

## *East Asian Students' Spoken Participation in American College Classrooms: Does Institutional Diversity Matter?*

Brendon Paul ALBERTSON

*Pine Manor College, USA*

*While East Asian students make up a significant portion of international students at American colleges, they may have difficulty verbally participating in classes due to intersecting factors including, but not limited to, English proficiency, anxiety, culture, and classroom dynamics. This qualitative study used interviews to examine the following: The factors East Asian international students believed had an influence on their spoken participation at the most diverse liberal arts college in the United States; whether diversity played a role; and participants' suggestions for how professors could encourage their participation. Findings suggested diversity did not alleviate perceptions of a marginalized identity among participants; their lower English proficiency remained a strong identifier. Listening comprehension difficulties, including diverse accents, seemed an underlying cause of other hindrances to participation. Other key factors were English-related anxiety, peer pressure, and activity format (whole-class versus group), while several factors appeared interrelated. Participants overall favored group work, a more explicit approach to requiring participation, and adjustments to help them understand lectures. Suggestions for professors included activities for building intercultural communication skills among international and domestic students alike. EAP programs can likewise benefit from prioritizing listening skills, including colloquial expressions and exposure to diverse accents.*