



# Classroom Participation of Students with Hard of Hearing in Inclusive English Language Class

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how hard-of-hearing students at Ambo Addis Ketema Primary School participated in an inclusive English language class. The participants' experiences with the difficulties involved in their participation in the school's EFL classes were investigated using a qualitative research technique and a case study design. Seven students who have hearing impairments, two English teachers, five classmates without disabilities, a special education teacher, and a supervisor. Generally, seven people were chosen using the purposive sampling approach. Semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions, and observation were utilized as the data gathering methods to ensure that the study's goal was achieved. According to the study questions, a thematic analysis of the datasets was conducted. This led to the conclusion that hearing-impaired students did not engage effectively in class because they did not receive enough attention. This resulted from a dearth of teaching aids and materials, such as altered textbooks, magnifying glasses, unpleasant classroom environments, and inexperienced teachers.

**Key words:** Classroom Participation, hard of hearing, Inclusive.

**DOI Number:** 10.14704/nq.2021.19.9.NQ21149

**NeuroQuantology 2021; 19(9):159-167**

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## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a continuous process of educational transformation and a clear set of equity indicators UNESCO (2017), It starts with the premise that all children have a right to be in the same learning environment. Systems are in place to track the presence, involvement, and progress of all students within the educational system, which is one way inclusive education may be judged to be effective (UNESCO 2017). This is addressed when educational institutions like schools and other learning facilities develop plans to promote the attendance, involvement, and academic success of all local students.

Although it is essential for all learners' academic performance in that it allows them to practice all language skills, integrating students' involvement in classes is one of the biggest issues facing English instructors today. In line

with this, stated that participation is defined as finishing the assigned readings, asking questions about any topics covered in the readings or discussions that require clarification or expansion, offering ideas and responses, listening to others' ideas and responses, paying attention and displaying respect to the teacher and other students in the classroom.

Although they are in an inclusive classroom setting, kids with hearing impairments struggle to participate in class activities and are not given enough attention by their teachers, according to findings from the literature. For instance, Kebede (2015) said that students with residual eyesight who attend their classes in conventional schools constantly gripe that their professors don't pay them enough attention or even notice they're even there.



Learning English could make it possible for pupils to engage completely in their education and succeed in whatever else they study. The current study made an effort to close this gap by looking at the difficulties poor vision and hard of hearing students encounter when participating in EFL classes, as well as the effects this has on their academic performance. Based on this, the study responds to the following research inquiries:

1. How is classroom participation of students with hard of hearing in inclusive English reading lessons?
2. What are the challenges of teaching students with hard of hearing in inclusive EFL class?

The research generally aimed at exploring challenges in classroom participation of students with hard of hearing in inclusive English Language (EFL) classes.

## **2. General objectives**

The overall goal of the research is to examine barriers to classroom participation for students who are hard of hearing and/or low vision in inclusive English language (EFL) classrooms.

## **3. Significance of the Study**

It is intended that the study would be useful in addressing the issues that students with various impairments experience and in providing guidance for what needs to be done in relation to the academic aspects indicated below.

The study's first goal is to assist teachers, managers, education specialists, and school administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about children with disabilities and the ways in which they might be integrated into regular courses.

The study's findings will also be beneficial to the town's educational institutions since they will assist instructors in developing plans for effectively teaching pupils who are hard of hearing, as well as in including all children with impairments in regular classrooms.

Thirdly, the results of this study will undoubtedly be important in shedding light on how to decrease obstacles to inclusive education and address how to build a truly

inclusive society for instructors, non-disabled students, and the whole school community.

The study's results could also serve as a springboard for more research by other curious academics who desire to investigate the topic further.

## **4. Research Methodology**

This analysis of research aim was to investigate the difficulties hearing-impaired students with participation in inclusive EFL lessons at Ambo Addis Ketema Primary School face. A case study research design with a qualitative research technique was used to collect information for the study's success, and the analysis's findings were further elaborated by words and sentences. This is justified by the fact that a case study. The reader can better understand the researcher's argument by using a qualitative technique (Widdowson, 2011). The research was conducted all at once and was mostly based on the involvement of students who have hearing impairments in inclusive English language classes.

### **4.1. Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Ambo Addis Ketema Primary School had 3556 students enrolled when the study was being conducted. One of the town's ten primary schools, Ambo Addis Ketema Primary School, was specifically chosen for this study based on data supplied by the Ambo Town Education Office describing its status and key services.

providing in education to students with various impairments, and it attempted to conduct inclusive education with a greater number of students (49 children). Additionally, the school was the first to open in Ambo Town and has a history of around 44 years as a primary school.

Purposive sampling was used in this study since it allowed us to choose the sample based on the study's goal. The judgmental sampling method, also known as purposive sampling, involves selecting study participants on purpose based on the unique personal characteristics they are assumed to have. Finding people that can and are willing to provide information because of their knowledge or experience is beneficial

(Nick Ellison, 2010). As a result, the purposive sampling approach was used to pick each participant for the interview and the focus group discussions.

In order to acquire relevant data and important information, five students with hard of hearing (SWHH) from grades 6 to 8 were chosen for focus group discussions (FGDs) based on their academic achievement in the first semester (high, medium, and poor achievers). Due to the fact that the classroom observation took place in an English Language class and two English instructors from the same grades were chosen for semi-structured interviews, it was assumed that they would have better knowledge of the target children.

Due to their interest in the whole range of educational support provided to the targeted kids, the semi-structured interviews with the special needs teacher and supervisor were both chosen. To reflect how they and other students feel about their impaired peers, five non-disabled peer students who are close friends were chosen for FGDs. The sample size of qualitative research is strongly influenced by theoretical data saturation with regard to

overloaded data, particularly at a moment during the data collecting stage where new Participants no longer provide fresh data or new insights to the research questions.

#### 4.2 Data Collection Instruments

In social research, a researcher gathers data via interviewing subjects, observing subjects, and studying documents (Flick, 2015). Consequently, a qualitative research technique and a case study were used in the study.

Focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, and uninvolved observations were all used in the study observation to increase its veracity and dependability. The use of audio recording and note-taking during the data collection in the research sessions was based on the informants' consent.

#### 4.3 Data analysis and interpretation

Participants in the study included a principal of the school, a teacher of SNIE, a supervisor, two English instructors, five pupils, five of whom were hard-of-hearing, and the data analysis, which was preceded by demographic data on the study's participants.

**Table-1 School Staff and Principal Participants in Semi-structured Interview**

Code	Sex	Age	Educ. Back ground	Work experience	position
T1	F	30-35	Degree in Eng. Lan	10	Teacher
T2	M	35-40	Degree in Eng. Lan	12	Teacher
SNE1	F	30-35	Degree in SNE	10	Assistant Teacher
SVR	M	35-40	Degree in Geography	14	Supervisor
SP	M	35-40	Degree in Physics	15	School Principal

All the participants in the table above took part in the study and interviewed differently. The two English teachers have 10 to 12 work experience, so they are well experienced in the profession and could give reliable information

about the target students although they haven't got any training concerning special need education. All other participants know little about special education except the SNIE teacher.

**Table-2 Hard-of-Hearing Students (SWHH) Participants in FGDs**

Code	Sex	Age	Educ. Status	Type of Disability
SWHH1	F	14-16	Grade 6 student	SWHH
SWHH2	F	14-16	Grade 6 student	SWHH
SWHH3	M	15-17	Grade 6 student	SWHH
SWHH4	M	15-17	Grade 6 student	SWHH
SWHH5	M	14-16	Grade 7 student	SWHH



The inclusion of hard-of-hearing students in an English listening session was a key issue, as was indicated in the study's purpose. Therefore, as shown in the table above, every participant who took part in the focus group talks is a student who has hearing loss.

(SWHH) at Ambo Addis Ketema Primary School in grades 6-7. They ranged in age from 14 to 15 and 17 respectively. Four of them, as shown in the table, were in grade 6, while the only one who could provide sufficient information to respond to the questions posed during the focus group discussions was in grade 7.

**Table-3 Students without Disability Participants in FGDs**

Code	Sex	Age	Educ. Status	Relationship
SWO1	F	14-17	Grade 8 student	Friend
SWO2	M	15-17	Grade 8 student	Friend
SWO3	M	14-16	Grade 7 student	Friend
SWO4	M	14-16	Grade 6 student	Friend
SWO5	F	13-15	Grade 6 student	Friend

SWHH had close friendships with five of his peers who were not impaired and who were chosen for FGDs. They were students in grades 6 through 8. As can be seen from the table, they were expected to provide important information on hard-of-hearing kids who were enrolled in the same grades and classes as them because they were old enough and close friends for SWHH.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered from different respondents through semi-structured interview, focus group discussion and observation were interpreted in respect of the categories dealing with the basic research questions. Although they were presented to different respondents during data collection, they are organized in the way they show the objectives of the study. Therefore, Based on the basic research questions and responses from the participants, the researcher has developed four main extensive themes and other subcategories to make the findings clear and comprehensive, and presented the data by merging the collected information from the participants through the three tools. The first two themes have been amalgamated in order to avoid redundancy as their subcategories are the same. In the presentation of the data, „inverted commas“ (“...”) have been used to show the actual words of the interviewees and

discussants, but where their speech is long, it has been italicized. The themes are:

- Classroom participation of students with hard-of-hearing (SWHH) in inclusive English Language listening lessons:
- Classroom atmosphere for SWHH
- Feeling of SWHH about learning with hearing peers
- Inaccessibility of adapted learning materials for SWHH

#### 4.5 Classroom Participation of SWHH in Inclusive English Listening Lessons

The themes mentioned above have been treated with discussion by manipulating the three data instruments aforementioned. In line with this, different responses were obtained from different participants who took part in interviews and focus group discussions including classroom observations.

#### 4.6 Classroom atmosphere for SWHH

When discussing the situation of SWHH's passive or active involvement in various activities, the term "classroom environment" refers to a fascinating or stimulating mood that is distinctive of the class. Based on this, the two English instructors offered the following suggestions in their semi-structured interview in response to the topic of whether SWLV had



equal involvement in all activities done in the classroom with sighted peer students.

T1: said, "To some extent, but not satisfactorily. "He continued: You know! I think this is because most learning materials are given in written form, yet these students have some problems to read the print and written notes from the chalkboard and even from the textbook since it is not adapted and modified. Similarly,

T2: suggested: If the students regularly use magnifying eyeglasses and are given adapted reading materials, they can read and write what they are told to do and participate in different activities equitably in the class, but they sometimes get lost their magnifying eyeglasses and come to school for nothing good. Therefore, I don't think that they equally participate with their sighted peer students. In addition, the teachers were asked how often they motivate SWLV to participate in reading and writing activities in the class. Based on this, they did not deny that motivation is nothing without the availability of necessary learning materials, and both teachers have almost the same ideas that they face difficulty to get along with SWLV to involve them doing class activities like reading and writing. For instance, T1 said: Both reading and writing are skills done if only the person can identify the letters/words, but you know, these students cannot clearly see and read the printed materials since they are not adapted the way SWLV are able to read or write. As a result, there is no ground to step on for such motivation. T2 also shared the same idea and he postulated: Motivation is meaningful if there is a way of doing something. Nonetheless, these students do not have adapted learning materials to learn effectively like their peer sighted students, therefore, motivating them is difficult. For the same question raised for sighted peers in their focus group discussions, they suggested as follows:

SWO1: "It is rare to see them participating in class activities."

SWO2: "Somewhat!"

With regard to the condition of classroom and active/passive participation of SWHH in the class, for the question about if hard-of-hearing

students have equal participation in all activities done in the classroom with non-disabled peers, according to the data obtained from semi-structured interview, the two English teachers reflected their ideas as follows:

T1 suggested: As to me, meaning: they do not equally participate with non-disabled peer students. You know, these students are people with minority group, and since they have hearing problem, they may not get each activity clear which is done by the teacher and even by their hearing peers, and we teachers may not pay attention to them as we all focus on covering the portion, and as a result, I don't think that hard-of-hearing students are active participant as their hearing peers in the class. In addition,

T2 raised ideas about the unwillingness of all students including no-disabled that they do not participate in class activities comparing with the challenges hard-of-hearing students face in their education.

He said: T2: As you know nowadays, leave alone SWHH, even the non-disabled students themselves is not this much willing to participate actively in the class. I'm afraid that hard-of-hearing students may not clearly hear what teachers teach due to the fact that there is much noise in the class, and therefore, you can judge how much they can participate in all activities. For the same question about participation of SWHH in the class raised for hearing peers in their focus group discussions, they reflected their ideas as follows:

SWO1: "They rarely participate especially when the teacher goes nearby and call their name to answer some questions."

SWO2: "I don not think they clearly hear what the teacher says, so I have not noticed them participate in the class."

SWO3: "Hmm! I have no idea about it."

SWO4: "You know! Most of the time the class is too noisy, so I do not think they can hear what is said." He added, "I hear from the SWHH themselves as I am a friend of them that they complain about the difficulty they face in the class regarding to the absence of equal participation with non-disabled peer students."



In their FGDs, SWHH themselves suggested the same ideas as mentioned above by different participants about the poorness of their participation in the class. SWHH1: "By the way, I'm very happy to tell you this!" "Everybody knows that the class is very noisy, and I doubt that if the non-disabled students themselves can hear each other for better understanding, so, it is difficult to say that we SWHH participate like other hearing peer students because of our hearing problem." SWHH2: "It depends! Some teachers say loudly, but some others are not heard of what they say in their explanation of the lesson, so our participation is..." During the observation session, it was noticed by the researcher that what all the participants suggested seem to be true. For example, the class was really noisy, attention was not given to the students from the teacher, the students' hearing problem was not considered, and the motivation given to them was also less to enable them to participate in any activities. Therefore, it is possible to say that their participation is poor as a whole.

#### **4.7 Feelings of SWHH about Learning with hearing peers**

Hard-of-hearing students were also asked to suggest their feelings about learning with their hearing peers, and their suggestions are presented below:

SWHH1: "I am always in trouble when a group or pair work is given because students discuss points with smooth voice which is difficult to hear and therefore, I do nothing in group or pair work; this causes me to be hopeless."

SWHH2: Some students usually touch me on my shoulder from the back of my seat, and when I get back to talk to, the teacher gets angry with me, and even punishes me. Consequently, I am sad and absent from the class

In addition to this, hearing peer students were asked in their FGDs what they feel about the presence of CWDs in their classroom to learn together. They suggested their ideas as follows:

SWO1: "Nothing I feel, but I doubt that they clearly hear what is said by the teacher."

SWO2: "When they do not hear clearly what is said, some students laugh at them, and as a friend of them I feel sad; otherwise, I am happy to learn with them."

SWO3: "Most of the time they remain at the same desk when we are given some activities to do as a group work; this makes me worry about them."

SWO4: "I do not have idea about it, but what suggested above by friends seem to be true." During the observation sessions, it was also noticed that hard-of-hearing students were not happy and did not participate in any activities in the classroom since the class was noisy and also in group work, they were not doing with the hearing peers, but remained at their desk.

#### **4.8 Inaccessibility of Adapted Learning Materials**

In relation to the above idea, different interviewees and discussants were asked to reflect their ideas in both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Accordingly, the school principal was interviewed if necessary learning materials are available for SWHH to enable them to equally learn with their sighted peers. He hesitated and said, "I am not sure, you can check from their teacher, and we also have SNIE teacher for full information." "So! You can just check there."

With regard to SWHH, the students were also asked what services they are provided with differently from non-disabled peers in the school, and if adequate materials are available to help they learn equally with hearing peers. Based on this, all of them had the same idea that nothing is differently made for them to help learn in the provision of learning materials. For example:

SWHH1: "What I know is that the only my parents afford to buy school uniform, exercise books and others."

SWHH2: "What I do not deny is that there is a resource room in the school compound which is known to be reserved for children with disabilities."

SWHH3: "Nothing is different, but as my friend suggested, the only resource room we have" This was confirmed by the observation

conducted, and it was substantiated that both SWHH do not have the needed materials that help them attend their education equal to non-disabled peer students. In addition to this, the English teachers were interviewed the extent to which SWHH manage to hear their discussions from their seat.

T1: said, "Not effectively unless I go nearby and say somewhat."

T2: said, "I sometimes tell the next students to help them enlighten what I give the class as instruction." The same question was forwarded to the hard-of-hearing students the extent to which they can manage to hear the teachers when they discuss in the classes.

SWHH1: "Not sufficiently."

SWHH2: "Difficult to hear clearly, but I ask my friends for clarification after the class."

SWHH3: "It depends!" "If the teacher uses louder voice, it's ok for me." This was found to be true when the students were observed in the class during listening lessons that there was no attention paid to them from the teachers. There was no effort to be made to help the students hear clearly what the teacher say in explanation of the lesson. Such problem may result in all other subjects who could lead to poor classroom participation of students with disabilities like SWHH. Lastly, the question about the practice of educational inclusion of CWDs was asked if it is taking place in the school and classroom. As it has been reflected in different ideas above, there was no positive response from each of the participants. In addition, as it was observed, the class was with large size and intrusive; interpreters including necessary learning materials were not available; and there was less attention towards hard-of-hearing students. As a result, the class seemed to be exposed to poor participation for SWHH, less interaction of teacher with SWHH and less interaction among SWHH and hearing peer students, less individual attention for SWHH, poor instruction of teacher, and inappropriate classroom situation. These all could undermine them not to have quality education throughout their academic life.

#### **4.9 Challenges of Teaching English Language for SWHH in Inclusive Classroom**

The broad guiding concepts, pedagogy, and management techniques employed in classroom education are referred to as the teaching method. Appropriate teaching approaches have produced positive results for children with impairments.

The following queries are posed as a result of instruction referring to the act, method, or profession of teaching:

Issues look at how instructors manage inclusive classrooms, what teaching strategies they employ, and other things.

Regarding this, several concepts, including classroom observations, were brought up in semi-structured interview guide questions and focus group discussions.

#### **4.10 Suitability of Teaching Method**

The two English teachers were interviewed whether they have got training on how to teach in inclusive context. In their response to the forwarded question, they did not get any training in relation to the idea raised above.

T1: said, "I have not got any training regarding to education for children with disabilities except continuous professional development (CPD), which is common for all, and therefore, I normally teach the same way others teach."

T2: suggested the same idea that he has not got practical training in relation to disabilities. He said, "We teachers sometimes share experience to improve our teaching method, but no one raised about the way of teaching CWDs because all of us are unfamiliar to it." For another question they were asked about the way the teachers interact with each other and their students, they responded as follows:

T1: said, "I am interested to do with all other teachers and all students even with the disabled ones to solve the existing problems in education, but I am still in difficulty to get the way of supporting the students in education."

T2 also said: I am interested to communicate with all of the students (disabled and non-disabled) equally, but professionally, I don't know how much I fit. We teachers normally

collaborate to help all children academically, but nothing we do differently to support those with disabilities. The above idea was elaborated in the FGD guide questions of students with low vision that to what extent the teacher's teaching approach initiates both SWLV and SWHH to participate in every class activity. Based on this, SWHH suggested that there was no even initiation from the teachers in their teaching approach.

#### 4.11 Availability of Resources

The two English teachers and school principal participants were confused about the availability of suitable materials that help teachers teach and students learn efficiently dealing with diverse learning needs in their classrooms. This implies that they do not have the knowhow of inclusiveness. For instance, the school principle said, "As you know, the government equips all schools with necessary learning materials like textbooks and reference materials adequately, but for those of with disabilities, there is no clear instruction and provision made. Regarding to the services they are provided with differently from non-disabled peers in the school, SWHH reflected their ideas in their FGDs separately as follows: It seems that all the students with low vision almost had the same feelings.

SWHH1: "Hmm, what I know about having service provision differently from other non-disabled peers is that our teachers allow us to sit at the front side to help us hear what is said during explanation."

SWHH2: "The SNIE teacher often promises us to give us hearing aids to use in the classroom, but still we have not got."

SWHH3: "Most of the time, I expected motivation from the teachers, but it is..."

#### 5. Conclusions

The key objective of this study was to examine the difficulties that students with poor vision and hearing impairments have while trying to participate in inclusive English language programs.

The main findings of this study are that students with low vision and hard-of-hearing pupils have

found it challenging to participate as needed in inclusive EFL sessions. This is due to the difficulties they face in a variety of areas, such as the lack of teacher motivation, the poor quality of the learning materials offered to them, the lack of inclusion training for their instructors, the neglect of mainstreaming, and other issues.

All of these factors may cause children to participate less, which may cause them to perform poorly academically or even leave traditional institutions. It is possible to make an effort to get students with disabilities the learning materials they need to fully participate in class and to get along with peers who don't have disabilities in all educational activities, even though inclusive education is still in its infancy in schools and even across the nation. As a result, the school has to have all the prerequisites in place so that all of these children may fully participate in the educational process. In truth, given the difficulties SWHH encountered, this may not be a simple task.

#### 6. Recommendations

According to the findings, the researcher would like to suggest that the following issues be taken into account: For students with special needs to actively participate in the classroom and be placed in a real mainstream environment, teachers must create an individualized education plan (IEP). Additionally, teachers must be ready to use a variety of teaching techniques to include these students in all activities.

In order to offer the support required for children with special needs, the school should assure the availability of specialized learning materials and equipment by designating a particular budget and stocking the library and resource room with the appropriate resources. Teachers must give special consideration to pupils with special needs in the classroom and during testing and assessment procedures, allotting extra time and altering or adapting materials as necessary.



In order to enhance mainstream education and support students with disabilities in participating in all activities in the classroom and within the mainstream environment, school administrators must work with the Woreda Office of Education.

Additionally, school administrators must take a leading role in working with NGOs to demand an adequate budget allocation for the provision of necessary educational materials, as well as to request that the Ministry of Education review the curriculum in order to adapt educational materials for students with low vision and hearing to meet their needs, and to designate sign language interpreters for hard-of-hearing students so that they can participate equally with non-disabled peers.

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