Abstract
This article explores Japanese EFL learners' classroom silence in a Japanese EFL context. The existence of silence in second language learning contexts
can be a source of conflict between students and teachers and even among students themselves. It can also be an obstacle to acquiring the target language. In order to tackle this problem and to illustrate the dynamic characteristics of classroom silence, this study draws on insights from the ethnographic approach and interprets the roots, functions, and meanings of silence from a sociocultural perspective. It was conducted through a questionnaire survey which aimed to elicit learners' and teachers' views on silence and also to examine whether a mismatch of perceptions exists. The issues of identity and the role of cultural and contextual factors in the use of silence are discussed and possible pedagogical approaches which could be implemented in varied learning contexts are suggested.

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