

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents several theories related to this study. It includes the definition of reticence, the reason behind reticence, reticence in speaking, and the previous studies.

A. Definition of Reticence

Reticence is an unwillingness to do something or talk about something, for example because you are nervous or being careful. Another definition of Reticence is being reserved, quiet or reluctant. McCroskey (1977) assigned reticence as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons”. Tsui (1996) allowed speaking reticence as “learners’ inadequate ability in self-expression, a problem in verbal response to the learning situation”. Riasati (2014) stated that reticence is “The students' unwillingness to speak and participate in classroom activities”.

B. Reasons Behind Reticence

Through looking into prior studies, there are several identified reasons for reticence, including low language proficiency, foreign language anxiety, introversion, teachers’ influence, insufficient preparation, and competition with peers. Shy students who are unable to participate verbally in class can be attributed to being reticent. Simply put, shyness is a trait that can come from anyone or from a variety of factors, including social introversion, unfamiliarity with academic discourse, lack of faith in the subject, or communication anxiety (McCroskey, 1992). According to previous research, low English proficiency was the main

contributing factor to students' reluctance to speak. Harumi (2011) collected questionnaires from 197 English majors in a Japanese university to investigate reasons for remaining silent in the English classroom. 67% of participants felt that the linguistic issue contributed to the most prominent factor. This stopped them from expressing themselves in English.

The second commonly mentioned reason behind reticence in a large body of research was anxiety. For investigating foreign language anxiety in language learning, Yalcin and Incecay (2014) identified three components of language anxiety, namely communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Students with communication apprehension feel uneasy to use the target language when being the focus of others, especially in the speaking context. As to the fear of negative evaluation, it refers to 'apprehension about others' evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations and expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively'. Students with test anxiety feel afraid to fail in a test situation, especially in the speaking output stage.

Some research revealed that reticence was partly teacher-induced. Williams and Andrade (2008) identified a teacher as the reason for students' reticence, the teachers in their study were referred to the English native speakers. In that case, students struggled to comprehend what native speaker teachers were saying. If they failed to understand, they would remain quiet. Personality traits, especially introversion, are widely adopted as one of the predictors of classroom reticence. According to Olakitan (2011), introverts were inclined to be quiet and less willing to be involved in groups, so introverted students appeared to have less participation in classroom interaction. Similar findings are documented in Williams and Andrade

(2008) and Harumi (2011), claiming that shyness played a significant role in learner reticence.

Other reasons are also identified in addition to the factors mentioned above. Liu et al. 's (2011) found that the most commonly rated reason was insufficient preparation. They were not familiar with the teaching content, thereby remaining quiet. Another great and unexpected contributor towards silence was that active students were fluent in spoken English, so they chose to be listeners instead of losing face by showing their poor English. Classroom atmosphere is another reason why they are reluctant to speak English. Silence is contagious when the majority of classmates rarely respond to their teachers and speaking English may create a sense of isolation (Williams & Andrade, 2008). Other factors, such as fear of making mistakes, being unfamiliar with the teacher and students and difficulty of the learning content, are all attributed to the students' reticence (Liu, 2005).

C. Reticence in Speaking

Reticence is a serious barrier for achieving fluency in spoken English and multiple variables contribute to it in language classrooms. English teachers should be aware of the strategies to help the students become more active to speak the target language in the English classroom (Liu, 2005). In the English classroom, students have the willingness to participate in class discussions, but some students are being passive and reticent in class. The reticent students expressed their willingness to participate in English classes through pair or group discussions (Riasati, 2014). They may feel more confident in participating in pair or group discussions because they feel less anxious.

Reticence is defined as an obstacle in communication with cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects which appear in second or foreign language classrooms and influence the students' speaking skill (Li & Liu, 2011). Students, even if they have good speaking skills, may experience low self-esteem because they assume they lack vocabulary mastery and tend to make a lot of mistakes. Therefore, they prefer to be silent in class and do not want to get out of their comfort zone to improve their speaking ability.

For the purpose to help the students to reduce the reticence, English teachers should realize the existence of reticence among the ESL/EFL learners. Teachers also should give more opportunities and encourage the students who are reticent by asking more questions to them (Liu,2005). For instance, in order to make the reticent students participate actively in speaking class, teachers can prepare more interesting topics which are related to the students' activities, life, or hobbies. Hence the students can improve their speaking skill, participate actively and feel more confident in class through that topic (Liu, 2005).

As stated by Liu (2005), English teachers should build a comfortable classroom atmosphere which supports the reticent students to feel free while they speak English in class. If there is a competition among the students in the classroom, students can feel under pressure and they will get difficulties to remedy the situations. The atmosphere in class is really important for the reticence students. Friendly atmosphere makes them willing to participate actively, answer the questions, and express their ideas freely in class because they will not be afraid of making mistakes (Riasati, 2014). If they make a mistake or have difficulty in the speaking class, their friends will give some responses to build their confidence in a

friendly way. This friendly classroom environment supports and helps the reticent students to be more confident, active, and get motivation to encourage their speaking ability. EFL/ESL teachers have the main problem in which the students cannot respond orally to the teachers' instructions. The types of students who are passive, embarrassed, silent, and unwilling to participate in class are the factors that make the students unable to improve their speaking ability well.

D. Characteristic of Reticence

Chowdhury (2014) explained the characteristics of students' reluctance is feeling anxiety, lack of topics in conversation, timing when speaking is not right, often thinking for too long, feeling difficulty conveying something, and having difficulty remembering.

Witayarat (2015) described the characteristics of students' reticence in the classroom is not confidence when speaking, non-participation, non-questioning, passivity, too dependent on the teacher. Moreover, Izadi and Zare (2016), the reticence students can be described when they are silent in communication and do not willingly contribute in language classroom every time, more worried and anxious when asked to involve in a conversation.

E. Previous Studies

Different researchers have employed different ways of identifying students' reasons of reticence. Using interviews, observations, and journals written by second/foreign language learners, researchers have managed to discover why some language learners choose to remain silent in language classrooms.

Liu and Jackson (2009) investigate students' reticence in oral English lessons at the tertiary level. The researchers used surveys observations, reflective journals, and interviews as data collection techniques. It was found that students who benefited from a higher proficiency level were more willing to speak in class. Moreover, giving a lecture was found to be the least favorite activity, while pair work was rated as a popular activity. Students' willingness to take part in class activities was found to increase as a result of their exposure to spoken language and familiarity with the environment.

In a recent qualitative study, Riasati (2012) explored Iranian EFL learners' perception of factors influencing their willingness to speak in language classrooms. The interview results showed a range of factors including task type, topic of discussion, role of interlocutor, role of teacher, class atmosphere, learners' self-perceived speaking ability, and their personality. It was also found that students' fear of evaluation and fear of the correctness of speech reduced their willingness to speak in class.