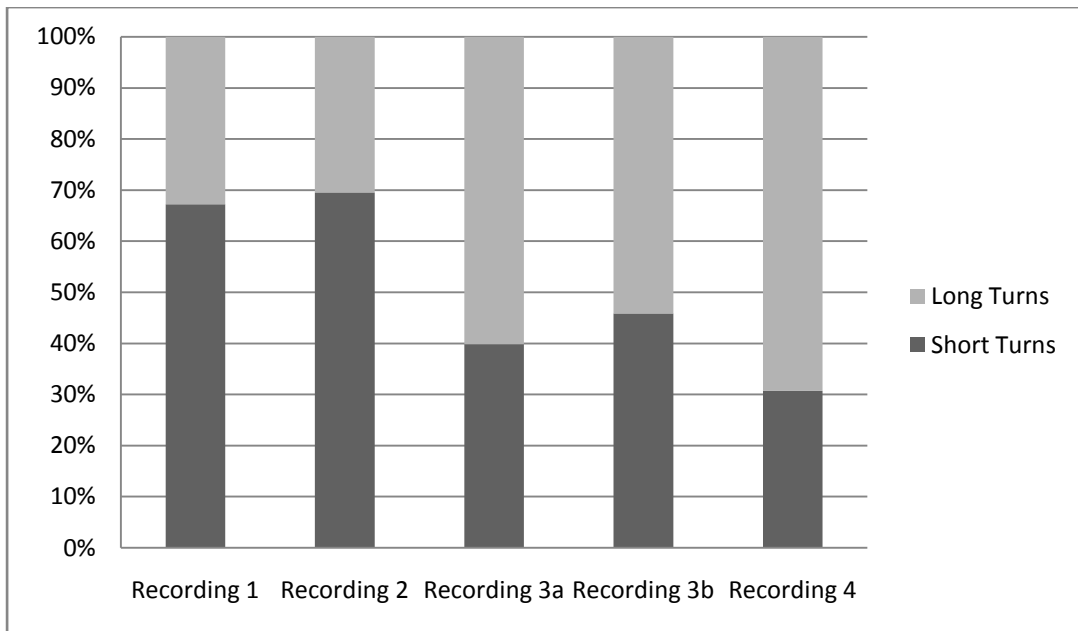


Figure 4.14. Ratio of long to short turns across the 5 recordings for all classes.

Note. Long turn is defined as 6 words or more; short turn is defined as 5 words or fewer.

Recordings 1 & 2 = WCD without techniques; Recording 3a = WCD with partial techniques; Recording 3b = WCD with techniques; Recording 4 = TD with techniques to equalize participation.

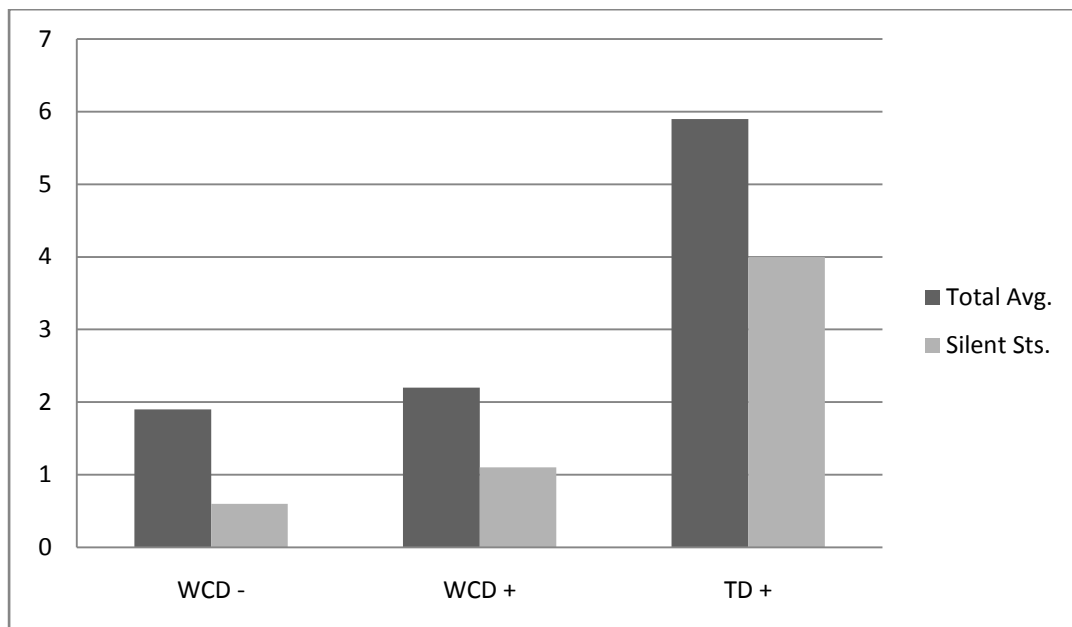
**Turn length and gender.** In looking at turn length and gender, data were compared across all five recordings by short and long turn. It was found that overall males took an average of slightly more short turns than the females. This remained the case in the WCDs without techniques being used, as well as in the WCDs and TDs with techniques being used to increase participation.

Similarly, it was found that overall, male students took an average of more long turns than female students, regardless of techniques being used or not.

**Turn length and silent students.** The average number of long turns taken in the first two recordings was 1.9. In contrast, the average number of long turns taken by silent students in the first two recordings was 0.6. In other words, silent students took almost four times fewer long turns than the average (see Figure 4.15). This represents a considerable difference.

The average number of long turns taken during recording 3b was 2.2. The average number of long turns taken by silent students during recording 3b was 1.1. This means that silent students took an average of two times fewer long turns than the average, which is a clear increase over the first two recordings (see *Figure 4.15*).

The average number of long turns taken during recording 4 was 5.9. The average number of long turns taken by silent students during recording 4 was 4.6. This means that silent students still took fewer than the average number of long turns, but by a much smaller margin than in either the first two recordings or in recording 3a. While their participation was still not equal in long turns to the average, the silent students were close enough to the average that they could by no means any longer be labeled silent (see *Figure 4.15*). On an individual level, only 3 silent students out of 14 participating in recording 4 qualified as silent. Even these silent students still each took at least one long turn.

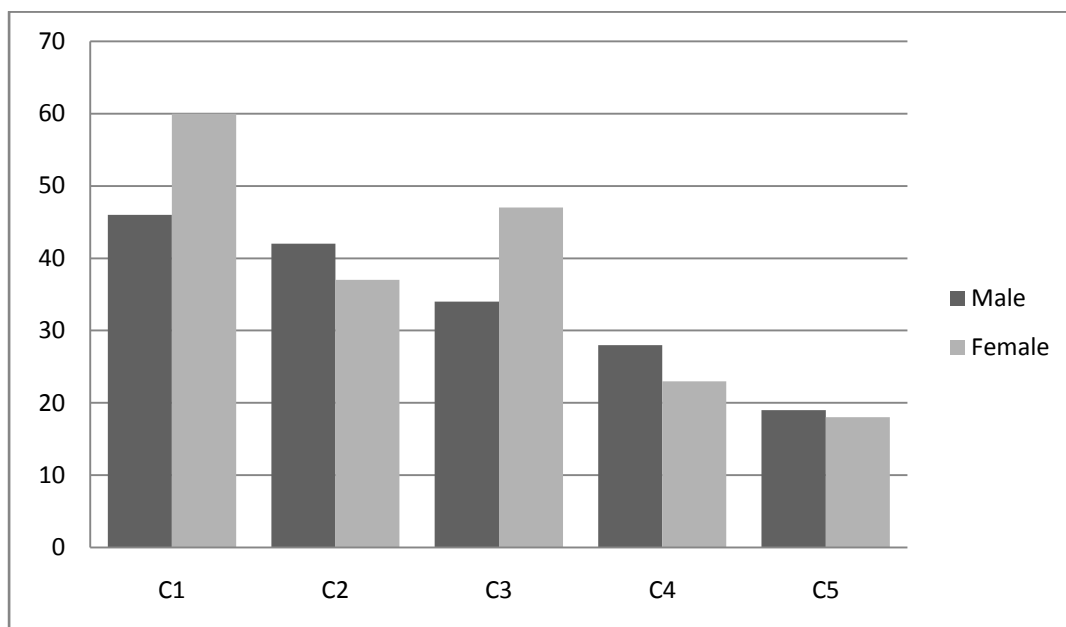


*Figure 4.15.* Changes in average (Avg.) number of long turns with interventions.

Sts. = students; WCD - = WCD without techniques; WCD + = WCD with techniques; TD + = TD with techniques to equalize participation.

## Speech Time

The data for individual speech time were analyzed to determine any relationship to gender and silence. In analyzing the data, it was noted first of all that the average speech time differed considerably by class (see *Figure 4.16*).



*Figure 4.16.* Average speech time by gender per class.

C1 = Class 1; C2 = Class 2, etc.

In looking more closely at these data, it was found that in two of the classes the female students took a longer speech time on average than the male students. In the other three classes, the male students took a longer speech time on average than the female students, though not considerably. In other words, there appeared to be little difference by gender overall.

As can be seen in *Figure 4.16* above, the average speech time varied widely from class to class, from 52 seconds (Class 1) to 19 seconds (Class 5) of the total 60 seconds allowed. Therefore it is difficult to compare individual silent student speech time to the average across all five classes together. Instead, the individual silent student speech time was compared with the class average (see *Figure 4.17*).

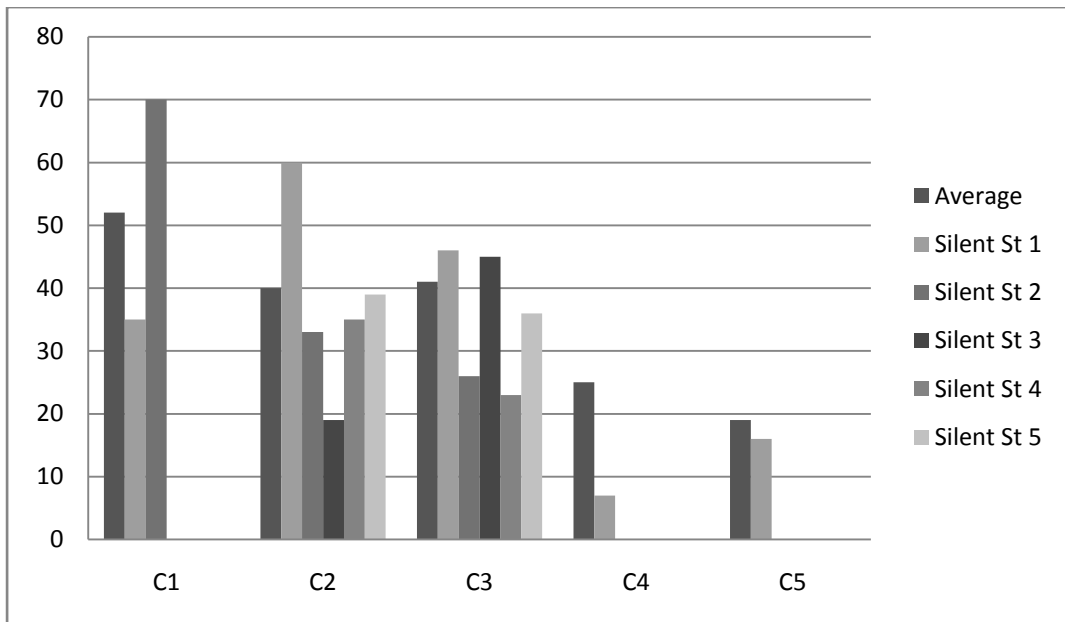


Figure 4.17. Average speech time in seconds per individual class and individual silent student (St).

C1 = Class 1; C2 = Class 2, etc.

Viewed in this way it can be seen that of the 14 silent students participating in the debate lesson, 4 took above the class average speech time. The remaining 10 took below their class average, with only 2 of these 10 taking fewer than half the average speech time. In other words, only 2 of the silent students qualified as silent in terms of speech time.

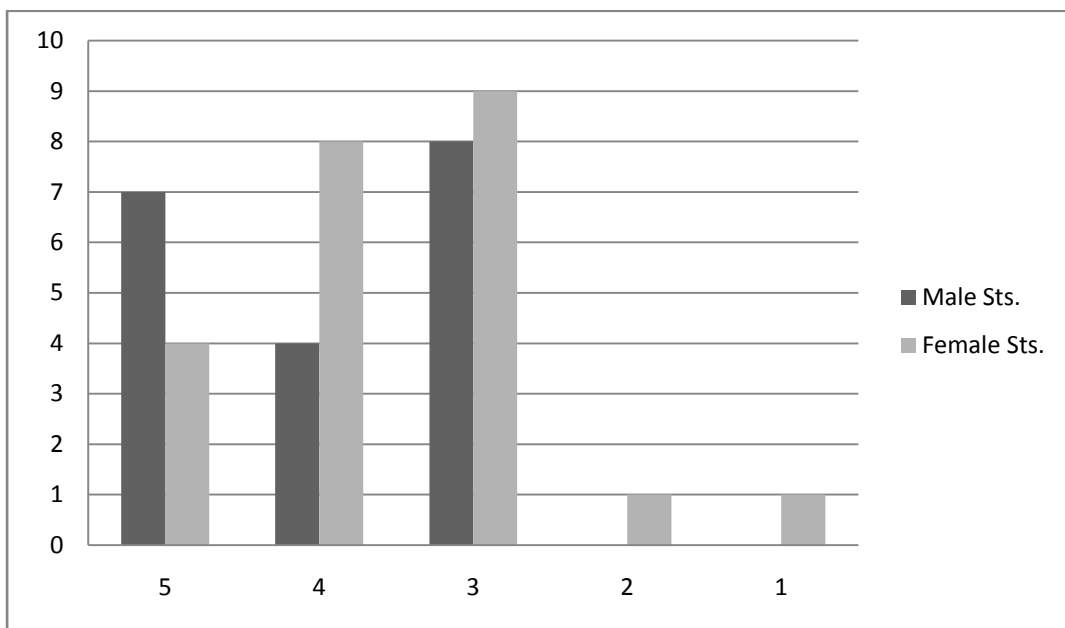
### Student Questionnaire Results

Of the 51 students that participated in the study, 42 responded to the student questionnaire (see Appendix E); 19 males and 23 females. The data from these questionnaires are summarized here.

### Comfort Level in Speaking to the Whole Class in English

All 42 students responded to question 1 (see Figure 4.18). Almost all of the students said that they felt moderately (3) to very (5) comfortable speaking English to the whole class. Only 2 students, both female, said that they felt somewhat

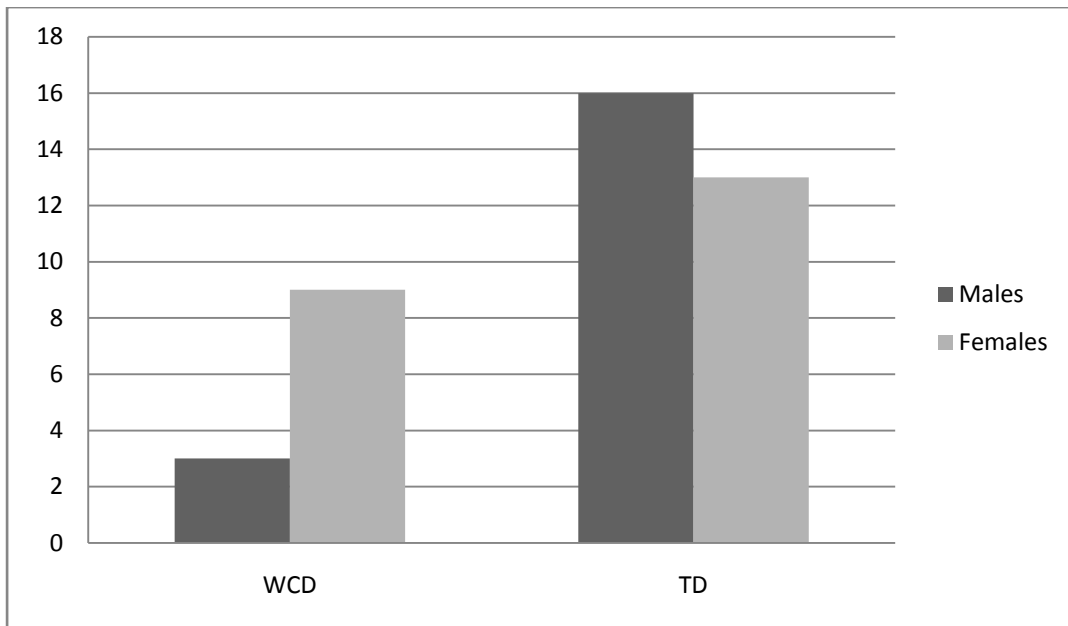
uncomfortable (2) or very uncomfortable (1) speaking English to the whole class. Of the 11 students who said they felt very comfortable speaking English to the whole class, 7 were male and 4 were female, or 37% and 17% respectively. This means that considerably more males than females stated that they felt very comfortable speaking English to the whole class. On average, males said that they had a 3.9 comfort level, whereas females said they had a 3.6 comfort level.



*Figure 4.18.* Comfort level by gender in speaking to the whole class in English. Sts. = students; 5 = very comfortable; 1 = very uncomfortable.

### **Preferences in Type of Whole Class Speaking Activity**

A total of 29 out of 41 students who responded to question 2 said that they enjoyed the whole class speaking activity of team debate (TD) more than whole class discussion (WCD). Only 12 said that they enjoyed WCD more. However, in looking at the breakdown by gender, it was found that most of the students who said they enjoyed WCD more were females (see *Figure 4.19*).



*Figure 4.19.* Preference by gender for type of whole class speaking activity.

Part b of question 2 asked students to explain their answer. Here, some interesting information came to light. For WCD, the male students did not explain why they chose this answer. Female students gave several reasons. Of particular note, here, are two responses, which are shown in full:

1. “It makes me confident and encourage me to participate.”
2. “It makes a person express him/herself freely and at any point they want.”

These responses show that these 2 female students feel more confident or freer to speak out in a less structured WCD that does not require them to speak at a particular time.

For TD, a wide range of explanations were given by both male and female students. Seven students stated that they enjoyed the TD lesson more because it allowed everyone a chance to speak or encouraged all to participate. To illustrate, one female student stated, “Because everyone have the right to give his opinion,” and one male student stated, “It force us to speak while in the class discussion we can not



participate.”

The most common reason listed by male students for TD was that it allowed them to learn more or improve their speaking skills. The most common reason for the female students was that the TD was more fun or interesting. Several students explained that they enjoyed the TD more because it was competitive. One male student put it very plainly: “Because I love competitions.”

Another interesting response was, “because it taught us how to... not fear when we speak,” stated by a female student. For this female student, her statement implies that she fears speaking, and enjoys having the opportunity to learn to overcome her fear. A final reason, explained by a male student was, “because it is more organized,” which clearly contrasts with the female statement earlier that she enjoyed the WCD more precisely because it was *less* structured.

A total of 41 students responded to question 3. Of these, 22 said they felt more comfortable speaking in the TD, 16 said they felt more comfortable speaking in the WCD, and 3 said they felt equally comfortable speaking in both (see *Figure 4.20*). Interestingly, although 6 male students felt more comfortable speaking in the WCD, only 3 said that they *enjoyed* it more than the TD. The female students were split evenly over the two, with 10 feeling more comfortable in each speaking context.

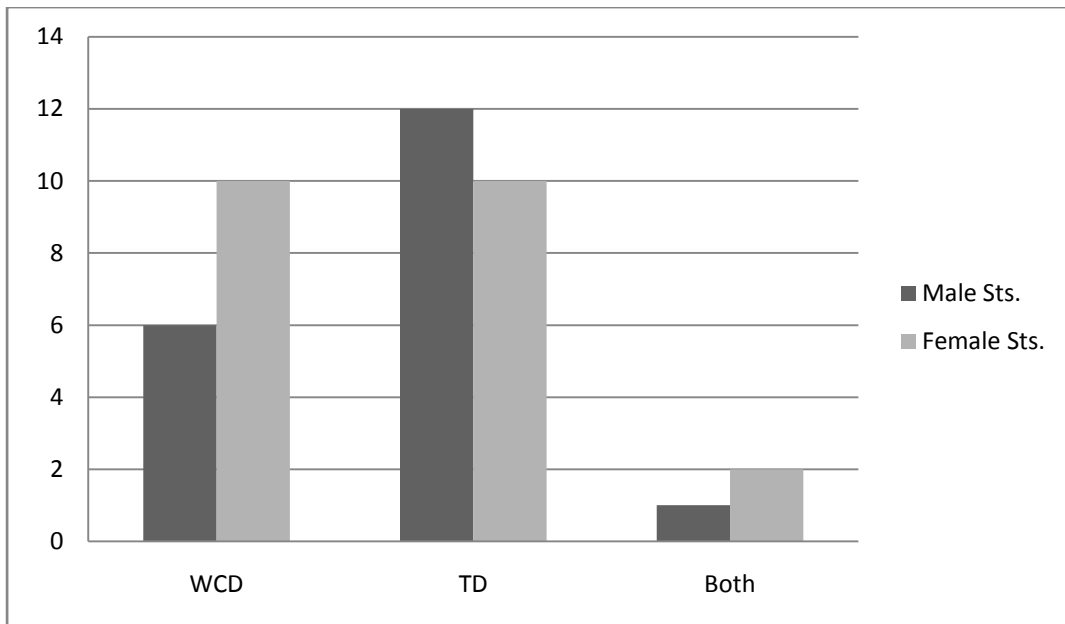


Figure 4.20. Gender breakdown for speaking type students (Sts.) felt more comfortable with.

Part b of question 3 asked students to explain their answer. Of the 5 female responses to this question to explain the choice of WCD, 2 stated that they felt more comfortable because it allowed them to “not be shy.” In contrast, only 2 male students provided an explanation for their choice of WCD, neither of which focused on emotional factors, such as “it improves pronunciation.”

Of the 10 female responses to explain the choice of TD, 4 said that they felt more comfortable in the TD because it gave them a chance to participate. In contrast, none of the 11 male responses mentioned this reason. Male responses included explanations that the TD was more interesting, and that they felt comfortable debating among friends. One male student stated, “because there is a time for preparing my ideas.” Another stated, “because I will keep talking until I prove my point.”

From the above student responses explaining why they enjoyed and/or felt more comfortable with one speaking context over the other, it would appear that the most common reason for female students was that the TD gave them the chance to

participate. In contrast, the most common reason for male students was that the TD allowed them to share and learn more than the WCD.

### **Reasons for Not Participating**

Question 4 asked why students choose not to participate at times in whole class speaking activities. First of all it was noted that of the 42 students who completed the questionnaire, only 33 responded to this question. Interestingly, the percentage of male students who chose to answer the question was quite low (68%) compared to the female students (87%). Further, the average length of a female answer to this question was 12 words, compared to the male average of 8 words. Of the 33 students who responded to the question, 4 stated that they do participate, implying that the question does not apply to them.

Since the question was open-ended, the responses varied widely. The responses were analyzed by gender and categorized by theme or factor as follows: emotional/social; physical condition; topic/activities; lack of knowledge/skills; and miscellaneous (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1  
*Reported factors for not participating in whole class speaking activities*

Factor	Male	Female	Total
<b>Emotional/Social</b>			
Embarrassed, fear mistakes, etc.	4	5	9
Due to others' behavior e.g. interruption, lack of respect etc.	1	4	5
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Physical Condition</b>			
e.g. tired, unwell, bad mood, etc.	4	7	11
<b>Topic/Activities</b>			
Boring, unimportant etc.	3	6	9
<b>Lack Knowledge/Skills</b>			
English not good enough	1	2	3
Lacks information, unprepared etc.	4	4	8
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
Convinced of own opinion	1		
Likes to listen to others		1	
Wants to give others a chance		1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>48</b>

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the most common reasons given for not participating related to social and emotional factors, including feelings of embarrassment, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes or that peers might laugh at contributions made. Interestingly, here there was a noticeable difference by gender. Of the 14 students who mentioned social and emotional factors, 9 were female and 5 were male. In other words, 39% of the female students listed these types of factors as reasons why they do not participate. In contrast, only 26% of the male students said the same. Perhaps most interesting in these responses, were the students,

3 female and 1 male, who mentioned the behavior of others specifically. These responses are listed here in full, because they provide important insight into the issue of emotional climate of the classroom.

1. “May the teacher want to make me just participate not to respect my opinion.” (female student)
2. “Because I’m reluctant and others don’t give you the chance to talk because they start talking whenever something comes into their mind and interrupt you.” (female student)
3. “I didn’t like the debate or discussion because others were offensive.” (female student)
4. “I think that I am afraid about my friends comments and that they are going to laugh.” (male student)

It appears from these examples that for a number of students, the negative behavior of others may be an important deterrent to participation.

Another common reason stated by students for why they do not participate related to the student’s physical condition, including feelings of being tired, unwell or in a bad mood. In fact, this reason was listed by 11 out of the 33 students who responded to the question. Also listed by 11 students, were factors relating to lack of skills or knowledge, including not having enough information about the topic, not knowing the answer, and not having the words in English. Following these reasons were those related to the activities or topic, including feeling that the topic was not interesting or important. Interestingly, one student said that she might refrain from participating in order to give others a chance to do so.

### **Factors Promoting Participation**

Question 5 asked students to explain what factors help them to participate in

whole class speaking activities. Since it was again an open-ended question, answers varied widely. Responses were analyzed and categorized into the following themes: social/emotional factors; topic/activities; knowledge/skills; and personal goals (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2  
*Reported factors promoting participation in whole class speaking activities.*

Factor	Male	Female	Total
<b>Social/emotional</b>			
When others do, to feel part of the class, get to know others, etc.	3	5	8
Teacher behavior (e.g. respecting their opinions)	2	1	3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Topic/Activities</b>			
(useful, interesting, fun, etc.)	8	12	20
<b>Knowledge/Skills</b>			
(To give opinion, when they know the answer, etc.)	6	2	8
<b>Personal goals</b>			
(To get a good grade, improve English, etc.)	9	7	16

As illustrated by Table 4.2, it was found that the most common factor that students stated encouraged their participation related to the activities or topics being interesting, fun, or useful. Here, there is a difference in response by gender, in that 55% of the female students gave this type of explanation, which was the most common female response, versus 42% of the male students, which is still a considerable percentage.

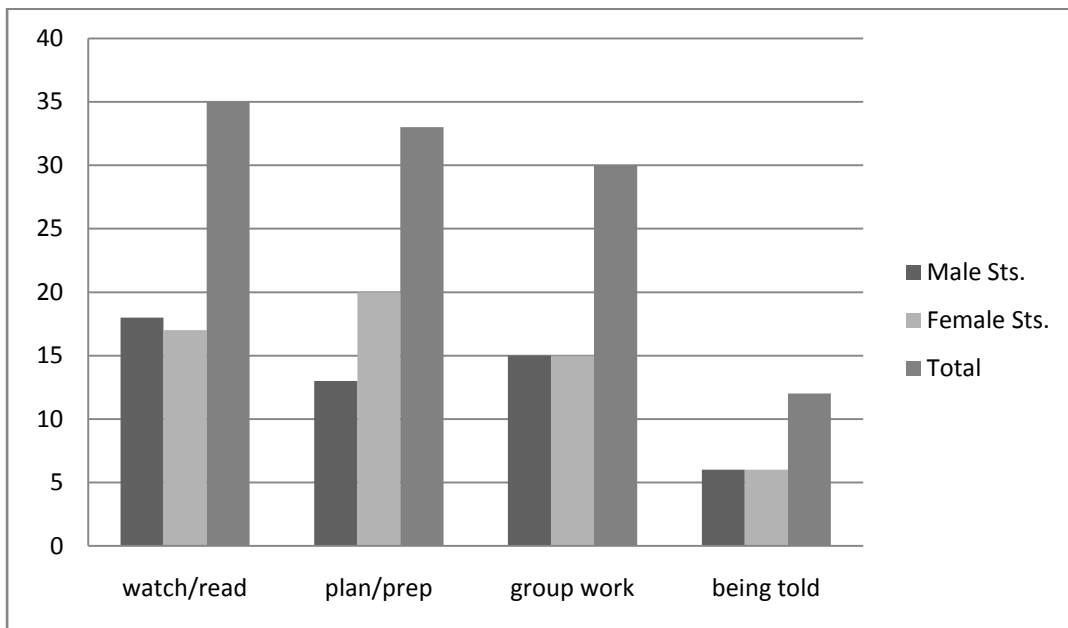
The most common male response related to personal goals, such as to improve

English, or to get good grades. More male students (32%) also stated that they participate because of their knowledge about a topic, versus only 9% of the female students. Interestingly, none of the students mentioned factors relating to their physical condition, such mood, or level of alertness, which were mentioned by many students as important factors causing them *not* to participate.

Finally, another common reason for both male (26%) and female (27%) students related to various social and emotional factors. To illustrate, one female student stated, “to feel a part of the class.”

### **Factors Increasing Participation**

Question 6 asked students to tick the factors that they felt helped to increase their participation in the two whole class speaking activities used as interventions in the study. These factors included: (a) having time to plan and prepare; (b) watching or reading something about the topic prior to speaking; (c) working in small groups prior to speaking; (d) being told they had to speak. The results of this question are summarized in *Figure 4.21*.



*Figure 4.21.* Reported effectiveness by gender of 4 techniques to increase participation.

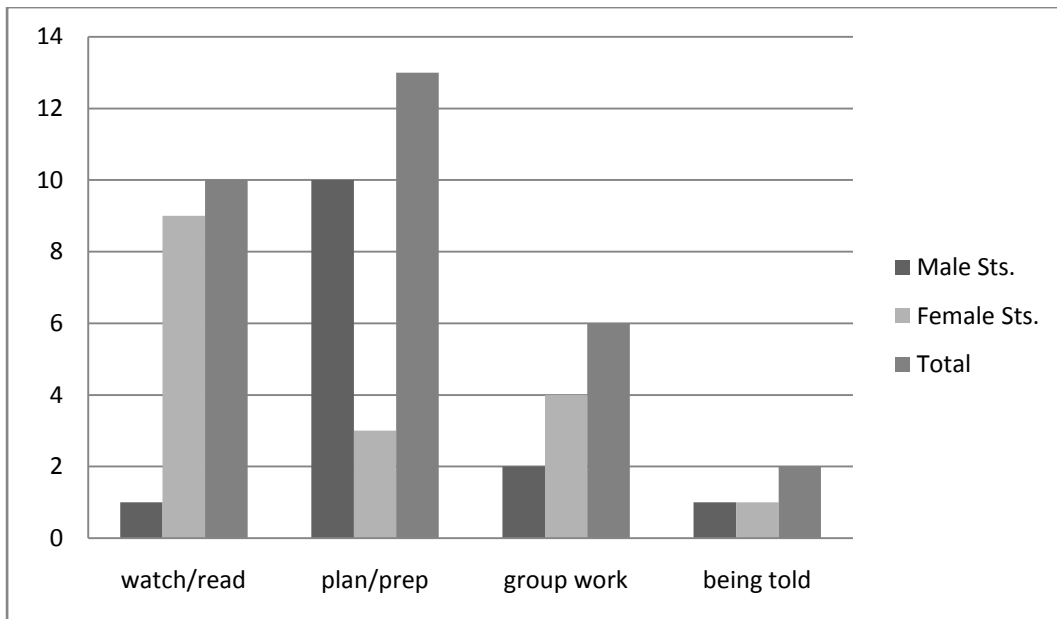
Sts. = students; watch/read = watching/reading something about topic prior to speaking; plan/prep = having time to plan and prepare to speak; group work = working in small groups prior to speaking; being told = being told they had to speak.

There appears to be little difference by gender in which techniques students found effective in helping them to increase their participation. However, there is a clear overall preference for the first three techniques over the technique of being told they had to speak.

### **What was the Most Effective Technique in Increasing Participation?**

Question 7 asked students to identify which, if any, of the four techniques listed in question 6 helped the most to increase their participation. Responses to this question totaled 31. Results are summarized in *Figure 4.22*.





*Figure 4.22.* Reported most effective technique by gender in increasing participation. Sts. = students; watch/read = watching/reading something about topic prior to speaking; plan/prep = having time to plan and prepare to speak; group work = working in small groups prior to speaking; being told = being told they had to speak.

The figure clearly shows that students varied considerably by gender in which technique they thought was most effective in helping them to participate more in whole class speaking activities. Male students clearly favored having time to plan and prepare as the most effective technique, while female students strongly favored having the chance to watch or read something about a topic before speaking. Only 2 students felt that being told they had to speak was the most effective technique. Overall, more students felt that having time to plan and prepare was the most effective technique.

### **Results of the Teacher Questionnaire**

All five of the teachers assisting in the study responded to the teacher questionnaire. The results are presented here.

### **Which Context, if Any, Helped More?**

Four out of five of the teachers thought that the team debate (TD) helped most to increase the participation of silent students. The remaining teacher, Teacher 4, thought that neither helped to increase the participation of her 1 silent student. All of these responses are supported by the data from the video recordings, which showed that TD did help more to increase silent student participation, except in the case of the 1 silent student mentioned by Teacher 4.

### **Perceptions on Difference in Participation by Gender**

Two teachers perceived that their female students participated more, and attributed this to weakness in language skills of the male students. Interestingly, these were the same two teachers who did not favor their male students with more teacher calls. The other three teachers perceived no difference in participation levels by gender in their classes. These three teachers were the same teachers who favored their male students with more teacher calls. All of these responses are in clear contrast to the recorded data, which found that male students participated more than female students, in all five classes.

### **Which, if Any, Techniques Helped Most?**

There was wide variation in which techniques the teachers thought helped most to increase the participation of silent students in their classes. The most commonly chosen was that of using a controversial topic for discussion, with four teachers ticking this technique. Three teachers thought that requiring students to speak was one of the techniques that helped most. The remaining techniques of providing more structure, having students discuss the topic in small groups prior to speaking, having students watch or read something about the topic prior to speaking, and the type of speaking context, were each chosen by one or two teachers. None of the

teachers chose the technique of using worksheets to prepare as most useful.

### **Comments on Individual Teacher Responses**

Several individual comments may shed further insight onto the issue of classroom participation in their classes. These are presented here.

Teacher 3 said that several female students in her class tend to dominate. This was found to be the case from the recorded data, which indeed identified two such cases. In this case, her perception appears to be accurate. However, she also stated that *all* the female students in her class were generally more outspoken. This is in clear contrast to the findings of the recorded data, which found that 3 of her 7 female students were silent, and that 1 of her male students in fact was dominant. Similarly, Teacher 1 said that the female students tend to participate more than the male students. This clearly contrasts with the findings of the recorded data, which found that 2 male students in this class dominated, compared with none of the female students. In addition, more silent females were identified in this class than silent males.

The two teachers that chose structure as one of the best techniques for increasing participation were also the two teachers that used the most teacher calls in their classes.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

The discussion section is divided into four parts: (a) a discussion of the results of the study; (b) comments on the limitations of the study; (c) suggestions for future research; and (d) conclusions.

### Discussion of the Results

The following is a discussion of the results of the study presented in Chapter 4. It is divided by the topics of: silence; gender; changes in participation; and comments on the effectiveness of techniques to increase equal participation. In so doing, it aims to provide possible explanations for and insight into the findings.

#### Silent Students

Silent students were identified in all five classes participating in the study, as illustrated by *Figure 4.2*. The percentage of silent students found is supported by the findings of Jones & Gerig's (1994; p. 169) study, that about one third of the students in any given class are silent, and suggests that silence is just as prevalent in the Egyptian EFL college classroom as it is in the United States and Britain, where the vast majority of research into classroom participation has been conducted.

A small number of dominant students was also identified, in four of the five classes (see *Figure 4.2*). This supports the finding of previous research (Croll, 1985; French & French, 1984; Sunderland, 1995) that dominance is usually attributable to a small subset of students in a given class.

The above findings on silence and dominance suggest that there may be a considerable imbalance in participation in the Egyptian EFL classroom, afflicting not just a few individual students, but rather more significant numbers. If half of the

students are not participating equally, then many students do not have an equal chance in succeeding at SLA. This underscores acutely the need for solutions to the problem.

**Class size.** A difference was noted in comparing the larger classes (12 students each) to the smaller classes (7 and 8 students respectively), such that in the larger classes, an average of 43% of the students were silent, and in the smaller classes, an average of only 20% were silent. Similarly, with respect to dominance, 7 dominant students were identified in the larger classes, and only 1 in the smaller classes (see *Figure 4.2*). In fact, in the larger classes, only 39% of the students participated equally. In contrast, in the smaller classes, 73% of the students did so. This difference could be because the smaller class dynamic is less anxiety-inducing than the larger class dynamic (Corson, 1997; Holmes, 1995; Townsend, 1998). However, since the difference in class size is not so great, especially when the high incidence of absence is taken into account, it is difficult to make any conclusions.

It could also relate to other variables such as the teacher's style, or student proficiency level. In contrast to the larger classes that were studying at an advanced level, the smaller classes were studying at an intermediate level. Itakura (2002) found in her study that the degree of male dominance was affected by proficiency, such that the dominance was more pronounced in the L1 than in the L2. She attributes this to the fact that the speaking skills needed to dominate a conversation are not well enough developed in lower level language learners.

**Teacher calls.** It was found that across the five classes, the teacher called on silent students much less often than on other students (see *Figure 4.5*). This suggests that teachers give less attention to silent students than they do to other students, which supports Clarricoates' (1983) findings. It is possible that the teachers are not aware of this differential treatment, which implies that awareness raising might help to rectify

the imbalance, as investigated by Whyte (1984), among others. That being said, however, the fact that the teachers called on certain students more than others could have itself *caused* some students to be mis-categorized. That is to say, a student might normally have been labeled silent, but due to being called on by the teacher more often than others, s/he participated more, changing the category to average or even dominant. Regardless of categorization, however, if teachers are calling on some students more than others (see *Figure 4.3*), then this differential treatment could affect student participation levels. Where used as a technique to increase participation of silent students, this could be a type of intervention to equalize participation, if expressly chosen for this purpose by teachers. However, the video-recorded data do not suggest that this was necessarily matched by teachers' behavior, especially where gender is concerned (see *Figure 4.6*).

### **Silence and Gender**

A difference was found in percentage of silent students by gender, such that 39% of the female students were silent, versus only 30% of the male students, using the most conservative scale of measurement, including all turns, whether long or short. However, this gender gap increased when only data from the larger classes were considered (see *Figure 4.4*). Further, when short turns were excluded from the equation, looking only at the number of long turns taken, this gender gap increased again, more dramatically, to 61% of female students labeled as silent compared to 35% of the male students. This difference suggests that: (a) more female students tend to be silent than male students, which supports the research of Jones and Wheatley (1990), Jule (2001), and Sunderland (1998); and (b) that male students tend to take longer turns than female students, as also found by numerous past studies (Kelly, 1988; Swacker, 1975). The implications of the latter suggestion are perhaps more

serious, especially for the EFL classroom. If two thirds of the female students are taking fewer than half the class average number of long turns, then they are at a distinct disadvantage to their male counterparts, since SLA has been shown to be more positively impacted by longer attempts at interaction than shorter attempts (Doughty & Long, 2003; Swain, 2005).

**Why the gender gap?** The first step in addressing the issue of silence and gender is to understand why a gender gap exists. Here, the results of the student questionnaire analysis may shed light on the issue, in that they provide insight into how students feel about various issues related to classroom participation, insight which is largely unobservable, and could therefore not be gleaned from analysis of the video recordings alone.

*Comfort level in speaking English to the whole class.* More male students stated that felt very comfortable speaking in English to the whole class than did female students (see *Figure 4.18*). In contrast, the only two students who stated that they felt uncomfortable speaking in English to the whole class were female. These findings support the findings of the video-recorded data in that they could explain why male students participated more overall than female students. Comfort level in speaking to the whole class has been linked to anxiety. Where a student has high speaking anxiety, it has been shown that he is less likely to participate (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004). The finding that female students are less comfortable speaking to the whole class than male students is supported by the research of Coates (2004). Additionally, if comfort level can relate to anxiety, this finding is supported by a number of studies, for example Alansari's (2006), which found that Egyptian female college students have higher levels of anxiety than their male counterparts, and Mills' (2006), which found that females have higher levels of public speaking anxiety than

males.

***Reasons for not participating.*** The findings of the student questionnaire analysis suggest that many factors may cause a student to choose not to participate (see Table 4.1). Most important of these may be emotional and social factors, including fear of peer judgment, or not feeling respected, which were reported more commonly by female students than male students. The statements of a few individual students, such as disrespect from the teacher, or fear that other students will laugh at them, provide further support of the findings of previous studies that the emotional climate of a classroom affects participation (e.g. Allan & Madden, 2006). Therefore, it would appear that addressing these factors could positively affect the participation levels of some silent students, and particularly silent female students, since more female students mentioned emotional and social factors as reasons for not participating.

While a number of students mentioned that their physical condition (e.g. tiredness or mood) could negatively affect their participation, it is difficult to address this factor in the classroom. However, teacher awareness of this factor might be able to affect it in some instances. For example, if students are particularly tired or in a bad mood, the teacher might try to find activities that could engage them or change their mood.

Another important factor relates to the topic of discussion. Interestingly, more female students than male students mentioned that the topic could negatively affect their participation, where it is not interesting or important, for example. The implication of this is that perhaps topics need to be chosen carefully to suit female students especially, a theory supported by Shehadeh (1999).

Finally, a number of students stated that the lack of knowledge or skills could



affect their participation, where they do not know enough about the topic, or do not have the words in English. This would suggest that the techniques of providing students with background information about a topic, as well as a chance to activate their schemata, or learn relevant vocabulary prior to speaking, could help to generate participation, as suggested in Chapter 2.

**Dress.** In looking more at silent female students, it was found that many more of the female students who wore head scarves were silent than those who did not (see section on dress in Chapter 4). This finding suggests that dress may be indicative of a certain cultural orientation, educational background, and/or belief system which could predict silence. It could be that some of these students come from a lower social class than the other students. If this is the case, it could be that they feel intimidated by their upper-class peers, or that their social class holds more traditional views about women and the acceptability of speaking in public, a finding noted by Chambers (1992), Kelly (1988) and Harik and Marston (1996). In this case, the socialization factor discussed by Coates (2004) could have played a much stronger role in the silence of these students, compared to the students without head scarves. However it is difficult to do more than speculate on the possible relationship of dress to silence, since no further information, such as demographic, was available. Nevertheless, it is an interesting finding that warrants further investigation.

**Absence.** One of the most interesting findings of the present study relates to absence and gender. It was found that silent female students were three times more likely to be absent than other students (see section on absence in Chapter 4). This finding suggests that silence and gender may relate to increased absence.

In fact, the research appears to be divided on which gender tends towards more absence than the other (cf. Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson & Kirk, 2003; Woodfield,

2006). However, some studies suggest that the reasons for absence may differ by gender. Woodfield (2006) found female absence to be more strongly predicted by social anxiety, whereas male absence was more strongly predicted by academic performance. That is to say, a female student may tend towards absence where she has high levels of speaking anxiety, whereas a male student may tend towards absence where his academic performance is low. If silence is an avoidance strategy to save face (Morita, 2004), then absence can be viewed as the ultimate face-saving avoidance strategy (Opuda, 2009; Pellegrini, 2007). Where a student is silent, but still present in the class, there is the chance that he or she might be called on to participate. Where a student is absent altogether, however, this removes all chance of having to participate. In that sense an absent student can be viewed as the most extreme case of silence. Indeed, both Opuda (2009) and Pellegrini (2007) have found that students use absence as a strategy to avoid situations causing anxiety such as having to speak to a large class.

Wilkins (2008) explores this theme of anxiety and absence further, and found that a negative school climate may cause absence, for example where students fear peer laughter or unkind remarks, as found by Ashton-Hay (1996) and Woodfield (2006). Here again, responses to the student questionnaire provide support for these findings. A number of emotional and social factors were mentioned by 27% of the students who responded to the questionnaire, such as “to feel a part of the class” and “the teacher” (see Table 4.2). This supports the finding above that suggests the emotional climate of the classroom needs to be addressed. Where students feel encouraged and comfortable to participate, without fear of peer or teacher judgment, they could be more likely to participate (Donovan & MacIntyre, 2004; Howard & Henney, 1998; Townsend, 1998).

Since the present study found that silence might be predicted by fear of peer judgment, it follows that absence, when viewed as an extreme form of silence, may indeed be related to the chilly classroom climate for females, discussed by Hall and Sandler (1982, as cited in Allan & Madden, 2006) so many years ago. The finding that silent female students are more likely to be absent than other students, then, might be explained by fear of peer judgment. Wilkins (2008) found that the generating of a sense of community, or a positive classroom climate, increased school attendance, which suggests that fear of peer judgment *is* a cause of absence, and that where this is the cause, absence can be reduced.

In addition, Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003), who found that female students were more likely to be absent than male students, also found a link between parents' valuing of education and absence. That is to say, where parents placed a lower value on education, their children were more likely to be absent. This suggests that perhaps some parents place less value on the education of their daughters than their sons. This might provide another explanation for the higher incidence of absence found in the present study in female students than in male students.

***Teacher calls and gender.*** It has already been established that silent students get fewer teacher calls than other students (Kelly, 1988), which can be tentatively supported by the findings of the present study (but see earlier section on teacher calls). However, in addition to this, it was also found that overall, teachers favored male students in the number of calls. Male students received close to twice the number of calls as female students (see *Figure 4.6*). This gender imbalance has also been noted by several past studies (e.g. Alcon, 1994; Jones & Dindia, 2004; Sadker & Sadker, 1985), and implies that silent female students may be doubly disadvantaged,

receiving the least number of calls. It would appear that teacher awareness raising might be an effective method of equalizing this imbalance, since most likely, they are unaware of this behavior (Kelly, 1988; Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Tsouroufli, 2002; Whyte, 1984). It is important to note, however, that not all of the teachers were found to favor male students in number of teacher calls. This suggests that the behavior of differential treatment by gender may not be present in every classroom, and where it is, it may vary by degree.

**Dominance.** It was found that most of the dominant students identified were male (see *Figure 4.3*). This supports the finding that male students tend to dominate more than female students (e.g. Coates, 2004). Interestingly, the 2 dominant female students were from the same class. In looking more closely at this class, it was found that the teacher called on female students more often than on male students, by 1.5 times more. It could be that female students in this class felt more encouraged to participate because of this. The three larger classes each had 1 or 2 dominant male students, which supports past findings (Croll, 1985; French & French, 1984; Sunderland, 1995).

Of further interest in regards to male dominance, it was found that the male students took more turns in the first two whole class discussions (WCDs) without techniques (see section on gender and number of turns, in Chapter 4). While the difference is not great, it still suggests that male students are dominating by taking more than the average number of turns, a finding supported by an overwhelming amount of literature (e.g. Kelly, 1988). Further, it was found that male students took more long turns than female students, which implies that they are at an advantage in terms of SLA, since longer turns provide more opportunity for the negotiation of meaning required for SLA to occur.

Perhaps more interesting, is information gleaned from the teacher questionnaires. In looking at the results of the teacher questionnaire data, it was noted that their perceptions did not always match the results of the recorded data. Most noteworthy is that none of the five teachers perceived that their male students were participating more than their female students, and in fact two of the teachers felt that their female students participated *more* than their male students, which supports the findings of Kelly (1988) in regards to teacher perceptions about participation by gender. The findings of the recorded data refute these perceptions, which show that the male students participated more in at least one session per class, and in some cases by a great margin, such as in Classes 1 and 2 (see Figure 4.7). This discrepancy between teacher perceptions about and actual behavior recorded, in regards levels of participation by gender, is supported by Spender (1982, as cited in Sunderland, 2000), and lends support to the theory that males and females are so socialized into their roles, that a difference in participation by gender is often not perceived by teachers (Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Whyte, 1984). Teacher 3 perceived that *all* of her female students were more outspoken than the male students in her class, when in fact, 3 of her female students were found to be silent and 1 of her male students dominant in the video-recorded data. The disparity between perceptions and actual behavior could explain why three of the teachers called on male students far more than female students, a behavior that is perhaps the unconscious manifestation of the socialization suggested by Coates (2004), and also noted by Tsouroufli (2002). The implication of these findings is that teachers need to be made aware of their gender-differential treatment, and of the difference in student participation by gender. Teacher awareness raising has been shown to be a useful tool in changing this behavior (Sadker & Sadker, 1985; Whyte, 1984).

**Turn taking and gender composition.** It was found that in the first two recordings across the five classes, one recording stood out from the others (see *Figure 4.8*). In the second recording of Class 5, the students took a higher average number of turns than they did in any other of the 10 recordings without techniques. In looking more closely at this class, it was noted that on that day 2 male students were absent, leaving only 1 male student and 5 female students. Upon reviewing the video recording, it was found that the talk was characterized by mainly short turns, and that many of the turns seemed to be building on the contributions of others. It could be that the gender imbalance allowed the female students to speak more often than they would have otherwise, because they felt freer to express themselves (Brooks, 1982; Whyte, 1984), and/or it could be that in a female majority setting, the talk becomes more cooperative, in keeping with Edelsky's (1981) findings that women prefer a cooperative style of talk, whereas men prefer a more competitive, one-at-a-time style of talk. The cooperative style generates more turns, since it allows for the back-and-forth of jointly built discussion.

### **Comments on Overall Changes in Participation**

It was found that overall the techniques of structure and preparation used to equalize participation in the two public speaking contexts of whole class discussion (WCD) and team debate (TD) were successful, albeit to varying degrees.

**Speaking context.** In the WCD without techniques, roughly half of the students took an average number of turns (see *Figure 4.9*). In the WCD with techniques, this number increased to roughly two thirds, and in the TD with techniques, it increased more substantially to 85%. This represents a dramatic increase in equal participation. In looking at the number of silent students and dominant students, the numbers decreased in the WCD with techniques, and again in the TD

with techniques. In both speaking contexts with techniques, then, there was a reduction in dominance and silence. These findings suggest that the techniques used to equalize participation were successful, and imply that these techniques might be similarly successful when transferred to other situations.

**Individual classes.** It was found that in four of the classes participating in the study, participation became more equal when the techniques of structure and preparation were employed. However, one class showed a dramatic decrease in equal participation (see *Figure 4.10*). Class 4 began with almost equal participation in the WCD without techniques, and decreased in the WCD with techniques, and decreased even further in the TD with techniques. It was noted upon further investigation into this class, that unlike other teachers, Teacher 4 relied heavily upon the technique of calling on students by name to generate participation in the WCD without techniques. In the other two speaking contexts, she was not allowed to call on students by name. It could be that her students were used to waiting to be called on to speak, thereby affecting their participation in the WCD and TD with techniques. It needs to be acknowledged, however, that the technique of calling on students by name could have generated equal participation, at least for this teacher in this particular class, a finding supported by Aukrust (2008).

**Silent student participation.** It was found that in the WCD without techniques, the silent students took an average of about one quarter the average number of turns taken by all the students together (see *Figure 4.12*). This represents well under the cut-off mark for silence, defined as taking fewer than half the average number of turns. In contrast, for the WCD with techniques, the silent students took almost two thirds the average number of turns. This is well above the cut-off mark for silence. Even more dramatic, for the TD with techniques, the silent students took 78%

of the average number of turns, or almost four fifths. This is again, well above the cut-off mark for silence, although still below the average. Clearly, these findings suggest that the techniques of structure and preparation might be very successful in equalizing the participation of silent students when transferred to other situations as well.

***Silent students and gender.*** A clear difference was found in the participation of silent students by gender in the WCD and TD with techniques (see *Figure 4.12*). This finding suggests that TD is a context that generates more participation from silent male students than WCD. In contrast, the participation of silent female students showed no particular difference between WCD and TD. This suggests that male students may prefer the TD context over the WCD context.

Findings from the student questionnaire (see *Figure 4.19*) provide more insight into this issue. In fact, many more males stated that they did enjoy the context of team debate (TD) more than that of whole class discussion (WCD). In contrast, although more females also preferred the TD context over that of WCD, the margin of difference was much lower. In addition, it was found that many more male students stated that they were more comfortable speaking in the TD context than in that of the WCD. In clear contrast, the female students did not show a difference in which context they felt more comfortable speaking in. This could explain the difference in degree of change in silent student participation by gender.

The explanations given by students as to why they enjoyed or felt more comfortable in one speaking context over the other may provide further explanation for this gender difference (see *Figure 4.20*). Male reasons for preferring the TD related most often to enjoying the debate style of interaction, or the competitive nature of TD. One male student explained it clearly: "Because I love competition." These statements support the findings of Edelsky (1981) and Abu-Haidhar (2004), that males



prefer the competitive style of talk generated by TD, and could explain why the silent male student participation did not increase as considerably in the WCD with techniques as it did in the TD with techniques.

In contrast, female reasons for preferring the TD related partly to the chance it provides for participation by all students. This suggests that some of the lack of participation by female students may be attributable to their feeling that they do not have a chance to participate. In fact, the particularly insightful explanation by one female student that “[in the TD] everyone have the right to give his opinion” supports this possibility, as do the findings of past research conducted by Norton (1995) and Kelly (1998). The findings of the video-recorded data suggest that when silent female students are given the linguistic space to speak, they take it, in almost all cases.

The implications of this are that other techniques might be more effective in increasing silent male student participation in the WCD speaking context, which supports the theory posed in the introduction that silent female students and silent male students may need to be treated differently, because in some cases they may be silent for different reasons. Further, these findings suggest that comfort level with a particular type of context may be a strong predictor of participation.

***One silent female student.*** Although participation increased for almost all silent students in the WCD and TD with techniques, one silent female student showed no change at all (see *Figure 4.13*). In reviewing the recordings of this class, it was found that on three occasions, other students laughed at her attempts to contribute to the discussion. This suggests that there was a chilly classroom climate (Allan & Madden, 2006) for this particular student, such that she did not feel welcome to participate. This climate likely increased her peer-anxiety level to an extent that it negatively affected her participation, as suggested by Donovan & MacIntyre (2004).

This explanation is supported by numerous other studies (e.g. Baxter, 2006; Hirst, 2007; Madhok, 1992). In other words, the silence of this particular female student may have been constructed by the classroom situation, a conclusion also suggested by Jule (2004) in her in-depth case-study of one silent female student. Indeed several students in the present study said that they choose not to participate at times because they are embarrassed, lack confidence, or fear others will laugh at them. The implication of this for the classroom is that the chilly climate, where it exists, needs to be addressed. Students, especially female students, have been found to be negatively affected by a negative emotional classroom climate (e.g. Fassinger, 1995). At the very least, teachers should be made aware of this issue and its negative impact on participation, so that they might take a more proactive role in its elimination.

**Turn length.** Both the WCD and TD with techniques appeared to generate more long turns than the WCD without techniques (see *Figure 4.14*). This finding suggests that the techniques of structure and preparation used to equalize participation have the added benefit of increasing the number of long turns taken compared to short turns. The implications of this for the language classroom are of tremendous import because research has shown that long turns have a greater positive impact on learners' interlanguage (Doughty & Long, 2003; Swain, 2005), since longer turns increase the negotiation of meaning necessary for SLA to take place, as students struggle to produce comprehensible language. Further, it was also found that 61% of the female students took fewer than half the class average number of long turns in the first two WCD sessions without techniques, where there was already a fewer total number of long turns taken compared to short turns. In contrast, the participation of almost all of the silent females increased to more than half the average number of long turns for the two sessions where techniques were used. This implies that silent female student

participation might be affected more dramatically by the techniques than the participation of any other students, indicating that these techniques may be especially effective for silent female students.

**Speech time and its relationship to participation.** The average speech time ranged widely across the five classes (see *Figure 4.16*). The reason for this is unclear. It could be that Teacher 1 set up the debate in a more formal manner and waited for each student to fully complete their turn. They were also reminded on several occasions that they had a full minute to speak. It was noted that in some of the classes, the teacher interrupted the speaker before they had clearly finished their turn. Therefore, it is difficult to use the average speech time of all five classes together as a mark against which to compare individual students. Rather, the average speech time for each class was used as the mark instead. It was found that 12 out of the 14 silent students participating in the TD were close to the average speech time for their classes. Only 2 of the silent students took fewer than half the average speech time, and can therefore be labeled still silent. Very little difference was found in the average speech time of male students versus female students. This suggests that gender does not predict the amount of time a speaker might speak, at least when given a 1 minute time limit. To conclude, the findings for silent students and speech time suggest that most silent students will participate equally when giving a speech during a TD with techniques being used. This implies that TD with techniques is a suitable context for generating more equal participation.

### **Which Techniques Worked and Why?**

Since the various interventions of preparation and structure were used together during the study, the recorded data could provide very little insight into which technique might have worked better than another. Here data from the student and

teacher questionnaires can provide possible answers. Interestingly, student perceptions differed considerably by gender, and also differed somewhat from teacher perceptions.

It was found that the three techniques of: watching/reading something about a topic prior to speaking; providing time to plan and prepare to speak; and having students work in small groups prior to speaking, were all very important techniques affecting student participation, according to student statements (see *Figure 4.21*). In contrast, the technique of requiring students to speak was found effective by very few students, although several teachers stated that they felt this was a very effective technique. The results of the team debate (TD) analysis show that in fact being required to speak did relate to increased participation. One teacher actually commented on the fact that this technique is one that he uses regularly with his less-participating students, and which he has found to be very effective. However, the fact that students did not perceive this technique as being very useful could be because they do not *like* this technique. This suggests that the technique of calling on students directly by name might need to be approached with caution. It may be important to consider student preference in techniques being employed, since preference might affect student participation in other ways, such as in depth of contributions made, for example, or in their motivation.

**Difference by gender.** When students were asked which of the four techniques helped the most, there was a clear difference in response by gender (see *Figure 4.22*). The finding that many more female students stated that they thought watching/reading something about the topic prior to speaking increased their participation most, supports the findings of Kelly (1988) who found that females were most involved in reading classes. The implication of this gender difference is that, as suggested in the

introduction to the present study, male and female students may respond differently to different techniques used to increase their participation. The findings suggest that a teacher should use a variety of techniques in order to maximize equal participation. That is to say, where one technique might be effective in increasing the participation of one student, another technique might be more effective for another student.

**Other factors.** Students commented on several additional factors that were important to them in engaging their participation (see Table 4.2). Many students, especially female students, mentioned the importance of the topic being interesting, a finding also noted by Shehadeh (1999). Many also stated that they participate when they have an opinion to share. These findings imply that the topic needs to be chosen carefully to match student interests, and additionally be relevant to their lives (e.g. Brown, 2001; Dornyei, 2005). This will more likely generate participation because students will be interested and have more likely already developed their views on an issue that relates to them in some way.

A number of students also stated that the activities were an important factor in causing them to participate. Unfortunately, most of the students did not elaborate on this. However, it seems clear that the activities need to be chosen carefully to maximize participation. Perhaps some of the activities used in the study, such as group work, and well-structured speaking activities could meet this end, as suggested by past research (e.g. Ur, 1981; Dornyei, 2005).

Finally, an interesting factor related to motivation. A number of students of both genders stated that they were motivated to participate in order to improve their English, and others said they were motivated to participate in order to achieve high grades. This finding on the external motivation of achieving high grades suggest that for some students, attaching a grade to participation might cause them to participate

more.

**Conclusions on techniques.** To conclude, the wide-range in response to which techniques the teachers and students thought were most useful in increasing student participation further lends support to the theory that *several* techniques used together would likely be more effective in equalizing classroom participation than the use of just one.

### **Study Limitations**

There were a number of limitations noted to the present study, the most important of which are discussed here. First of all, since the study was exploratory and qualitative in nature, it cannot confirm findings of past studies, nor make any strong conclusions. Its purpose is confined to making suggestions, and supporting the findings of past studies. In addition, the study looked at several techniques together, so it is difficult to determine which, if any, might have been more effective than others.

Second, since the teacher of each class was different, these differences may have affected the results, perhaps significantly, such as in the case of Class 4, where equal participation decreased in the lessons where techniques were employed. Teachers differed by gender, age, experience, and in classroom manner. Some appeared to use a more teacher-led style in their running of the classroom, for example. Most notably, some teachers used the technique of calling on students directly by name during the first two sessions where no interventions were implemented, which may have caused some silent students to speak when they might not have otherwise. In fact, one teacher stated that he specifically uses this technique to encourage silent students to participate. The study did not control for this technique

in the first two recordings, in that responses to teacher calls were not excluded from the total number of turns taken. This could have affected the identification of silent, average and dominant students. Further, in relation to the teachers, it was noticed that some of the teachers did not implement the lesson plans completely as directed. Some called on students by name, although directions stipulated that they should not, since this was not a technique being explored. One recording, that of 3a, had to be discounted entirely because some of the teachers did not implement the technique of giving students time to prepare to speak, whereas others did. Therefore, the lessons were not comparable.

A third limitation related to the video recording. In some of the recordings, not all of the students were visible, and so it was difficult to distinguish who was speaking at times. This could have affected the results. However, the effects of this limitation could be minimal since the inter-rater reliability was quite high. Additionally, since only the whole class speaking activities were recorded, it was difficult to know to what extent the teachers implemented the techniques of group preparation. In hindsight, it would have been useful to record the whole lessons.

A fourth limitation identified relates to absent students. A very high incidence of absence was found across the 25 recorded lessons. This rendered the data somewhat incomplete. This is of special import in regards to silent female students since these students were absent even more often than other students. It could be that these students were more extreme cases of silence, and might have therefore been silent in the lessons with techniques. It would have been interesting to see how these students would have behaved had they been present. However, due to time and resource constraints, it was not possible to wait for lessons where all students were present in order to implement the techniques. In addition, demographic information

pertaining to student educational and social background was not collected. This might also have related to silence in some way, for example that of the female students wearing head scarves. In hindsight, it is clear that this information could have enriched the findings of the study.

The final, and perhaps most important limitation noted relates to the lack of qualitative analysis of contributions made. Contributions were not analyzed for level of depth or relevance, which might have shown differences by gender. It could be, for example, that an overly long turn contained little substance or relevance to the topic being discussed compared to a moderately long turn. Further, interruptions and topic change, both strong conversational dominance techniques, were not analyzed. This type of information could have provided more insight into the nature of male and female talk in the classroom, which may have impacted on participation levels of some students.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Due to the exploratory nature of the present study, findings can provide many important suggestions for possible future research. The most important suggestions are discussed here.

First of all, it would be useful for future research to look at each individual technique to equalize participation on its own. Findings from the student questionnaire suggest that there may be a strong difference by gender in preference for one technique over another. Future research might identify which techniques, if any, work better for increasing silent student participation by gender.

The present study suggests that there may be a relationship between female student dress and silence. If female students wearing head scarves are much more likely to be silent than other female students, studies looking into this could attempt to



identify reasons for this silence, for example a link between dress and beliefs about roles of men and women, or a link between silence and educational and/or social background. Should reasons be identified, these reasons might be addressed and positively impact the participation of these silent female students.

Another area that might be explored is the reason for silent female students' apparent tendency to be absent. This could be done in a follow up study collecting demographic information from the students who participated in the study, which could then be compared to the original findings on individual participation. Further, each individual silent student could be interviewed, or observed in an ethnographic type study to gain richer insight into the nature of their silence. If it is found that absence is caused by speaking anxiety due to fear of peer judgment, the intervention studied by Wilkins (2008) of generating a more positive emotional environment through community building activities, might be tested in the context of the present study.

In the case of Class 4, where the teacher relied heavily on calling on students by name to generate participation, this technique appeared to be effective, at least in this particular case. However, due the small class size, it is very difficult to place much weight on such a suggestion, although Aukrust's (2008) study does support it. A future study might look more carefully at this technique, to see how far it is effective in other situations, with other teachers and in other classrooms, especially given the fact that most of the students did not perceive this technique to be very effective.

The issue of silence and its relation to a chilly classroom climate is also an area worthy of future study. The female student in Class 4 who faced laughter from her peers at several of her attempts to contribute to the discussion appeared to be very much affected by this negative classroom climate, in that unlike all the other students, she showed no change at all in her participation levels during the lessons using

techniques. Future research could address this issue, perhaps looking at techniques of student and teacher awareness raising as possible interventions.

Finally, the present study was limited to looking only at number and length of turns taken. Future research might look much more at the quality and type of contributions made in relation to silent students and gender. Cognitively rich contributions have been linked to the promotion of SLA (e.g. Doughty & Long, 2003). For example, if a particular technique promotes equal participation in terms of higher level of cognitive contribution, then this technique would be more effective than another technique that only increases equal participation by number of contributions. Further, if it is shown that male students tend to interrupt and change the topic more often than female students, this behavior might have impacted on participation levels of silent students. This is more likely with silent female students in particular, since research has shown that dominant behaviors such as interruption are more often employed by male students with female students than with other male students. Future research could investigate this issue, and perhaps find techniques to reduce these conversational dominance behaviors, which might impact on participation levels of other students.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the present study support the findings of past research that about one third of the students in a given classroom are silent (Jones & Gerig, 1994). The present study suggests that this is true in the Egyptian EFL college classroom as well, since silent students were identified in all five classes. In addition, the results of the present study also support the findings of Jones and Wheatley (1990), Jule (2001), and Sunderland (1998), that more silent students tend to be female than male. However, the margin may not be as large as these studies have found, and may be

related to class size. Interestingly, in the Egyptian EFL college classroom context, it could be that this gap relates to educational or social background, in that the female students wearing head scarves considerably skewed the results. The issue of female student dress, then, warrants further research.

Although the results of the present study do suggest that Egyptian female EFL college students may be at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to classroom participation, they also suggest that their participation can be increased, perhaps dramatically, by introducing the techniques of preparation and structure into the whole class speaking activity. The finding that the participation of silent students increased during whole class discussion (WCD) and team debate (TD) with these techniques supports the theory postulated by Ellis (2008) and Dornyei (2009) that IDs, such as silence, need not be considered fixed traits. That is to say, silent students are not necessarily silent in all contexts (Townsend, 1998). It should be the duty of the teacher, then, to find those interventions that can increase their participation. The findings of the present study strongly suggest that the techniques of preparation and structure are two such effective interventions. They also suggest that direct invitation to speak may be another, as found by Aukrust (2008) and Whyte (1984).

Finally, the results of the student questionnaire suggest that, as put forth in the introduction, silent female students may need to be treated differently from silent male students, in regards to the techniques employed to increase their participation. To conclude, the results of the present study are very promising, in that they suggest that it is possible for teachers, through the use of several techniques, such as preparation and structure, to generate more equal participation in their EFL classrooms.

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**APPENDIX A: Group Worksheet 1**

Together summarize the main arguments of the two speakers you listened to. Take turns to be the secretary so that every person has a chance to write.

Arguments For	Arguments Against

**Group opinions about women’s right to choose a marriage partner**

Discuss what you think about women’s right to choose a marriage partner. Write your ideas in note form here.

Arguments For	Arguments Against

**Group’s Final Consensus?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: Group Worksheet 2

Debate proposition: \_\_\_\_\_

For or Against: \_\_\_\_\_

Brainstorm your arguments for and against. Write all ideas without judging now, in note form.

For	Against

Now sort through your arguments, choosing what you will include, and organize them in logical sequence here. Add more as needed. Then divide up the points by speaker.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Next, go through the possible arguments the opposing team might use, as listed in your chart above. What will you say to each argument? Now prepare your individual speeches.

## APPENDIX C: Teacher Lesson Plans

### Instructions for Lesson 1

#### Listening and Whole Class Discussion

	What to do	Time	Materials / Notes
	<p>a. Briefly explain students will watch a debate on women’s right to choose a marriage partner. Allow them 2 min. to write down what they think the speakers might say – have them try to think of 2 points for and 2 against.</p> <p>b. Make a 2-column chart on the board of “For” and “Against” and invite students to share their ideas of what the speakers might say. This will be video-recorded. Call only on students who raise their hands. Try to look at all the students and give pauses to wait for students to raise hands. Write their suggestions in note form under the 2 columns.</p>	10 min.	<p>White board and board marker</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*Video Recording*</p>
	<p>a. Have students watch the video-clip of the first 2 speakers of the debate. Ask them to take notes in chart form of points for and against the motion, as you did on the board.</p>	10 min.	Student note books / pieces of paper
	<p>a. Organize students into groups of 3 or 4, trying to ensure a mix by gender, and hand out the group worksheet. Have each student in the group use a different color pen or pencil.</p> <p>b. Explain that they are to work together to summarize the main points of the debate. Students take turns being the secretary, each student writing one point with help from their group and then giving the worksheet to the next student to write. This is a round table cooperative learning structure.</p> <p>c. Next, the group should discuss their own opinions about the motion, trying to reach a conclusion.</p>	15 min.	Group worksheet and copy of Doha debate video clip
	<p>a. This will be video recorded. Explain that each group is to present opinions of their group. Add their points to the board. Once all the points are written on the board, explain that they will now discuss the motion, based on the opinions each group had. Try to have each group contribute, but only call on hand raisers, and do not put any one individual on the spot.</p>	10 min.	<p>White board and board marker</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*Video Recording*</p>

## Instructions for Lesson 2

### Team Debate

	What to do	Time	Materials / Notes
	<p>a. Explain that students are going to debate two motions. Divide students into 4 groups, trying to ensure a mix by gender. Two groups will debate one motion and two groups the other. Hand out group worksheets. Assign each group “For” or “Against” one of the motions. The motions are “Couples should date before marriage” and “Early marriage is a good idea.” Make sure they understand the motion and what they need to argue. Explain that each student will have to give a one-minute speech for their team, similar to the debate they watched. They will also have a chance for free rebuttal after the speeches are all completed.</p> <p>b. Have each group brainstorm their ideas for their argument, using the worksheet to record. Then have them organize the points they want to argue, and divide up the arguments among the team.</p> <p>c. They should also try to think of the counter-arguments and what they might say to refute these, using the worksheet to record their ideas.</p> <p>d. Allow students 2-3 minutes to prepare for their speeches.</p>	15 min.	Group worksheet
	<p>a. Set up the desks to run the debates. You will play the moderator role. Assign someone from the audience to be time-keeper. Inform the audience that they should make notes on the arguments for and against.</p> <p>b. Begin the first debate. This will be video-recorded. Allow each student 1 min. for their speech. They may go over by a maximum of 10 seconds. After each speech, ask the speaker one clarifying question.</p> <p>c. Once all the speeches are completed, allow free rebuttal – i.e. any speaker may ask any speaker from the opposing team a question, or voice a concern. The total debate should not go over 18 min.</p>	20 min.	*Video Recording*
	<p>a. Repeat the process for the second debate. This will be video-recorded.</p>	20 min.	*Video Recording*
	<p>a. Optionally, have students write up their opinion about the debate they watched, using their notes to help them. This is a homework assignment.</p>		

## APPENDIX D: Consent Forms

### Participant Information Statement

The purpose of this research project **Equalizing classroom participation: Public speaking contexts in the Egyptian EFL context** is to explore the use of group preparation and activity structure for public speaking activities and their relationship to classroom participation, in terms of talk time, hand-raising, anxiety, gender, and number of turns. The purpose of the study is to find ways to equalize student participation in whole class speaking activities. Video and audio recordings and student and instructor questionnaires will be used. The research project will last for about four one-hour lessons, and will include approximately 35 participants.

All copies of notations, video, audio files and questionnaires will be given code numbers to maintain anonymity. The materials will be stored in a secure place and will be destroyed after seven years. The information obtained will be used in a Master's thesis, conference research papers and/or journal articles and participants will not be identified by name. Results will be available after the study is completed.

If at any time a participant wishes to withdraw from the project, they may do so without penalty or prejudice. Questions about the research, participant rights or research-related injuries should be directed to the principal investigator, Phyllis Wachob, at 2615-1923.

If participants have any complaints in relation to this research project, they may contact Graham Harman, Chair of the IRB at [gharman@aucegypt.edu](mailto:gharman@aucegypt.edu)

## Consent Form

I give my consent to participate in the **Equalizing classroom participation: Public speaking contexts in the Egyptian EFL context** project.

I understand that my privacy will be maintained.

I understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty or prejudice and I may contact the principal investigator Phyllis Wachob at 2615-1923.

I understand that if I have any complaints, I may contact Graham Harman, Chair of the IRB at [gharman@aucegypt.edu](mailto:gharman@aucegypt.edu)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_





8. Other comments about class participation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX F: Teacher Questionnaire**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who are the least participating students in your class? List all:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why do you think they do not participate? Comment on each less-participating student in detail if possible. (Use back if needed)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. a. Did either of the two sessions help the less-participating students speak out? (Circle all that apply)

1. Whole class discussion (Lesson 1)      2. Team debate (Lesson 2)

b. Did one of the two help more? Which? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Was there a difference by gender in the participation of the less-participating students within the two lessons? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think made the most difference, if any, in helping these students to speak out? (Tick up to 3)

a. Providing more structure to activities \_\_\_\_\_

b. Using worksheets to prepare \_\_\_\_\_

c. Watching or reading something about the topic first \_\_\_\_\_

d. Having a chance to discuss the topic in smaller groups first \_\_\_\_\_

e. Requiring that everyone speak (e.g. one minute in the debate speech) \_\_\_\_\_

f. The controversial nature of the topics \_\_\_\_\_

g. The type of public speaking context (e.g. class discussion vs debate) \_\_\_\_\_

h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Other comments on the issue of class participation during the sessions?

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