

Student Perceptions of Oral Participation in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

Student motivation affects behavior and achievement in every classroom. In a foreign language classroom, student motivation is a particularly important variable that affects oral participation, a vital element in achievement. This study attempts to determine which factors students find most influential in their oral participation in a foreign language class and their thoughts on what actions the teacher should take to encourage more oral participation in class.

1. Introduction

Academic success in a foreign language classroom is largely dependent on oral participation in the class. Motivating students to participate orally is a struggle for many foreign language teachers. Recent research in the area of second language motivation focuses on the social aspect of education (Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004). Creating a warm classroom environment where students feel safe, cared for, and engaged in learning is in my opinion one of the most important factors in increasing student motivation and achievement. According to Abraham Maslow's theory on motivation, humans have a hierarchy of needs that must be met in order to achieve self-actualization (Huitt, 2007). The bottom levels of his pyramid model of needs include physiological, safety/security, belongingness and love, and esteem. For many children, these needs are not being met at home for a variety of reasons, and I feel that this directly affects their motivation to learn and their ability to achieve. While Maslow's is obviously not the only theory on motivation, I believe that if teachers are able to meet these needs for the students in their classroom it will create an environment where children are willing and able to achieve to the best of their ability.

From a personal standpoint, I have seen the effect that a caring teacher and positive classroom environment can have on student motivation and achievement as well as the negative effect that a cold teacher and classroom can have. Though I think it is more common for elementary teachers to get to know their students on a more personal level, I believe it is no less important at the secondary level. As a student teacher at the high school level, I met several students who were facing some extremely challenging situations in their lives. I was amazed at how little time and effort it took on my part to make these students feel welcome, worthwhile and capable in my class. Though they may not have had a sense of safety, affection or belonging at home, they knew that they could find all of those things in my classroom and I saw their motivation and achievement increase as a result.

I have also seen the effect that peer relationships can have, both positively and negatively, on student engagement and achievement. Recent anti-bullying campaigns have drawn much light to the subject, but I believe that teachers must remain vigilant on the matter. Creating a community of peers within the classroom and the school as whole is a vital step in meeting students' need for safety and security. If this need is not being met, how will they be able to achieve in the classroom?

Many young people in our schools are facing incredible challenges each day that affect their willingness and ability to achieve success in the classroom. I do believe that as teachers we need to take the time to create a warm classroom environment that can become a safe haven for those students, and to develop the personal rapport that some of our students so desperately need. I also believe that by supporting the emotional development of our students,

and encouraging them to believe in their own abilities, we ultimately give them the tools they need to succeed academically.

In addition, I am interested in the role of fun in relation to encouraging oral participation in a classroom to increase student engagement and effort and to create positive teacher-student rapport as well as a community of peers in the classroom. I think that too many teachers forget that secondary level students are still kids and have a true need for fun. Even most adults would rather be in a daily environment that allowed them to have fun while doing their work. I would hypothesize that in a work or classroom environment, fun would increase productivity as well. If students are having fun, they are more likely to participate orally in class, and this is the main goal of learning a foreign language.

2. Literature Review

Much of the literature reviewed focused on elements that affect student perceptions of the classroom environment, such as teacher-student relationships, learning environment, peer relationships, and proficiency. I originally wanted to know if there was a correlation between positive classroom environment and oral participation in the foreign language classroom. That question evolved into determining what students believe to be the most influential factor in determining whether or not they chose to participate orally in their foreign language classroom and what they believed could be done to encourage increased oral participation.

2.1 Teacher-Student Relationships

A recent study on Chinese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students found that students were least likely to participate in oral activities in class that required them to respond

to teachers' questioning. They were much more likely to participate if it involved working in a pair with a peer (Liu & Jackson, 2009). Perhaps this is a result of Chinese culture, but reflects I believe the importance of a personal relationship between teacher and students. Having a supportive relationship with the teacher influences the students' sense of belonging thereby affecting student effort, achievement, self-efficacy and even long-term goals (Walker & Greene, 2009); (Anderman, 2003). What exactly are the personality traits that most affect students' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships with teachers? Research points to teacher support and cooperation as the most important factors in developing students' positive perceptions of the teacher-student relationship. Though student preference of teacher leadership style varies according to content area, what is clear is that regardless of the subject matter, students feel good with teachers who are understanding, tolerant and helpful (VanPetegem, Aelterman, VanKeer, & Rosseel, 2008). Getting to know our students on a personal level also gives us some insight into their interests and goals for the future-information that can be used to create lessons that have a degree of perceived instrumentality for the students. This will further support the development of a positive classroom environment (Hardre, Crowson, Debacker, & White, 2007). This personal care and support is especially important in increasing the learning opportunities and outcomes of students who come from low socioeconomic status households (Tam, 2009).

2.2 Learning environment

In a task-oriented classroom, students measure their own progress and success relative to their past performance, as opposed to an outcome-oriented environment in which students

compete with their peers for the best grades. Some research suggests that shifting the focus of the classroom from competition to cooperation, creating an environment where each individual can proceed and succeed at his or her own rate, will ultimately create a positive classroom environment, which in turn will foster continued achievement (Anderman, 2003). This will also add to each student's self-efficacy, further promoting motivation and achievement. Prior achievement is also indicated as a positive influence on a student's perception of the classroom environment, regardless of grade point average. Therefore, creating a task oriented classroom where all students can achieve some modicum of success regardless of their ability level will begin a cycle of achievement, motivation and a positive classroom environment (Anderman, 2003). Another study shows that while a task oriented classroom can lead to higher motivation among students; it is the motivation and not the task orientation of the classroom that leads to the positive perception of the environment (Chua, Wong, & Chen, 2009). It seems to me that all of these factors are interrelated and mutually supportive.

Instrumentality of the course content is a factor in developing positive learning experiences, just as it is a factor in developing positive teacher-student relationships. This in turn leads to a positive perception of the classroom environment. Students will want to participate in a class if they can see the usefulness, importance and personal relevance of the material they are learning (Anderman, 2003). In addition, an increase in perceived instrumentality can encourage students to set different and higher achievement and learning goals for themselves, particularly in task-oriented classrooms (Hardré et al., 2007). As a Spanish language teacher, I see a huge opportunity to show my students how exactly they can use

language to further their career goals. I also see the importance of exposing them to new and different ideas for future careers that include using the foreign language.

2.3 Peer Relationships/Community

In classrooms where there is a large cluster of students with behavior problems, such that the classroom environment is not viewed as safe, whether physically, socially or emotionally, there is a negative effect on student motivation (Walker & Greene, 2009); (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008). When these behavior problems are directed at classmates, any benefit of being in a higher socioeconomic group is weakened (Tam, 2009). However, when the teacher creates an environment of mutual respect and cooperation among peers, there is a positive effect on student motivation (Kelly, 2000). The foundation then of creating this positive peer community would have to be the teacher's ability to manage classroom behavior.

"Discipline occurs best when teachers provide classrooms that are accepting, encouraging, respectful, and supportive. Such classrooms enable students to behave with dignity, self-control and concern for others." (Nelson & Lott, 2008, p. 104). It follows that in a classroom where students do feel safe and like a respected part of a peer community, they will have a more positive perception of the classroom environment, thereby increasing their motivation to learn and ultimately their achievement.

2.4 Proficiency

Various studies pointed to limited proficiency as a factor that limits students' oral participation in foreign language class, specifically an insecurity and self-consciousness about a low ability to speak the target language in front of one's peers (Lee, 1999); (Léger, 2009). What

can teachers do to increase student self-confidence and decrease anxiety, particularly at low levels, to increase student oral participation? None of the articles I reviewed dealt with the correlation between teacher-student relationship and teaching style or how that directly or indirectly affects the classroom environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample

There were 98 students in four classes of Spanish 1 and two classes of Spanish 2 at a rural middle school and high school, who were invited to participate in the study. Student grade levels ranged from 8th to 12th grade. The final number of participants in the study was 38.

All students in each class were invited to participate through an informed consent letter as well as a parental permission form (see Appendices), which were approved prior to the study by the SUNY-Oswego Human Subject Committee and both building principals where the research was conducted. Participants and their parents were informed of the purpose and nature of the study. Assurance was given that the participants would remain anonymous, could opt out of the study at any time without penalty, and that participation or non-participation would not affect the student's grade in the class positively or negatively. They were also informed that the study would consist of a student questionnaire which would be conducted in class, and that they would only be allowed to participate with signed documentation from both the student and the parent or guardian.

3.2 Instrumentation

The questionnaire used (Appendix I) consisted of 10 questions related to students' perceptions of their foreign language class and their thoughts on the amount of their personal oral participation in the class. In addition, they were asked if they enjoyed speaking in the Spanish classroom, if they felt that the amount of their oral participation was sufficient to develop proficiency in the language, and their opinion on what the teacher could specifically do to encourage them to speak more in the class. They were also free to add any other comments on their feelings about speaking in the foreign language class.

3.3 Procedure

Prior to administering the questionnaire, all student consent forms, parental permission slips and questionnaire forms were encoded. This allowed me to have all of the students in the classes participate in the questionnaire activity and then simply discard those questionnaires whose code did not match any of the signed consent and permission forms that I had on file. Therefore, students who did not want to be included in the research or who were unable to obtain parental permission were not singled out. Of the 98 students in my sample, 40 of them returned parental permission and personal consent forms. Two of the students who returned permission forms were absent on the day the questionnaire was administered, resulting in a final participation count of 38. Usable questionnaires were compiled and answers to each question were tallied. Open ended questions were compared and similar answers were grouped together in the results.

4. *Data Analysis*

The first question on the survey asked students to tell me a little bit about their foreign language class. As the question was open ended and did not specify exactly what I wanted to know, the answers were quite varied. Also, many students gave multiple responses so there are more than 38 answers to this question. Overall, responses were positive with students describing the class as fun, interesting, cool, relaxed, and a good learning experience (Table 1). Students also pointed to specific factors that they liked about the class such as the teaching style of the teacher and methods used in class such as songs. One respondent was especially vocal about his enjoyment of the class, saying, “I can honestly say that Spanish class is my favorite class of the day. I get through with my other 3 and my heart begins to race.”

Students were then asked to identify their favorite part of their foreign language class and to give a reason why it was their favorite (Table 2). Again, as it was an open-ended question, students often gave more than one answer. Results indicated that the largest number of respondents said that speaking was their favorite part of the class. Several other popular responses included games, songs, and movies. Several students said that learning new vocabulary was their favorite part because it allowed them to communicate better. The reasons behind student answers were very similar regardless of what they chose as their favorite aspect of the class (Table 3). Most students said that fun was the number one reason, followed by how helpful they found it toward their learning.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Fun | 38% |
| Good Learning Experience | 16% |
| Cool/Awesome | 9% |
| Songs | 7% |
| Good teacher | 7% |
| Relaxed Atmosphere | 7% |
| Other | 7% |
| Interesting | 4% |
| My favorite class | 4% |
| Not much homework | 2% |

Table 1. Students' Descriptions of Language Class

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Speaking | 21% |
| Games | 18% |
| Learning | 13% |
| Movies | 13% |
| Songs | 10% |
| Activities | 8% |
| Culture | 5% |
| Atmosphere | 5% |
| Teacher | 5% |
| Projects | 3% |

Table 2. Students' Favorite Part of Language Class

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Fun | 37% |
| Helps with learning | 26% |
| Easy | 9% |
| Increases ability to communicate | 9% |
| Useful/Applies to real life | 6% |
| Interesting | 3% |
| Cultural | 3% |
| Other (various) | 9% |

Table 3. Students' reasons for choosing a favorite aspect of language class

Students were likewise asked to identify their least favorite part of the class and explain their answers (Table 4). While several students responded that they did not have a least favorite part, many students identified a particular activity or type of assessment such as homework, tests & quizzes, verbal assessments, reading or writing. However, the most compelling data for this study is the fact that six students specifically said that their least favorite part of foreign language class has to do with speaking in front of the class. Regardless of their answers on this question, most respondents said they most disliked a particular aspect because of the difficulty. Further examination of the data told me that of those students who responded that "speaking in front of the class" was their least favorite part, most of them said the reason behind this was either self-consciousness or poor self-efficacy.

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Quizzes/Tests | 15% |
| Nothing/ I like everything | 13% |
| Speaking in front of class | 13% |
| Homework | 11% |
| Reading/Translating | 9% |
| Verbal assessments | 6% |
| Writing/Paperwork | 4% |
| No answer | 4% |
| Not Understanding | 2% |
| Peers | 2% |
| Learning | 2% |

Table 4. Students' Least Favorite Part of Language Class

Learning a language consists of four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Question #4 of the survey asked participants to rank these skills in order of importance, though they were told that they did not necessarily have to rank them 1-4 if, for instance, they thought that two skills were equally important. Overall, the participants ranked the four skills in the following order from most important to least important: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Eight of the participants felt that speaking and listening were equally important, with reading and listening being less important. When asked why they had ranked them like this, several students pointed to the instrumentality of these skills when one is travelling to other countries and the fact that communicating with native speakers would require speaking and listening but not reading or writing. One student said, "You can speak to someone without

knowing how to read or write.” Five other students said that all four skills were equally important, with one stating, “I’ve learned that they are all very important and that without one you don’t have the other.” Only one student felt that speaking was the least important of the skills. Her reason was stated as, “Listening, reading & writing are all needed skills to learn a language and take tests, but you don’t have to be able to speak as much.” This mind set should make teachers aware of the importance of using formal summative oral assessments as well as informal formative oral assessments.

Students were then asked to estimate the number of times they participate orally in class: 0-3, 4-6, 7-10, or 11+. Only three of the 38 participants thought that they spoke only 0-3 times per class. The other groups were nearly equal. One trend I did see in examining the data was that the middle school students tended to say they spoke more than the high school students did. It is unclear if this is simply perception or if the higher level students had less opportunities for speaking due to the increased amount of other activities and instruction going on in class at that level.

The following question asked students if they enjoy speaking in the foreign language class. While the overwhelming majority (30 students) said “yes”, there were four who said “no” and four others who said “sometimes”. Those who enjoyed speaking in class gave various reasons, such as: fun, helps learning, recognition of achievement/to show off skills, and having a new experience. Three students said they enjoyed it because, in their words, “No one will pick on you” and “It’s not a big deal if you make a mistake”. This is interesting because of the 8 students who did not enjoy speaking in class; five of them said that they were self-conscious,

embarrassed or afraid to fail in front of their peers. Another four responses (some students gave more than one reason) mentioned a lack of skills or lack of self-efficacy (“I’m bad at it.”) as their reason for not enjoying speaking in class. Of course, either one of those could lead to self-consciousness in front of their peers. Only one student said he did not like speaking because, in his own words, “I speak English.”

Students were next asked if they felt that their personal amount of oral participation was sufficient to develop fluency in the language. Nine students responded negatively to this question. When asked what was keeping them from participating more, six students felt that lack of knowledge or skills was a contributing factor. Lack of knowledge included not knowing the answer to a question, not knowing the pronunciation of a word, and limited vocabulary development. Only two respondents said embarrassment was the issue. When viewed next to the previous question, it would seem that the main issue at hand is that the students don’t want to look foolish or stupid in front of their peers. Another open ended question that received a wide variety of responses was, “What could your teacher do to encourage you to speak more?” The largest response to this question (8) was “nothing”, with several of those students saying that the teacher already does enough to encourage them. Another three participants stated that they did not know what the teacher could do.

Though the open-ended style of this question is perhaps not the best, due to the variety of answers given, several students had worthwhile suggestions. An equal number of students (5) suggested using more games/presentations/activities and requiring all students to answer simultaneously instead of calling on those students with their hands raised. I am not sure that

the latter is a good option due to the variety of learning levels in any given class, but will take that into consideration. Three students suggested offering incentives like candy to encourage participation, while two suggested speaking with them privately instead of in front of the class.

The last question of the survey asked students to volunteer any additional information that would help me understand their feelings about oral participation in their foreign language class. While many gave comments, they were mostly unrelated to oral participation but instead to their overall feelings about the class or teacher. One student seemed to have good meta-cognitive skills as she stated, "I don't mind speaking in Spanish class. It helps me learn the language better. When I say a word out loud, it helps me understand it better." Another student had some advice to offer teachers. She said, "Keep it fun. We're kids. We can't sit in a room with silence. We need vocal and physical learning."

5. *Discussion*

5.1 *Summary*

Student motivation affects behavior and achievement in every classroom. In a foreign language classroom, student motivation is a particularly important variable that affects oral participation, a vital element in academic achievement. This study attempted to determine which factors students find most influential in their oral participation in a foreign language class and their thoughts on what actions the teacher should take to encourage more oral participation in class. Though the sample was relatively small, some clear trends emerged in the responses given.

5.1.1 Positive Influences on Oral Participation in Foreign Language Class

a. Fun

The majority of students surveyed said that they enjoy Spanish class, with a large number saying that speaking in class is their favorite aspect of the class. When asked what they liked most about speaking, fun was the number one response of most students. This confirmed my original assumption that fun would play a significant role in building a classroom community and in increasing student motivation and participation in class. Other students named specific activities, such as games, songs, and projects as positive influences on their participation in language class. These could all probably be categorized under “fun” as well.

b. Recognition

Students pointed to recognition as a strong factor influencing their willingness to participate orally in foreign language class. Some students said they wanted recognition from the teacher, while others said they wanted to show off their skills in front of their peers. Obviously, this response was given by students who were excelling in the class.

c. Positive classroom environment

Three students said they enjoyed speaking in class because, in their words, “No one will pick on you” and “It’s not a big deal if you make a mistake”. I have to wonder if these are students who normally don’t make mistakes, or if they do make mistakes and honestly feel that it’s not a big deal. Regardless, these students obviously feel quite comfortable both with the teacher and with their peers.

5.1.2 *Barriers to Oral Participation in Foreign Language Class*

a. *Student self-consciousness*

While the number of students who said they did not like speaking in class was relatively small, they all seemed to have the same or similar issues holding them back. The majority of these students said that embarrassment or self-consciousness was the main reason that they did not like to participate orally in class. Students do not want to look foolish or stupid in front of their peers. One student had a lot to say about this. *"I have an issue with screwing up. I hate it. I prefer to get things perfect the first time, if I don't I get a little angry and if I'm in front of others when I make a mistake I turn bright red, literally."* This response is consistent with previous research which found that in classrooms where the environment is not viewed as safe, whether physically, socially or emotionally, there is a negative effect on student motivation (Koth, 2008) (Walker, 2009). It seems that foreign language teachers need to let students know that mistakes are a normal part of the learning process. Care should also be taken to create a classroom environment where students know that it is not okay to tease other students for their mistakes. In addition, we need to know our students well enough to know which ones are suffering from self-consciousness or embarrassment. This may be true even when others in the class do feel safe and secure with the environment.

b. *Low self-efficacy*

Some students responded that they didn't participate in class because they felt that they weren't good at it, or that they lacked the knowledge and skills to do well. Lack of knowledge included not knowing the answer to a question, not knowing the pronunciation of a

word, and limited vocabulary development. Perhaps this is just another root of self-consciousness. All of the students surveyed were in their first or second year of language study, and only a couple of months into the school year. They had been told repeatedly that they were just starting to learn the language and that no one expected them to be perfect. Their language had been compared to toddlers who are just learning English, whom no one expects to speak perfectly. Some students seemed to understand and take that analogy to heart, while others remained frustrated at not being able to say what they wanted to say and to say it correctly.

5.2 Limitations

The results of this study are limited by the small number of participants, representing a specific geographical and socioeconomic group. Due to the fact that research was limited to four weeks, time constraints were also a factor limiting my results.

5.3 Implications

In order to encourage all students to participate orally in foreign language class, teachers need to create a safe and fun environment. While the majority of students may feel comfortable speaking in front of their peers, we need to realize that a significant portion do not feel that way at all. Based on my research, I believe that time should be taken at the beginning of a course to do some community building activities. Students should also be specifically told and perhaps shown through instructional videos what level of proficiency is expected of them (and what they should expect of themselves) at the beginning level. In order to build confidence in lower achieving students, teachers should carefully select questions for them that

they can answer successfully. For oral presentations, the option should be given for individuals to videotape their assessments instead of performing in front of the class. As students gain some successes in the language, their confidence will grow. As their confidence grows, so should their enjoyment of the class and of the language, and their amount of oral participation should naturally increase as well.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Student Questionnaire

1. Tell me a little bit about your foreign language class. _____

2. What is your favorite part of Spanish class and why? _____

3. What is your least favorite part of Spanish class and why? _____

4. Learning a foreign language includes speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Please rank these 4 skills in importance, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important.

Speaking _____ Listening _____

Reading _____ Writing _____

Why did you rank them in that order? _____

5. How many times per class do you speak in the foreign language?

- a. 0-3
- b. 4-6
- c. 7-10
- d. 11+

6. Do you enjoy speaking Spanish in the classroom? Yes/No Why or why not?

7. Do you think the number of times you are responding in class is sufficient to make you a fluent speaker? Yes/no

8. If not, what is keeping you from speaking more? Please be as specific as possible.

9. What could the teacher do to encourage you or help you to speak more in class?

10. Feel free to add any other comments or information that would help me understand your feelings about speaking the language in your foreign language class.

Appendix 2 – Letter Requesting School District Permission

Dear (Superintendent, High School Principal)

My name is Karen Tepfenhart and I am currently employed in your school district as a long term Spanish substitute for XXXX XXXXX at the Cato Meridian Middle School and High School. I am also a graduate student at SUNY-Oswego, where I am presently taking a course on research methods for classroom practitioners which will culminate in my Master's Thesis.

The reason I am writing you is to request your permission to conduct action research at Cato-Meridian High School with the two classes of Spanish 2 that I am teaching. My project deals with the effect of student perceptions of the classroom environment on their motivation and oral participation in a foreign language classroom. I would like to collect qualitative data through a short student survey to gain insight into their perceptions of the classroom environment. Quantitative data would also be collected by measuring the amount of oral participation in each class. Student participation in the survey would be on a voluntary basis and would remain completely confidential. I would be happy to share the results of my research with the district's foreign language department.

I am in the process of obtaining permission to conduct my research project from the SUNY Oswego Human Subjects Committee. If you would like further information, please contact me or you may contact my professor, Dr. Faith Maina at XXX-XXXX.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Tepfenhart

Appendix 3 – Permission from Parents

Dear Parents,

This year I am conducting an action research project on the relationship between student perceptions of the classroom environment and their motivation to participate orally in their foreign language class. This research is part of my Master's thesis at SUNY-Oswego. My long-term goal is to improve student achievement through increased oral participation by creating a warm classroom environment which includes positive relationships between teacher and students as well as between peers.

Students will be asked to complete two questionnaires at home to determine their perceptions of the classroom environment, their relationship with the foreign language teacher and their relationships with peers in the class. I will also be collecting data through observation of the amount of oral participation occurring in the classroom.

Student responses to the questionnaire will remain anonymous, as will any reference to their classroom participation in my written report. Your child's participation or decline of participation in this research project will in no way affect their grade in the course, either positively or negatively.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, feel free to contact me at XXX-XXXX or ktepfenhart@xxxx.xxxx.org. You may also contact my professor, Dr. Faith Maina at XXX-XXXX. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Barry Friedman, Chair of the SUNY Oswego Human Subjects Committee at XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

Karen L. Tepfenhart

Please complete the bottom portion of this letter and return it to me by (date).

I have read the above statement about the purpose and nature of this study, and I freely consent to allow my child to participate.

Student's name _____

Parent's signature _____

Yes, my child _____ can participate in this research project.

Appendix 4

Student Informed Consent Letter

Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am doing through SUNY Oswego. The purpose of the study is to determine how students' views of the classroom (including how they feel about the teacher and their classmates) affect their oral participation in foreign language class.

If you agree to participate and your parents give their permission, you will be asked to complete two different surveys about your Spanish class. You won't have to give your name on the forms and you can change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will also be actively involved in recording the number of times you contribute orally in class, though your name will not be on that either. Participation or refusal to participate will in no way affect your grade in Spanish class, positively or negatively.

There are no known risks involved in participating in this study. However, it is hoped that the information gathered will benefit other foreign language teachers and their students to increase participation and achievement. If you would like to participate, please sign the statement below. I will also need a signed permission slip from a parent in order to allow you to participate.

Thank you,

Sra. Tepfenhart

I _____ (Student's name) _____ would like to participate in the above stated research study on oral participation in my foreign language class. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I understand that my grade in this class will not be affected by my participation or refusal to participate in this study. I also understand that my participation will remain completely confidential.

Student's signature _____

Teacher's signature _____