Different platforms, different voices: how a switch to online discussion changes patterns of class participation

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My premise:

Having one’s voice heard in the classroom is a cornerstone of inclusion.
A general question:

How does the learning environment we create affect patterns of student participation?
What I usually do...

★ Students meet with me face-to-face
★ I foster conversations in real time
A week-long diversion...

★ Students post images and words on the LMS over a week
★ All conversation happens online
A specific question:
Do different students show different rates of participation in asynchronous online versus face-to-face formats?
Using available data:

★ Weekly participation grades related to level of contribution to class dialogue

★ Points awarded for posting during the online activity
Trends we might anticipate:

★ “Performance is independent of learning environment”

★ “Optimal learning environment varies radically between learners”

★ “The story is more complex”
“Performance is independent of learning environment”
“Optimal learning environment varies radically between learners”
“The story is more complex”

or

“There is no story”
Maybe students like online learning environments less, but different students don’t seem to have different optimal learning environments?
Overall, there is no trend in this region...
A few students do seem to make much more significant contributions in the online environment.
Clear shortcomings of my data

★ Participation grades are very coarse representations of actual “voices being heard”

★ Online activity grades may not fully capture the level of participation of each student
If we really want to understand how our learning environments affect participation, we need to design studies that generate appropriate data.