

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical review related to the research. It will discuss silence in the classroom, factors contributing to students' Silence, and teachers' strategies for breaking students' Silence. It also discusses previous relevant studies related to the research.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Silence in the Classroom

Classroom interaction plays a vital role in improving students' English proficiency. Teachers and students participate in all teaching and learning activities related to old and new knowledge during English teaching. However, in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms, most teachers must deal with the phenomenon of students keeping silent in school, and they also need help to motivate students to engage in the classroom environment actively. They know the value of language communicative ability, even though most students do not participate in classroom activities. *Silence* is a phenomenon that always exists in-class interaction, especially in an EFL context.

Researchers have discovered several definitions of Silence in the classroom. According to Levinson (1983), Silence has no vocalization. In his view, Silence is commonly understood as not making sound in certain areas. Granger (2004) defined students' Silence as "the mere absence of speech." Liu (2002) argued that Silence in the classroom is an absence or lack of communication. In line with (white, 1996, p. 37), Silence is the absence of talk, not the absence of thought (as cited in Zhouyuan, 2016). Sometimes, students need time to think about answering the questions, such as when asked for their viewpoints.

According to Baurain (2011), Silence in the classroom is defined as absence, withdrawal, or withholding, perhaps as the result of disinterest, frustration, boredom, or force. Besides, (Giles et al., 1992) stated that Silence is "interpreted as lack of interest, an unwillingness to communicate, anxiety, shyness, and lack of competence" (as cited in Tatar, 2005). Silence is generally considered a student's negative response to the teachers (Min, 2016). Based on those definitions, Silence is students' behavior where they do not communicate verbally, indicating several factors such as anxiety, lack of confidence, shyness, reflection, etc.

In classroom interaction, Silence means being quiet and not making vocal contributions. It also refers to reluctance to answer questions unless specifically asked and lack of interaction between students and teachers. In discussion activities, students are often unwilling to speak out and share their ideas. These students rarely participate in classroom interaction, resulting in limited or nonexistent interaction within the class.

2.1.2 Factors Contributing to Students' Silence

The factors that cause students' Silence in the learning process are varied. Based on previous studies, researchers have found various reasons related to students' Silence. The causes of students' classroom silence are personal and impersonal, as well as linguistic and psychological factors such as students' personalities and language proficiency, teachers' methodologies, lesson contents, and class cooperation (Hanh, 2020). According to Tuyen (2018), three factors lead to Silence in the classroom: students' lack of confidence and knowledge, personal beliefs and cultural differences, and lastly, the teacher's teaching methods.

According to Liu (2000), Asian students are closely related to multiple factors distributed across five major categories. The first is cognitive factors, which refer to a lack of background knowledge and prior experience. Second, pedagogical factors come from the teachers and environment, such as teaching style, lesson type, and class

size. Third, affective factors refer to "participants' personality traits, motivation and attitude, anxiety and risk-taking" (Liu, 2000). Fourth, socio-cultural factors refer to cultural background and beliefs. Finally, *linguistic factors* are the participants' linguistic ability and communicative competence (Liu, 2000).

In addition, another researcher found that many factors can be assumed to be the root of Silence, such as linguistic and physiological, and some other impersonal elements. From the physiological perspective, second language anxiety is one of the critical contextual factors that can affect Silence (Nakane, 2007; Hanh, 2020). However, Teng (2020) stated that negative feedback experiences, peer pressure, worthlessness, inclination toward the correct answers, and lack of confidence are the same major factors that lead to classroom silence. Students often feel reluctant to speak in class because they receive negative peer feedback.

Silence does not always mean non-communication. As stated by Saylag (2014), Silence, which can be seen as a threat, may also have some advantages for students when learning and producing. Students need Silence to think of what they have learned and how they can make it. It is in human nature to think for a while before taking action for something or talking about something. The study by Liu and Littlewood (1997), as cited in Ping (2010), found that most Chinese students were accustomed to minimal speaking opportunities at school, where 'listening to the teacher' was their most frequent classroom experience. This was because they believed it showed respect towards their teacher. In other words, students who tend to be silent in class see their silence as part of their culture and as an appropriate behavior and way to participate. Besides, students' Silence is expected and stimulated as a sign of respect for the teachers and classmates (Liu, 2002). On the other hand, Harumi and King (2020) define students' Silence as "a voluntary productive, communicative resource able to enhance L2 learning opportunities". Instead of being interpreted as a lack of thought or communication, pupils' Silence should be seen as another kind of communication.

2.1.3 Teacher Strategies for Breaking Students' Silence

Students' Silence in the EFL classroom is a problem for EFL teachers; some factors can trigger it. Therefore, every EFL teacher must find ways and strategies to help break their Silence. Several studies have explored teachers' use of various intervention strategies in response to different classroom behaviors, including Silence in the classroom. The previous research about some factors that can break students' Silence in EFL classrooms come from Zhouyuan (2016) stated that there are several strategies to break students' Silence in EFL classrooms across three major categories:

1. Building up Students Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is the most important aspect of language learning. A Lack of confidence can help students learn properly (Zhouyuan, 2016). It can be challenging for EFL teachers to enhance their confidence and help them participate more actively in classroom activities. In building self-confidence, students should have a positive attitude toward studying English; teachers should develop a positive learning attitude and make the students believe they can study English well. Teachers need to persuade students not to fear making mistakes, and teachers should express tolerance and consideration for the students so that they can dispel their fear and anxiety in the classroom. Only when students feel confident will they participate in classroom activities?

2. Improving the teaching methods

Teaching methods have a great effect and play an important role in the student's performance in the classroom. Teachers should have a correct judgment of students' proficiency. Teachers should motivate and challenge the students to answer questions and give positive feedback. With positive feedback, students will be encouraged to participate in classroom interaction. Furthermore, interaction between teachers and

students is very important in classroom activity. More activities, such as group work, discussion, pair work, and role-play, should be employed. Improving various effective teaching methods can allow the students to participate in classroom activities so that Silence can be broken.

3. Creating Harmonious Classroom Atmosphere

The classroom atmosphere is a basic requirement for class interaction. Teachers must give students more time and freedom to participate to create a harmonious classroom. The role of the teacher is not only to facilitate learning but also to organize, instruct, help, and evaluate students. Teachers and students should feel respected and connected. In a harmonious atmosphere, students' nervousness and anxiety in participating in class activities are reduced.

2.2 Study of Relevant Research

This section will review some related studies in the same field: students' Silence. There are many studies conducted that focus on examining students' Silence in the English Classroom. Hanh (2020) studied students' Silence in the EFL classroom. The study investigates the factors of students' Silence and how the silent behavior of students can promote their learning. The subject of this study consists of 85 English-major students at a foreign language university in Hanoi, Vietnam. The data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The study's findings revealed various factors of students' classroom silence: personal and interpersonal, as well as linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and ungrammatical expression. Psychological factors include lack of confidence, shyness, and feeling of losing face or sounding silly before their teacher and classmates. There are also several other factors, such as language proficiency, students' personality, and class cooperation, teachers' methodology, and lesson contents.

According to Choi (2015), two Korean students tend to remain silent in US graduate program classes. The study was conducted at a large urban university in the US. The participants were two Korean graduate students, one female and one male. The data was collected through audiotaped recording and semi-structured interview transcripts. The study's findings showed that the reasons for Silence were a lack of speaking proficiency relevant to academic work, the influence of Korean manners, face-saving, and a lack of background and content knowledge. The study stated that their low proficiency in English affected their Silence in class.

Furthermore, Harumi (2010) studied the classroom silence of Japanese students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in cross-cultural settings in the UK for over a decade as part of her doctoral dissertation in the late 1990s. The study found three factors that could influence classroom silence: linguistic (limited vocabulary, expression, grammar, etc.), psychological (shyness, boredom, lack of confidence, etc.), and socio-cultural (Confucian ethics, classroom culture, etc.) factors.

Another study by Shan (2020) investigated Silence in English classrooms in college. This study focused on the two agents in classroom interaction: the teachers and the students. This study aimed to discover the causes and further explore the implications for college English teaching. The study found that the aspects leading to classroom silence come from teachers, students, and Chinese culture. This study found many elements leading to classroom silence, such as students' learning motivation, language proficiency, personality, teaching material, and teaching method. Furthermore, Chinese culture also causes students to be silent.

According to Hamouda (2013), it is indicated that a considerable number of students were reluctant to respond to the teachers and remained silent in oral English language classrooms due to many causes, such as low English proficiency, fear of speaking in front of the whole class, fear of negative teacher traits, negative teacher

evaluation, shyness, lack of confidence and preparation and fear of making mistakes. The study also indicates the same strategies students use to participate in class, such as improving their vocabulary, speaking and building their self-confidence, not fearing making mistakes, preferring the same before class begins, rehearsing what they say, and preferring the ideas and questions and others.