

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical review related to the research. It will discuss silence in the classroom, factors affecting student's silence, synchronous learning, and virtual classroom. It also discusses the previous relevant studies related to the research.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Silence in the Classroom

2.1.1.1 Definition of the Silence in the Classroom

The students' involvement in the classrooms are varied. Liu (2002) argued that there are four forms of student involvement in the classroom, namely: a) total integration is the students who are actively participating in the classroom, they know exactly when to speak up in the class, on what and how. b) conditional participation as a classroom communication pattern refers to students who participate in class based on a number of socio-cultural, cognitive, affective, and environmental factors. These students may have a high level of motivation to attend in class, but their actual participation and interaction with classmates and teachers is limited. These students are still figuring out when and how to talk in class and about subjects. c) marginal interaction refers to students who are usually very attentive listeners, but rarely speak in class. Their class participation is peripheral, and is usually compensated for by attentive listening, notes, and group discussions after class. d) silent observation fear with students' withdrawal from oral class, and their acceptance of what is being taught or the class. Students use a variety of compensation strategies (e.g. recording tapes, taking

notes, or relying on small group discussions after class) to help digest and ascertain what is being communicated in class. The various factors underlying their silence in the classroom are complex, and cause misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

Silence is a phenomenon that always exists in class interaction especially in EFL class, and it is ambiguous. Thoughts and feelings arise in a quiet person, but they remain inaccessible and secret. A word or phrase offers some clues as to its meaning, but its meaning of silence depends on the interpreter's sensitivity to understand. There are several definitions of silence in the classroom which are found by the researcher. Liu (2002) viewed silence in the classroom as absence or lack of communication. Silence often focuses on the border between thoughts and speech or between thoughts and words, as Zhouyuan (2016) argued that "silence reflects the noiseless non-verbal communicative behavior that students act in the teaching process in the classroom" (p. 106). Another theory explained by Remedios, Clark and Hawthorne (2008), the concept of 'silence' among students does not always refer to total calm but is also used loosely to show minimal talk during class discussions.

Giles et al (1992) stated that silence is "interpreted as lack of interest; an unwillingness to communicate, anxiety, shyness, and lack of communicative competence" (as cited in Tatar, 2005. p. 285). Bruneau (1973) stated that one of the forms of silence is interactive silence. It is employed "to acquire attention, reflection, interpretation, and judgment from others, to provide space for thinking, responses, or appreciation, and even to establish or prevent

development of relationships” (as cited in Bao, 2019, p. 27). Based on those definitions, it is understood that silence is a behavior that often occurs to students where they do not communicate verbally which indicates several things such as shyness, anxiety, reflection, provides space for thinking, responses, and others. In addition, scholar efforts have been made to see the silence and speak in a more complex way treating them as sound and silence.

Instead of, in online learning, a possible non-participation assumption is that related computer problems, computer users are not open enough to share the same vulnerabilities or openness as those who have posted to online forums; despite being able to read everything that was posted, he refused to contribute to the discussion (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2007). In addition, the researchers explained that the perception of silence as non-participation in online encounters is interpreted as a consequence of exclusion and silencing, for instance, the virtual classroom does not erase concerns about powerlessness and marginalization of some groups.

In the context of the interaction, silence is defined as the condition of being quiet, that is not making any comment or vocal contribution to the learning process unless specifically asked. These students seldom participated in the classroom interaction and, thus, their total amount of participation in joint meaning making was very low. A rare chance of silent participants who were involved in whole class discussions were situations where the teacher asked them bilaterally for information, views and opinions. Therefore, this student can be categorized as silent members of the learning community who do not

participate in multilateral discussions with the other members of the learning community unless prompted to do so.

2.1.1.2 Factors Affecting Student's Silence

The factors that cause student's silence when the learning process is varied. Based on previous studies, the researcher found various reasons related to students' silence. Silence might indicate several reasons, such as unspoken opinion, truths, or reality that can be seen or cannot be seen (Baurain (2011)). In some cases, it often happens that students think about what they want to speak but do not know how to speak it or are not ready to speak whatever the reason. While, Hang & Bell (2015) said that in western countries, students remain silent when the student "did not hear the teacher, does not know the answer to the teacher's question, is shy, lacking confidence or is deliberately refusing to engage with the teacher" (p. 765).

Liu (2000) found that Asian student's silence is closely related to multiple factors distributed across five major categories:

1. Cognitive factors

Student's silence is closely related to multiple factors, one of them comes from cognitive factors. Cognitive factors refer to the cognitive aspects of information and knowledge, and cognitive learning styles and strategies of the participants used to (Liu, 2000). Being textbook-dependent, and only asking questions related to texts, lack of background knowledge or schemata and work experience, the interest level in, and knowledge about, the subject

matter under discussion are the cognitive factors that contribute to student's silence.

2. Pedagogical factors

However, factors that contribute to student's silence do not only come from students themselves. It can come from the teacher or the environment. As Liu (2000) explained that pedagogical factors refer to the educational experience of learners in terms of a teacher's teaching style, class size and composition, as well as an educational environment. He noted that the teaching style of the individual instructor is an important factor influencing the students' oral class participation mode.

3. Affective factors

Affective factors refer to "participants' personality traits, motivation and attitude, anxiety, and risk-taking" (Liu, 2000, pp.164-165). Positive perceptions towards oral classroom participation can be related with students' extroverted personality, risk-taking, feeling making mistakes is unavoidable, and concern about the professor's impression on students based on participation modes. On the other hand, affective factors come into play when participation is perceived negatively. For instance, some participants considered themselves introverted, having a lack of confidence in speaking, shy in nature and passive in communication, over-relying on native speakers of English, or feeling overwhelmed by native English speakers in class, thus causing inhibition and or intimidation.

4. Socio-cultural factors

Socio-cultural factors refer to cultural beliefs, values, and moral judgments that are influenced by their cultural background and previous education in their home country (Liu, 2000). Factors such as being a good student means taking notes and listening to the teacher carefully without asking questions as a sign of respect for teachers, lack of participation experiences in their own countries, discouragement of oral participation in the native culture, over-reliance on the L1 community, viewing class time too valuable to ask questions, and to save face by avoiding mistakes inhibited the participants' positive perceptions towards oral classroom participation. In spite of this, a students' belief that questions and problems shall be resolved through self-study and lesson preparation is one of the debilitating factors (affect negative perceptions) in the socio-cultural domain.

5. Linguistic factors

Linguistic factors can be defined as the participants' linguistic ability and communicative competence (Liu, 2000). Liu associated student's active participation modes and positive insights towards participation with their good English speaking skills while student's poor English skills disadvantaged.

Moreover, Liu (2000) divided all the factors in each category into three kinds according to their functions, namely, facilitative (factors that affect positive perceptions of oral class participation), debilitating (factors that affect negative perceptions of oral participation), and neutral

(factors that can lead to positive or negative perceptions of oral class participation and their mode of participation).

In addition, another researcher found that many factors can be assumed as a root of silence, such as linguistic and physiological factors and some other impersonal elements as well. Student's lack of proficiency in English was a major barrier to participation (Nakane, 2007; Hanh, 2020). Additionally, from the physiological perspective, second language anxiety is one of the important contextual factors which can affect silence (Nakane, 2007; Hanh, 2020). Besides that, Hamouda (2013) found that many factors that caused students to be reluctant to respond to the teacher remained silent such as fear of speaking in front of others, low English proficiency, lack of confidence and preparation, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and negative evaluations. Furthermore, Tang et al. (2020) argued that negative feedback experiences, peer pressure, worthlessness, inclination toward right answers, and lacking confidence are some major intentions that drove into classroom silence. Moreover, students often feel reluctant to actively speak in class because they often get negative feedback from peers. The experience of being laughed after they give wrong answer questions, so they feel that their answers are not valuable and they become insecure to actively speak in class

However, Bista (2012) stated that international students are silent because of the following reasons: a) Learners view silence as a strength to build them up the ability to listen effectively and have a clear view of other people's hearts, b) Students who are silent lack sufficient language proficiency to express their thoughts and opinions

clarity, c) students distinguish silence as a classroom requirement because of the teacher-centered pedagogies in which the teacher expect them not to speak, d) Asian culture admits silence as a form of “wisdom” and self-control or respect inside the class. The focus of research on silence in the classroom has mostly addressed the negative characteristics of silence. Most silence in class creates negative perception and interpretation.

In particular, silence does not always mean non-communication, as Saylag (2014) found that silence is needed by the students to think of what they have learned and how they can produce. The researcher said that thought for a while is human nature, before taking an action for something or talking about something. Jaworski and Sachdev (1998) explained that learners tend to view their own unmarked silence in the classroom positively, and consider it to be “a facilitative device enabling students to gain access, organize and absorb new material” (p. 286). Moreover, Tatar (2005) argued that silence does not always indicate a lack of knowledge or interest, and for non-native students, and it may be a deliberate choice. Theriault (2019) commented on such beliefs:

The benefits students gained from the silent modes of participation and the varied nature of student participation, for example: students expanded background knowledge through online searches, utilized course materials to keep engaged with the class, and students did physical actions like nodding or shrugging to demonstrate their attention and responsiveness (p. 12).

In the classroom setting, students’ silence is expected and stimulated as a sign of respect for the teachers and classmates (Liu, 2002). A large number of socio-

cultural factors, such as keeping quiet in class as an indication to show respect for teacher, trying to resolve questions through attentive listening and through lesson preparation, or maintaining harmony by holding off one's different opinions, are all very crucial in shaping students' perceptions towards oral classroom participations, which help produce more listeners than speakers in class (Liu, 2000). Besides that, Liu (2002) found silent behaviors in classrooms, to varying degrees, are constrained by numerous functions. The first function is silence to show the student's appreciation of the high quality of the questions that demands more time for the student's to come up with an appropriate answer. The second function is that students tend to use silence in class as a shield to protect themselves through invisibility, or as an expression of congruence and harmony with the majority. The third is silence performs as a judgmental function, an instance to express agreement or disagreement with what someone else has said.

Thus, silence in the classroom is not indicative of a lack of participation, as Tatar (2009) mentioned dimensions of silence that were experienced by non-native English-speaking students. These included:

Silence as (a) face-saving strategy, (b) a means of participation, (c) a reaction to others' contributions, (d) a sign of respect for authority and concern for others, and (e) the product of a feeling of inarticulacy (p. 288).

In addition, Nakane (2007) stated that in social interaction, silence is a sign of politeness. It can be used to avoid unwanted imposition, confrontation or

embarrassment in social encounters which may have not been avoided if verbal expressions had been used.

In short, silence in the classroom is caused by multiple reasons which may vary from one context to another. Whereas, silence in the classroom cannot be categorized as negative behavior, because many factors of students' silence affect positive perceptions of oral classroom participation, and it can be as varied as students' participation.

2.1.2 Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning refers to any type of learning in which learners and instructors are in the same place, different places, at the same time, so that learning takes place (Shi, 2010; Finol, 2020). This includes in-person classes, live online meetings where entire classes or smaller groups come together, and it allows students to interact directly with other students and with the teacher. In synchronous learning, students usually go through the learning path together, convoyed by a teacher who can provide support while students complete assignments and activities.

Synchronous learning allows students to instantly communicate with their peers and instructors. It supports learners interacting with lecturers and provides feedback among themselves directly (Giesbers, Rienties, Tempelaar, & Gijsselaers, 2014; Francescucci and Rohani 2019; Lin and Gao (2020). In the synchronous online course, the faculty and students can be spoken to each other using text, video, and audio and emotional expression using emoticons, the students were able to ask questions, receive feedback from the instructor the right way, discuss and share ideas and resources with other students synchronously. Besides that, students felt brave and relaxed to ask and answer questions in

synchronous courses, also students were more actively participating in-class learning and discussion.

The development and adoption of synchronous virtual learning environments are justified in many ways such as “advanced collaboration and communication, convenience, efficiency, user control, personalization, everywhere, task orientation, and the timeliness of learning and teaching” (Racheva, 2018, p. 020032-2). Furthermore, Xie, Liu, Bhairma, and Shim (2019) said that empowering students to keep away from the feeling of isolation or separation since they are in communication with others all through the learning procedure is the fundamental advantage of synchronous learning.

However, there are several challenges in applying synchronous learning as Xie et.al. (2018) explained that in synchronous learning students would need to set aside a particular time slot with a specific end goal to go to a live teaching session or online course progressively, so it is not adaptable regarding the time, and it may not be perfect for the individuals who have time conflicts in fixed timetable. Besides that, the bandwidth of the internet and its pedagogy requires a precisely formulated design of instruction are the challenges of synchronous e-learning (Xie et.al., 2018). Other challenges described by Lin and Gao (2020) are learning progress, distraction, and technology issues. For example, students complained about the various learning management systems (LMS) they need to use for different subjects, and some of them were not familiar with using the LMS (Lin & Gao, 2020). Therefore, Xie et.al. (2018) mention disadvantages of synchronous e-learning include “the same learning pace, less attention, and depending on the quality of instructor” (p. 272).

2.1.3 Virtual Classroom

A virtual classroom is an online learning environment that supports direct interaction between the tutor and the learners as they are participating in learning activities, and it is in many ways, similar to a physical classroom (Racheva, 2018). For example, both physical and virtual classrooms allow for interaction with instructors and peers, guided exercise to motivate and increase student learning, and direct feedback. Therefore, Martin, Parker, and Deale (2012) define virtual classrooms as:

Online environments that allow instructors and students to interact online synchronously, through audio, video, text chat, interactive whiteboard, application sharing, instant polling, and other features, as if they were standing face to face in the classroom (p. 228).

In addition, Xie et.al. (2018) stressed that the synchronous virtual classroom is “a setting for teachers and students to associate and work together in real-time” (p. 271). Virtual classroom technologies are “a cost-effective method for synchronous delivery in the online course, which was initially made possible through video conferencing technologies (Martin, Parker, & Deale, 2012). Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that a virtual classroom is an online teaching and learning environment in which settings involve live interaction between instructors and participants. In this setting, teachers and students can present course materials, engage and interact with other members of the virtual class, and work in groups together.

So far, the ability to reach lecturers and students anywhere and anytime is the difference that underlies virtual classroom and face-to-face learning. In a virtual classroom, students can communicate and interact with teachers and other students at the same time but in different places. Compared to face-to-face learning, virtual classrooms provide a variety of benefits for

students. Racheva (2018) lists the major benefits of using the synchronous virtual classroom as follows: enhanced learning opportunities, more focused learning, creates a favorable space for the active participation and engagement of the learners, immediate feedback, learners feel more confident to share opinions, ask questions, and actively participate in the learning activities.

According to Martin, Parker, and Deale (2012), the features available in the synchronous virtual classroom have an important role in upholding interaction. Most of the virtual classroom technologies have a content frame to share the instructors' power points, tools for educators to write, breakout rooms for group activities, text chat that the instructors and the students within the class can interact using words and emoticons, and audio to speak via microphone with the audience. The instructors can administer students' polls, share their desktops, or can allow students to share their own desktops. Besides that, a webcam can be used with a stable internet connection, so students and instructors can see each other. Some of the common virtual classrooms available today are Google Meet, Canvas, Zoom, Skype, etc.

2.2 Study of the Relevant Research

This part will review some related studies in the same field, that is, student's silence. There are many studies conducted that focus on examining student's silence in the English classroom both on online learning or face-to-face learning. Previous research on silence in asynchronous and synchronous text-based, online communication conducted by Zembylas and Vrasidas (2007). This study takes an ethnographic perspective in examining how learners and instructors in two online courses (asynchronous and synchronous) use and interpret silence. This study found the meaning and the forms that silence takes in text-based, online environments both synchronous and asynchronous included the following:

1. Silence as non-participation

However, in a synchronous online communication students revealed that they did not like the fact that students were “forced” to follow a timetable in their online communication, the line of conversation just sort of failed, the flow of discussion was frustrating and it’s not interesting.

2. Silence as confusion

Zembylas and Vrasidas (2007) study found that synchronous online interaction was very likely to lead to confusion and misunderstandings. Based on the interview result of this study, online discussions are not as smooth as face-to-face discussions. There are more misunderstandings and the interaction slows down as a result of online silence.

3. Silence as marginalization

Zembylas and Vrasidas (2007) exploration found that all participants were, for the most part, inclusive, supportive, and receptive to others’ ideas. Some students were willing to be critical and to challenge others’ beliefs and ideas. Sometimes they feel intimidated because they do not see their ideas being valued by some of their online partners.

4. Silence as thoughtful reflection

The final theme that emerges from the analysis is the idea of silence as a reflection. In some circumstances, the opportunity to reflect on a post, without the intimidating physical presence of the other person, offers important quality aspects of online learning, such as convenience and openness. Such opportunities do not always exist in face-to-face interactions. In this sense, the use of silence in the context of online education can be constructive and allow time for deeper reflection on what is being learned.

In addition, Choi (2015) has focused on the social phenomena of two Korean students currently attending graduate school in an urban setting. The study was conducted at an outsized urban university in the US, known for its diverse student population in terms of ethnicity and its high proportion

of international students. The study found that the Korean graduate students perceived themselves to be the quietest in the classroom and stayed discreet, themselves attributing this silence to poor speaking proficiency in their area of studies, Korean classroom mannerisms, face-saving, and content knowledge.

Along with this, Zhouyuan (2016) analyzes the main factors of classroom silence from three aspects such as student factors, teacher factors, and cultural factors. According to Zhouyuan (2016), there are two aspects of classroom silence that come from student factors:

The first is a lack of confidence. In this case, students think that their English is too poor to take an active part in Classroom activities. Thus, English students are afraid of being laughed at by their teachers or classmates for making mistakes and then they keep silent in class. Second, students' personality, gender, and motivation (p. 107).

Liu (2000) shows that gender and personality have a great influence on participation modes because female students and introverted students have a stronger propensity to keep silent.

Besides student factors, the main factors of student silence also come from the teacher's factor. Zhouyuan (2016) found that the traditional teaching method is the main factor of students' silence. The researcher said in the obsolete teaching model, the teachers occupy most of the time giving lectures. Hence, the students should be listening to the teacher quietly, and dare not interrupt teachers or challenge teachers' authority. They are accustomed to the teacher-centered model, and they will not ask questions even when they have difficulties in comprehending some key points (Zhouyuan, 2016). The teacher traits also influence in encouraging participation among students (Mustapha, Rahman, & Yunus, 2010). The teacher who does not ask questions to those silent students often maintains silence (Bista, 2012). However, students were more inclined to participate when the lecturers called them by name, asked exploring questions, and participated in positive nonverbal behaviors such as smiling and nodding to

acknowledge their answers (Mustapha, et al., 2010). Besides that, students are motivated to participate more in the class, when the lecturer is enthusiastic, supportive, and patient (Mustapha, 2010).

Hanh (2020) conducted a study on student's silence in the EFL classroom. The subject of this study was 85 English-major students at a university of foreign languages in Hanoi, Vietnam. The data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The result of Hanh's study indicates various causes of student's classroom silence, among others are: 1) linguistic factors: lack of vocabulary, poor pronunciation, ungrammatical expressions, and low-level proficiency. 2) Psychological factors: lack of confidence, shyness, particularly students' feeling of losing face or sounding silly before their teacher and classmates. 3) Several other factors, such as inadequate time for information processing, turn-taking, unfamiliar topics and unsuitable teacher-centered teaching method.

Furthermore, Shan (2020) investigated classroom silence in college English classes in China. The study focused on the two agents in classroom interaction, namely, the teacher and the students. The study found that aspects leading to classroom silence come from teachers, students, and Chinese culture. Shan (2020) explained that a student's personality, student's language proficiency, and student's learning motivation are the most influential factors leading to silence in the teaching and learning process. Besides that, Shan (2020) found that teaching methods and teaching material are a salient part of classroom interaction. Furthermore, according to Shan (2020), Chinese culture also caused student's silence. The effect is discussed from the face shield. The research finding showed that students are not sure if they should discuss if their arguments differ from those of the teacher (Shan, 2020). Shan (2020) explained that the face is rooted in Chinese culture and defined as social value, which is concerned with negotiation and balance between self-evaluation. Based on the data collected in the study, some students tended to be silent to avoid insults,

mistakes, and shame. Some students with good grades also did not want to answer questions to avoid being conspicuous among their classmates. Language learners must take the risk of making mistakes.

However, Shan (2020) suggested several measures for teacher and students to break the silence, among others are:

Seize the opportunity and call the students by name, adopt a variety of classroom activities and liven up the classroom atmosphere, cultivate students' self-correction ability and give them more positive evaluation, create more opportunities for collaborative learning and reduce students' learning anxiety, and establish a good relationship between teachers and student (pp. 146-147).

Another study conducted by Tang et al. (2020) investigated the intentions that drive Chinese students into silent learners and the contribution of the previous schooling experiences to the intention that drive Chinese students into silent learners. This study was conducted in an urban, lower-middle-class elementary school, with roughly 50% migrating from rural areas with their parents. Surveys and in-depth interviews with Chinese 6th graders were used to gather the data. The study showed that a variety of schooling experiences can lead to intentions that drove some Chinese students to become silent students, and specific personal schooling experiences shaped the silence rather than general Chinese personality or cultural characteristics (Tang et al., 2020) Besides, teacher abuse power plays a role in classroom silence (Tang et al., 2020).

In summary, many scholars have investigated the factors of student's silence in the English classroom, and they found various factors. Most silent studies take place in face-to-face learning (conventional classroom). Furthermore, reviewing the current reality where learning is held online, and the form of learning switches from face-to-face learning to synchronous virtual classrooms may also contribute to various factors. Therefore, there is a need for studies to investigate the factors of student's silence in the synchronous virtual classroom. The objective of this study is

to investigate the factors affecting students' silence in the synchronous virtual classroom.