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TEACHER ELICITATION STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION

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Abstract. This conceptual study examines how teacher elicitation strategies shape student participation in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. Drawing on research on classroom interaction, questioning, wait-time, scaffolding, contingent follow-up, and teacher feedback, it proposes an interactional model in which the form of an elicitation move influences not only whether students respond, but also the length, quality, distribution, and continuity of their participation. The review argues that no single elicitation technique is universally effective. Display questions can support accuracy and checking, while referential and open questions can invite elaboration; extended wait-time creates processing space; scaffolding and reformulation can recover stalled sequences; and contingent follow-up can transform short answers into extended learner talk. The article develops a framework for future empirical testing and offers practical principles for language teachers who aim to increase both the amount and the equity of student participation.

Keywords: Teacher elicitation, student participation, classroom interaction, questioning strategies, wait-time, scaffolding, EFL, classroom discourse.

1. Introduction

Student participation is a central condition for language learning because learners need opportunities to produce language, test meanings, respond to others, and receive interactional relevant feedback. Yet participation does not arise automatically simply because a teacher asks questions. In many EFL classrooms, teacher-fronted interaction is organized through recurring initiation-response-follow-up sequences in which the teacher controls the topic, allocates turns, evaluates answers, and decides when a sequence is complete. The same structure can either create or restrict opportunities for learner contribution depending on the teacher's wording, timing, follow-up moves, and willingness to leave interactional space for students [3; 11]. For this reason, elicitation should be understood not as the mechanical act of asking a question, but as a set of interactional strategies through which a teacher makes a learner response relevant, possible, and worth extending.

Research on classroom questioning has long distinguished between display questions, for which the teacher already knows the expected answer, and referential questions, which seek information, opinion, interpretation, or experience that is not predetermined. Brock's classroom study showed that referential questioning can generate more substantial learner output than

highly constrained questioning [4]. Later work has complicated a simple open-versus-closed distinction. Boyd and Rubin demonstrated that the key feature of productive questioning is often contingency: a teacher question becomes powerful when it is built on what a student has just said and invites that contribution to be clarified, justified, or developed [5]. Thus, elicitation quality depends not only on the grammatical form of the initial question but on the entire sequence through which a response is pursued and taken up.

Recent classroom-interaction research reinforces this interactional view. Farrelly and Sinwongsuwat found that Thai EFL teachers used display questioning most frequently, together with scaffolding and referential questions, and that a broader repertoire of elicitation strategies appeared to support more active learner participation [1]. Work on wait-time similarly shows that silence after a teacher question is not empty time: it can function as processing space in which students formulate a response, decide whether to self-select, and organize language before speaking [6]. At the same time, extending wait-time alone may not be sufficient. Güneş and Girgin show that teachers often need additional response-pursuit strategies when silence continues, including reformulation, prompting, narrowing the question, or other forms of interactional support [2]. These findings shift attention from isolated question types to the sequencing and adaptation of elicitation moves.

The purpose of this article is therefore to interpret teacher elicitation as a dynamic classroom-interaction practice and to explain how different strategies may influence student participation. The article is conceptual rather than based on a newly collected classroom dataset. It synthesizes established and recent research, distinguishes participation quantity from participation quality and equity, proposes a model that can be tested through classroom observation and teacher/student data, and translates the model into practical recommendations for EFL teaching. The guiding research question is: Which teacher elicitation strategies are most likely to increase the frequency, quality, continuity, and distribution of student participation in classroom interaction?

2. Teacher Elicitation, Classroom Interaction and Student Participation

Teacher elicitation can be defined as the interactional work through which teachers invite, prompt, pursue, support, and extend student contributions. Within classroom interactional competence, effective teachers adapt their language to the pedagogical goal of the moment and create space for learners to contribute rather than filling that space themselves [3]. This means that the same linguistic form may function differently in different contexts. A display question such as 'What is the past form of go?' may be appropriate in a form-and-accuracy sequence because the intended response is brief and specific. A referential question such as 'Why do you think the character left?' is more appropriate when the goal is interpretation, reasoning, or

fluency. Elicitation is therefore effective when the strategy fits the pedagogical purpose and the expected type of learner response.

Participation must also be defined carefully. Counting how many times students speak captures only one dimension. A classroom can contain many short choral answers while still offering little opportunity for individual reasoning, negotiation, or extended language production. Conversely, some students may participate silently through attentive listening and cognitive engagement even when they do not take a public turn [7]. For research on elicitation, at least four dimensions are useful: participation frequency (how often students contribute), participation quality (how elaborated, reasoned, or linguistically productive the contribution is), participation continuity (whether the student is able to sustain or extend a turn), and participation equity (how broadly speaking opportunities are distributed across students rather than concentrated among a small number of confident volunteers).

The distinction between eliciting an answer and developing participation is especially important. A teacher may obtain the expected answer quickly by nominating a strong student, repeating the question, or supplying part of the response. These moves keep the lesson moving but may reduce opportunities for other learners to think and speak. Walsh showed that teacher talk can construct or obstruct learner involvement depending on whether teachers allow sufficient wait-time, use appropriate repair, respond to learner contributions, and avoid unnecessarily taking over the interaction [11]. Productive elicitation therefore requires a balance between instructional control and interactional space: teachers need to keep the pedagogical focus while leaving enough time and ownership for students to produce the language that the lesson is designed to develop.

Table 1. Core teacher elicitation strategies and participation-related considerations

Elicitation strategy	Participation function	Main risk	Effective-use condition
Display / checking questions	Rapid retrieval, comprehension checks, form-focused responses	Short or choral answers may dominate	Use when the goal is accuracy; follow with elaboration when needed
Referential / open questions	Opinions, explanations, personal meanings, longer turns	Question may be too broad for lower-proficiency learners	Match cognitive and linguistic demand to learner level
Extended wait-time	Processing space, self-selection, more considered responses	Silence may reflect misunderstanding rather than thinking	Wait first; scaffold if the response does not emerge
Scaffolding / reformulation	Reduces response difficulty and recovers stalled sequences	Over-scaffolding can supply the answer for the learner	Give the minimum support needed while preserving learner ownership

Contingent follow-up and feedback	Extends turns and shows that learner ideas matter	Generic evaluation can close the sequence too early	Build the next prompt on the learner's previous contribution

3. Methodological Approach

The article employs an integrative conceptual review. Research on EFL classroom interaction, teacher questioning, wait-time, scaffolding, feedback, and student classroom talk was brought together to identify recurring mechanisms linking teacher elicitation to learner participation. Priority was given to studies that analyze actual classroom discourse or observable participation, as well as conceptual work on classroom interactional competence. The synthesis was organized around five questions: (1) Which elicitation strategies recur across interaction research? (2) What type of participation does each strategy make relevant? (3) Which teacher moves help when an initial elicitation fails? (4) How can participation be measured beyond simple response counts? and (5) How can teachers align elicitation choices with form-focused, meaning-focused, and fluency-oriented pedagogical goals?

This approach does not present simulated classroom results as if they were empirical findings. Instead, it develops a testable framework for subsequent observation-based or mixed-method research. A future empirical study could combine video-recorded lessons, interaction coding, student-level participation measures, and teacher reflection. Such a design would make it possible to examine not only whether a strategy occurs, but what happens immediately after it: who responds, how quickly, how long the turn lasts, whether the response is elaborated, whether the teacher follows it contingently, and whether participation is redistributed to other learners.

The proposed model includes six teacher-side variables: referential/open questioning (RQ), extended wait-time (WT), scaffolding or reformulation (SC), contingent questioning/follow-up (CQ), facilitative feedback and uptake (FU), and turn redistribution (TR). Student participation is represented through frequency (PF), quality (PQ), continuity (PC), and equity (PE). Teacher dominance (TD) is treated as a potential negative condition when teachers answer their own questions, interrupt emerging learner turns, overuse echo, or close sequences through immediate evaluation. The framework assumes that elicitation strategies affect participation through interactional mechanisms such as cognitive processing space, reduced response difficulty, acknowledgement of learner meaning, and increased access to speaking turns.

Figure 1. Interactional pathways from teacher elicitation to student participation (editable Word diagram)

Open	Choice	Talk	Quality
Wait	Time	Reply	Freq.
Scaf.	Help	Reply	Range
Follow	Uptake	Extend	Flow
Turns	Access	Peers	Equity

For a future quantitative test, a composite participation index can be modeled as a function of elicitation strategies. The coefficients would represent estimated associations rather than assumed causal effects, and classroom-level nesting should be considered when multiple students are observed within the same lesson or teacher.

$$PI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RQ_i + \beta_2 WT_i + \beta_3 SC_i + \beta_4 CQ_i + \beta_5 FU_i + \beta_6 TR_i - \beta_7 TD_i + \varepsilon_i$$

A second equation can separate the quality of participation from simple speaking frequency. This distinction is important because a strategy may increase the number of responses without increasing elaboration, reasoning, or target-language complexity.

$$PQ_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 EL_i + \gamma_2 RE_i + \gamma_3 RT_i + \gamma_4 UP_i + \xi_i$$

Here, EL denotes elaboration, RE reasoning or explanation, RT response-turn length, and UP learner uptake or continuation. In empirical work, inter-rater reliability should be established for coded interactional variables, and multi-item perception scales should be checked for internal consistency. Where a teacher or student questionnaire is used alongside observation, reliability may be examined with Cronbach's alpha before structural or regression analysis.

$$\alpha = k/(k - 1) \cdot (1 - \Sigma\sigma_i^2/\sigma_t^2)$$

4. Literature-Based Findings: Which Elicitation Strategies Promote Participation?

The synthesis indicates that question type matters, but its effect depends on pedagogical purpose and follow-up. Display questions are efficient for checking recall, confirming form, and establishing shared knowledge. They can produce high response frequency, especially in choral or tightly controlled sequences, but responses are often short because the answer space is predetermined. Referential and genuinely open questions create a wider semantic space and can encourage students to express opinions, experiences, interpretations, or reasons. Brock's findings remain influential because they show that referential questions can increase the quantity and complexity of learner output [4]. However, productive interaction does not require abandoning display questions. Boyd and Rubin show that even display questions can lead to extended student talk when teachers make subsequent questions contingent on students' prior contributions [5].

Wait-time is a second major mechanism. Teachers often experience silence as a problem and respond by repeating the question, nominating a student immediately, simplifying too quickly, or answering it themselves. Yet a short pause may be precisely what learners need to retrieve vocabulary, formulate syntax, interpret the expected answer type, and decide to speak. Ingram and Elliott's analysis emphasizes that wait-time changes the interactional behavior of both teachers and students rather than functioning as a simple fixed-duration technique [6]. For EFL learners, the need for processing time can be even greater because conceptual planning and linguistic encoding occur together. Extended wait-time is therefore best understood as protected response space, not merely as a prescribed number of seconds.

Scaffolding and reformulation become particularly important when waiting does not produce a response. A teacher can narrow the question, repeat a key phrase with changed intonation, offer the first part of an utterance, provide a lexical cue, model an expected response frame, translate a critical word where appropriate, or reformulate the task while preserving the original cognitive demand. Farrelly and Sinwongsuwat observed scaffolding as one of the most common strategies used to elicit learner talk, especially when participation was weak [1]. Güneş and Girgin similarly focus on what teachers do after extended wait-time fails, showing that response pursuit is a sequential accomplishment rather than a one-step question-answer event [2]. Effective scaffolding reduces interactional difficulty without taking away the student's ownership of the response.

Contingent follow-up is the fourth recurring factor. In conventional IRF interaction, a teacher may respond to a correct answer with 'good,' 'yes,' or repetition and immediately move to the next question. Such feedback confirms correctness but can close the sequence. An alternative is uptake: the teacher selects something from the student's answer and turns it into the next question or invitation to elaborate. For example, 'You said the character was afraid. What in the text makes you think that?' makes the next turn dependent on the learner's previous contribution. This type of contingency signals that student ideas have interactional value and can produce longer, connected sequences of learner talk [5]. Positive assessment can also support participation when it acknowledges achievement without prematurely terminating the topic [9].

Participation is also affected by how teachers distribute turns. Open questions directed to the whole class can appear participatory while repeatedly attracting answers from the same confident students. In large or mixed-proficiency classes, this produces an illusion of active discussion while quieter students remain peripheral. Turn redistribution strategies include inviting a second opinion, asking one student to build on another's answer, using brief pair rehearsal before public response, rotating nomination patterns, and explicitly allowing students

to self-select after thinking time. Research linking classroom talk and achievement suggests that individual participation matters, but participation should not be reduced to vocal quantity alone [7; 10]. The strongest elicitation practice therefore combines opportunities to speak with attention to whose voices are being heard and what kind of cognitive-linguistic work their turns contain.

Table 2. Proposed constructs and sample measurement items for a future classroom study

Construct	Operational meaning	Illustrative item / coding indicator	Expected role
Referential/open questioning (RQ)	Questions with a non-predetermined answer space	Teacher invites opinion, explanation, interpretation, or experience.	Positive for PQ/PC
Extended wait-time (WT)	Protected pause after an elicitation move	Teacher leaves processing space before repeating, nominating, or answering.	Positive for PF/PE
Scaffolding/reformulation (SC)	Support used when a response is difficult or absent	Teacher narrows, cues, models a frame, or reformulates without giving the answer.	Positive for response initiation
Contingent follow-up (CQ)	Next teacher move builds on the student's prior turn	Teacher asks the learner to justify, clarify, exemplify, or connect an idea.	Positive for PQ/PC
Facilitative feedback/uptake (FU)	Feedback that acknowledges and develops learner meaning	Teacher validates contribution while keeping the topic open for further talk.	Positive for PC
Participation frequency (PF)	Number of learner contributions or speaking turns	Student contributes verbally across the observed lesson segment.	Outcome dimension
Participation quality (PQ)	Elaboration, reasoning, linguistic productivity, relevance	Student explains, justifies, exemplifies, self-repairs, or extends an answer.	Outcome dimension
Participation equity (PE)	Distribution of speaking opportunities across learners	Turns are not concentrated among a small number of frequent volunteers.	Outcome dimension

5. Student Participation Should Be Measured as More Than Response Frequency

One of the most important implications of the framework is that elicitation effects should be measured across multiple dimensions. A teacher may successfully increase response frequency by using rapid display questions, but this does not necessarily mean students are

producing longer or more meaningful language. A different teacher may obtain fewer turns overall but create extended responses that contain justification, examples, self-repair, or interaction with peers. Studies of whole-class discussion also caution against treating silence as complete disengagement because attentive, cognitively active students can learn without frequent vocal participation [7]. For this reason, an observation protocol should code who speaks, how often, for how long, in response to what elicitation move, and with what degree of elaboration.

A practical measurement model can distinguish three participation zones. The first is a response zone, where the main goal is rapid retrieval, form checking, or confirmation; brief answers and display questions can be appropriate here. The second is an elaboration zone, where students explain, justify, compare, narrate, or interpret; referential questions, extended wait-time, and contingent follow-up become more important. The third is a distributed-dialogue zone, where the aim is not simply teacher-student exchange but broader classroom participation: students respond to peers, take up previous ideas, self-select, and sustain topic development. Moving from one zone to another requires changes in teacher talk. A strategy that is effective for a vocabulary check may be counterproductive if the pedagogical goal is extended speaking or dialogic reasoning.

Figure 2. Elicitation-to-participation cycle for classroom interaction (G = goal; W = wait-time; S = scaffolding; F = follow-up; R = redistribution)



6. Research Propositions

The conceptual synthesis leads to the following propositions. They are framed as testable expectations rather than findings from a new dataset.

Proposition	Statement
P1	Referential and genuinely open questions will be associated with longer and more elaborated learner responses than tightly constrained questions when proficiency and task difficulty are controlled.
P2	Extended wait-time will increase opportunities for student response and self-selection, although its effect will depend on whether silence reflects processing or misunderstanding.
P3	When an initial elicitation receives no response, minimal scaffolding or reformulation will increase response probability more effectively than immediate teacher self-answering.

P4	Contingent follow-up questions that build on learner contributions will predict greater participation continuity and response elaboration than generic evaluative follow-up.
P5	Facilitative feedback that acknowledges achievement while keeping the interaction open will support continued learner participation more strongly than feedback that closes the sequence.
P6	Turn-redistribution strategies will increase participation equity by reducing repeated dominance by a small group of fast or confident responders.
P7	A coordinated repertoire of elicitation strategies aligned with the pedagogical goal will predict stronger student participation than reliance on any single strategy across all classroom contexts.

7. Practical Implications for Language Teachers and Teacher Development

For language teachers, the framework suggests that elicitation planning should begin with the intended learner turn. Before asking a question, the teacher should be clear whether the desired response is a word, a sentence, an explanation, an opinion, a narrative, or a peer-to-peer exchange. Question design can then be matched to that goal. Display questions are useful when accuracy and retrieval are central; referential and open questions are more appropriate when the teacher wants learners to contribute meanings that are not already fixed. This simple alignment can reduce the common mismatch in which teachers ask apparently open questions but accept only one predetermined answer.

Second, teachers should treat wait-time as part of the question rather than as dead air after it. Asking a cognitively demanding question and then speaking again after one second effectively changes the task from 'think and answer' to 'listen while the teacher answers.' Teachers can make processing time visible by pausing, maintaining an expectant but non-threatening stance, allowing brief note-making, or giving pairs a short rehearsal before public response. At the same time, wait-time should remain adaptive. If silence indicates that learners have not understood the question, continued waiting alone is unlikely to help; the next move should be a scaffold that clarifies the task without immediately supplying the answer [2; 6].

Third, teacher development should include practice in contingent follow-up. Many teachers can generate good initial questions but find it harder to listen closely enough to use the student's answer as the basis for the next move. Contingency requires the teacher to shift from a script-driven sequence toward responsive interaction. Useful follow-ups include 'Why?', 'What makes you say that?', 'Can you give an example?', 'Can you connect that to what X said?',

and reformulations that preserve the learner's meaning while inviting further talk. This type of follow-up turns student contributions into resources for the lesson rather than answers to be evaluated and discarded [5].

Fourth, participation should be managed for equity as well as volume. Teachers can track who has spoken, avoid relying exclusively on fast volunteers, give lower-confidence students preparation time, and use pair or small-group rehearsal to reduce the public risk of answering. In online or technology-mediated lessons, interactional competence also includes the ability to manage turn-taking, latency, chat, microphones, and other features that affect who can enter the floor [8]. Whether the classroom is face-to-face or online, the central principle is the same: participation opportunities must be designed, protected, and redistributed rather than assumed to be equally available.

Finally, teacher reflection should focus on interactional evidence. Short video excerpts can reveal patterns that are difficult to notice during live teaching: how long the teacher actually waits, whether questions are routinely answered by the same learners, how often the teacher repeats or completes student turns, and whether feedback opens or closes interaction. Walsh's work on classroom interaction shows that small changes in teacher language can significantly alter opportunities for learner involvement [3; 11]. Reflection is therefore most productive when it asks not only 'Did students participate?' but 'Which teacher move made this particular participation possible, and which learners were still excluded from the interaction?'

Conclusion

Teacher elicitation is one of the most immediate ways in which classroom discourse shapes student participation. The literature does not support a single universally superior question type or a fixed technique that automatically produces interaction. Instead, participation emerges from sequences of teacher moves that are aligned with pedagogical purpose. Display questions can efficiently support form-focused work; referential and open questions can widen the response space; wait-time protects processing time; scaffolding and reformulation can recover stalled responses; and contingent follow-up can extend learner contributions into more dialogic exchanges. The teacher's interactional skill lies in selecting, sequencing, and adapting these moves in response to what students actually do.

The central argument of this article is that the impact of elicitation should be evaluated through participation frequency, quality, continuity, and equity rather than through response counts alone. A class in which a few confident students answer many questions is not necessarily more participatory than a class in which speaking opportunities are carefully distributed and learner turns are developed. Future empirical research can test the proposed model through video-based coding, student-level participation measures, and teacher reflection,

with particular attention to how elicitation strategies operate across proficiency levels, class sizes, and face-to-face versus online contexts. For teacher education, the practical priority is to help teachers notice how their own talk either opens or closes space for student language use.

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Xülasə. Bu konseptual tədqiqat müəllimin sualvermə strategiyalarının ingilis dilinin xarici dil kimi tədris olunduğu (EFL) siniflərdə tələbələrin iştirakına necə təsir etdiyini araşdırır. Tədqiqat sual növləri, cavab üçün gözləmə müddəti, dəstəkləyici təlim strategiyaları (scaffolding), tələbə cavablarına uyğun əlavə sualların verilməsi, geribildirim və danışıq növbələrinin bölüşdürülməsi ilə bağlı elmi araşdırmaları ümumiləşdirir. Eyni zamanda, tələbələrin iştirakının yalnız tezliyi ilə deyil, həm də keyfiyyəti, davamlılığı və bərabərliyi baxımından qiymətləndirilməli olduğunu irəli sürür. Təklif olunan konseptual çərçivədə müəllimin sualları daha geniş qarşılıqlı ünsiyyət ardıcıllığının bir hissəsi kimi nəzərdən keçirilir. Bu çərçivəyə əsasən, tələbələrə düşünmək üçün vaxt verilməsi, onların cavablarının müvafiq dəstəklə təmin edilməsi, irəli sürdükləri fikirlərin müəllim tərəfindən nəzərə alınması və danışıq imkanlarının tələbələr arasında yenidən bölüşdürülməsi onların sadəcə suallara cavab verən iştirakçılar kimi deyil, sinif diskursunun fəal iştirakçıları kimi formalaşmasında mühüm rol oynayır.

Açar sözlər: Müəllimin sualvermə strategiyaları, tələbə iştirakı, sualvermə strategiyaları, dəstəkləyici təlim strategiyaları, sinif diskursu.