

Pre-service English Teachers' Reticent Beliefs Towards Oral Participation in EAP Classrooms

Ruey Shing Soo¹  · Hock Seng Goh²

Published online: 27 April 2017
© De La Salle University 2017

Abstract The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service English teachers' reticent beliefs towards oral participation in English for Academic Purpose classrooms. To this end, 144 Malaysian pre-service English teachers enrolled in a teacher-training programme participated as respondents in a survey conducted using the Reticent Belief Index. They were all diagnosed with high level of reticence prior to the study. In addition, 24 pre-service teachers, selected randomly from among the survey participants, took part in focus group discussions. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the pre-service English teachers subscribed to eight beliefs that are presumed to be associated with reticent behaviour. Additionally, a newly identified belief, 'Kiasuim' was also found to cause the pre-service teachers being reticent in the class. The results of the study point to the importance of alleviating pre-service teachers' reticent behaviour via a remedial course which incorporates the elements of modifying reticent beliefs.

Keywords Reticent beliefs · Avoidance behaviour · Oral participation · Pre-service English teachers · Kiasuism

✉ Ruey Shing Soo
sooruey1899@yahoo.com
Hock Seng Goh
goh.hs@fbk.upsi.edu.my

¹ Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, University of Selangor, Shah Alam, Malaysia

² Faculty of Languages and Communication, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjung Malim, Malaysia

Introduction

Student oral participation occupies an indisputable position in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms that operate within the communicative approach. In these classrooms, students are always encouraged to participate verbally in various communicative activities in order to enhance their aural-oral competencies and soft skills (Fauziah et al. 2012). Besides pair-work and small group discussion, students' ability to participate in open class discussions is also given great importance. Apart from providing students the opportunity to practise their speaking skills, open class discussion is a platform for teachers to evaluate their students' learning outcomes in class. Thus, in realisation of the importance of talking in second language learning and the fact that students learn better when they are active participants (Cieniewicz 2007), students are always expected to participate in open class discussion. However, engaging in open class discussion can be a difficult and daunting task for many students (Karas et al. 2016).

The phenomenon of student reticence has continuously been reported and has become the focus of classroom-based research. Previous studies have widely examined student reticence from various perspectives, such as speaking anxiety, cultural factor, teacher factor and language proficiency (Delima 2012; Jackson 2002; Jenkins 2008; Liu et al. 2011; Tsui 1996). Most of the researchers predominantly associated linguistic, teacher and cultural factors with ESL students' reticent behaviour in class (Xia 2009). Along this line, the suggestions recommended for student improvement are also based on these factors. However, the existing literature in the field of English language teaching has not extensively examined the cognitive factor of student reticence and remediation. To date,