Silent Learners' Voices: Exploring the Silence Behavior in Indonesian EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Silence in an EFL classroom is inevitable, but it only becomes an issue when it discourages students from participating, speaking out, or taking an active role in the teaching and learning process. This study's goal is to determine the reasons for learners' silent behavior and expectations in the EFL classroom. Employing an explanatory sequential research design, the data are collected through questionnaires from 78 Indonesian senior high school learners and analyzed using a descriptive statistic to identify the silent learners. Moreover, interviews were given in order to elicit personal explanations for why learners choose to remain silent in EFL classes. The result of this study specifically identified five reasons for silence in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, the empirical findings gained by this study can support linguistic practitioners or educators in developing a more acute awareness and a deeper comprehension of learners' silent behavior.

Keywords: Classroom Silence, Classroom interactions, Learners' Behavior, Learners' Preferences, EFL Classroom

1. INTRODUCTION

As English language teachers, the "silence" of the learners often sets off alarm bells for us to wonder what is wrong with the lesson or classroom. In fact, silence becomes a crucial issue that can be a source of conflict in classrooms and an obstacle to acquiring the target language (Juniati *et al*., 2018; Harumi, 2011). It refers to the condition when learners do not participate actively in classroom interaction over a long term (Tang *et al.,* 2020). Even though it cannot be classified as bad behavior in some educational circumstances, many

researchers contend that silence in an EFL classroom poses a serious threat to successful language acquisition, in which EFL learners have to advance their English skills (Hanh, 2020). This learners' intentional absence of participation has been a challenge, especially for English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers to help learners become more active in order to improve their communication ability in English.

One of the ways to help silent learners is by finding and listening to their voices (Ghavamnia & Ketabi, 2013). Paying attention to the reasons behind learners' silence can be just as educational as hearing their voices. It is imperative then, to investigate the reasons for EFL learners' silent behavior. Despite the scant research about silence, this topic has gained more attention in recent years as the value of oral competence in the EFL study. Hereof, the silent behavior of Indonesian EFL high school students is examined in this study. Starting by identifying the learners' overall patterns of silence, then the current study critically examines the causes of student silence in EFL classes. Finally, it offers advice regarding what teachers may do to encourage increased verbal participation in foreign language classes based on the silent learners' preferences and expectations.

To date, various studies have investigated the silent reticence of language students in multicultural settings. For example, Wang and Moskal (2019) do such a study in a classroom environment with international students in the United Kingdom. The findings indicate that linguistic and cultural factors have a significant impact on students' restraint in class. However, they would go above and beyond to participate in the conversation if they felt like members of the class and that their thoughts were valued. In Asia, many learners in language classrooms still often pose challenges in many forms such as whether one should take part in the classroom discussions despite the grammatical flaws in their speech if they still attempt to speak, or would it be viewed as interference by the class teacher (Gangavarapu, *et al.,* 2022). More specifically, Chinese learners' silent behaviors are driven by some big intentions, like peer pressure or lack of confidence, well as some major experiences, such as receiving negative feedback or witnessing teachers' abuse of power (Tang *et al.*, 2020). In India, a study by Singh *et al.* (2021), found that some conflicts based on cultural and caste differences are the cause of some silence in the classroom.

Moreover, in EFL settings, more previous studies highlighted some issues regarding the learners' silent behavior such as identifying learners' silence in EFL speaking classrooms, the motives of silent learners, silent learners' attitudes, and the patterns of passive participation (Hanh, 2020; Ghavamnia & Ketabi, 2020; Tang *et al.,* 2020; Sedova *et al.*, 2019; and Van Tuyen, 2018). In Indonesia, silent learners' behavior also become an issue. It is assumed that a large number of Indonesian students favor silence when responding to assignments in class (Bao and Ye, 2020). Even though some activities necessitate verbal interaction, many of them still remain silent before finally speaking up. Along the same line, a study by Nurrohmah & Waloyo (2021) reports that high silence behavior among EFL learners during online classes is due to several aspects such as individual, teacher, cultural, technological, and domestic. A study by Juniati *et al.* (2018) also mentions different major reasons among thirteen college students who take an English major. In addition, the study revealed the lecturers' strategies to overcome the silence by

providing opportunity to speak, guiding students to speak, and asking them to write down their opinion before speaking up.

The previously mentioned studies illuminate the perspective that negative silence in the classroom resists the goals of EFL learning outcome which is communication skills. Therefore, this topic should have more attention, especially in Indonesia. Furthermore, studies that investigate the reasons behind the silence of Indonesian EFL students at the senior high school level still remain under exploration. Rather than just studying whether they are silent or not, this present study intends to fill this gap through an in-depth analysis of the reasons for learners' silence in the EFL context. While the focus of most previous studies is at the university level, this present study set apart to study at the senior high school level where English language learning has become the compulsory subject. Taking the consideration that unwillingness to actively participate is negative behavior and it is essential to observe the way to deal with it (Juniate *et al., 2018*), this study attempts to take earlier measures from high school students. It is hoped that the finding would assist Indonesian EFL teachers in certain strategies to tackle the issues and create active classroom behavior.

Considering the issues discussed above in the Indonesian EFL context, the following research questions were formulated for this study:
1. What are the reasons behind the silent behavior of Indonesian EFL learners?
2. What are the preferences activities of silent learners in English classrooms in the Indonesian EFL context?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Why students need to be active

The emergence of communicative approaches during the previous decades made it clear how learner-centeredness was taken into account in the teaching-learning process, which changed the focus from language form to language function, or to language use (Savignon 1997 as cited in Ghavamnia & Ketabi, 2013). Thus, modern language pedagogy attaches a lot of importance to communication. It leads us to the fact that communication is key in the classroom. It is suggested based on the study that learners can increase their academic performance through talk (Resnick *et al.,* 2018). Another study by Sedova *et al.* (2019) also confirmed a positive link between students' talk time and students' achievements in the classroom. In the sense that learners should actively participate in oral discourse, unfortunately, there are students who still remain silent in the classroom (Hanh, 2020).

Silence in the classroom refers to a phenomenon in which learners choose not to interact with teachers or one another which might indicate signals of boredom, pessimism, or unwillingness (Juniati *et al.,* 2018; Baurain, 2011). It also distinguishes a gesture of denial, agreement, request, warning, command, threat, or confirmation as interactional strategies. This is a critical challenge since the teaching and learning process might not be successful if the outcomes do not meet the communicative purpose. The problems occur when EFL learners are asked to participate or practice their English in class but choose to remain silent or, more frequently, only a small number of them do so (Bahar, *et al.,* 2022). Thus, teachers usually have a negative perspective and interpretation of any silence that occurs in the classroom.

2.2 How silence occurs in the classroom

There are times when silence in class is necessary and other times when it is not. Therefore, silence is not absolutely considered negative behavior. Thus, we have to equate the concept of "silence" that we discuss in this study to avoid the ambiguity questions such as: Should students in the classroom be silent or not? Which circumstances call for students to be quiet and which circumstances call for students to raise their voices?

A silence is required in EFL classes. For instance, learners need the wait time to consider and prepare for when the teacher asks a question or gives certain assignments (Juniati, 2018). However, mostly silence is undesirable because it often happens unexpectedly. For example, when the teacher asks the class to respond to a question, it commonly happens that only a few students do so or that no one responds at all (Min, 2016). Additionally, Kurzon (1997) as cited in Nakane (2006), identifies intentional and unintentional silence. Intentional silence is used intentionally as a strategy, while unintentional silence is caused by extreme anxiety, embarrassment, or panic. Since there are several ways to describe silence in the classroom, the current study defines silence as a deliberate lack of participation in the productive discussion taking place in the EFL classroom. It also correlates to passivity in class (Tang *et al.,* 2020; Ha & Li, 2014).

Some major factors which somewhat intertwined with one another are generally studied as the reason why undesirable silence happens in the classroom. One of the causes is anxiousness on their own. The two problems that the learners frequently mentioned as restricting their participation in classroom communication were language anxiety and low self-esteem. (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009 in Adamson 2022). It has to do with the fear of making mistakes and being negatively judged, both of which are understandable in any situation when a foreign language is employed. The inability to speak the target language fluently in class is another factor that can cause silence. Some learners find it difficult to be calm and composed when asked to speak English because they have not developed their vocabulary or mastered the language's grammatical rules well enough to converse with others freely and fluently (Min, 2016). Additionally, students may feel stressed out if they find it hard to understand what teachers or lecturers are saying in English and feel judged by their peers in class (Saylag, 2014). They, therefore, employ silence as a face-saving tactic to stave off others' disapproval (Choi, 2015; Kandila *et al.,* 2021; Tsui, 1996 cited in Gangavarapu, *et al.,* 2022). These are just a few of the things that can make learners passive. Learners are referred to as silent learners when they do not actively ask and respond to questions or participate in class discussions (Ping, 2010, referenced in Zhu & O'Sullivan, 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

To investigate silent learners' in EFL classrooms the researchers employed an explanatory sequential design which it will focus on quantitative data and use qualitative follow-up data to explain quantitative results (Cresswell & Clark, 2018; Streling & De Costa, 2018). It has a number of advantages, including simplicity and the ability to dig deeper into quantitative results (Ivankova, *et al*., 2006). In this regard, the demographic

questionnaire and the close-ended questionnaire about silent learners' in the EFL classroom were adapted to collect the quantitative data. Moreover, in order to verify and enlighten the data obtained from the questionnaire responses, there will be a follow-up interview (Latief, 2019).

3.2 Research Context and Research Participants

The target population of this study is EFL high school learners in one of the well-known private high schools in Jember, East Java, Indonesia. In this school, English language lesson serves as the mandatory subject that the learners should have since they are 10 graders. They have English language lessons twice a week. Since the researcher has limited access to the big population, purposive sampling is used to obtain the sample. As non-probability sampling strategies, purposive sampling enables certain responders to fulfill the criteria, who are then purposefully sought out (Galloway, 2005). Therefore, the participants of this study are 78 (35% male; 65% female) EFL high school learners who filled out the demographic questionnaire. They are ranging between 10-11 graders. Moreover, 41 silent learners (27% male; 73% female) were identified using data from the demographic questionnaire and completed the next phases. They responded to a closed-ended questionnaire. Then, the researcher randomly chose 5 participants to be interviewed to get more depth information. Since the rule of the school does not allow their learners to bring any electronic devices such as phones or laptops, all the processes of data collection in this study were done manually at the end of their English session (in three days) taking around 20-30 minutes with the English teacher's permission.

3.3 Research Instruments and Analysis
3.3.1 Demographic Questionnaire

There were 78 high school students participating in the first round of data collection by filling out a questionnaire about their demographic information and answering a question about whether they are active or silent in the EFL classroom. The questionnaire is adapted from Ghavamnia & Ketabi (2020) and established the expert validation and some revision. The outcome of the demographic questionnaire led researchers to focus on silent learners for this study. The result is analyzed using a pivot table in Microsoft Excel. It indicated 41 participants (52.5%) of the total were identified as silent learners. After confirming the result with their EFL teacher then these participants continued to fill out a closed-ended questionnaire.

3.3.2 Silent Learners' Questionnaire

The questionnaire for silent learners is also adapted from Ghavamnia & Ketabi (2020) which covers the reason for silent behaviors and silent learners' expectations. Indonesian language and the 4-point Likert Scale were used to get bold and more specific responses. In order to assure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the expert-validation and try-out were done on the questionnaire. Thus, it was appropriately modified to meet the goal of this study and it was also moderated based on the suggestions from experienced EFL teachers as well. The try-out of the questionnaire had been tested on 15 participants who were in the same learning environment before the main data collection process. The data from the

piloted questionnaire were run on the SPSS version 25 to check the validity the reliability. Firstly, it contained 27 items but the findings detected 2 invalid items so they were eliminated. Thus, the 25 items are valid because the significant value is < 0.05 and the r value is > 0.514. Moreover, the reliability coefficient was relatively high (α=0,937). Therefore, the questionnaire meets the requirements to be said valid and reliable. Then, the fixed silent learners questionnaire was delivered to 41 participants. The data was then tabulated and analyzed in Microsoft Excel using Descriptive Statistical Test to observe the frequency, central tendency, and standard deviation.

3.3.3 Interview

In the subsequent phase—a follow-up interview—themes for the next investigation were developed using the preliminary questionnaire data. Rossman & Rallis (2011) stated in Arslan (2019), that the interview was viewed as a way to confirm and double-check the information gleaned from the questionnaire. More crucially in this study, the interview was intended to bring out personal justification of the silent learners for why they choose such behavior in EFL classes. This present study used a semi-structured interview which allowed guided questions focused on exploring the information of the interviewee's beliefs, attitudes, and meanings (Menter *et al.,* 2011). Then, the semi-structured interview questions are validated by the expert in order to fix inadequacies. Then, the complete semi-structured interview guide is completed with 11 items. Each interview was conducted in Indonesian by the researcher and then translated into English. The responses were recorded, then written down before it analyzed manually for qualitative analysis to support the questionnaire result.

4. FINDINGS

As previously mentioned, the data obtained from the questionnaire were derived from participants who identified as silent learners in the EFL classroom. The results of the responses cover the reasons behind their silent behaviors and their expectation of activity in the EFL classroom. In this section, the results of the questionnaire are presented regarding the two aspects. The findings can be seen from the percentage of learners who chose to agree or disagree with the statements. The mean score also considers the results; if yesterday many students agreed with the statement on a number, then the mean score on that number would be high and vice versa. Along with that, the report of the interview is presented to support the questionnaire results.

4.1 Questionnaire Results
4.1.1 The Reasons for Learners' Silent Behavior

The beginning of the questionnaire investigated the reason for learners' silent behavior just as presented in Table 1. Several significant reasons can be drawn from the questionnaire in which a number of students chose to disagree with the statements. First, almost all of the participants, 95.12% to be exact, opposed that they are confident enough to answer questions in the EFL classroom (M=2.00). This is the smallest mean score among the entire statements that clearly shows us why these learners chose to remain silent. Second, 73.17% of participants did not agree that learning English is easy (M=2.27). Third, more

than half participants (58.54%) failed to agree that they like having to speak in class (M=2.22). Although the teacher had given a chance to speak, if the learners had these kinds of thoughts they would stay reluctant to grab that chance and remain silent.

There is also one reason that 41.46% of participants strongly agreed is due to the difference in proficiency levels among students in the classroom (M=3.44). Considering the fact that some of the students are chosen by the school to join the English club as their extracurricular activity, it makes them able to be more active in English class while the others would remain passive. It is related to the next reason that 48.78% of participants agreed about the anxiety of making mistakes and being laughed at by classmates (M=3.32) or being judged by the teacher (M=3.17). Another one that cannot be ignored is that learners often did not understand the lesson taught by the teacher (M=2.80). So, it makes sense when 68.29% of participants agreed with the statement. When the teacher passed some questions, these learners stayed silent because they could not get along with the materials.

Table 1. The Reason for Learners' silent behavior

No.	Statements	Frequency in Percentage				Mean
		SD	D	A	SA	
1.	I have a good English score since junior high school until now.	7,32	41,46	51,22	0,00	2,44
2.	It is quite easy for me to learn English.	0,00	73,17	26,83	0,00	2,27
3.	I confident enough to answer a question from my English teacher in the class.	2,44	95,12	2,44	0,00	2,00
4.	I like having to speak in class.	9,76	58,54	31,71	0,00	2,22
5.	I comfortable enough to speak in English.	4,88	58,54	36,59	0,00	2,32
6.	I like the way my English teacher teaches in the class.	14,63	58,54	24,39	2,44	2,15
7.	I like studying English	7,32	48,78	34,15	9,76	2,46
8.	I often do not understand the lesson taught by my English teacher.	2,44	21,95	68,29	7,32	2,80
9.	I often know the answers of my English teacher's questions but I am too lazy to answer it orally.	0,00	2,44	56,10	41,46	3,39
10.	My English teacher often gives me a chance to answer his/her questions.	2,44	26,83	63,41	7,32	2,76
11.	The proficiency levels of the students present in one class are not the same.	0,00	7,32	41,46	51,22	3,44
12.	I am afraid of making mistakes and being judged by my English teacher.	0,00	19,51	48,78	31,71	3,17
13.	I am afraid of making mistakes and being laughed by my classmates.	0,00	9,76	48,78	41,41	3,32
14.	The best technique for teaching English is by translating everything into Indonesian.	0,00	17,07	65,85	17,07	3,00
15.	The English classes are useless for me just because my skill has been weak.	14,63	68,52	19,51	0,00	2,05

4.1.2 The Silent Learners' Expectations

In the next order, the questionnaire explored the silent learners' expectations toward activity in the EFL classroom. It included their hopes for the English lesson and their

preferences for activities that could motivate them to participate actively. Significantly, there were some aspects that stand out from the result which have high mean scores as presented in Table 2. It can be seen that even though they acted as silent learners, 51.22% of participants expected to pass their English class with a good score (M=3.49). In the same line, 48.78% of participants believed that English is important for their future life (M=3.51). On the other hand, most of them (70.73%) did not assume that English lessons are useless just because their ability has been weak (M=2.05). It is hoped that silence can be freed through some activity that the students prefer.

Let us take a look at the learners' preferences obtained from the questionnaire. First, 80.49% of participants strongly agreed to have an English teacher who gives more examples to speak English in the class (M=3.80). This highest mean score shows us that these learners regard their teacher as a role model in speaking English. Second, the friendly English teacher was preferred by 75.61% of participants (M=3.76). Third, 60.98% of participants also preferred to have a teacher who gives examples of sentences while explaining the lesson (M=3.59). The next is followed by the kind of speaking activity in the classroom which 21.9% really hoped to try more variance of activity in the classroom (M=3.07). When it comes to the choices between individual or group work, more participants (17.07%) strongly agreed and preferred to have the activity in a group (M=2.88).

Table 2. The silent learners' expectations.

No.	Statements	Frequency in Percentage				Mean
		SD	**D**	**A**	**SA**	
16.	There should be more individual speaking activities	14,63	68,29	17,07	0,00	2,02
17.	There should be more groups speaking activities	0,00	29,27	53,66	17,07	2,88
18.	I want to pass my English class with a good score	0,00	0,00	51,22	48,78	3,49
19.	I think that English is very important for my future life.	0,00	0,00	48,78	51,22	3,51
20.	I like having an English teacher who translate everything into Indonesian.	0,00	7,32	63,41	29,27	3,22
21.	I like having an English teacher who only translate difficult words into Indonesian.	0,00	9,76	46,34	43,90	3,34
22.	I like having a friendly English teacher.	0,00	0,00	24,39	75,61	3,76
23.	I like having an English teacher who gives more examples of sentences when he/she explains the lesson.	0,00	2,44	36,59	60,98	3,59
24.	I like having an English teacher who gives more examples to speak English in the class.	0,00	0,00	19,51	80,49	3,80
25.	In English class, there should be discussions in English.	0,00	14,63	63,41	21,95	3,07

4.2 Interview Results
4.2.1 The Reasons for Learners' Silent Behavior

All of the five participants who were interviewed did acknowledge the reason for silent behavior in the EFL classroom. In the interview phase, they confirmed their questionnaire

responses by sharing their perspective and experience. Each student indeed had different point of view, however, low proficiency became the big theme influencing the silence in the EFL classroom. Some participants confessed as follows:

> *Sometimes I do not get the answer, sometimes I even do not understand the question. I believe my friends would answer it anyway. My friends who are members of the English club are smarter. (Participant A).*
>
> *I forget English words quite often because I am not used to speaking in English. I worry to mispronounce some words. There were times when my friend's pronunciation was wrong, we laughed at him because it sounded silly. I know we were joking but I do not want to be silly. (Participant B)*
>
> *When I do not answer my teacher's question, it is because I do not know what it is. But when I know, I rarely volunteer to answer the question because basically, I am a shy person. (Participant D)*

In this case, the result of the questionnaire matched with the interview in which participants A, B, and D thought about the inconvenience of speaking activity and the difficulty of learning English. Specifically, the lack of English vocabulary appeared to be the crucial aspect that made the learners stay silent. Furthermore, Participant A is not the only student that mentioned different proficiency in the classroom since other participants also mentioned the same issues such as:

> *I was insecure when I thought my friends were smarter. There was a time when I thought the teacher was explaining a difficult lesson, but my friends seemed to understand while I didn't. It is embarrassing, isn't it?* (Participant C).
>
> *Some of my friends like to give an answer when we discuss an assignment from a textbook or translate words with the class. Most of the time their answers are correct, so I just sit back and follow the discussion while taking some notes. (Participant E)*

The fear of being laughed at by classmates was greater in this case. It is related to the reason that learners' proficiency was not equal. Thus, it resulted in low confidence for learners to actively participate in the EFL classroom and ended up in silent behavior. Other than that, some learners chose to keep silent even though they already had the answer to the questions raised by the teacher.

4.2.2 The Silent Learners' Expectations

The findings from the interview support the survey about silent learners' expectations and preferences in English lessons. Despite the fact that participants thought English is hard, they still wanted to try to finish their English lesson with a good score believing that English is important for their future careers. Some of them confessed:

> *I know that English is important, and that is why I try to get a score as good as I can. Maybe I cannot really compete with the speaking activity or answering questions orally, but I try my best in other tasks. (Participant E)*
>
> *I believe that English will be very important in the future. Maybe I am not really good at English now, especially speaking and listening. If I have a chance, maybe I will take a course. Nevertheless, being able to speak in English is cool, right? (Participant D)*

I need to pass my English class at least with the minimum score criteria, but I hope I can get more than that. (Participant B)

It can be derived that the learners still care about English lessons. It led the investigation to dig into their preferences in the classroom. The participants expected to get more fun activities rather than just discussing the textbook assignment, questions, and answers or translating words. They also hoped to get more examples and references for speaking skills. As illustrated in some responses of the five participants below.

It is easier for me if my teacher explains the lesson and gives more examples of the right sentences. I also like if my teacher is friendly and creative because it is hard for me to stay focused in such a monotone situation. (Participant A)

Playing games, watching videos, or listening to songs are fun. I prefer to have those kinds of tasks rather than just doing tasks in the textbook. Group activities are also fun because if I make a mistake in English it will not be too obvious, because we are in the group. (Participant B)

I like it when my teacher gives a template to say something. For example, if we want to greet someone we can say this, this, or this… My favorite activity? It would be role plays. I like working in a small team, because it does not feel like a competition among each student, and it feels less stressful. (Participant C)

I like games and group speaking activities rather than individual speaking tasks. I feel more comfortable and confident. (Participant D).

My teacher once conducted a game about our topic in the class, it was so fun. I hope to get more activities like that. Unfortunately, we often get the activities like discussing the questions in the book or translating a text. (Participant E)

5. DISCUSSION

This study is intended to examine the silent behavior of Indonesian high school learners in EFL classrooms. It can be understood that the existence of silence in class interactions came from various reasons. From the questionnaire, several reasons were derived as follows: (1) the learners were not confident enough to answer questions in the EFL classroom, (2) the learners believed that English is difficult, (3) the learners did not like having to speak in class, (4) the learners' proficiency levels in the classroom were different, (5) the learners were afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by classmates, and (6) the learners were afraid of making mistakes and being judged by the teacher. During the interview phase, these reasons were confirmed and clarified. In other words, the reasons for silence in the EFL classroom could be caused by several factors such as students' anxiety, peer pressures, lack of proficiency, and motivation. It is in line with the previous study by Ghavamnia (2013) that claimed several reasons for silence in the classroom, namely a psychological perspective, a sociocultural perspective, and a cognitive perspective.

If it is drawn to a larger theme, there are 2 things that we can highlight from the results of the questionnaire and interview. The first theme is learners' low self-esteem. This is related to a study by Sedova and Navratilova (2020) which indicated a common reason for low and high-achieving learners' silent behavior is the struggle of speaking in front of

others. Many learners struggled to develop confidence because they constantly worried about making mistakes or looking silly, which prevented them from actively participating. In the interview phase, some students clarified that they abstained from class because they felt inferior to the other 'clever' ones. Some of them also claimed that their silence stemmed from their shyness or a lack of excitement.

The second theme is dealing with inadequate English proficiency. The reason why learners kept silent, they claimed, was that they either did not know the answer or did not understand the question. As a result, in situations like this when they were unable to convey their thoughts, silence became their only escape (Hanh, 2018). It also had to do with the fact that the other learners were acknowledged as having a greater skills and were expected to participate and provide answers. When the teacher asked a question and the silent learners were unable or unwilling to respond, they always remained silent until the call was handed to the other, "more clever," learners.

Given that English is not just utilized as a dominating language in EFL classrooms, silence is likely to occur. However, when a student requires silence to assist their own learning, it needs to be managed carefully so that it doesn't last too long before the verbal style of learning can take over (Bao and Ye, 2020). Therefore, listening to the silent learners' voices about their wants in the English classroom is the way to break the silence. EFL teachers can use such strategies to motivate silent learners to be active even more.

In the questionnaire result, some preferences were drawn. Learners preferred to have; (1) teachers who provide more examples of speaking in English, (2) friendly English teachers, (3) English lessons with more examples or templates to speak correct sentences, (4) more variance in classroom activities, and (5) more group activities for speaking. Those findings are related to the fact that senior high school learners need more English exposure which would be a prominent factor to cope with silence since there is a significant correlation between exposure frequency to English and speaking performance (Arfah & Zamzam, 2017). One of the easy ways is more examples of speaking in English from the teachers since they are the role model for the learners. For instance, the teacher can set class time to discuss what they have learned using English. Listening to the teacher's talk can also familiarize learners with the English language.

Additionally, some students confessed that the activities such as discussing the assignment from their textbook or translating words were monotone and less attractive for them to actively participate. Concerning this, student-center activities are better done due to the fact that Indonesian high school students learn English because of practical and functional reasons (Averina & Kuswandono, 2022). Several strategies such as integrated game-based learning, a group presentation, role-play, or other activities which require teamwork are suggested to be used in the classroom (Kandilla, *et al.*, 2021). Student center activities that focus on communicative purpose can increase learners' motivation to attempt their speaking and get rid of their silent behavior.

Further, building up learners' motivation is also crucial in this case, as well as helping learners through words and actions. Positive oral feedback when learners make a little progress in speaking can encourage them to do more. It is better for the teacher to appreciate the learners' effort even when there are some mistakes. For instance, simply saying "I appreciate that you try to answer. It's nice when we can consider the answer together. I'm

curious if anyone else has a different opinion?" or "I can see why you might think that." Instead of directly judging that their answer is wrong. These kinds of statements help the learners to keep a safe face and tell them that it is okay to make mistakes as a part of learning. What is not okay is when the learners decide to stay silent for a long time to hold back from making errors or looking silly. The teacher should also remind the learners not to make fun of their friends' mistakes. As stated by Mahdi (2015), EFL learners must accept the possibility that they might be wrong in some sentences or answering questions. Instead of hiding in silence, it is hoped that learners finally be active and practice their speaking even with some mistakes to make them learn better.

6. CONCLUSION

This article set out to identify the reasons behind the silence of Indonesian senior high school learners in the EFL classroom and to catch their expectations. Among 78 participants, 52,5% of them are identified as silent learners. These 41 participants completed the questionnaire and 5 representatives of them were randomly selected for the follow-up interview. The result shows some contributing reasons for silence in EFL classroom, namely; (1) lack of confidence to answer oral questions, (2) belief that learning English is difficult, (3) hesitancy to speak in front of others, (4) different levels of language proficiency, (5) fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by classmates and judged by teachers. In this case, the learners' lack of self-esteem and their inadequate English competence were the two big concerns. However, silent learners still had the willingness to get a good score and consider the importance of English for their future. This study also explored learners' preferences in EFL classrooms. They preferred to get more exposure to oral English. Teachers as role models should give examples of speaking in English. It is also important to build up learners' self-esteem through student-center activities and to give positive feedback for learners' efforts to speak. In such a way, the EFL teachers can use these strategies to break the silence in their classroom and help the learners to actively participate in the teaching process.

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