

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an extensive overview of the study. It encompasses the background, formulation of the problem, operational definitions, aim of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Students' silence is a common phenomenon in the learning process in EFL classrooms. Min (2016) said that many teachers must face the phenomenon of "student silence," which is inevitable in English classes. Many students are passive in English class and depend heavily on the teacher's explanations. Some students are unwilling to express their ideas in class even though the teacher gives them a great deal of encouragement. The existence of silence in the second language learning context can be a source of conflict between students and teachers or even among students themselves (Juniati et al., 2018). The phenomenon of students' silence can lead to miscommunication between others.

Students' silence occurs not only in regular English classes but also in an English club class at a vocational high school in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. English club is an extracurricular activity chosen by the students' desire to allow them to use English more casually than in regular English classes. In one classroom, it consists of a mixture of grades 11 and 12, with several majors from that vocational school. The material in the English club class is made directly by the English teacher without referring to the school curriculum. The material discussed concerns grammar, vocabulary, asking and giving opinions, daily conversation, speaking practice, and others. In this English club class, students are given material by the teacher using only the board as a learning media in front of the class. When researchers conducted preliminary research (observations), there was uneven student activeness; in a classroom with more than 50 students and one teacher, some students in the front tended to be active until some students dominated the class. The researcher

also found that some students who sat in the middle to the back row tended to be silent during the class. The students only look forward to the teacher, make gestures such as nodding their heads, lack participation in giving opinions, and when they make a sound, the sound is imitated low. Under these conditions, the phenomenon of students' silence in English club class is interesting to observe because the researcher is curious about the factors that influence students to remain silent, especially in speaking and conversation classes, despite their high motivation to join the English club.

Students' silence can be an obstacle to mastering the target language. Language learners must produce the target language to internalize and consolidate their learning (Swain, 1985). When students remain silent, they miss the opportunity to produce the language actively, inhibiting their ability to internalize grammar structures, vocabulary, and communication strategies. Silence is ambiguous (Liu, 2002). Due to the ambiguous perception, students' silence often generates negative judgments. There may be different interpretations of students' silence among teachers. Since the misunderstanding related to the students' silence keeps growing, studying students' silence is interesting to investigate.

Students' silence in EFL classrooms is caused by various reasons, which may differ from one context to another. According to Karim & Shah (2012), students become silent because of the lack of English proficiency and teachers who use too much control in the classroom. Another reason is that EFL students are likely to feel more anxious because they try to use a foreign language but do not use it competently (Hanh, 2020). Therefore, staying silent became their only solution in such a case or when they could not express their ideas. Whatever the reason, classroom participation is an important part of measuring the student's ability.

Related to the students' silence, the previous research conducted by Huynh & Adams (2022) entitled "Vietnamese Teacher Educators' Perceptions of Silence during Online English as a Foreign Language Classes" examined student silence during online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in EFL

classes through teacher perceptions. The previous research used semi-structured interviews to set up regular EFL classrooms at the university level. The previous research highlights a link between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. The results show that silence is experienced by teacher educators in different ways: as a thinking or learning opportunity, as an indication of teacher uncertainty, and as a release of consciousness. In contrast, this study focuses on students' perceptions and explores the factors that cause students' silence in the EFL classroom. The research is devoted to studying one of the English club classes at the vocational high school level. Then, the researcher investigates students' silence based on Yu's (2016) framework, considering students', teachers', and cultural factors.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background above, the researcher addressed the following question: What factors affect students' silence in the English club class at one of the vocational high schools in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia?

1.3 Operational Definitions

To avoid misinterpretation of this research, here are the operational definitions of each keyword:

- 1.3.1 Students' Silence** : Students' silence is a typical persons who still have difficulties conveying their ideas using English as a foreign language, low interaction between students and teachers in the class, only bowing their heads and looking at the teacher. If they make a sound, the sound emitted is low. This students' silence occurred during learning in the English club class, especially during the question-and-answer session.
- 1.3.2 English Club** : An extracurricular activities which students study various aspects of the English language. The English club consists of students who are interested

in learning English outside of regular classes. These clubs focus on improving English language skills, fostering communication, and providing a supportive environment for language learners.

1.3.3 Vocational High School Students : Students who are in grades ten and eleven in vocational high schools and join the English club at one of the vocational high schools in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia

1.4 Aim of the Study

This research focuses on the factors that affect students' silence in an English club class based on vocational high school students' points of view.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Use

This research enriches the theories related to students' silence based on the evidence from vocational high school students.

1.5.2 Practical Use

This research provides the information for English teachers about students' silence based on the evidence from vocational high school students.

1.5.3 Empirical Use

This research provides the researcher about a deeper understanding of the factors that influence students' silence based on the evidence from vocational high school students.