

WHY DO STUDENTS AVOID ASKING QUESTIONS DESPITE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING?

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Annotation. *This article explores the reasons why students avoid asking questions despite lack of understanding in classroom learning environments. The study examines psychological, social, linguistic, and educational factors that influence students' reluctance to seek clarification during lessons. The article discusses important issues such as fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, communication anxiety, classroom environment, peer pressure, and cultural influences on classroom participation. The research also analyzes theoretical perspectives including Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, student-centered learning approaches, and dialogic education theories. Furthermore, the article presents practical strategies for encouraging questioning behavior through supportive classroom environments, cooperative learning activities, positive teacher attitudes, and technology-assisted communication tools. The findings indicate that students often avoid asking questions because of anxiety, fear of criticism, and limited confidence. The article concludes that interactive teaching methods, respectful classroom communication, and supportive educational practices can significantly increase students' willingness to ask questions and participate actively in learning processes.*

Keywords: *Questioning behavior, classroom participation, student anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, communicative competence, student-centered learning, classroom interaction, self-confidence, EFL classroom, educational communication.*

Asking questions is considered one of the most important elements of effective learning. Questions help students clarify misunderstandings, deepen knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and participate actively in classroom learning. In modern education, student participation and interaction are viewed as essential components of successful teaching and learning processes. However, despite the importance of questioning, many students avoid asking questions even when they do not fully understand the lesson material.

In many classrooms, learners remain silent during lessons although they experience confusion or difficulty understanding academic content. Instead of seeking clarification, students may pretend to understand, avoid eye contact, or wait for others to ask questions. This behavior has become a common issue in educational settings and may negatively

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affect students' academic achievement, confidence, and learning motivation. When students do not ask questions, misunderstandings may continue, causing learning gaps and reducing classroom engagement.

Researchers have identified several psychological, social, and educational factors that influence students' reluctance to ask questions. One of the most common reasons is fear of negative evaluation. Many learners worry that their classmates or teachers may judge them as unintelligent, unprepared, or weak if they ask questions. This fear often creates anxiety and prevents students from participating actively in classroom discussions. Shy students and learners with low self-confidence are especially affected by this problem. Another important factor is classroom environment. In teacher-centered classrooms, students may feel uncomfortable interrupting lessons or expressing confusion openly. Some learners may also avoid asking questions because of strict classroom culture, negative past experiences, or fear of receiving criticism from teachers. In addition, cultural and educational backgrounds can influence students' attitudes toward questioning. In some educational systems, students are expected to listen quietly and respect teachers without interrupting or challenging information presented during lessons. Lack of motivation, low participation, poor communication skills, and limited language proficiency may also contribute to students' unwillingness to ask questions. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, learners often hesitate to ask questions because they are afraid of making grammatical or pronunciation mistakes while speaking English. As a result, students may choose silence rather than risk embarrassment.

Educational researchers emphasize that active questioning improves comprehension, critical thinking, and independent learning. Students who ask questions are more likely to engage deeply with lesson content and develop stronger academic performance. Therefore, understanding why students avoid asking questions is important for creating supportive and interactive learning environments. This article explores the reasons why students avoid asking questions despite lack of understanding. The study examines psychological, social, linguistic, and classroom-related factors influencing students' reluctance to seek clarification during lessons. Furthermore, the article discusses possible strategies teachers can use to encourage questioning behavior, improve classroom communication, and create more supportive learning environments that promote active student participation.

Students' questioning behavior has been widely discussed in educational research because asking questions is considered an essential part of effective learning. Questions help learners clarify information, solve misunderstandings, develop critical thinking skills, and participate actively in classroom communication. However, many students avoid asking questions even when they do not fully understand lesson materials. Researchers have investigated psychological, social, linguistic, and classroom-related factors that influence this behavior.

One of the most important concepts related to students' reluctance to ask questions is fear of negative evaluation. According to educational psychologists, many learners avoid questioning because they worry about being judged by teachers or classmates. Students

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may fear appearing unintelligent, weak, or unprepared in front of others. This fear often creates anxiety and reduces classroom participation. Shy learners and students with low self-confidence are especially likely to remain silent during lessons. Another important theoretical perspective is Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen explains that emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence strongly influence learning processes. Learners with high anxiety and low confidence develop a strong "affective filter," which prevents effective communication and participation. Students who are afraid of making mistakes or receiving criticism often avoid asking questions even when they are confused.

Researchers have also emphasized the role of classroom environment in shaping students' questioning behavior. Studies show that teacher-centered classrooms may discourage active participation because students have limited opportunities to interact or express confusion openly. In classrooms where teachers dominate communication or react negatively to mistakes, learners may become hesitant to ask questions. Paulo Freire criticized traditional "banking education," where students passively receive information instead of participating actively in the learning process. According to Freire, supportive and dialogic classrooms encourage learners to express ideas and ask questions freely.

Social and cultural factors are also important themes in the literature. In some educational cultures, students are expected to remain quiet, respectful, and obedient during lessons. Learners from such educational backgrounds may feel uncomfortable interrupting teachers or questioning academic information. Researchers note that cultural norms often influence classroom communication styles and students' willingness to participate actively.

Communication anxiety is another major factor influencing students' reluctance to ask questions. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, learners may hesitate because they fear making grammatical, vocabulary, or pronunciation mistakes while speaking English. According to studies on foreign language anxiety, students often prefer silence to avoid embarrassment or negative reactions from peers and teachers. Several studies have shown that self-confidence strongly affects students' willingness to ask questions. Learners with positive self-esteem are more likely to participate actively and seek clarification when needed. In contrast, students with low confidence often avoid interaction even when they experience difficulties understanding lesson content. Researchers argue that supportive teacher attitudes and positive classroom environments help improve learners' confidence and encourage questioning behavior.

Peer relationships also influence classroom participation. Some students avoid asking questions because they fear classmates may laugh at them or consider their questions unimportant. Peer pressure can therefore reduce students' motivation to communicate openly during lessons. Studies indicate that collaborative learning activities and group discussions help create safer environments where learners feel more comfortable expressing confusion and asking questions. Modern educational research also highlights the importance of student-centered learning approaches. Interactive teaching methods such as discussions, pair work, cooperative learning, and problem-solving activities

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encourage learners to participate more actively in classroom communication. Researchers argue that classrooms promoting openness, respect, and interaction increase students' willingness to ask questions and engage in academic discussions.

Technology-assisted learning has also been discussed in recent studies. Online learning platforms, digital communication tools, and anonymous question systems allow students to ask questions more comfortably without fear of embarrassment. Researchers suggest that technology can reduce communication anxiety and encourage participation among shy or less confident learners. The literature indicates that students avoid asking questions because of multiple interconnected factors, including fear of negative evaluation, anxiety, low self-confidence, classroom environment, cultural expectations, peer pressure, and communication difficulties. Previous studies emphasize that supportive teacher behavior, student-centered teaching methods, positive classroom atmospheres, and interactive learning strategies can help encourage students to ask questions more confidently and participate actively in the learning process.

In many classrooms, students avoid asking questions even when they do not fully understand lesson materials. This behavior can negatively affect academic achievement, classroom participation, and overall learning outcomes. The practical analysis of this issue shows that psychological, social, linguistic, and environmental factors strongly influence students' willingness to ask questions during lessons.

One of the most common practical reasons for avoiding questions is fear of making mistakes. Many students worry that their questions may seem simple, unnecessary, or incorrect. Learners often fear negative reactions from classmates or teachers, which creates anxiety and lowers confidence. As a result, students prefer to remain silent rather than risk embarrassment in front of others.

Low self-confidence is another important practical factor. Students who lack confidence in their academic abilities may believe that their questions are not valuable or intelligent enough. Shy learners especially hesitate to speak publicly because they feel uncomfortable attracting attention during classroom discussions.

Classroom environment also plays a significant role in students' questioning behavior. In teacher-centered classrooms, learners may have limited opportunities to participate actively. When teachers dominate classroom communication or react negatively to incorrect answers, students become more hesitant to ask questions. Strict classroom discipline and excessive correction can further discourage participation and create emotional barriers to communication.

Peer pressure is another practical issue influencing classroom interaction. Some students fear that classmates may laugh at them, criticize them, or judge them negatively for asking questions. This social pressure often causes learners to hide confusion instead of seeking clarification. In competitive classrooms, students may avoid questioning because they do not want to appear academically weaker than others.

Language difficulties can also prevent students from asking questions, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Learners with limited vocabulary or

poor speaking skills may struggle to express their confusion clearly in English. Fear of grammatical or pronunciation mistakes often discourages communication during lessons.

To solve these problems, teachers can apply several practical strategies to encourage questioning behavior in classrooms. One effective approach is creating a supportive and positive learning environment. Teachers should encourage students to view mistakes and questions as natural parts of the learning process. Respectful communication and positive feedback help learners feel emotionally secure and more confident in participating.

Student-centered teaching methods can also improve classroom interaction. Pair work, group discussions, collaborative learning, and problem-solving activities provide students with opportunities to communicate more comfortably. Learners often feel less anxious when discussing ideas in small groups before speaking publicly. Teachers should also encourage open communication by responding positively to students' questions. When learners receive supportive reactions from teachers, they become more willing to seek clarification in future lessons. Praising students for asking questions can increase confidence and create a classroom culture where participation is valued. Anonymous questioning methods may also help shy learners participate more actively. Question boxes, online platforms, and digital communication tools allow students to ask questions without fear of embarrassment. Technology-based learning systems can therefore reduce anxiety and encourage communication among less confident learners.

Reducing excessive teacher dominance is another important strategy. Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to share opinions, express confusion, and participate actively in classroom discussions. Interactive teaching approaches help learners become more independent and communicative.

In EFL classrooms, teachers can support questioning behavior by simplifying language, teaching useful classroom expressions, and encouraging learners to communicate gradually. Providing students with sentence patterns such as "Could you explain this again?" or "I do not understand this part" may help learners ask questions more confidently. Encouraging students to ask questions is essential for improving critical thinking, comprehension, and academic performance. Students who actively seek clarification usually understand lesson content more effectively and become more engaged in learning activities. Classroom participation also improves learners' confidence, communication skills, and motivation.

In conclusion, the practical analysis shows that students avoid asking questions because of fear, anxiety, low confidence, classroom atmosphere, peer pressure, and communication difficulties. However, supportive teaching methods, positive classroom environments, student-centered learning activities, and effective teacher-student communication can significantly reduce these barriers. By encouraging open interaction and respectful participation, teachers can help students become more active, confident, and successful learners.



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