An Investigation on Students' Reticence in Iranian University EFL Classrooms

Authors : Azizeh Chalak, Firouzeh Baktash

Abstract : Reticence is a prominent and complex phenomenon which occurs in foreign language classrooms and influences students' oral passivity. The present study investigated the extent in which students experience reticence in the EFL classrooms and explored the underlying factors triggering reticence. The participants were 104 Iranian freshmen undergraduate male and female EFL students, who enrolled in listening and speaking courses, all majoring in English studying at Islamic Azad University Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch and University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. To collect the data, the Reticence Scale-12 (RS-12) questionnaire which measures the level of reticence consisting of six dimensions (anxiety, knowledge, timing, organization, skills, and memory) was administered to the participants. The statistical analyses showed that the reticent level was high among the Iranian EFL undergraduate students, and their major problems were feelings of anxiety and delivery skills. Moreover, the results revealed that factors such as low English proficiency, the teaching method, and lack of confidence contributed to the students' reticence in Iranian EFL classrooms. It can be implied that language teachers' awareness of learners' reticence can help them choose more appropriate activities and provide a friendly environment enhancing hopefully more effective participation of EFL learners. The findings can have implications for EFL teachers, learners and policy makers.