Abstract

The participation of students in spoken activities within the classroom is an essential part of the aim of many English medium higher education institutions across Asia to enhance the English language proficiency of their undergraduate populations. However, while many researchers and teachers have discussed the alleged reticence of Asian learners, only limited attention has been given to understanding the process of how second language learners participate in oral activities within the undergraduate classroom. This seminar will draw on questionnaire, interview and observational data collected as part of a larger ethnographic study of Chinese-background undergraduates in an English medium of instruction university in Asia. The seminar explores some of the assumptions about Chinese learners’ participation in spoken activities and reveals how one group of freshmen business and economics students participated in situated oral activities within both content and language classrooms. The implications for classroom practices designed to promote student participation in spoken activities and for future research will be considered.

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