Insights into classroom silence: perspectives from Japanese EFL and ESL learners

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This paper addresses the issue of Japanese EFL and ESL learners’ classroom silence in cross-cultural settings. The role of silence as an interactional and learning place in L2 learning has been widely discussed, however its positive and negative use and the impact on L2 learning in the classroom is still under-investigated, particularly when the context of learning varies from monolingual to multilingual settings.

The study explores, therefore, how the use of classroom silence by Japanese EFL learners could change or remain the same when they transfer from Japanese EFL to ESL contexts in multilingual settings abroad. The participants in this study are from two different contexts. The first group comprises 20 Japanese EFL students in a Japanese context and their teachers and the second is the 10 ESL students whose length of residence in the UK varies from 6 months to 5 years.

They study adopted two research methodologies. First, adopting a conversational analytic approach, 20 hours’ video-recorded classroom observation has been analysed. Second, participants were interviewed to elicit self-reflections on their use of silence and all the data was qualitatively analysed.

The findings document conflicts between learners’ own interactional norms and those in L2 interaction. They also have pedagogical implications, involving transitional time and space and the way new contexts can generate different perspectives which learners find by themselves. They study also suggests that the emic perspectives of learners can form valuable bridges connecting teachers and learners and also between peers to facilitate classroom interaction. The role of classroom silence was further investigated as an interactional and learning space from cross-cultural and pragmatic points of view in relation to classroom practices. They study also suggests possible pedagogical approaches which could be implemented in relevant and varied learning contexts.

Keywords: ”pedagogy”, ”classroom silence”, ”interaction”.