

THE RETICENCE OF STBA PONTIANAK STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract - The present study reported on the reticent factors and its behaviours demonstrated by the third-semester students of the academic year 2019/2020 in STBA Pontianak. They were all 2A1 class with 38 students majoring in English literature. Ten students were selected to be asked in interview. The study applied a qualitatively descriptive method which data were obtained from direct observation and semi-structured interview, then, being analysed in three steps. The research finding indicated that the students were reluctant to speak and remained reticent in language classroom due to three aspects, namely students factors as the most various influential factors, lecturer factors, and cultural factors. Moreover, speaking more in their native language, avoiding communication, sitting at the back and in the middle, being passive, unwilling to initiate interaction, giving a short response, relying on memorization, doing less interaction, and needing more a waited-time, were identified as reticent behaviours.

Keywords: Reticence, Factors, Behaviours, ESL Classroom, Reluctance to Speak

I. INTRODUCTION

In higher education, students have been positively required practising a higher level of critical-thinking in classroom activities. Therefore, most of teaching and learning process are conducted through interaction. Sari *et al.* (2018, p.150) defined classroom interaction as all activity which encourages students participation in lessons being taught by lecturers. The interaction occurs between lecturer and students or students and their peers to construct deep understanding of learning. As stated by Brown (2001, p.165), interaction is an reciprocal action done by two or more people through the process of exchanging ideas, thought, or feeling. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that learning will be gained through interaction. Students are expected to think critically, clearly, and intelligently. They also have to communicate actively in asking, questioning, sharing ideas, or arguing opinions with logical reasons. All these communicative activities are existed in classroom interaction.

The correlation between interaction and communication is inseparable. In a context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, students have to communicate target language orally in interaction. Brown (2001, p.165) believed that interaction is the centre of communication. Interaction will be effective if students show their interest to communicate each other. Unfortunately, a common issue of reticence has been existing among students which highly impacts teaching and learning process. According to Keaten & Kelly (2000), reticence is a communication problem because of the beliefs that it is better to remain silent than appearing foolish. Furthermore, compare to non-reticent, the reticent student more deals with matter related to knowledge of what to say, timing, organization, delivery and memory. They rarely do communication, as a result they lack of learning experience, competence and proficiency. The absence of oral participation indicates student's unwillingness to communicate which appears as interaction matter in the class. This condition might hinder students to learn and master English skills, particularly speaking skill.

Reticence is a term initiated by Phillip in 1965. He refers reticence as avoidance of communication due to fault beliefs experienced by reticent people (Li & Liu, 2011). Fear of losing face when talking with others is the beliefs which becomes a reason to remain silent. Phillip also linked the communication problem with two dimensions of behaviour and cognitive. However, Keaten & Kelly (2000) added affective dimension among those two aforementioned dimensions. Keaten & Kelly (cited in Tuyen, 2018, p.180) underlined affective dimension as an anxiety experienced by EFL students when they learn or speak target language. This dimension includes feeling of uneasiness, worry, nervousness and apprehension. The cognitive dimension consists of belief systems which cause the reticent persons impeding their intention to speak. Meanwhile, behaviour dimension emphasizes the avoidance affected by devaluation of the five rhetorical process (invention, disposition, style, delivery, and memory)

Despite students possess a great linguistic competence, it is insufficient without communicative competence. Young (2011) explained that an individual's communicative competence and linguistic competence highly impact language teaching and testing. Moreover, communicative competence differentiates one from

others because it involves how to communicate appropriately with knowledge the speakers have. Hence, students have to appear as active learners that they are able to master the competences. On the contrary, the matter comes to passive students who are unwilling to communicate actively in the class. As a result, they are labelled as 'reticent students' or commonly 'quiet students'. To facilitate the students mastering the competences and to reduce student reticence, lecturers should create effective learning through active interaction in their class which focusing on the students' willingness to communicate (WTC). Interaction may improves students' participation if lecturer provides opportunities for them. As stated by Astuti (2011, p.14) who included the criteria of effective classroom interaction which is demonstrated by students occasions to communicate that they become active participants during learning.

In EFL classroom, the students should speak English as a system for uttering intention or thoughts. As stated by Meng & Wang (2011), the language functions as a teaching tool and also a target language being applied by lecturer and students when interaction occurs. However, the notion of reticence is a highly complex matter in EFL classroom. Bao (2014) explained reticence as an obstacle in communication where students experience difficulty in activating language skills. Reticence denotes student's unwillingness to communicate in particular context (Li & Liu, 2011). It also reveals that the students are unresponsive toward learning process or topic being taught, disregarding the value or strategies of classroom participation, being apart from learning community, and feeling bored.

Despite the students know the importance of using English, yet they remain passive and being reticent in classroom (Chalak & Baktash, 2015, p.2656). The reticent students tend to speak in low voice when responding direct questions from lecturer (Liu & Jackson, 2009). They also usually are reluctant to answer questions in front of the whole class. Only a small number of students who took the speaking opportunities which have provided by lecturers. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the factors causing reticence in classroom interaction.

Liu & Jackson (2009) claimed that students' fear of making mistake, lack of confidence, being laughed at are the variables which contribute in students' reticence. On the contrary, Carter & Henrichsen (2015, p.15) argued that student's lack of

competence, motivation, and proficiency are inequitably contributed in reticence factors. They stated that because of lecturer's assumption of reticent students are concluded simply through productive skills (speaking, writing) without considering receptive skills (listening, reading). In fact, motivated students are prone to possess awareness of improving communicative competence that enhance their WTC (1980, cited in Galadja, 2017, p.39). Galadja (2017, p.54-55) added factor affecting WTC in EFL classroom. He stated that group dynamic facilitated by lecturer is truly important in the process of interaction. Liu et al. (2011, p.20-21) underlined how reticent students behave in classroom interaction. They have propensity to speak in short, unspontaneous or even rely on protective actions. For instance, nodding head, using body to block lecturer's eye from seeing them, and showing hesitant gaze or anxiety.

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the reticence as an issue which hinders students to speak in interactive classroom activity. It reported that reticence is a matter impacting their WTC. Reza (2015) investigated reticence among level 1 preparatory year students at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. He claimed that reticence impacts students learning that they are incapable to master English language. He found the top three factors that provoke reticence: role of teachers, anxiety, and motivation. He, then, added factors of attitudes, curriculum development, beliefs and classroom environment contributed in students' reticence. A three years qualitative longitudinal case study conducted by Tong (2010), investigated willing to participate and reticence in Hong Kong's school. The study revealed that the students were quiet as they desired to improve their listening and language skill. However, lack of confidence, shyness, insufficient language skills, anxiety about making errors and being singled out are the causes of their quietness and passiveness. On the contrary, students more willing to communicate when they were less visible in classroom discussion as well as being shield by their peers.

Overall, reticence in EFL classroom connects to behaviours characterized by avoiding communication, remaining silent and passive, unwilling to speak or rarely interact by using English in interactive classroom activities. Moreover, The factors of cognitive, affective, students it self, lecturer, are also generating students reticence.

The reticent behaviours are appeared as a result of the belief systems which will hinder students from positive progress in learning English.

EFL students are expected to possess the competences, both in linguistic and communication. However, the students apparently have to deal with reticence which constantly occurs in classroom. The researcher conducted preliminary survey through Google Forms for 2A1 students of STBA Pontianak. It had shown that 33% students answered their peers were passive when speaking opportunities came to them. The lecturer's survey forms result also revealed that the class was passive. Only some students who took the opportunities which had been provided by lecturers. They were also asked to speak full English in the class but they preferred to speak their native language and being quiet. Drawing from the explanation above, the issue over reticence is necessary to be studied due to people who are connected with teaching and learning might necessitate the breakthroughs. Furthermore, no single study has attempted to investigate reticence as the issue existed in STBA. Therefore, the concern on the oral participation regarding reticence in learning process leads this study to be investigated.

II. METHODS

The study conducted at STBA Pontianak whose participants are 38 students from 2A1 class who learned English as a Foreign Language. They were all the third-semester students of the academic year 2019/2020 in A regular program. Their age ranged from 19-20 years old. Furthermore, the 2A1 class was dominated by 25 females, whilst male were 13 students. The study was done to two classes, Introduction to Translation English-Indonesian (ITEI) and Discussion Skill (DS), since the lecturers applied different methods. The study applied a qualitatively descriptive approach to gain understanding through exploration on reticent factors and its behaviour demonstrated by 2A1 students of STBA Pontianak in learning English.

Data for this study were collected through direct observation and semi-structured interview. The observation was carried out for five times in order to acquire actual understanding about reticent behaviours among all the student of 2A1 class. The researcher took field notes during observation. Besides, interview

provided perspectives from 10 students (the informants) who had chronic reticence during learning process. The results were recorded then transcribed one by one. In a process of analysing data, the researcher coded interview transcriptions. The coding was done for informant names (A-J) and lines of their statements related to the focus of study. As the data were proceeded, the researcher organized, determined categories, and designed the data in form of matrix. In the end, the researcher drew conclusions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The coding was used in data from interview only. It assisted the researcher to find the reticent factors, while the behaviour were revealed from interview data and field notes. Therefore, the findings were divided into two.

The factors of reticence

The researcher revealed three aspect of reticent factors, as follow:

1. Students Factor

The reticence experienced by the informants were because of their personality. Data of A(2-4), A(12), B(7-10), C(2-8), D(19-23), E(2), E(4), F(2-4), G(5-7), I(2-3), I(13), J(2-3), showed that all informants were agreed that their personality raised their unwillingness to speak. For instance, when being asked about the effect of their personality, G(5-7) said “ *It depends on who the lecturers and my friends I interact with. I will be harder in my adjustment with friends I am not really close with. I feel more comfortable with my close friends.*”. Also F(6) said “*I can't control my self because I always feel nervous every time I perform*”. Most of the informants were introvert that caused them being quiet in the class.

The informants from A(108-112), B(36-39), B(64-67), B(80-81), D(13-15), D(27-30), E(3-4), E(43), E(53), F(13-15), G(9), I(70), J(64-65) also admitted their classroom rapport had given contribution in why they remained silent. The informants explained that it was difficult to communicate with their peers. They also felt insecure since the class denied to support and accept them to share their ideas. A(108-112) described “*..It is due to my friends and I don't always get*

along or anything. They exclude others unless the ones who they like to be a friend. As you know, they are grouping. That is why we sit near our close friends only. Also, I often experience being ignored by others who are not my close friends although we are in one group to do presentation. I don't comfy with this situation. ”.

Nearly all informants namely A(88), B(32-24), B(55-57), C(22-25), D(12-15), D(45-46), D(88-90), E(11), F(13-15), G(35-36), H(15-16), J(24-26), J(31-34), I(7-8) stated that they had low confidence. They completely considered that making mistakes were complicated matters they could not avoid. The informant C was worried if others evaluated her performance as well. The E admitted her willingness to communicate (WTC) but it was hard for her to get rid of the fear inside her head.

When being asked about English Proficiency, the informants mentioned matters which greatly impacted their WTC. A(167-169), B(21-22), C(68), D(70), E(39), G(57), and I(81) found themselves struggling with grammar, pronunciation, and the way to translate words. They felt that it was one of big problems hindered them practising their English actively. As A(167-169) explained, “*...I fear of making error and being asked to give more explanations. I feel better to speak in Bahasa Indonesia. Besides, I worry my English is so bad that my friend will laugh at me.*”.

The informants further explained that they were failed to recall what to say. It revealed that A(78-81), G(11-12) expressed similar reasons that they had problem in recalling words if others interrupted them. E(11-13) said, “*...the lecturers and my friends sometimes interrupt my words when I am speaking. The words suddenly are gone from my head. I have forgotten what to say. That is why I don't want to speak.*”. C(93-94) also said, “*I often forget all things in my head. They are just gone after I prepare them.*”.

One of the reasons contributed in reticence was the belief controlled their thoughts. The informant C compared himself to the students who were smarter than him (*line 27-28*). As a result, the Informant C felt inferior that drove him being reticent student. Besides, when being asked about why the informant J tended to be passive, he said, “*Speaking is wasting, feeling bored, I don't*

understand the lesson, introversion. I like to be silent. (line 70-71)". It showed that the belief of speaking was wasting contribute in reticence factors.

Almost all informants felt nervous in speaking activity. As F(62) explained that she was getting nervous in whatsoever situations that drove her to think it was better to be silent. The F avoided speaking most of the time since she worried about the nervous. Likewise the informant B, she experienced chronic anxiety even she was sitting to listen. B(135-136) said, "*I do feel nervous in all situations. My body shakes and gets cold even when I am sitting.*". The researcher, then, found some informants were unmotivated to study. As A (135-136) said, "*I don't know for sure. To be compared with previous semesters, I feel unmotivated lately. I am getting down right now.*". Since motivation to participate actively in the class was deteriorated, the informants A(101-102), C(77-78), D(54-55), D(68), and F(20) felt that having no improvement was completely a matter.

Regarding motivation which got worse, the informants expressed personal problems they had. D(54-55) who relied on his mood to speak, "*.. It because I am having many problems since this semester. It makes me so lazy to speak in the class.*". Moreover, the researcher found none of the informants had learning strategies to assist them mastering the lesson. When being asked about whether or not they had learning strategies, F(11) said, "*I don't have any strategies. I only follow the flows.*".

Another reason why the informants preferred to remain silent was being shy. As G (35-36) said, "*..I renounced my intention because of I am not sure with my thought. I am afraid of losing face if it is wrong. I do rethink again.*". Lastly, the researcher found two informants were being underprepared to speak. The informant I told the researcher that she refused to speak unless having preparation before performing. "*I don't hope so. I will speak unless preparing words before speaking. I can't speak spontaneously. (line 29-30)*".

2. Lecturer Factors

The informant A(64-68) explained that the students had tendency about when they chose being active or passive depended on how lecturer treated them.

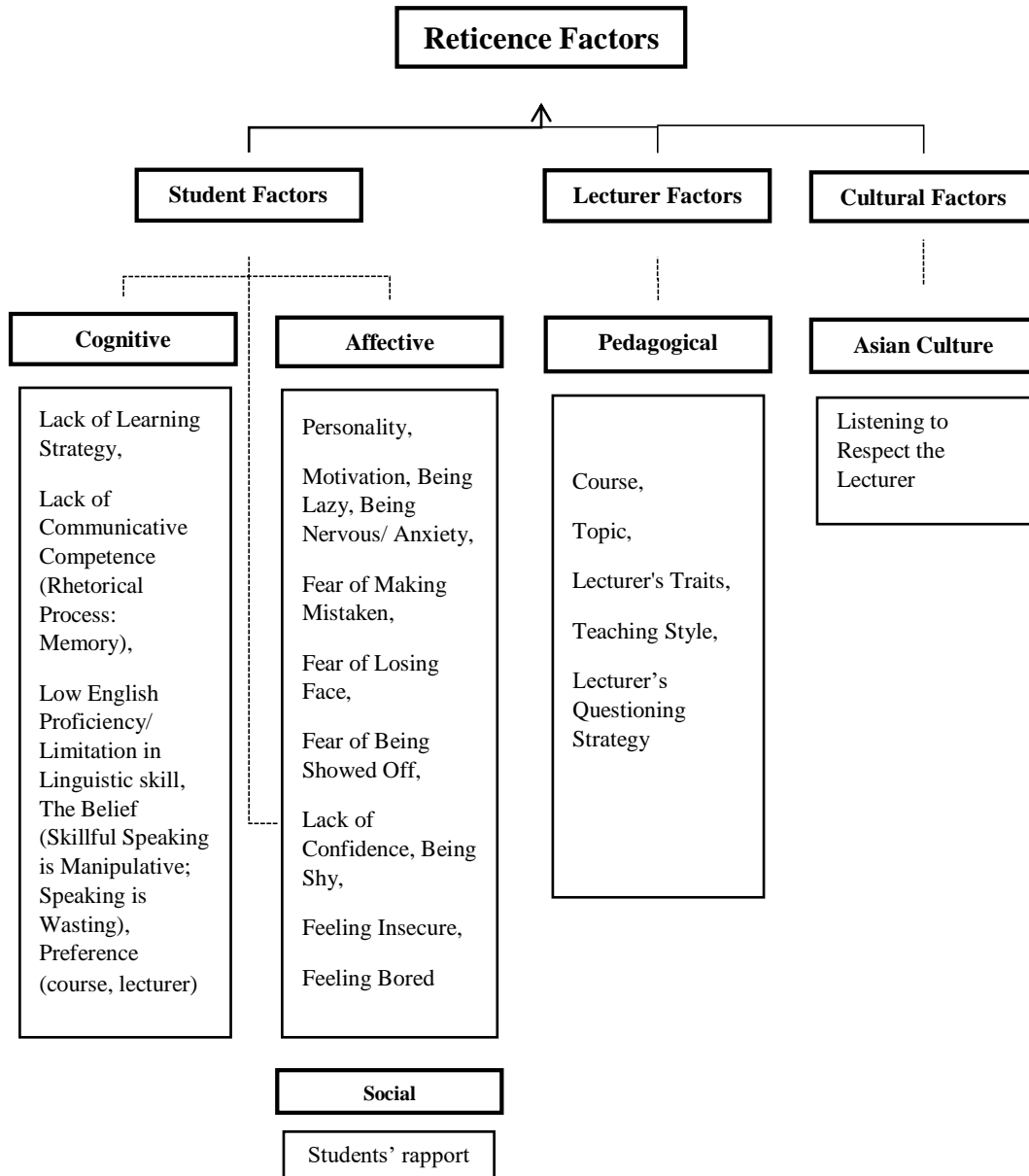
If the lecturer was sensitively stiff and rarely talked joking when taught them, the students preferred to be reticent. The informants A(21-22), A(64-68), A(138-139), B(64-66), D(8-10) I(46); J(42-43), J(64-65) also thought the same. As expressed by H(46-47), being quiet was a way to respect the lecturers when lecturer explained the topic. Moreover, B(99-101) assumed it was better to be silent due to the belief that lecturers tended to give their attention only to certain student they liked.

Furthermore, lack of knowledge being taught was one of the factors the students remained reticent in the class. Discussing topics they never learned before, sometimes led them to feel bored or uninterested to speak actively. H(64-66) said, *“I probably will be silent. I had asked my friends’ opinion about the lesson, they said that it was so difficult to understand. That is why we only silent in the class.”*. The informant H also expressed that he was excited to the particular topics which was useful (*line 5-6*).

3. Cultural Factors

Cultural factors affected how the students behaved in the class. The student were reticent because they wanted to show their respect to lecturer. As the informant H(46-47) said, *“ It affects me much. I feel easier to understand if the lecturer explain the lesson well. I only do listen seriously. That is normal. I just want to show my respect.”*. Furthermore, the reticent students were reluctant to speak due to fear of being laugh at by their peers. Once they made mistakes, they would be bullied. When being asked about it, the informant B(36-39) said, *“Well, my friends sometimes do bullying or judging ‘you are dumb’ or something. Maybe yes or no it really happens in my class. I remember the one who said ‘hey you are dumb. You know nothing here’. Fortunately, there are still some of them teach me instead.”*.

The reticence occurred because the factors which the informants revealed in interview session. The factors of reticence were shown in the following figure.



The reticent behaviours

As being interviewed about how to respond lecturer’s direct question, A (47) explained that she could not speak spontaneously, *“Of course I don’t. I must be thinking my words before speaking.”*. The researcher also found the same when doing observation in the class. As teaching process is going, the lecturer asks students but no answer from them. The students lowering their head at the moment.

Then, the lecturer repeats the questions in order to give a waited time for the students' response. Despite some students finally show their participation by answering lecturer's questions, yet, most of the time it is difficult to hear their voices once lecturer asks them. Unfortunately, it happens for many times.

Furthermore, as doing interaction the students communicated with their peers by using their native language rather than target language. B(113-114) said, *"I frequently use Bahasa Indonesia even my close friend ask me in English. I am afraid of making error much."* This reticent behaviour was also found in observation. As the field notes revealed, *"While a group performs, the other students do much interaction but they do not speak target language."*

The data also revealed the informant J felt more comfortable to speak with their peers than lecturer. As it said, *"I often ask my friends because I believe their explanation would be easier to understand than lecturers' explanations. The lecturers' explanation is complicated to be understood and I feel pressure when asking them.(line 64-66)"*. The class became passive most of the time, only certain students who frequently spoke. B(132-133) said, *"I prefer to ask my friends first, after that to the lecturers if needed."*

In observation, the researcher found 2A1 students always sat near their close friends. The researcher found that none of students sat in the first row near lecturer. They also sat at the same place and near the same person. The class started, then, the lecturer provided them brainstorming before going to main discussions. As being interviewed the informants expressed that sitting in the middle and at the back were more comfortable than in front of lecturers' seat. C(90-91) said, *"That is because we like to be in the middle. I am afraid if the lecturers asks me if I sit in front. I feel safer to be where I am right now."* The informant explained that they used body blocking to shield away from lecturer's sight. I(75-76) said, *"I hope the lecturers can't see me. I feel more comfortable to sit in where I am now."*

Another prominent behaviour the researcher found was to answer lecturer's direct question or to share one's opinion, the 2A1 class seemed relying on the same students who consistently speak. F(26) said, *"We are safe in silence because I know they will speak. I am so grateful."* The reticent student were identified as the person who rarely to speak up when opportunities came to them. The lecturer asked but no

respond until the lecturer repeated and changed the question. Then, after minutes the students give short answer.

The reticent students were unwilling to initiate interaction (asking, giving opinion) although they showed response when directly being asked by the lecturers. As the field notes revealed, *“After each group has performed, the lecturer instructs the students to give comments and suggestions about the performance. Silence occurs again, no one speaks. Therefore, the lecturer calls group names to speak up. It takes time waiting for their comments and suggestions even some students do not give their voices when being singled out.”*

Discussion

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that reticence was a crucial matter that influenced the students’ performance in practising English orally. Reticent students could be identified from the way they behaved in the class. Generally, the reticent students had tendency to avoid communication. The students became passive during learning process due to some factors. The factors turned out, based on the finding, not only come from the students but could be varied. Lectures and culture were the factors that also contributed in reticence.

Reticence was caused by the students included variables from some dimensions. The researcher divided the dimension into three, cognitive, affective and social dimension. Cognitive dimension consisted of lack of learning strategy, low communicative competence, and limitation in linguistic skill, fault beliefs, and students’ preference to study in the class. Affective factors included motivation, personality, and the fear. Meanwhile, students’ rapport was included in social dimension. The study by Reza (2015) found the similar result. He presented beliefs as others factors besides the top three factors he presented. These results were also in accordance with Tong (2010) and Irwanti (2017) who revealed insufficient language skills and affective factors as the cause of students’ quietness

Regarding to lecturer aspects, the finding proved that it also came as the factors of students’ reticence. Students preference toward the course, topic, lecturer's traits and teaching style as well as questioning strategy, had given contribution in determining how the students behaved in classroom. One of reticent behaviour showed by the

students were by sitting at the back or far enough from lecturers' eye. Sitting far enough from lecturers' seat helped them using body blocking. They considered that the place where they were sitting now would determine the frequency lecturers asked them a direct question. However, some students chose to sit at the back because they followed their close friend only not because they wanted to avoid communication. That was why reticent students liked to sit near to their close friend in classroom and rarely moved to other seats. Similar finding by Liu *et al.* (2011) stated that difficulty level of lessons, the novelty of topic discussed were included as reticent factors. Reza (2015) also found teachers roles as one of the top three factors contributed in reticence.

Cultural factors, which was Asian culture, had dominated in the class causing the students chose to listen their lecturers' explanation quietly. The reticent students were also afraid of being laugh by their peers if they pronounced English words inappropriately or gave non sense answer in front of the class. Furthermore, being reticent in the class was because they wanted to avoid possible chance of losing face if they spoke. From all these reasons, they became passive receivers of knowledge given by their lecturer because they thought it was better to remain silent rather than spoke. The reticent students tended to listen the lecturer rather than being active in speaking. The students did more listening since they believed that listening more helped them to understand the topic being taught. Watching others without conveying their ideas became such an habitual they did in the class. The students believed that being silent was an act to respect their lecturer. Culture was considered as one of reticence factor also pointed out in the study by Zhouyuan (2016). He revealed that the students were influenced by the traditional culture and avoided oral communication in English classroom because they were afraid of losing face.

All in all, reticence occurred in the classroom highly impacted students during learning process. They become passive and being shy to communicate English as a target language in classroom due to factors mentioned above. The way the reticent students acted in the class could hinder them form having improvement both in communicative and linguistic competences. Moreover, classroom interaction could be not effective because the students were reluctant to voice their ideas.

IV. CONCLUSION

Returning to the focus posed at the beginning of this study was to determine factors which contribute reticence and its behaviours in the class. This study had shown that three aspects from student, lecturer, and cultural play important role in students' willingness to speak. The three aspects become factors triggering reticence in the 2A1 class. The student aspect were the most variously influential factors seen from the dimension of cognitive, affective, and social that cause students being reluctant to speak. The cognitive included lack of learning strategy, lack of communicative competence, low English proficiency, and the belief. Besides, the affective related to personality, motivation, the fear, motivation, low confidence, and anxiety. On the contrary, the social dimension referred to how the relationship among students in the class.

Moreover, the lecturer factors were the second of the most influential after student factors. Pedagogical which included course, topic, lecturer traits, teaching style/ lecturer questioning strategy could affect student's participation. The cultural factors included students learning experience that enabled them getting accustomed to being silent and listening to lecturer. It was considered as an act to respect the lecturer. Besides, the culture of giving negative evaluation from others also contributed in reticent factors.

Regarding to the issue of reticence in the classroom, the students should understand the value of being active in classroom participation. By understanding the importance of participation as well as the negative impact of being passive, the students could try as hard as they can to speak English in the classroom. They also should think that it is insufficient possessing good knowledges without communicative competence. Furthermore, the students should create supportive classroom environment.

The lecturers, then, should apply various strategies to cultivate students' WTC and also know the characteristic of each students. Moreover, the lecturer should involve students in English speaking activity. Therefore, the student would have more experience in practising their communicative competence in front of the people. Motivation is needed also to encourage students' participation and to reduce reticence in the class.

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