

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In an educational setting, it is commonly found that there are many kinds of student characteristics in the classroom, such as active students, passive students, and silent students. One of these characteristics is referred to as silent students. According to Levinson (1983), silence is the absence of vocalization. In his view, silence is commonly understood as not making any sound in specific situations. Silence in the classroom has become a phenomenon and a barrier to student-teacher interaction (Zhouyuan, 2016). For example, in a senior high school in Garut, many students remain silent in class. They are reluctant to participate in class interactions despite teachers' best efforts to engage them in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom activities and improve their teaching efficacy. Furthermore, Zhouyuan (2016) argued that most teachers face silent students and need help motivating students to participate actively in an academic atmosphere. In fact, students' silence becomes widespread in class, frequently leading to communication failure between teachers and students and among students themselves.

Silence has been viewed and documented as bad behavior in some educational circumstances. According to Tang et al. (2020), silence is when the students do not actively participate in classroom interaction for a long time. The reasons for students' silence may vary, such as lack of confidence, the belief that learning English is difficult, hesitancy to speak in front of others, different levels of language proficiency, and fear of making mistakes (Zafarina, 2022). In language learning, the interaction between students and teachers is very important (Wang, 2016), so silence can be seen as a negative phenomenon. Learning outcomes will be hard to reach without active interaction among students and teachers. In reality, the students did not participate or

make vocal contributions from the beginning to the end of the learning process. Additionally, students did not answer the teachers' questions or respond when the teacher asked them to express their opinions, except when the students asked about their personalities.

Those conditions make the phenomenon of classroom silence interesting to observe. Silence in the classroom has become a common phenomenon and an obstacle to the interaction between teachers and students (Zhouyuan, 2016). Learners' intentional absence of participation has challenged English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to encourage students to participate more actively to develop their English communication ability (Zafarina, 2020). Students' silence becomes a crucial issue influencing their language and academic ability. Furthermore, EFL teachers realize that students' silence in the classroom should be resolved. Research about students' silence has been firmly established previously. For instance, Hanh (2020) examines the reasons behind students' silence in the classroom or lack of verbal participation and offers several suggestions and solutions for improving class discussion. Zhouyuan (2016) explored the factors of silence in college English classrooms. Besides, Wang and Moskal (2019) explore second-language postgraduate international students' classroom experiences and voices behind the silence at a United Kingdom university. The results indicate that linguistic and cultural factors significantly affect students' restraint in class. Furthermore, a study by Singh et al. (2021) found that some conflicts based on caste differences and culture cause silence in the classroom.

Furthermore, studies investigating the reasons behind the silence of Indonesian EFL students at the senior high school level still need to be explored. While most previous studies focus on the university level, this present study sets out to study at the senior high school level. Therefore, this topic deserves more attention, especially in Indonesia. This present study intends to fill this gap with an in-depth analysis of why

learners are silent in the EFL context. It hopes that this study will assist Indonesian EFL teachers in devising effective strategies to deal with silent learners and create an active classroom.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

This study focuses on answering the following questions:

1. What are the reasons behind the students' silence in the EFL classroom?
2. What strategies does the teacher use to break students' silence in the EFL classroom?

1.3 Operational Definitions

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

- 1.3.1 Students' silence** : Students' silence is a condition in which students are quiet, interact little with teachers in the classroom, are unwilling to answer questions from the teacher, and do not make vocal contributions to the learning process.
- 2.3.1 Teacher Strategies** : Teacher strategies are the methods, procedures, techniques, and processes teachers use during instruction in learning.

1.4 Aim(s) of the Research

Based on a research statement, this study investigated the reasons behind the students' silence in the EFL Classroom and the teacher's strategies to break students' silence in the English classroom.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The findings of this research aims to give a contribution to:

- 1.5.1 Empirical use** : This research will provide empirical insight into the existing research on the same issues regarding students' silence in English classrooms.
- 1.5.2 Theoretical use** : This research will expand the current knowledge about why Indonesian students are silent in the English classroom.
- 1.5.3 Practical use** : This research's findings will give teachers an overview of why Indonesian students remain silent in the English classroom and assist Indonesian EFL teachers in implementing effective strategies to deal with these silent learners and create an active classroom.