A STUDY OF STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE OF SILENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

Gabriella Anindyarizki Widhiprasetya
112008144

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
SATYA WACANA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
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18 JUNI 2013
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Date:

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A Study of Students’ Perspective of Silence in the Classroom

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Abstract

This study discussed students’ perspectives toward silence in the classroom. The aim of this study is to answer the research question, “What is ED students’ view of silence in the classroom?” Six students of English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University were selected to be the participants of this study because of the limited of time. Four themed interview questions were asked to get ED students’ general idea of silence in the classroom. The result of the study revealed that students do not always view silent students as ones who do nothing in class, but also it is how they learn a lesson. However, students also view silent as Indonesian culture that is already embedded in Indonesian students’ mind. Pedagogical implication suggested by this study is that teachers will have to be more open minded about how they have to react regarding the students’ behavior itself.

Keywords: silent students, teacher role, class activity, culture

INTRODUCTION

Sadker & Sadker (1994) explained that classroom participation is considered to be one of the factors related to effective learning and to result in more positive views of the learning experience. Based on this explanation, classroom participation is a way to make learning process become more effective. Mager & Nowak (2010) defined classroom participation as participation of students in collective decision-making at school or class level. Classroom participation also requires a dialogue between students and other decision-makers, so it is not only consultation or a survey among students, but also consultation and survey with the teacher (Mager & Nowak, 2010). From the expert’s explanation above, we can conclude that there are benefits that the students will get if students get involved in the classroom. Those are, students become more
active in the class; they could solve problem by becoming a decision-maker; and for reserved students, they may feel challenged to have a discussion with their friends.

However, there are several students who sometimes do not want to participate in class. Tsui (1996) argued that the students are unwilling to participate in a classroom activity because they are afraid to give responses, and they also do not want to ask questions. This view has been my curiosity and motivation to do the study about students’ silence. According to Madison and Hamera (2006) silence is typical of human being, so it can be a positive attitude or negative one. Therefore, in this study, the researcher would like to find out students’ perception toward silence in the classroom. The researcher also would like to find out the effect of their silence upon them.

To help answering the research question above, the researcher has also raised the following supporting questions:

- What do students understand as silence in classroom?
- How do students define ‘participation in the classroom’?
- To what extent does the students’ culture influence their unwillingness to participate in classroom?
- Does their environment (teacher, friends) have big impacts on their participation in the classroom?
- What is the impact of their silence upon them?

The general aim of this study is to explore ED students’ general idea of silence in the classroom. Therefore, this study is beneficial for the learners and teachers in that it informs how silence is understood by the learners and what aspects that affect silence to occur in the classroom. This study can also be a reference for both students and teachers to raise awareness of silent behavior in a classroom.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is organized into different categories. The first category discusses the definition of classroom participation. The literature will also show the effect of participating in classroom activities. The second category will discuss the definition of silent students. The literature will also show the characteristic of silent students and general reason of becoming silent students. Lastly, the cultural issues of silent students in which the researcher will discuss some cultural issues that cause students to be silent in a classroom.

Classroom Participation

The definition of classroom participation offered by some experts (Sadker & Sadker, 1994 and Mager & Nowak, 2010) is quite similar in its explanation. For the researcher, the definition of classroom participation is taking part in what is going on during a teaching session through interacting with the teacher and classmates, asking and answering questions, and voicing their opinions, thoughts and ideas. In fact, classroom participation is a broad term that can be defined from different angles. How good a participation is, differs from one teacher to another. Based on Sadker & Sadker (1994), classroom participation is all of the students considered as one of the factors that make a teaching session become effective. Students are the most factors that can make learning activity more effective and to make a result in a positive views of the learning experience. In my own opinion, I also think that students have an important role to make learning activity become more effective. Basically people always see teacher as a main role in the learning process, that statement is not false but how the learning process can go well and become effective if there is no response from the students. Mager & Nowak (2010) also have their own
definition. According to them classroom participation is students who participate in communal decision-making at class level. Classroom participation also requires a dialogue between students and other decision-makers, so it is not only consultation or a survey among students, but also consultation and survey with teacher. These phenomenon also happen in English Department students, sometimes when they did not clear enough with what their teacher taught them, they prefer to ask it directly to the teacher. In addition, the teacher will also ask the students if there is something that they want to add or ask.

Classroom participation is quite beneficial for learners’ learning process. According to Mager & Nowak (2010), the benefits of participating in a classroom are students’ improvement in learning and academic achievement. It means that by participating in class, their academic achievement will improve, their grades in their tests and in their assignments will have some improvement. It has been stated before that classroom participation means that students will be involved in every learning session. They will ask questions, answer the teacher’s questions, and are willing to get involved in class activities, such as class games, group works and so on. Besides, they will develop their life skills’, for example, their communication skill will improve. In classroom participation, students need to talk to their friends or their teacher. By communicating more with others, their communication skill will improve. In classroom participation, students will also involve in a group discussion or a group work, in which they will improve their cooperative and teamwork skill. From the discussion above, it can be say that by involving or participating in a classroom activity, students will get a lot of benefits.

However, in some classes, there are several students who do not want to get involved in the teaching and learning activity. MacKinnon and Manathunga (2003) mentioned that partial listening to their teacher is the characteristic of passive students and students who commonly
speak up their opinions in the classroom are often distinguished as active students. According to Davis (1993), students are more likely to participate in class if they feel they are among friends rather than strangers. In other words, the environment of the students supports their attitude in class. Active students who want to participate in class, will learn better and may also increase their critical thinking skill. This statement is also supported by Beng (2003). In active class participation, students will need to exercise critical thinking that requires them to go beyond the basic recall of information. Students also need to absorb information, question it, and then use it to create new ideas, solve problems, make decisions, construct arguments, make plans, and refine their view of the world. By discussing, sharing and comparing their ideas and understandings in class, students can deepen their own understanding of what they are learning; they can learn from each other. It also helps them to know if the students understand what is being taught, or if they need further explanation or other help. Based on the explanation above, I am interested in finding out what students think of their silence in relation to classroom participation. I believe that students may have their own perception about silence in the classroom and whether this silence is viewed as a passive act in the classroom or it has more meaning than that.

**Silent Students**

According to my personal belief, silent students are not always students who perform worse than others because for some people, being silent is one of their behaviors as the reaction of certain environments. It is not always related to their level of understanding toward the thing being discussed. Reda (2010) referred silent students also as quiet students. She mentioned several kinds of quiet students: students who stoop in the back row, hidden beneath their cap; students who smile pleasantly but never, ever raise their hands. However, not all Indonesian students are allowed to wear a cap inside the class, what we can see in Indonesia is when we can see students
who stoop in the class especially in the back row. Students who stoop in the class is hinted that they are not interested with the lesson and will remain to be a quiet students in the class. Reda (2010) also has a whole vocabulary for explaining students' silence: They are unprepared, resistant, hostile, less intelligent and "absent." Davy (2011) also said that quiet students are easily found at the back of the classroom, focusing on their work and staying out of the way. They are easy to spot, as they do nothing to draw attention to themselves. Most quiet students will answer questions only if asked directly and will make almost no attempt to socialize during the period of the class. While McCroskey (1980) explained that the type of quiet students has only one thing in common; they are quiet. Beyond that, they are as different from one another as any other group of human beings. From the experts’ explanation, it can be concluded that silent students do not want to do anything in their class, even raising their hand to ask a question for something that they do not know.

Being silent is not always the way the students who feel inferior behave in class. It can be one of the characteristics a person has. Davy’s (2011) interviews revealed that one student, James Barron, is a person who just does not like to talk. Some people tend to think of quieter students as being afraid to talk to others, odd, even inferior. Others might think that the kid must be messed up in some way. Because of these stereotypes these individuals are often excluded. In the United States being verbal and animated are desired personality traits. Unlike in countries like Japan, who believe that being calm and respectful are key to being a good person. According to studies done by psychologists at Stanford University, more shy, quieter individuals tend to be more academically talented than more outgoing people. According to Davys (2011), being quieter in class may help scholars succeed in school. When you spend most of your time by being quiet, you have plenty of time to think and conceive unbelievable ideas. From the
explantion above, it is shown that there are many reasons why students do not want to talk in class. It can be because they do not like to talk like James Barron, one of the students interviewed by Davis; it can also because they are too shy to raise their hand to ask a question, get bored or also because they are unprepared. In addition to that, Reda (2010) claimed that racism, sexism, and classism often worked to silent some voices. She also stated that students’ silence was not necessarily a problem. Some students choose silence because it best fits their learning style, culture, or history. Much contemporary pedagogy lauds the calls for "student voice" as empowering. On the other hand, students who are, for example, visual learners, or whose home cultures have taught them to value speaking and silence differently than the contemporary culture of American higher education does, often benefit from the inclusion of silence in the curriculum. Recognizing that silence can be an active, generative space, those students agree with a small group of theorists who argue that silence can invite meditation, contemplation, and engagement. In other words, silence - along with dialogues - fosters learning. Some students are quiet because they are listening to others' views to integrate them into their own perspectives. Seeing that culture also becomes one of their reasons why they become silent, some of cultural issues will be discussed in the next section.

Cultural Issues of Students’ Silence

Cheng (2000) reports that Asian (especially East Asian) students of English as second or foreign language, are reticent and passive learners. Cultural attributes of Asian societies are often cited as the main causes for such alleged behavior of reticence and passivity. Copenhaver (2000) was wondering what the reasons students to become silence in class were. Whether they did not want to talk or did they lack the background information to help them understand. Besides, she was also questioning whether those students found difficulties in understanding the explanation
that the teacher gives. Copenhaver’s curiosities about silent students in class have made me curious to study why most Indonesian students are silent in class. McCroskey (1980) stated that students would become very quiet when they were placed in a classroom in which he or she represented a minority culture. While Ping (2010) quoted Jan Bamford, Tim Marr, Gary Pheiffer and Inge Weber-Newth (2002) cited Woodrow & Sham (2001), “Chinese students have displayed a preference for working alone rather than in groups; they tend not to like asking questions, and to set little value by peer-group discussion.” In her book Xie (2010) mentions that there are some characteristics of Asian culture that has a correlation with silent students’ behavior: (1) to save their own face; a student did not venture an unsure reply for fear of making mistakes and being laughed at, (2) they only raised questions when they could not find out answers unaided, (3) they waited for another student to speaking up first, allowing them to avoid being seen as the ‘show off’, and also (4) they respected the elder and senior by looking up to teachers as authority figures and not challenging or interrupting them with questions (cited from Peng 2007; Tan 2008). Wen and Cle’ment (2003), also argued that Chinese students avoid classroom communication because they are extremely concerned about the evaluation of the significant others. While Marlina (2009) sees culture as the dominant factor in shaping these students’ participation in tutorials. She also argued that diversity and individual differences were also the reason why students intended to become silent in class.

Different from the other experts, Cheng (2002) and Shi (2006) discovered that the ideas of non-talking students were shaped by their cultural background. The students did not accept the teacher explanations without reasoning or questioning. They were also critical about what their teacher’s way of teaching, they also said disagreement if they disagreed on something.
THE STUDY

Context of study

The setting of the study was in the Faculty of Language and Literature or English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University (SWCU), in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. The reason why the researcher chose the ED of SWCU as the setting of the study because the ED of SWCU is the place where the researcher is studying, so it is more practical for the researcher to collect the data.

Participants

The participants of the study were 6 students of English Department (ED). The researcher decided to used only 6 students of English Department was because of the limited of time. The researcher chose random sampling to choose 6 ED students as the participants. In random sampling (McKay, 2006 p. 36) every individual in a particular population has an equal chance of being included in the study. The reason of choosing random sampling to choose the participants is because the researcher thinks that every student in English Department has the same opportunity to become the participants of this study. Therefore the researcher randomly chose 6 participants for the study. In this study, the researcher wanted to find out the students’ perspectives of their silence in a classroom.

Instrument of data collection

This study used semi structured interview to answer the research question. The researcher chose semi structured interview because it allows greater flexibility in gaining information because the interviewer can develop and modify the questions based on the things the interviewer wants to understand more from the interviewees’ answers. It does not only focus on the questions the interviewer has already prepared. Based on Case (1990),
Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information. Semi-structured interviewing starts with more general questions or topics. Not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues. Semi-structured interviewing is guided only in the sense that some form of interview guide.

The researcher could get more data by using this method of interviewing. Obviously semi-structured interview is more practical rather than in structured interview. The semi-structured interview focused on how ED students viewed silence in the classroom. The interview data is obtained by noting and recording the interviewees’ answers. Each interview took around 20 minutes and the interview questions had 4 themes, those were:

1. Questions focusing on students’ perspectives about class participation.
2. Questions focusing on students’ opinion about silent students.
3. Questions focusing on factors that may make the students become silent in classroom.
4. Questions focusing on what the teachers do when the students keep silent?

The table below shows the complete data that the researcher collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument of Data Collection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonsai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure of data collection

This study used qualitative method. The researcher chose the qualitative method because “it can give intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.19). First, the researcher created a list of questions in Bahasa Indonesia; then the researcher interviewed the participants and each interview took around 20 minutes. The interviews were recorded. Each interview was divided into some phases (adapted from Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993), they were:

* The warm up phase; it was meant to introduce the researcher and gave a brief explanation about what the purpose of the interview was and also asked for participants’ demographic info.
* Asking questions focusing on students’ perspective about class participation.
* Asking questions focusing on students’ opinion about silent students.
* Asking questions focusing on factors that may make the students become silent in classroom.
* Asking questions focusing on what the teachers do when the students keep silent?
* Clarifying phase; it was meant to clarify something that the interviewer is not clear with.
* Closing phase.

The Interview was held by using participants’ native language (bahasa Indonesia) to avoid the difficulties in expressing their opinion in English so that the interviewer could get a clearer and more accurate data.
Research Method

In analyzing the data, the researcher went through several steps. They were: 1) interviewing the participants, 2) transcribing the interviews, 3) analyzing the interview, and 4) drawing a conclusion. In transcribing the interview the researcher used clean transcription (Elliot, 2005 in Zacharias, 2011, p.99) because clean transcription transcribes the interview cleanly. It means the researcher transcribes the main point of the context of the study. In analyzing the interview, the researcher used “categorical content” analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998). This means that the researcher focused on the contents and themes emerged from the participants’ statement.

DATA ANALYSIS

From the students’ experiences in silent and also from the 4 themed questions in the interview, the researcher found out some interesting findings. The researcher would like to present the result by categorizing the respondents’ perspectives namely: Passive Silent vs. active silent; silent as psychological and personality behavior; silent as one of Indonesian culture; teacher and environment, the main factors affecting students’ silence.

Passive Silent vs. Active Silent

There are many definitions on silence and also the respondents also had different point of views about silence. During the interviews the researcher found that the respondents had two different opinions about being silent in class and therefore the researcher classifies silent into passive silent and active silent.

1. Passive silent

Students who keep silent due to lack of awareness toward the lesson are classified as passive silent students.
a. Definitions of silent students

When asked about what a silent student was, the participants mentioned some activities that were related to doing nothing in class. There are three respondents who said that a silent student is a student who lacks in participating in class activity. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what silent student is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>“Silent students are students who keep silent in class, they are not active in class, they lack of participating in class activity or class discussion.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>“Keep silent in class, does not like to participate in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bunga</td>
<td>“Silent students are students who lack the willingness to participate in class, they always keep silent.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When they have no willingness to participate in class activity they are considered as passive silent students. They do not want to be productive when they are in class. Although they have the opportunity to be active in class they still do not want to do it. This kind of students is classified as passive silent students.

a1. Definitions of classroom participation

However, what do they actually mean about participating in class? When the researcher asked about what participating in class was, most of them said that everything related to class activity, for instance asking questions, answering teacher’s questions, having a discussion both class and group discussion, and giving a presentation in front of the class. Everything related to class activities is considered as classroom participation. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what classroom participation is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sherina</td>
<td>“Participation in class, raising hand when teacher ask a question, having a discussion, having a presentation in front of the class.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Totok  
“Doing assignments, asking a question in class, answer teacher’s questions, having a discussion in class.”

3. Ronny  
“Answering questions, giving comments on something, asking questions about the lesson that is not clear enough.”

b. Characteristics of Silent Students

Passive silent students are students who do not want to participate in class; they do nothing in class, they do not pay any attention to the lesson that the teacher gave. Two of the six respondents also gave the same statement when they were asked what the characteristics of silent students according to them were. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what the characteristics of silent students is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>“Silent is keeping silent in class, never ask questions, does not want to answer the teacher’s questions, does not want to join a discussion, keep silent when he/she is asked to give an opinion about something.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>“They are silent because they do not care about the lesson and they do not give attention to the teacher when he/she is explaining the lesson.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, passive silent students keep silent because they do nothing and do not pay any attention to the lesson. Passive silent also refers to students who are silent and do not want to participate in class. For example, they do not want to have a discussion; they do not want to answer the teacher’s questions and they never ask questions. Everyone who does not want to be included in a classroom activity is considered as a passive silent student. Those findings are also support by Reda (2010), silent students are similar to quiet students. She also describes silent students as unprepared students and it is also the same as if they were absent in class. They are said to be absent because they always keep quiet and give almost no contribution in class.
2. Active silent

On the other hand, active silent students are those who remain silent in class because they try to understand the lesson. One of the respondents, Boim, also comes up with the idea that there are two different types of silent students, i.e. passive silent and active silent students. The table below showed the respondent’s comment on what active silent is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Boim</td>
<td>“A silent student is considered active when he/she is silent in class because he/she is giving a full attention to the teacher, and try to think deeper about the lesson, so when the teacher asks him/her about the lesson, he/she can answer it correctly.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Boim, in the case of active silent students, it is not that they do not care about the lesson and do not want to participate in class, but they are actually actively absorbing the lesson that the teacher is delivering. Active silent students are willing to participate in class. Boim also thinks that an active silent student will pay attention to the teacher, so when his/her teacher asks him/her to answer a question, he/she can answer it. This means that active silent students have the willingness to participate in class like answering questions. However, they may not like to ask questions in class. They prefer to listen to other students’ questions, opinions, etc. and try digest the information together with their own knowledge in a silent way. There were many ways that students used to learn the lesson. Each student has their own way to understand the material. Active silent is one of the methods of how they study, they can understand more if they keep silent and listen carefully to what the teacher and their friends are discussing.
When the researcher asked the respondents to define what “silent” was, one of the respondents gave an interesting statement. The table below showed the respondent’s description about silent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sherina</td>
<td>“Silent means time to think and be productive”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This statement is very suitable in describing what active silent is. Being silent in class does not mean that a student is not doing anything. Being silent in class can also mean that the particular student is actively thinking about and paying full attention to the lesson. It can also means being productive, meaning he/she is doing something in silence. For example, he/she makes notes, and tries to figure out how to solve difficult questions. He/she seems to do nothing but he/she is actually doing something. Those findings also support by Davys (2011). He also thinks that when students keep silent it means that it is a time for them to think and reveal amazing ideas. There are many ways to study that students can choose. It is only natural that students will choose a style that is best for them to study. One of them is being silent in class. Some students can learn and understand more easily when they keep silent and listen carefully to teachers’ explanation or discussion in class

**Silent as Psychological and Personality Behavior**

The most common reason why students become silent in class is of a psychological matter.

1. **Psychological**
They tend to feel inferior to talk to others and afraid to talk in front of the class. Those kinds of behavior are classified as psychological matters. They are afraid to speak in front of the class because they may have an exaggerate nervousness. Thus, they cannot speak although inside of their mind, they want to speak up, but somehow they just cannot do it. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what make the students keep silent does.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bunga</td>
<td>“It maybe because the large amount of students who dominate the class make the students indolent to participate in class, his silent nature, feel inferior.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>“Students who do not like to participate, feel inferior, not too good in communicate with others.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students feel inferior because they think that they are not smart enough. They feel that they are neglected by their peers; they feel that they are not well-liked by their friends, so that they feel inferior. It may also because they are afraid that they may give the wrong answer and will be laughed at by their friends, so they are afraid to speak up in class. It is not that they do not want to participate in class, but maybe they just do not have enough courage to speak. Those behaviors influence them to keep silent in class.

2. Personality

Another psychological aspect affecting students to be silent in class is their personality. Each student has their own personality. Some students are cheerful, some are reserved, stuffy, noisy, lazy and some are active. One of the reasons students become silent is because it is their personality. They have a reserved personality and do not like to talk too much in class. They are shy to talk or it can also be that they are just lazy students. Some of the respondents also said that the reason students were silent in class was because of their personality. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what the reasons of silent students is.
Based on their perspective, shy, lazy, and reserved personalities are factors affecting students to be silent students. In every class usually there is at least one student who has this kind of personality. It is hard for them to change their personality and it is not always because they do not want to participate in class, but it is more about how brave they want to speak up and how much they are willing to change.

**Silent as One of Indonesia’s Cultures**

It has become a stereotype that Asian students tend to be silent in class. Cheng (2000) said that the main causes for reserved and passive behaviors are the cultural attributes of Asian societies. Everything that students do in class is based on what their teacher tells them to do in class.

1. **Teacher as a class main role**

In Indonesia a teacher has a big role in students’ learning process, especially when they are in a classroom. When the researcher asked the respondents to explain what their point of view about classroom participation was, most of them said that classroom participation was

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sherina</td>
<td>“Do not care about the lesson, shy, unconfident, do not understand about the lesson.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>“Maybe they are shy, or they do not know the answer, lazy, or it is just their personality to be silent.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bunga</td>
<td>“Reserved person, always obey the teacher, do not want to have a risk.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>“Keep silent and shy to ask questions…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Boim</td>
<td>Boim: “Keep silent in class, do not pay attention, do not understand the lesson, sleepy, their reserved personality.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
everything related to what the teacher wanted his/her students to do. The table below showed the respondents’ comment on what classroom participation is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sherina</td>
<td>“Participation in class, raising hand when teacher ask a question, having a discussion, having a presentation in front of the class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>“Doing assignments, asking a question in class, answer teacher’s questions, having a discussion in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>“Answering questions, giving comments on something, asking questions about lesson that is not clear enough.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Boim</td>
<td>“When teacher ask a question, we answer it. Having a group discussion, sharing additional information about the lesson given.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>“Asking questions, answering questions, having a discussion with friends.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answering questions, having a discussion, having a presentation are things that teachers usually ask the students to do. If students are not assigned to have a discussion, then they will not have a discussion, so how the class runs depends on how the teachers teach the class.

2. Obedient students

Indonesian students are very obeying to their teacher. If they are asked to do a task, they will do it and obey their teacher. When the researcher asked about what the characteristics of a silent students were, Bunga gave an interesting answer. The table below showed the respondent’s comment on what the characteristics of a silent student is.

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bunga</td>
<td>“From what I saw, usually students who often keep silent in class are students who always obey what the teacher said. When they are asked to have a discussion they will discuss with their friends, but if there is no order from the teacher they will keep silent in class. Moreover, when the teacher said ‘please pay attention to me’ or ‘please do not have a discussion with your friends’, students who always do what they are told, will keep silent until the teacher tells them to have a discussion or answer the teacher’s questions.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is the habit of Indonesian students to always listen and do what the teacher wants them to do. It is very clear when we see the respondents answer about classroom participations. It is about what the teacher tells the students to do. If the teacher asks questions, the students have to answer it and if the teacher wants them to have a discussion, the students will have a discussion. Moreover, if the teacher wants them to have an impromptu presentation then the students have no choice but do what the teacher tells them to do.

Imagine when a teacher is lecturing for the whole class hour, and the teacher wants the students to pay attention to him/her, then the whole class will keep silent and listen to the teacher. So, it is not always the students’ desire to keep silent, but somehow it is what their teacher wants them to do. This behavior has already become one of the Indonesian’s habits. It is their culture to obey the teacher.

3. Respect the teacher

Xie (2010) mentions that there are some characteristics of Asian culture that has a correlation with silent students’ behavior. One of them is they respect the elders and seniors by looking up to teachers as authority figures and not challenging or interrupting them with questions (cited from Peng 2007; Tan 2008). One of the respondents said that “A teacher is the centre of knowledge”. It makes students believe that a teacher is never wrong, everything that he/she says is true. The table below showed the respondent’s experience in a class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>“…also there is a slogan that said “a teacher is the centre of knowledge”, so maybe that is why some teachers in the past felt offended if his/her students gave a comment or rebuttal. Although the era has changed, somehow some teachers’ attitude has not changed and they are still in their “old school” behavior. If I have that kind of teacher, it is better for me to just keep silent.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The habit of Indonesian teachers is embedded until now. Some of them have changed their mindset. Although, now it is a different era, it seems that some of them have not and cannot change. A teacher who cannot accept his/her students’ comment or rebuttal about his/her opinion, inevitably will make their students to keep silent in class. They do not want or are not brave enough to say their opinions. When we were in the elementary school very often, our teacher would ask us to keep silent during the class activity. The students were not allowed to make any noise in class. They had to always pay attention to the teacher who was always in front of the class. Some of the respondents have the same opinion on this issue. The table below showed the respondents’ experience in a class.

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>“My experience from elementary school, my teachers always told his/her students to keep silent, pay attention, not to be busy with ourselves, so perhaps that kind of behavior is embedded up till now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ronny</td>
<td>“I think English Department’s students are silent because of their wrong learning experience in the past when they were still in the elementary school, junior high school, or senior high school. Teachers rarely gave their students the opportunity to participate actively in class. They just listened to the teacher’s explanations in class. So now, although the teachers of the English Department give the opportunity for the students to participate in class, somehow they still do not have the willingness to participate actively in class. I think because of the behavior that already embedded since they were in elementary school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>“Students in the past were required to be passive in class, they just had to listen to the teacher’s explanation. Teachers are the ones who know everything. So this behavior is embedded up till now.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students’ past study habits are embedded until they are grown up. These past habits became their natural habits when they are in the university. Most of Indonesian elementary school teachers do not encourage their students to be active in class. Teachers make their
students to remain silent during the class. As a result, most Indonesian students do not participate actively in class. In their mind, a good student must always remain silent and pay their full attention to their teacher. The students have the idea that as soon as they are in the classroom, they need to be silent.

**Teacher and Environment, the Main Factors Affecting Student’s Silence**

Classroom environment includes the atmosphere of a classroom, the teacher, and also the student themselves.

1. **Teacher affects the students’ silence**

   It cannot be denied that a teacher has an important role in class, how a teacher teaches the students affects how the students will become. Based on the result of the interview, it is important that a teacher can teach the students well, explain the lesson clearly, answer every question asked by the students, deliver the lesson creatively, and can also give a clear instruction when he/she gives assignments to the students. It does not rule out the possibility that teachers affect the silence of a student.

   a. **Teacher voters**

   The table below showed the respondent’s experience in dealing with teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sherina</td>
<td>“Usually I become silent when I get lazy or I did not understand the material, or when the teacher is not in a good mood, or the teacher is speaking about himself/herself, and is not paying any attention to the students, or <strong>he/she is just giving his/her attention to some particular students.</strong>”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is very common that some teachers like to give their attention to some particular students only. For example, it is common that a teacher only gives his/her attention to students who sit in the front row, or to some students that he/she likes the most. This kind of behavior affects in students’ manner. It can make the students reluctant to listen to the teacher or to answer teacher’s questions, and they feel more comfortable to keep silent.

b. Teacher’s mood

Sometimes, we also found teachers who have no passion in teaching. It may be because of their mood is not good. When the teacher is not in a good mood it will affect the students’ mood negatively. In such situation the students will most likely remain silent in class. The table below showed the respondent’s experience in dealing with teachers.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>“My silence depends on the teacher, if the teacher is not in a good mood or he/she is not pleasant than I will keep silent”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Narrow-minded teacher

Another reason that will turn a student into silence is when the teacher does not appreciate a student’s opinion. It is very unfortunate that not all teachers have broadminded and have a positive attitude towards students’ opinion. There are teachers who do not like to be criticized or being commented, and this kind of attitude very much affects the silence of students. The table below showed the respondents' experience in dealing with teachers.
2. Classroom peers affect the student’s silence

Besides the teacher, the peers in the classroom can also cause a student to be silent in class. According to Davis (1993), students are more likely to participate in class if they feel they are among friends rather than strangers. However, there are also students who like to dominate the class; for example, there are students who always answer the teacher’s questions. They do not give other students the chance to answer the teacher’s questions. When faced to this kind of situation, some students will feel uncomfortable and they will remain silent.

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bunga</td>
<td>“Many Students who dominate the class make their peers indolent to participate in class”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The class environment very much affects how the students will behave in a class. A teacher’s behavior and mood in a class will affect the atmosphere of a classroom. When a teacher cannot hide that he/she is having a bad mood in the classroom, the atmosphere of the classroom will become gloomy. Bad classroom atmosphere will make the students feel uncomfortable and they will remain silent in class. Students who always dominate a class and who is uncooperative will also cause the silence of a student.
CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, the aim of this study is to explore ED students’ general idea of silence in the classroom. The researchers have found that most of the respondents have the opinions that silent students are students who are doing nothing in class, they do not have the willingness to participate in any class activities, and they just keep quiet in class. However, some of the respondents also think that students who are silent in class do not mean that they are doing nothing in class. However, some of them are trying to think deeper and absorb the lesson. The researcher has also found an interesting thing about how students learn either in the classroom or outside the classroom. There are some students whose method of learning is by being silent. Every student has his/her own characteristic and his/her own strategy to learn. Thus being silent in class does not always mean that a student does not care about the lesson but instead, he/she is trying to understand the lesson better.

This study has also found some interesting facts about why students remain silent in the classroom. First, silent is one of students’ personality behavior. There are some students who are reserved, shy, and even lazy. They do not like to talk too much in class, and they are shy to speak up in front of the class. Second, students remain to keep silent because they feel inferior. This is their psychological problem; they are afraid to speak in front of many people because they think that they are not smart enough. They are afraid that their friends will laugh at them because they give a wrong answer. Third, being silent is a part of Indonesian culture. Xie (2010) said that Asian people respect their elder very much, and they see a teacher as an authority figure. Thus, it is very impolite to interrupt or challenge a teacher with questions or comments. Therefore, one of the reasons why Indonesian students like to keep silent and listen to the teacher is to respect their teacher. Finally, a teacher is one of the most important reasons affecting the attitudes of the
students in class. How the teacher teaches will affect students’ willingness to be active in class. If a teacher cannot deliver the lesson clearly the students will get confused and in turn this will make them lose their interest in the lesson. How the teachers behave in class also affects the students’ attention to both the teacher and the lesson. Most of the respondents said what made them remain silent in class was that their teacher could not accept and respect the students’ opinion or comment. It made them reluctant to be active or even just to speak to the teacher. Some of the respondents also said that students who liked to dominate the class also made them reluctant to be active in class.

The study related to students’ general idea about silent students is still limited. In this case, the researcher only focuses on the students of the English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga, Indonesia. The implication then is that English teachers will have to be more open minded about how they have to behave in class; they need to respect their students’ opinion and give them a chance to show what they have. They have to know how to place their mood in class; not letting it affects the mood of the students in learning. In addition, English teachers have to be more aware to the students in class. If the students are getting bored, it means that there is something wrong with the way they teach them. Teachers need to think more creatively to face students who like to keep silent in class whatever their reason is. However, this study still has some limitations. The main limitation of this study is the number of participants (n=6). Bigger number of participants will be more beneficial for the reliability of further studies. In the future, the researcher hopes that this study can be a reference for both teachers and students who want to be teachers and to raise their awareness of silent behavior in a classroom. The researcher also hopes that there will be a more thorough research about silent students someday.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would not be able to finish this thesis without the help and support from several individuals around me. Therefore, I would like to send my greatest thank to Jesus Christ for His blessing, love, and for always being around me in every condition I have. I would like to send my gratitude to my supervisor, Ibu Anita Kurniawati, M. Hum for the supervision, support and fundamental suggestion given to me, and also to my examiner, Sesilia Rani Setyo Sari, M. Hum for the guidance during the completion of this thesis. I also want to say thank you to all of my participants for their time and help in the process of collecting data.

I am very grateful of being among my parents and family: Kristina Hadhinugroho and Samuel Widhiprasetya as my parents, Ody, and Tante Ninik, whom without their endless prayer, love, and support, I would not be able to finish my study. Special thank goes to my fiancé, Ronny Wibowo for his support, pray, love, care, and restless companion. I also want to say thank you to Tyak and Om Hauw for knowledge to share that made the finishing of my thesis possible. I would like to say thank you for all my best friends, Yessy, Didud, Allen, Gaby, Benny, Temon, Nindha, and Mamud for being the surrogate family during the many years I studied. Last but not least, I would like to deliver my deep thank to all teachers in English Department for teaching and educating me the whole time I study in SWCU.
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Appendix A: Interview questions

1. Bisa tolong perkenalkan nama anda siapa, asal dari mana, sudah berapa tahun belajar bahasa Inggris, dan sekarang semester berapa di FBS?

2. Di setiap pelajaran, dosen terkadang meminta muridnya untuk bisa ikut di dalam aktivitas kelas, apa yang anda ketahui tentang “classroom participation”? 

3. Menurut anda penting atau tidak “classroom participation” itu? Kenapa?

4. Suasana kelas yang seperti apa yang anda suka apabila sedang belajar di kelas? Kenapa?

5. Menurut anda murid yang seperti apa yang dikategorikan sebagai “silent students”? 

6. Apa pendapat anda mengenai “silent students”?


8. Menurut anda mengapa “silence” terjadi di kelas?


10. Biasanya jika murid-murid dikelas diam, lalu biasanya apa yang guru lakukan?

11. Apabila guru anda memberikan pertanyaan dan teman-teman anda tidak ada yang menjawab apa reaksi yang anda berikan?

12. Bagaimana tanggapan anda apabila menemui teman atau guru yang tidak dapat membantu anda dalam proses belajar mengajar dikelas?

13. Bisa tolong deskripsikan “silence” dalam 2 atau 3 kata?

14. Apa ada yang ingin anda tambahkan?