

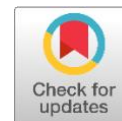
# Silent struggles: Analyzing the causes of student silence in Yogyakarta's EFL classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

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This study uses qualitative research methods to investigate silence among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in a high school in Yogyakarta. This study was conducted at a private high school in Yogyakarta, with the participants being students of classes 10th and 11th. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to understand the underlying causes of students' silence in English as a foreign language class. After the observation was completed, the researchers used the interview technique as the final stage to collect information directly from the students. At the interview stage, the researchers asked 8 students as research subjects, 4 females and four males, with 8 questions that had been prepared. Interviews were conducted openly to obtain valid information for the needs of researchers. The results showed that fear of making mistakes, introverted and shy personality, low self-confidence, unpredictable dynamics emotions, low English proficiency, lack of interest in EFL classes, unsupportive classroom atmosphere, traditional teaching methods, and comprehension difficulties experienced by students contributed significantly to students' silence. Meanwhile, the most inhibiting factors were students' attitudes towards factors that hinder learning in the EFL classroom, including demanding teacher behavior, cultural beliefs, anxiety, and tolerance of ambiguity. This study highlights the importance of fostering a more supportive and interactive classroom environment to encourage active participation and improve language learning outcomes among EFL students.



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## 1. Introduction

Silence among students in the classroom, especially for those learning English as a foreign language (EFL), is a phenomenon that presents serious obstacles to language learning and the development of practical communication skills. Given that English is a required subject in senior high schools in Indonesia, policymakers and educators working to improve the quality of English instruction must comprehend the causes of students' reluctance. Student silence facilitates EFL students' success, with pedagogical implications for teachers and teacher trainers (Hu, 2021). Many researchers argue that silence in EFL classes seriously threatens the success of language learning (Hanh, 2020). The absence and lack of participation of students in this class is a challenge, especially for English teachers in EFL classes, to help students become more active and improve their abilities in English.

Listening and paying attention to the words uttered by silent students about their silence is one method to assist them. It might be equally as vital to observe the reasons behind students' quiet as it is to hear their words. Investigating the causes of EFL learners' quiet conduct is so crucial. Silence is still a little-studied issue, but as an oral competency value in EFL studies, it has attracted greater attention recently. This context informs the examination of Indonesian EFL high school students' quiet behavior in this study. This study critically investigates the reasons behind students' quiet in EFL classes after determining the general pattern of student silence. Silence becomes a crucial issue that can be a source of conflict in classrooms and an obstacle to acquiring the target language (Harumi, 2011). It refers to the condition when learners do not participate actively in classroom interaction over the long term (Tang et al., 2020).

According to Liu and Jackson (2011), silence is an integral part of non-verbal communication and is translated as a time to think and respect the other person. In Asia, silence is often interpreted as negative, regardless of the cause. Therefore, Asian students' silence in the classroom in the US is frequently misunderstood and viewed as a lack of oral participation with classmates and the teacher (Nakane, 2007). Karas (2016) suggests distinguishing the constructs or concepts of silence and reticence due to their interchangeable use in second/foreign language research. While it is difficult to differentiate between these overlapping concepts, it is essential to distinguish between them to reduce students' reluctance yet still leave room to understand students' silence in the learning process (Bao, 2014). Bao suggests the concepts of silence and stillness differ in their strategies. The former signifies intentional actions as part of a communication strategy to enhance second language acquisition, while the latter denotes unintentional actions that hinder learners' second language acquisition caused by internal and external factors.

Currently, many studies have investigated language students' silence in EFL environments. For example, Wang and Moskal (2019) conducted such a study in a classroom environment with international students in the UK. Their research showed that linguistic and cultural factors significantly impacted students' silence in the classroom. However, they would try harder to participate in conversations if they felt like they were part of the class and their thoughts were valued. In Asia, many learners in language classes still often face challenges in various forms, such as whether one should take part in class discussions despite grammatical flaws in their speech if they try to speak anyway or whether it will be considered a distraction by the class teacher (Ghavannia & Ketabi, 2015). In another specific example, Chinese students' silent behavior is driven by several key intentions, such as peer pressure or lack of self-confidence, as well as several key experiences, such as receiving negative feedback or witnessing teacher abuse of power (Tang et al., 2020).

There are several reasons why there is silence in an EFL classroom in Indonesia (Zafarina, 2022). First, they think learning English is hard and lack the courage to respond to queries orally. They also avoid speaking in front of others out of fear of making mistakes and facing criticism from their peers and teachers. Moreover, varying degrees of linguistic competence add to the quiet. Despite these obstacles, silent children still want to do well in school and understand that English is critical to their future. Teachers should talk in English and provide students with more exposure to spoken English as role models to alleviate this problem.

## 2. Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative case study research method to investigate the phenomenon of student silence in EFL classes at a private school in Yogyakarta. Researchers use this qualitative method to examine and interpret events, social dynamics, perceptions of beliefs, and phenomena that affect people and groups (Sidiq et al., 2019). Subsequently, the acquired data are analyzed to provide study findings. The research can explain and evaluate the phenomena of silence among students in the EFL class in Yogyakarta. Students' silences during class have a variety of causes (Sirait et al., 2018). The research focused on students in grades 10 and 11 of English classes. Using a combination of qualitative research instruments, including classroom observations and semi-structured interviews, this study aims to comprehensively analyse the factors contributing to student silence in EFL classrooms.

The researcher took field notes to record interactions between students and teachers to supplement the data collected. Classroom observations offered insights into students' behavior, engagement, and English language skills. Passive students' feelings and limitations in engaging in the EFL classroom

were better understood through interviews with them. Eight questions in all, the semi-structured interviewing method was employed by the researcher. To ensure that the data collected was more comprehensive, the researcher combined semi-structured interviews with a subset of students with classroom observations to understand the reasons behind students' quiet in the EFL classroom. The researcher observed students in the classroom and paid close attention to those who appeared to have a predisposition to be quiet. They also participated in the learning process with the teacher. The researcher additionally logged every issue spot discovered by shooting images and videos.

Careful field notes were taken to record important information, such as interactions between students and teachers and students' responses to questions from teachers regarding the material covered. In addition, specific students who had been identified through previous observations were subjected to semi-structured interviews. Like Zarfsaz and Takkac (2014) who researched the silence factor that occurred in one university, the researcher re-developed the existing questions to find out more about the reasons for students' silence in EFL classes. This allowed for a more thorough understanding of this issue in an EFL classroom. Using the triangulation strategy, the researchers combined information from interviews and observations. This strategy was chosen to increase the validity and dependability of the data while offering a more thorough understanding of the issue at hand.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Factors that cause Silence in EFL Classes at a Senior High School in Yogyakarta

##### 1) Anxiety

According to the information from the interviews with the students who reported feeling nervous in EFL lessons, they were anxious when the teacher requested them to speak up in front of the class or answer questions in English. The students' anxiety levels increased when the teacher asked them to respond to questions after they had not paid attention to her explanation. Their worry and anxiety diverted the students' focus from answering the question, and they ended up asking their friends for assistance. With this assistance, the students asked to respond could respond to the questions despite their fear of making mistakes.

*"If I'm asked a question suddenly, I'm so shocked that I feel anxious because I wasn't paying attention when the teacher was explaining, so I ask my friend to tell me what the question means."*

*"I felt afraid if asked by the teacher to answer questions suddenly, feeling nervous and anxious made my mind blank and did not know how to answer questions for fear of making mistakes."*

The data suggests that unexpected questioning by teachers can induce significant stress and anxiety in students, particularly if they are not paying attention or fear making mistakes. These emotional responses can lead to cognitive impairments, such as not understanding the question or experiencing a mental block.

##### 2) Introvert/Shyness

When attending EFL classrooms and other educational settings, shyness was among the introverted dispositions that many students exhibited. Some students developed an introverted disposition and were too shy to participate in class. They were unwilling to voice their ideas during discussions and instead chose to understand the information by being silent. As a result, efficient learning exercises were not carried out. Engaging in such passive communication with classmates during class activities became difficult for them. During the interview, some students disclosed this information.

*"I choose to be quiet when the teacher is explaining because I am embarrassed if I have to interact with many people, and I pay attention to the teacher explaining."*

*"I do have a shy nature, so I am more often silent when in class. But the silence that I do is not just meaningless silence, but I am silent to pay attention to what my teacher explains."*

The data suggests that some students remain silent in the classroom due to embarrassment or shyness. However, this silence does not indicate disengagement; rather, it is a deliberate strategy to pay better attention to the teacher's explanation. Understanding this behavior can help teachers develop strategies to support these students, such as creating a more inclusive classroom environment that reduces social discomfort and encourages all students to participate in comfortable ways.

### 3) Lack of confidence

One reason some students were afraid to speak out in EFL classrooms was their lack of confidence when asked to speak in English. They feared what their teachers and fellow students would think of them when they made mistakes. Extremely insecure students found it impossible to comprehend English explanations, leading them to stay silent in EFL classes. In addition to having trouble understanding, the students reported feeling less confident speaking English with peers or teachers.

*"I am not confident in my pronunciation when speaking English because I have a powerful Javanese accent, so I am afraid to speak English and see the reaction of my teachers and friends who think it is strange."*

*"If asked to come forward, I do not dare because I lack the confidence to attend class. I feel my English skills are lacking, and I am afraid if I make a mistake and see the reaction of friends or teachers."*

The data suggests that the individuals experience significant anxiety and lack of confidence when speaking English, primarily due to a strong accent or perceived inadequacy in their language skills. Concerns about adverse reactions from teachers and peers compound this fear.

### 4) Dynamic emotions

One of the reasons students mute in EFL lessons is dynamic emotion. During puberty, students' emotions significantly impact how they learn in the classroom. The most prevalent emotions that students experience are dynamic ones like boredom and indifference in an English class. Students typically behave silently during EFL courses because they are so bored with the topic that they are reluctant to pay attention and begin to sleep. This is because boredom is the dominant emotion in students' lives.

*"My attention in class usually depends on my mood; if I'm not in a good mood, I get bored quickly, so I don't want to pay attention to the teacher."*

*"I'm in a bad mood if I've tried to understand the material, but it's too difficult, so I don't have the enthusiasm anymore."*

*"I don't really like English, so every time I enter EFL class, my mood immediately changes, it feels like I don't have a good impression of paying attention to the lesson."*

The data suggests that dynamic emotions significantly affect students' attention and engagement in the classroom. When in a bad mood, students are more likely to become bored, disengaged, and lose enthusiasm, especially if they find the material challenging to understand.

### 5) Low English Proficiency

One of the reasons for silence in EFL lessons is the presence of less proficient students. Students who feel they are not proficient in English are silent because they believe that they are not proficient in vocabulary, which they consider very diverse and difficult to memorise, and they also believe that vocabulary changes in different ways from one word to another. In addition, pronunciation ability is also the cause of students being quiet in EFL classes because they believe their improper pronunciation makes it difficult for the teacher or their peers to understand them.

*"I am reluctant to be active in class because my English skills are very low; I don't know much vocabulary in English. That's what makes it difficult for me to speak English."*

*"With my lack of English skills, such as lack of knowledge about vocabulary and how to construct sentences in English, I prefer to stay silent during EFL classes."*

The data provided describe individuals' feelings and behaviors regarding their English language skills and classroom participation. The students acknowledge that their English skills are not very good, which influences their participation in EFL classes.

### 6) Lack of Interest

Most students do not want to learn English because they are not interested in what they learn at school and believe that English lessons are challenging. Students' disinterest in English has two main negative impacts on their learning process: it makes them feel less confident and reduces their motivation to actively engage in language-related tasks, thereby hindering the development of essential communicative competencies. This lack of engagement often leads to minimal participation

in classroom activities, limited practice opportunities, and a reluctance to use English in academic and informal contexts. Lack of interest in the English subject is one of the reasons why students are not interested in learning.

*"I'm not interested in English classes because I don't feel confident to master English and also because the teacher who teaches the class always uses English during the lesson."*

*"I don't really like learning English, so when the English class is going on, I usually just stay quiet because I'm not really interested. Another reason, I think, is maybe because I don't like the methods taught by my teacher in class."*

The data suggests that students' disinterest in English class is primarily due to a lack of confidence in their English skills and the teaching method employed by the teacher. While the teacher's exclusive use of English is potentially beneficial for immersion, it might not be suitable for all students, particularly those who are struggling or lack confidence.

#### 7) Classroom Atmosphere

Students acquire various skills necessary to be regarded as adults in the classroom. In the classroom, students learn how to contribute to the development of identity and society. It is a place where students learn the skills necessary to fulfill their major life ambitions. Nonetheless, one of the causes of EFL students being quiet is the classroom atmosphere. It was found that one of the causes of silence among EFL students was the classroom condition. Some of them said that the classroom learning sometimes has poor lighting, is too cold, lacks facilities for teaching, and is not conducive. This condition makes some students feel distracted, so they become unfocused in listening to the material being delivered by the teacher.

*"My classroom is at the end of the hallway, so sometimes the classroom feels very dim and cold. It makes me unable to focus because the cold and dimness make me sleepy."*

*"I don't like how the classroom atmosphere is created when I'm in an EFL class, which is a formal atmosphere. The formal class atmosphere makes me feel bored and sleepy."*

*"The classroom that occurs when learning takes place should be conducive, but my class has students who are less able to be orderly when the EFL class is taking place or noisy. While I don't like noisy atmospheres when I am learning, I am silent because I am too lazy to respond to lessons in a noisy atmosphere."*

The data suggests that the classroom environment during the EFL class is not conducive to effective learning due to poor lighting, cold temperatures, etc. These factors contribute to the student's sleepiness and reduced ability to focus. While a quiet environment can sometimes be conducive to learning, excessive quietness can lead to a lack of stimulation, making students more prone to sleepiness.

#### 8) Teaching Method

One factor that requires attention is the teacher's teaching method, which is also why the stillness in the classroom. Compelling and engaging material presentation has an impact on the classroom environment. If the content is presented in such a way that it takes up too much time, students will not have the chance to engage in discussion. The data shows that student participation and circumstances influence classroom behaviour. If the teacher asked any questions, the students would answer; otherwise, they would remain silent.

*"I think the English teacher who teaches in my class has explained quite well, but I feel bored with her teaching method. Because my teacher taught monotonously, only explaining and then asking all students to write back what had been explained in our respective books."*

*"I don't like the teaching method my teacher uses in English class because it is monotonous. My classmates and I just listened to the material and wrote back. But I couldn't understand what I wrote"*

The data suggests that while the teacher effectively explains the material, the teaching methods are monotonous and fail to engage students, leading to boredom and disengagement. Boredom arises from a teaching style that lacks variety and interactive elements. Monotony in teaching can lead to disengagement, as students become less stimulated and less motivated to participate actively in learning.



### 9) *Difficulty in Understanding the Lesson*

One of the things that makes students silent in English class is the challenge of understanding the material. The English teachers provide standardized and curriculum-customized materials for students' ages. However, even with this organized delivery of the material, the teacher still faces the issue of helping the students comprehend what is being taught. The researcher discovered some students who struggled to comprehend the teacher's material. Some students prefer to remain silent during discussion activities because they find the topic difficult to understand.

*"The EFL teacher who teaches my class only explains in English throughout the lesson, while if I ask what it means, my teacher answers with synonyms in English too. This made me even more biased."*

*"I stayed quiet most of the time during the EFL class because I didn't really understand the material. I felt that my EFL teacher didn't explain it well enough, so I struggled to understand."*

The data suggests that the teacher's English-only approach and use of synonyms for clarification are ineffective for this student, leading to increased confusion and frustration. The student feels unsupported due to the lack of accessible explanations in the language they understand.

## 3.2. DISCUSSION

### 1) *Anxiety*

Student anxiety can be a massive barrier to active participation and engagement in a classroom environment, thus significantly affecting student responses and the overall learning experience. In the context of this research, respondents openly expressed feelings of fear and a tendency to remain silent, attributing these reactions directly to underlying anxiety. Concerns such as these often arise due to the wider classroom environment, which, if perceived as tense or unsupportive, can significantly inhibit students' comfort levels and willingness to engage verbally.

The apparent discomfort experienced by students in this study stems from various factors closely linked to the classroom atmosphere. One such element is the fear of judgment or criticism from peers and teachers. The thought of making a mistake or appearing incompetent in front of others can trigger crippling anxiety, prompting students to shut down as a defense mechanism. In addition, a competitive or overly demanding classroom culture can exacerbate this anxiety, as students feel compelled to meet unrealistic standards or benchmarks set by their peers where some students think that their proficiency in English is severely lacking, which leads to feelings of anxiety that discourage students from participating in class activities. A study by Perkasa (2022) found that anxiety can influence student participation in a classroom. Certain beliefs about their ability to learn English can trigger anxiety and frustration among some students in a classroom. He adds that one of the main reasons behind students' feelings of anxiety is their lack of confidence in their language skills. In addition, unpreparedness for English lessons is also a contributing factor to anxiety among students.

### 2) *Introvert personality/shyness*

Introverted personalities and shyness are the causes of silence in EFL classes. Students with introverted personalities are also associated with a lack of self-confidence. Students also said that with their lack of confidence, they were reluctant to participate in EFL class activities and interact using English because they were embarrassed by the reactions of their friends. Their difficulty in English was a significant factor, especially in sentence construction and pronunciation of English vocabulary. In the minds of introverted and shy students, if they make a mistake, they will be laughed at by their classmates. This case is similar to the statement by Handayani and Purbani (2018), who found that language anxiety was the main affective problem in speaking English, which was experienced by respondents categorized as introverted students. Their language anxiety was caused by two other issues, namely communication apprehension and fear of negative social evaluation. Their apprehension in oral communication includes fear of being wrong, stage fright, fear of being misunderstood, fear of being unable, and fear of forgetting.

Similarly, introverted students said their shyness did not mean they were unprepared if asked to answer questions. These findings correlated to a certain extent with the findings of Suliman (2014) or Furnham and Medhurst (1995) that introverted students were not necessarily keen on talking. But when they did it, their sentences were usually well-formed.

### 3) *Lack of Confidence*

Students who lack confidence showed reactions such as hesitation and fear of tasks or orders from the teacher to respond to questions. Students who do not have confidence feel that, with their lack of ability to master English, they will be ridiculed by their friends and responded poorly by their teacher if asked to participate in class. This is also felt by students who like English but have fewer English language skills, so they lack confidence in themselves. Petress (2001) points out some reasons for students' silence in a classroom. Two of them are closely related to the students themselves. The first one is low self-confidence. Students think their English is too poor to participate actively in classroom activities; the second is language anxiety. Students fear being laughed at because their English is inadequate, and they cannot accurately and effectively express what they want in the target language accurately and effectively.

Students who have experienced a lack of confidence because of the fear of mistakes they make if answering questions ahead of class will have difficulty answering. According to Hanh (2020), students who feel less confident are apprehensive about the risk of their classmates giving the wrong answer, especially if the question is quite simple. In general, students' lack of confidence is a prominent phenomenon due to the students' psychological fear and poor linguistic knowledge.

### 4) *Dynamic Emotions*

Emotions experienced by students can change without the student realizing or being aware of it. Harmful or destructive emotional changes with unknown reasons are one of the factors that make students take silent action during EFL lessons. Based on the case of the students in this study, the emotional changes that occurred among them were caused by boredom and lack of enthusiasm for EFL lessons, thus disrupting the smooth learning process for students and EFL teachers. Research on emotions shows that academic emotions affect the quality of student learning as well as communication in the classroom (Wang & Hsu, 2023; Jia & Cheng, 2024; Dai & Wang, 2024). Students experience a wide range of emotions in the learning environment. In addition to negative emotions such as anxiety that have been repeatedly reported, positive emotions are also frequently mentioned by Goetz et al. (2006). However, compared to positive emotions, negative emotions were more frequently reported by students in this study, particularly negative emotions about their classmates' behavior.

Students said that some factors, such as teachers' unpleasant teaching methods and uncomfortable classroom atmosphere, could quickly affect their emotions.

Students said these unstable emotional changes affected their interest in and desire to learn English. Pekrun (2006) describes the ambivalent structure of these emotions and states that anxiety, as an unpleasant emotion, can interfere with intrinsic interest and motivation, whereas as an activating emotion, anxiety can foster extrinsic motivation to avoid failure.

### 5) *Low English Proficiency*

Students' low English proficiency is one of the reasons for the silence during EFL classes. This happens because some students just stay silent when the teacher explains. Students said that they were silent because they felt that the role of students was only to listen. By being quiet, other students would not know they lack English proficiency. According to Pranasti (2013), the reason behind students' silence during English classes is not only because of their nature as students who prefer to sit and listen to the teacher explaining but also because they prefer to be silent to avoid mistakes if they take part and participate in activities during EFL classes.

Students with a lack of language proficiency in this study stated that they did not have the enthusiasm to learn English at school. Meanwhile, Hashim et al. (2020) state that learning English well takes power, intense effort, and a lot of practice. However, it is considered a tricky thing for some students. They said that many English vocabulary words are tricky to pronounce or write. Therefore, students need effective learning strategies and positive support from the surrounding environment. With this good support, students are expected to achieve a good level of English proficiency.

### 6) *Lack of Interest*

The researchers found that the lack of interest in English classes was one of the factors that caused some students to choose to stay silent. Some students said that their thought caused the lack of interest in English lessons, that English was difficult and they did not need it, so they did not have the enthusiasm to learn it. Learners face many unknowns that may be ambiguous and challenging for

them. As a result, low self-esteem on the part of the learners can lead to anxiety and lack of interest, leading to limited class participation. Likewise, Harumi (2011) states that learners have no interest in EFL classes because they do not have the confidence to learn it and feel as if they do not have the opportunity when they are in the classroom. Therefore, EFL students need more motivation to increase their interest in learning English. Uslu (2014) suggests that learners face many unknowns that may be ambiguous and challenging for them. As a result, low self-esteem on the part of the student can cause anxiety and a lack of interest that leads to limited class participation.

#### 7) *Classroom Atmosphere*

A comfortable classroom atmosphere is essential for effective learning, especially in an EFL classroom. In an EFL classroom in this study, silence would allow students to concentrate on absorbing language lessons without distractions. This allowed students to focus and understand English sentences well. On the other hand, the silence in EFL classes is caused by some students who say that EFL classes are boring and the classrooms are uncomfortable. The silent classroom atmosphere without communication between students and teachers allows for discomfort between the two parties in the EFL learning process. Rogers (2003) states that teachers facilitate the teaching-learning process. However, a favourable communication climate in the classroom is contributed by language teachers who help students view language learning positively, guide students in every step of the way, decentralize control and act democratically by nurturing meaningful communication, curiosity and insight. This means that classroom interaction is an integral part of the teacher's role in an EFL classroom to make students participate and improve communication in the learning process. Students who lack interaction and prefer to remain silent quickly become bored and feel a bad atmosphere in the classroom. Zarfsaz and Takkac (2014) state that the capacity and size of the classroom also affect how comfortable students are in learning. Classrooms that have the capacity for many students make some students who have anxiety and shyness reluctant to participate in learning. This is also related to the finding of students who said it is difficult to concentrate if the classroom atmosphere is noisy. Thus, with the silent mode, students are expected to foster an atmosphere that can improve their English learning when the class is in progress.

#### 8) *Teaching Methods*

Factors that cause silence during EFL classes may come from the teacher. Teachers have an essential role in building classroom silence. Students said many teachers caused classroom silence by using traditional teaching methods. With this old teaching method, the teacher usually only spent the lesson time explaining the material. At the same time, the students just listened quietly, and no one dared to challenge the teacher's authority. Students were used to the teacher's explanation-centered teaching model and did not ask questions even when they had difficulty understanding the materials.

On the other hand, the teacher expected students to react enthusiastically. However, because some students feared interacting with the English teacher, they did not dare to respond more. Hence, they chose silence. Teachers' tolerance of students' silence by not giving students enough waiting time results in students' reluctance to participate in classroom interactions due to the unequal opportunities given to them (Xie, 2006)

#### 9) *Difficulty in Understanding the Lesson*

The difficulty in understanding the lesson is one of the factors that cause students' silence during EFL classes. The researcher found that students' silence occurred because some students were confused and did not understand what was being explained by their teacher. The confusion felt by students arose because they were afraid and anxious to ask questions although they did not understand the material. This made some students reluctant to be active and chose to be silent. Hence, the teacher overlooked students who did not give signs that they did not understand. This is in line with Abrar et al. (2024), Maher and King (2022), and King (2014), who argue that the feeling of fear and anxiety make the students reluctant to participate and consequently make them silent.

Difficulty in understanding the lesson is a key factor contributing to students' silence in EFL classes. The researcher found that many students remained silent because they felt confused and struggled to grasp the teacher's explanation. This confusion often stemmed from fear and anxiety, which prevented them from asking questions even when they did not understand the material. As a result, some students became reluctant to participate and remained silent, making it difficult for the teacher to identify those who needed help. This aligns with the findings of Abrar et al. (2024), Maher



and King (2022), and King (2014), who argue that fear and anxiety discourage student participation, ultimately leading to silence in the classroom.

#### *10) Potential Long-Term Impacts of Student Silence*

Prolonged silence in EFL classrooms hinders language acquisition, self-confidence, and motivation, leading to academic and social marginalization. Active participation is essential for language learning, but fear of mistakes can create a cycle of disengagement (Swain, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986). Silent students may be perceived as less engaged, limiting their academic and social opportunities (Tsui, 1996). Many develop avoidance strategies that restrict risk-taking and authentic communication, which is crucial for language development (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Additionally, silence impairs critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic success (Tatar, 2005). In cultures like Yogyakarta, silence may stem from respect for authority, but if unaddressed, it can cause identity conflicts and reduced engagement (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Limited English proficiency can hinder higher education and career prospects in a globalized world (Norton, 2000).

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of EFL classroom silence by addressing two often-overlooked dimensions: emotional dynamics and cultural beliefs.

#### *11) Emotional Dynamics and Student Silence*

Existing research on classroom silence primarily focuses on cognitive and linguistic factors, often neglecting the fluctuating emotional states that influence student participation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Pekrun, 2006). This study highlights the role of dynamic emotions—such as boredom, disengagement, and anxiety—in shaping student silence. Unlike static emotional constructs, dynamic emotions shift throughout the learning process, impacting students' willingness to engage in discussions (Shaffer & Resnik, 1999). Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions emphasizes that students' emotional responses, influenced by their perceptions of control and value in learning tasks, directly affect engagement. Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) also argue that fluctuating emotions, particularly in language learning, create an "emotional rollercoaster" that impacts participation. By bringing attention to this aspect, the study adds a new layer to the discourse on silence, suggesting that addressing emotional variability can lead to more effective pedagogical strategies.

#### *12) Cultural Beliefs and Classroom Participation*

This research also deepens the analysis of student silence by incorporating sociocultural dimensions, particularly the influence of cultural beliefs on participation. While previous studies have acknowledged cultural factors (King, 2013; Harumi, 2011), few have explored how gender roles and social expectations specifically shape students' willingness to speak in EFL contexts. In Yogyakarta's classrooms, traditional beliefs about appropriate student behavior—such as the expectation for female students to be more reserved—can significantly influence participation. King (2013) highlights that in many Asian cultures, silence is often linked to politeness and respect for authority, reducing classroom engagement. Similarly, Harumi (2011) finds that Japanese EFL learners avoid participation due to culturally ingrained expectations of humility and group harmony. This study extends these perspectives by examining how sociocultural expectations shape silence in the Indonesian context, reinforcing the need for culturally responsive teaching strategies.

By integrating emotional and cultural dimensions into the discussion of classroom silence, this study broadens the scope of silence studies and provides fresh insights into the complexity of student participation in EFL learning environments.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Employing data collected through observations and interviews, this study examined the phenomena of silence in EFL classrooms and produced significant new findings. According to the study's findings, students who would rather listen silently than actively participate in class when the EFL lesson was in session were the reason for the quiet in the language classroom. Nevertheless, the strategy worked because some students continued to be engaged, allowing the teacher and students to interact during the lesson. Additional variables contributing to the quiet phenomenon in EFL classes included students' anxiety, introverted or shy personalities, lack of confidence, dynamic emotions, low English proficiency, lack of interest, classroom atmosphere, teaching methods, and difficulty in

understanding. This is evident from the realities that arise in EFL lessons. For example, when the teacher asked students to respond to questions, they felt uneasy since they were not paying attention and thought they were not very good at English. As a result, they were hesitant to respond and opted to remain silent. Additionally, there were a number of instances of student quiet in EFL classrooms, namely when students ignored the teacher during the explanation of the topic. This occurred due to the students' disinterest and perceived comprehension gaps, which made them unwilling to pay attention and decide to disregard the ongoing EFL lesson.

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