

Reticence in Oral English Classrooms: Causes and Consequences

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This paper reports the results of a study on reticence in Mainland Chinese EFL classrooms in different band groups at the tertiary level. By way of survey, observation, interviews, and reflective journals, the study revealed that (1) the students at all proficiency levels self-reported to be willing to engage in speech communications during oral English lessons; nevertheless, in all band groups few students actively responded to their teachers, though most students appeared to be active during pair work; (2) reticence negatively affected the students' performance in oral English; (3) a multitude of variables contributed to student reticence during oral English lessons; and (4) the majority of participants felt helpless about student reticence. Based on these findings, some suggestions and implications are discussed.