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Multi-contextual perspectives on silence: a narrative case study

This narrative case study explores ways a Japanese learner of English utilised multiple silences as an interactional resource, enhancing collaborative second language (L2) interaction beyond the classroom while studying abroad in the United Kingdom. The concept of 'multi-contextual silences' in this study involves the idea that multi-faceted silences play an integral, harmonious role in creating collaborative interaction in new socio-cultural contexts. Drawing on the concept of global cross-cultural competence, which nurtures all-inclusive views on diverse interactional styles, this study examines a learner's multi-faceted use of silence enhanced through her unique individual network of practice (INoP) as a social network theory (Zappa-Hollman, Duff, 2015) involving learners' initiation of agency for social interaction in language socialisation. It should be noted that this study adopts the revised INoP framework, incorporating learner agency enhanced through self-reflection. Its data includes a questionnaire survey and six in-depth interviews on the use of silence and talk during a year-long sojourn. It specifically sheds light on the learner's facilitative use of silence, manifested in solitude, creative silence in affinity space, sharable co-learning space, and the learner's use of silence as an active listener in L2 turn-taking practices originating in her emic and culturally oriented interactional perspectives. While challenging perceptions of silence as loneliness or coexistent with interactional struggles, this

study illustrates ways in which, from a learner's perspective, facilitative silence was highly signified and jointly, equally, responsible in talk-in-action. This study suggests the importance of opening up the space L2 learners need to enable them to initiate agency and deepen self and mutual understanding of the multiple roles silence plays in creating interactional opportunities in cross-cultural interaction as seen from diverse viewpoints.

Keywords: silence, active listening, awareness, global cross-cultural competence, social network

Słowa kluczowe: cisza, aktywne słuchanie, świadomość, globalne kompetencje międzykulturowe, sieć społecznościowa

1. Introduction

For the past few decades, Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' L2 interactional styles, frequently associated with silence, viewed as lack of initiative (King, 2013) and difficulty in addressing interactional problems (Harumi, 2011), have been seen as starkly contrasting with the interactional style students are expected to learn through participation in L2 contexts. Japanese learners' attitudes towards study abroad (SA) have also been described negatively and attributed to their self-perceived linguistic difficulty and foreign language anxiety. They have also been characterised as having inward-looking attitudes towards learning English (British Council, 2014; Erduyan, Bazar, 2022). Students' lack of oral participation in L2 interaction has also been considered a persistent issue, specifically in overseas SA contexts, where Japanese students are perceived as withdrawn from oral participation (Takahashi, 2021).

However, some studies helped reveal the dynamic, fuzzy, and ambivalent nature of learner silence in academic discourse during SA, highlighting its role as an unmarked, invisible interactional style (Ng, 2021). Such findings include (1) participation through observation or attentive listening and (2) learners' negotiated identities, as reflected in their silent interactional styles, tend to shift between silent participation and verbally oriented participation (Ellwood, Nakane, 2009; Morita, 2004) within academic discourse, or fluctuations in interactional involvement in L2 (Humphries et al., 2023a, b). However, to date, there has only been occasional exploration at a superficial level, with a limited in-depth understanding of how Japanese EFL learners use such productive silence during interactional processes, while maintaining the flow of unvoiced cognitive fluency in and beyond the classroom (Bao, 2023). For example, there are limited studies on learners' choice of

interactional style, looking at writing as a means to ease psychological pressure among those who are not ready to articulate their thoughts through speech (Harumi, 2023c) or online discussions, enabling learners to formulate their thoughts with less time pressure (Karas, Uchihara, 2021), and communities such as affinity spaces (Fukada, 2017; Kimura, 2019) in new socio-cultural contexts. Likewise, ways in which learners use initiation as a form of agency (Cleveland, 2022; Forrest, 2013; Olearczyk, 2022) mediated by their discursive practices in social interaction or solitary activities remain underexplored. As Sang and Hiver (2021, p.1) note, "how learners' agentic effort manifests in a reticent way of language learning" is overshadowed by perceptions that learners remain verbally silent in interaction. Kinginger (2011) also notes that "the ways in which the student is received" (p. 60) can limit the way one understands how learners are exercising their agency to participate in L2 interaction.

Further, the analytical framework of language socialisation in previous studies was centred on the role of talk as a prioritised action expected within the academic community. This framework has overlooked the facilitative role of the learners' dimension of silence in L2 interaction as a valuable interactional resource. This present study, therefore, addresses the need to widen analytical perspectives and explore the transition from talk-oriented to talk-silence integrated approaches, aiming as well to shed light on a particular learner's multi-faceted use of productive silence to facilitate collaborative L2 interaction, incorporating the global cross-cultural perspectives (Saville-Troike, 1976; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2022) needed to provide all-inclusive views on diverse interactional styles (Bao, 2022a, 2023). This study considers silence, on a par with talk, as an integral part of social interaction across various socio-cultural contexts, used to create such facilitative interactional spaces for deepening mutual understanding. In this study, 'productive silence' is defined as a set of silent interactional and cognitive resources in learning spaces where L2 learners engage in self-reflective silence involving both verbal and non-verbal and non-vocal interaction in the process of collaborative interaction.

2. Literature review

2.1. Silence in academic discourse: study abroad

Previous studies on the L2 language socialisation of East Asian learners during SA have facilitated a nuanced understanding of learners' interactional approaches to negotiating their identity, positioning, and agency in academic

discourse (Humphries et al., 2023b). For example, Kim (2022) examined a Chinese learner's emotional change and use of socially mediated agency in identity negotiation. Kim's study focused on workplaces and academic contexts, and emphasised the vital role communities play in academic oral socialisation, refining socio-cultural and psychological understanding of the gradual shift in learners' unique agentic approaches. This involves learners' psychologically enhanced interactional style shift from social isolation to integration (Turnbull, 2021) while highlighting the need for a deeper pedagogical understanding of learners' socialisation processes, which can lead to excessive anxiety (Zebdi, Monsillion, 2023) or adverse emotional reaction to others in educational contexts (Maher, 2021). Further, Umino's (2022) study adopted situated learning theory (Wenger, 1998) to examine the role of silent periods in Japanese foreign language learners' experience of studying abroad. Umino's study suggested that silent periods are a form of restricted participation and a foundational stage during which learners can find new ways to express themselves, rather than a total rejection of oral participation.

However, previous studies' analytical frameworks in L2 learning or academic discourse narrowly focus on the role of talk in enhancing participation, but not on other non-vocal interactional or semiotic resources (Duhn, 2015; Liu, Martino, 2022). Such speaker-oriented perspectives, valuing spontaneity or verbalisation, have overshadowed the role of the listener or active interactional silence in collaborative interaction. As Maynard (1989) argues, lack of spontaneity does not automatically suggest failed interaction when seen from cross-cultural viewpoints (Sakamoto, 2023; Saville-Troike, 1976; Spencer-Oatley et al., 2022). However, uncertainty or emotionally damaging reactions (Shachter, 2023) can naturally arise among interactants from diverse sociocultural backgrounds when dealing with unfamiliar contextual factors, or hidden interactional values reflected in collaborative interaction. Within this cross-cultural perspective, talk-oriented frameworks tend to reveal only one side of the coin, showing how interaction takes place but neglecting the role of diverse interactional styles across cultures.

Further, perspectives on silence have typically marginalised its role, highlighting attentive listening as a mode of initial participation (Morita, 2004; Umino, 2022), or thinking process in new communities, without further exploring ways in which its use or values relate to silence in specific learning contexts or social interaction. As Bao and Ye (2020) affirm, the use of silence is highly situational, and the necessity to use silence varies significantly according to individual learners' sociocultural contexts and the cognitive load of social interaction with others. Further, studies exploring how the listener role, or active listening in relation to silence, functions

in cross-cultural interactions are scarce. Adopting a broader global perspective on L2 interaction, the following section attempts to reconceptualise silence as seen within cross-cultural perspectives.

2.2. Reconceptualising silence from cross-cultural perspectives

Silence in cross-cultural interaction

The place of silence in L2 learning has often been discussed as part of a dichotomy between silence and talk, and the analytical perspective on L2 learner interaction has frequently been framed by speaker-oriented views (Sacks et al., 1974). Quantification of verbalisation in the use of language has been widely emphasised and measured as an indicator of interactional achievement. For example, in Japanese EFL contexts, perspectives on learner silence have frequently been framed by a 'deficiency model' involving a lack of initiation or engagement. Further, the use of silence by Japanese or East Asian learners has been interpreted negatively (Hajar, 2020) by other international students during SA, who have seen it as a lack of initiation or involvement in active oral participation. For example, Siegel's (2022) study on Japanese EFL learners during their SA in Sweden highlights the conflicts caused by the differing pace of interaction. Other studies looking at tandem learning involving Japanese EFL learners also illustrate interactional conflicts triggered by differences in American and Japanese students' perceptions of wait time (Akiyama, 2017) and lengths of interactional turns (Nishino, Nakatsugawa, 2020). However, recent studies illustrate ways in which L2 learners with limited proficiency can successfully interact in an L2 by utilising various non-verbal, multimodal interactional resources (Hauser, 2010; Takahashi, 2023), with attentive support from teachers (Harumi, 2020), the use of mediative learning materials (Harumi, 2023 a, c), or translanguaging (Harumi, 2023b). While the goal of verbally oriented L2 proficiency is often highlighted by L2 learners themselves among sojourners (Bao, 2020; Ellwood, Nakane, 2009), there has been very little attention to the learning process of developing interactional repertoires in cross-cultural encounters from all-inclusive and reciprocal perspectives.

For example, the concept of silence has been highly valued in Japanese language and culture and has been widely discussed (Harumi, 2011; King, 2013) in L2 contexts. Lebra (1987) highlights the significance of silence in Japanese contexts, which is seen as culturally salient and highly valued. Such cultural values include understanding silence as a means of

expressing truthfulness and social discretion for the sake of harmony and a 'sense of sharing' (mutual intuitive understanding), as identified by Harumi (2011: 261). These culturally positive evaluations of silence see it as a signifier of appropriate active listening behaviour during interaction. They see it as part of positive listenership. For example, *aizuchi* (back-channelling cues such as nodding, occasionally accompanied by short fillers or phrases) adopts a collaborative interactional style, frequently repeating portions of words uttered in the preceding turn of the other participant. These modes of communication have various functions, including acknowledgment, agreement, and encouragement to continue speaking within the interactional loop of silence between turns (Kogure, 2017). This differs from speaker-oriented interactional styles, which require minimum gaps between turns or interaction facilitated by questions, rather than repetition or frequent back-channelling.

Referring to the lack of back-channelling behaviour in American cross-cultural communication, Maynard (1985) pointed out that Japanese people may consider other non-Japanese participants unwilling to cooperate with them in the mutual activity of smoothing out potential differences of opinion. This concern has also been raised by some Japanese EFL learners (Harumi, 2011) who ask EFL teachers to send back-channelling cues confirming they have understood what students have said. On the contrary, Americans may react negatively to what they see as mindless agreement or inappropriate rushing when listeners send frequent reactive token messages in a noticeably short span.

When widening our perspective to the use of silence and talk in immediate multilingual contexts such as business (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2022) or early English as a second language (ESL) for young children in multilingual settings (Saville-Troike, 1976), perspectives on L2 or multiple language interactions are much broader and more global. For example, Spencer-Oatey et al. (2022) suggest that creating interactional space, or opportunities enabling all interactants from diverse cultural backgrounds to participate, is a fundamental condition in business settings. Petkova's (2021) study illustrates the richness of silence, what it means and what it does in new social contexts, while highlighting individuals' reaction to the new communities. Further, acknowledging the strengths students bring to the classroom, Saville-Troike (1976) strongly advocates "recognition and acceptance of students' previous linguistic, conceptual and cultural experience as a base on which to build, rather than as a handicap to further learning" (p. 69). Bosacki (2022), writing about adolescent learners in Canada, stresses the need to include pragmatic aspects of interactional training involving diverse turn-taking practices. The need for both students and teachers to develop rapport

management skills from multi-directional interactional perspectives has been emphasised by Spencer-Oatey et al. (2022).

Based on the nature of collaborative interaction, in this study the term 'global cross-cultural competence' refers to competence in which learners can engage collaboratively in L2, taking account of the inclusive views of diverse styles and attached values, while utilising talk and silence, including non-verbal cues, semiotic resources or translanguaging as an interactional resource. Thus, in this study, facilitative silence is reconceptualised as a valuable L2 interaction resource, which can enhance reflection, creative thinking, and mediation, or as a part of the learning process across diverse cultural contexts.

3. Analytical framework

Individual network of practice and learner agency

Learner-initiated social interaction seen as a form of agency, defined as "movement (physical, social and intellectual)," is observed by van Lier (2011: 391) from a language socialisation perspective. Similarly, Mercer (2012) argues that learners choose to exercise their agency through participation, referring to a concept of agency defined as the "socially mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001: 112). Examples of this would be learner-initiated action operating within sociocultural or institutional contexts, ranging from the classroom to immediate interaction. On the other hand, Brandura (1999: 154) argues that agency has more than one aspect, being formed in interaction, and is a socio-cognitive process in which "people are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and engage in self-reflection, and are not just reactive organising shaped and shepherded by external events." Bao (2022) also emphasizes the facilitative role of self-made decisions on the use of silence. For example, Shachter and Haswell (2022) note that Japanese EFL learners opt for a silent protective mode when facing socio-culturally competing interactional contexts. Similarly, Umino (2023) illustrates Japanese language learners' decisions to be quiet when they encounter difficulties in expressing their true selves. This self-directed use of silence also includes the facilitative use of non-verbal, non-vocal interactional resources to express their authentic inner voices (Harumi, 2020; Liu, Martino, 2022). These silences can also function as valuable springboards, helping learners to see others' different viewpoints more deeply (Liu, Martino, 2022). Further, Core Education (2017) also emphasises the role of learner-centred discursive practice, maintaining that

within educational contexts, "learner agency is about shifting the ownership of learning from teachers to students, enabling students to be part of the learning design and to take action to interfere in the learning process." (Core Ten Trends, 2017: 1).

To analyse the unknown trajectories of Japanese EFL learners' evolving social networks, this study adopts the revised notion of Individual Network of Practice (INOP) as a theoretical framework (Zappa-Hollman, Duff, 2015), which enables us to analyse a holistic view of language socialisation as a medium for accessing the learning resources available within communities and to individuals. INoP is the concept of individual networks of practice that signify all relevant personal relationships within and beyond a social group, regardless of their tie-strength or distance in academic socialisation, within L2 contexts (Zappa-Hollman, Duff, 2015). Investment in one's INoP is broadly expected to have affective and academic returns. Of conceptual relevance to this study are earlier social network theories, such as language socialisation (Schieffelin, Ochs, 1986) and community of practice (CP) (Wenger: 1998), which draw attention to the two types of support that learners gain through their interactional investment, which provides the resources they need for learning through self, or social interactional engagement. For example, Zappa-Hollman and Duff's (2015) study examined the academic English socialisation of Mexican students in a Canadian University during SA and suggested that peer support was gained through strengthened INoP. This INoP, which included co-national as well as other international learners, played a significant role in the Mexican students' academic socialisation and indicated the potential of such social networks for L2 language pedagogy. Similarly, Shachter (2023) suggested the importance of building social networks or support systems to enhance students' self-esteem. To provide a more profound analysis of ways in which individual learners exercise their agency to choose the communities they belong to through self-made decisions involving discursive practice (Bao, 2022), and caution (Huynh, Adams, 2022), and utilise available interactional resources in INoP, this study aims to significantly broaden the scope of INoP by revising its framework to include not only learners' engagement with other community members, but also their self-engagement, as valuable learning resources by examining: (1) the types of interactional investment and support learners seek and benefit from, either through self-engagement, or interaction with others, (2) the types of interactional resource learners utilise in communities and also through self-engagement, and (3) the degree of learner initiation in socialisation and its phased shifts.

To establish a viable, subtle yet vital construct for analysing L2 learner's socialisation in wider communities, rather than a specific community, INoP

was proposed (Zappa-Hollman, Duff, 2015) "as a means of representing and theorizing the forms of social support that mediate learning" across spaces (p. 399). Furthermore, INoP articulates learners' internal thought processes and their relationships within communities by identifying specific representatives as (1) ties (individual network connections), (2) nodes (the individuals with whom a person connects, including themself), and (3) clusters (the labels that identify individual grouping nodes of the same tie). This framework examines the "participant's social-interactional landscape" (p. 339). By analysing the fluid and subtle aspects of individual relationships, this approach can clearly reveal how each network can contribute to its L2 language socialisation.

Research questions:

1) What types of facilitative silence does a learner use as interactional resources to facilitate participation in cross-cultural interaction through the development of INoP?
2) How does a learner's multiple uses of silences enhance L2 collaborative interaction within new communities from an inclusive cross-cultural perspective?

4. The study

4.1. Research context

This narrative study originated in a larger project that explored Japanese EFL learners' development of interactional trajectories involving silence and talk, which were developed through INoP during study abroad. This study's participant, Kana (pseudonym) responded to the call for someone to join the research project and voluntarily participated in this study. Kana was selected as a participant for this study as she expressed a strong desire to develop oral participation, seeking these types of opportunities to nurture her interactional repertoires. Kana was a Japanese learner of English who chose to spend a gap year in the UK before entering a Japanese university, hoping to improve her English proficiency. She had no prior SA experience and attended fifteen weekly contact hours of general English language classes at two different language schools during a year-long SA. On arrival in the UK, the language school she attended placed her in an A2 class in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) criteria, and on departure, she attended higher B1 classes corresponding to her general English proficiency. Because she attended private language schools, i.e., learning contexts different from university exchange

or degree programmes, she had more freedom to choose the duration and location of her L2 learning and her individual approach to developing her social networks during SA. Section 5.1 below summarises her INoP developmental trajectories (Figure 1).

4.2. Method

To analyse Kana's evolving INoP and its phase shift during a year-long SA, this study used two data sources. The initial data was collected through a questionnaire examining Kana's previous L2 learning experience and her perceptions of silence and talk in L2 interaction. An audio-recorded follow-up interview for this survey was conducted using the questionnaire to clarify the intended meaning of her perceptions. The second data set comprises five audio-recorded interviews conducted over the final four months of SA. In total, six in-depth interviews, totalling approximately six hours, were transcribed and analysed. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and sought to identify (1) Kana's use of silence and talk in and beyond the classroom and (2) her critical social network and the underlying factors in the INoP that helped to enhance L2 interaction in relation to the use of silence and talk within and beyond the classroom.

These semi-guided interviews included updated episodes involving the use of silence and talk in L2 interaction and followed-up changes after previous meetings. The interviews were conducted in English in accordance with the participant's preference to maximise opportunities to speak in the L2 and were followed up in Japanese when clarification was required, or when the participant chose to speak in her L1. The Japanese parts of the interviews were transcribed and later translated by the author. The analysis of the narratives was inductive, and thematic content analysis (MacQueen, Namey, Guest, 2012) was applied to investigate recurring themes involving (1) the use of silence and talk, (2) key individuals and sustained or temporary networks that contributed to enriching the learner's L2 interactional repertoires over the twelve-month study period following periods of INoP. For the analysis of the first element, 'the use of silence and talk' was introduced with the intention of identifying positive uses of silence, and three broad themes emerged, according to the types of silent interaction the participant engaged in and enhanced by her initiation as agency: reflection, learning strategy and interactional space. Within these broad themes, the types of facilitative silence were analysed in depth. Furthermore, the self-perceived types of silence used as interactional repertoire, and the beliefs associated with the learner's choice of

such interactional repertoires in each situated context were analysed to create a holistic picture of the participant's development of INoP and L2 interactional repertoires.

5. Findings

5.1. Kana's developmental trajectories of INOP in class and beyond

As shown in Figure 1, in-depth interviews pinpointed three distinct phases in Kana's INoP which emerged over the twelve-month study period.

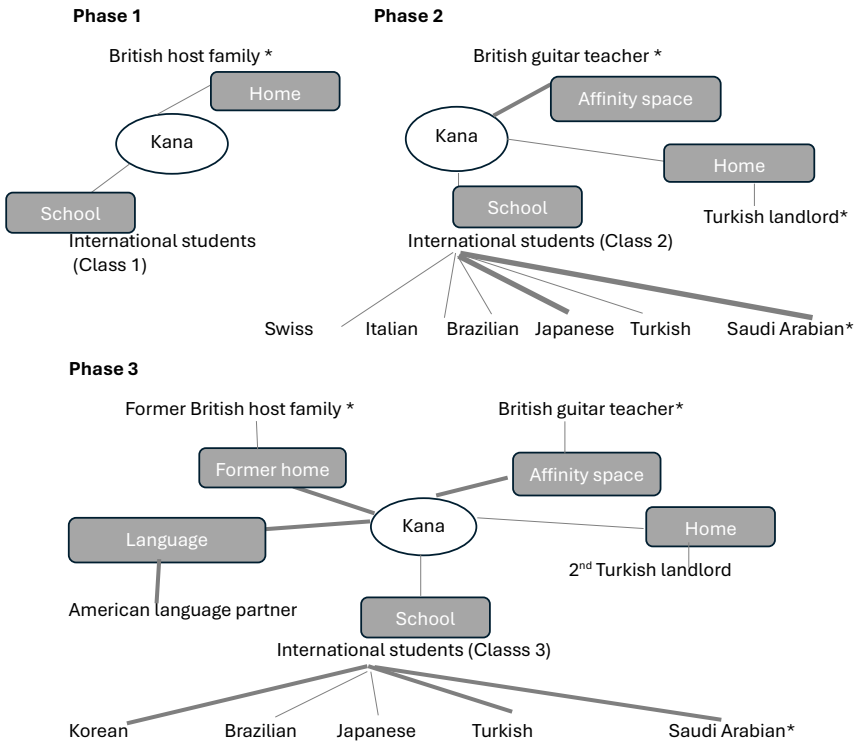

Figure 1. Kana's developmental trajectories of INoP

These stages reflect key transitional periods in her social interaction. Not only did the size of her networks evolve, but the types of interaction also varied with respect to her initiative when participating in community practices and the way she self-initiated L2 interaction in situated contexts, using both Japanese and English as translanguaging, or cultural capital. Based on Kana's narrative, thicker lines indicate stronger psychological

ties with others. Most of her ties were created through mutual collaboration for co-learning. The exceptions were Kana's contact with two Turkish landlords (Phases 2 and 3), her guitar lessons with a British teacher (Phase 2 and 3) and her reunion with her former host family (Phase 3). The asterisks (*) in the diagrams indicate the continuation of nodes to the following phase.

5.3. Multifaceted use of silence

5.3.1. Silent participation as loneliness

During the first phase, Kana deliberately chose to start her SA sojourn in a rural town where she expected there would be few or no co-nationals, maximising opportunities to improve her L2 oral proficiency. She stayed with a British host family for three months. Like the initial language shock frequently reported in other studies (Benson, 2017; Jackson, 2017), Kana recalled her experience of extreme loneliness as a form of silence during this initial stage, corresponding to what Umino's study (2022) refers to as 'the silent period'. Her social life was limited to two places, home, and school (see Figure 1, phase 1). Kana described her initial shock as follows: "It was like I was suddenly facing a language I never learned before, for example, like Russian, and had no clue on how to understand it" (Interview 1, translation by the author).

> Excerpt 1:
> When I came to England for the first time, I hardly was able to speak English both in class and with my home stay family. With other international students whose English proficiency was also extremely limited, I often used a mobile phone to show images to communicate and by pointing out things, and most verbal exchanges were limited to monosyllabic words despite my previous English language learning experience in Japan. Regarding the host family, who were extremely nice and caring, I felt extremely sorry for them, but because of the language barrier between us, gradually we talked less and less. During this period, I did not connect to anybody. Nobody knew me, and I did not have any means to express myself either in Japanese or English. (Interview 1, translation by the author)

Kana's initial language experience was significantly different to that expected. As noted, she had no channel for meaningful mutual engagement in L1 or L2-mediated interaction. Furthermore, her social contact was limited to the British couple who hosted her and the other international students within her first language class. As she explains, her tie with her host family

during this initial stage was very weak in terms of verbal interaction and psychological distance, despite her ardent desire to interact. However, despite her emotional shift towards a sense of loneliness as a form of perceived isolation when with the host family, in class she utilised semiotic resources, such as her mobile phone or gestures, and some monosyllabic words as interactional resources during unvoiced silence or fragmented talk, and her discursive practice to progress towards social interaction can be traced during this period. Her final statement regarding the use of her native language, Japanese, and English indicates that availability of channels such as interactional resources and translanguaging serving as mediational tools needs to be considered. Her silence during this period was challenging, as she struggled to interact with others although she was striving to engage with others.

5.3.2. Creative silence as solitude in affinity space

During the second phase, after she enrolled in a language school in a large city, Kana's immediate INoP evolved further (Figure 1), and at this stage she initiated two different types of discursive practice in the ways she used silence and talk in her affinity space (Fukada, 2017): (1) self-initiation to start guitar lessons, (2) writing lyrics for self-reflection and (3) self-encouragement.

First, a new network was added, with a British guitar teacher, providing access to an L1 English speaker other than a language teacher. She was motivated to develop her guitar skills and to improve her self-efficacy, saying, "I thought I can at least be good at improving a guitar skill as I have limitations in speaking in English" (Interview 2). Because she continued to have a strong sense of inferiority and lack of confidence in her L2 interaction, she sought an opportunity to use skills other than language to increase her confidence through an "affinity space", in which people engaged in social activities based on common interests (Fukada, 2017; Kimura, 2019).

> Excerpt 2:
> **R:** How was your guitar lesson?
> **K:** In terms of communication, it was so hard as he is not like my English teacher in class. I could not understand very much at first. The pace of talk is so fast, and he does not slow down. No special treatment. Also, having observed his reaction such as facial expression, I noticed very often he did not understand what I wanted to say. So, I am under pressure to say something and perhaps I might have said unnecessary things. In Japanese, I tend to listen and try to use *aizuchi* (back-channelling) a lot, but in English, the other person must find it difficult to understand me so, I always feel. I have to say something.

R: Then, how did you try to improve your communication?
K: I tried to use different expressions as much as I can. It is still difficult but my understanding improved a lot and I am happy with my progress when communicating with him.
(Interview 4, translation by the author)

According to Kana, lack of verbal communication with a native speaker other than a language teacher was initially an obstacle to interaction. By carefully monitoring the guitar teacher's reactions and responses, she often felt that her thoughts were not clearly communicated to him. However, her struggles motivated her to continue endeavouring to use reformulation strategies, such as paraphrasing, as self-scaffolding to communicate her intentions. Towards the end of her SA, she managed to understand key ideas during lessons. Although Kana found her limited output in L2 unsatisfactory, she was content with the progress made and strove for better interaction with her guitar teacher.

The second creative activity she initiated was self-engagement through writing lyrics. According to Kana, she originally formed a music band at school at the age of sixteen. After this, she started writing lyrics for her band and she continued this creative solitary activity in her free time after she moved to the UK.

Excerpt 3:

K: I started making songs three years ago.
R: So, you continue making some songs?
K: Ye::s, in here. I, I catched some expression, expe::rience?
R: Yes, I see
K: It's, easier to write here
R: easier to write.
You have different experiences?
so have you written some songs, since you came to England?
K: Yeah
R: I see. How many?
K: Two
R: Can I ask what it's about?
K: uhmm. It's it's, its' a life song?
R: Life song?
K: About life. Because I was I was so disappointed in when I write this song.
R: Why is that? What's the the::me of the song.
K: Yes just feeling sad. I don't like I don't think.

It's good song for energy song?
Because, I'm, for example, I'm disappointed, I'm I sad?

R: Yeah

K: so I ca::n't move up, so, once you pu::sh down, and naturally

R: you go up
That's how you cope with difficulties.

K: Yes.

(Interview 2, original in English)

Referring to this creative activity, Kana mentioned that her bitter experience and hardships she experienced in the UK, including the language barrier, made it easier for her to produce lyrics which she used in self-engagement, reflecting on her life in the new community. However, this solitary activity also functioned as an emotional shift (Ng, 2021), helping her to progress, as she expressed in the final statement.

Using self-engagement as a form of creative activity through music or writing lyrics, Kana used guitar lessons to improve her musical skills and her self-efficacy, which enabled her to overcome inferiority in L2 learning. However, despite initial interactional struggles, her response to her initial silence, accompanied by her monitoring of her teacher's reactions, motivated her to use reformulation strategies to overcome interactional difficulties. Her silent engagement with song writing also drove her progress towards an affective perspective, through self-reflection mirrored in her engagement with her lyrics. Thus, while Kana's bitter experience became a springboard for her to seek strategies involving the use of silence, or silence-oriented cognitive activities involving language use developed through INoP, this study considers her use of silence as a form of self-initiated learning and interactional style, rather than a limitation which was imposed on her.

5.3.3. Silence as shared co-learning space

Topics and forced vs intentional silence

From Kana's arrival in an urban context until the end of her SA, another sustained key node was a Saudi Arabian classmate, Fatima (pseudonym). Kana's self-observation indicated that Fatima's presence provided more opportunities for oral participation. Kana believed that communicating with Fatima and other international students who were slightly more proficient than herself was beneficial to her oral participation. She described them as "a model

of learning" and noted that "she [Fatima] and some other students in class who are better at speaking than me truly brought me up to the next level in terms of speaking" (Interview 2).This comment resonates with findings on peer-interaction in other studies (Carhill-Poza, 2021): slightly experienced peers can play a key role in supporting others' learning in institutional settings, and Kana also developed stronger ties with Fatima through socialisation outside class. Kana explained that a key factor contributing to their sustained individual network was their mutual interest in each other's cultures.

> Excerpt 4:
> It was the first time for me to meet a Saudi Arabian woman in my life and to learn about their vastly different culture: especially the roles of men and women in the society were fascinating. Because of this distinct difference from my own culture. I became extremely interested in talking to her, and she was also interested in Japanese culture of which she had some knowledge through social media, Netflix, or You Tube. (Interview 2)

This mutual and sustained engagement started as Kana's close monitoring of Fatima's interaction as a role-model in the shared space for co-learning, facilitated through sharable interests, their "tradable cultural capital" (Mitchell et al., 2017: 194) and opportunities to co-construct cultural understanding, which functioned as a resource for L2 interaction. On the other hand, when the class topic was medicine, involving medical terms which can be easily shared among European students, Kana felt it was extremely difficult to participate in the conversation, saying: "I could not join interaction at all because of my lack of knowledge and the accelerated interactional pace among them as a group who know the medical terms better" (Interview 3).

Furthermore, Kana expressed regret at missed opportunities in which she intentionally refrained from asking questions about religious beliefs because of the sensitive nature of the topic, despite her willingness to learn more about religions (Interview 4). These episodes suggest that new cultural resources could be both a help and a hindrance to oral participation and understanding of interactional practices. Willingness to communicate and intentional silence, refraining from discussing certain topics (Humphrey et al., 2023a), were strongly associated with topics involved in L2 interaction. In the case of Kana, religious topics were avoided. The significant role which choice of topic played in her ability to enter into mutual engagement was apparent in her narratives and accounts of topic-sensitive experiences, and Kana's views on the degree of engagement suitable for discussions about specific topics were also noted.

Silence, talk and translanguaging

Another newly added INoP that contributed to Kana's oral participation was a language exchange group involving Japanese and English medium interaction. Through this INoP, Kana eventually initiated a private language exchange. As with her language experience with her guitar teacher, Kana reflected that she was overwhelmed by the pace of interaction with an L1-English speaker and found it extremely challenging to speak when communicating in English, usually taking a silent but active listener role. However, in the case of topics associated with her own culture, Kana managed to express her opinion by disagreeing with certain ideas, partially bridged by her L1-mediated interaction. For example, she referred to the concept of *kūki o yomu* (to read between the lines/situation), an expression abbreviated as KY in Japanese. Kana was able to express the way that "KY has negative connotations referring to those who cannot read the air," so the use of this concept is not entirely positive or universal, in contradiction to her partner's belief that the expression's meaning was universal. "I am not sure whether I convinced my language partner of my opinion, but I disagreed with her idea" (Interview 4). In the interview, Kana emphasised that the use of KY is not universal. In her case, involving differing Japanese and American perspectives, KY was not always used or interpreted as a positive interactional resource and was described by her L2-Japanese speaking American language partner as a 'guessing 'skill'. According to Kana, her experience illustrates the way KY can have strong negative connotations for those who cannot accurately gauge atmosphere or others' intentions in Japanese contexts. Thus, both L1-mediated and L2-mediated language exchange, facilitated through sharable topics, enhanced opportunities and reasons for oral interaction, despite the presence of interactional dilemmas or Kana's struggles to deliver her own opinions in L2.

Previous studies revealed mixed findings on the role of learners' L1 as tradable cultural capita or as a medium for L2 interaction. However, Kimura (2019) reported that topics from Japanese culture served to trigger the initial interaction between a Japanese student and local Thai students in an academic context, and observed a positive use of L1. In this study, Kana was interested in exchanging ideas, saying: "I am impressed not only by the Japanese language she was using but also her ideas about socio-cultural issues in Japan" (Interview 4). Although Kana's primary aim was to improve her L2 English fluency, she valued the opportunity to not only use L2, but also learn others' opinions on certain topics related to her own culture and exchange ideas, facilitated by manoeuvres in the use of L1. In this episode, Kana encountered a challenging silence when using L2 to communicate with

an L1-English speaker, but the use of L1 as translanguaging, together with familiar topics from her native culture enhanced Kana's L2 interaction, enabling her to express her opinions about specific topics. This exchange benefited from the use of these familiar topics as tradable culture and mediative interactional resources.

5.3.4. Rhythmic use of silence in listenership

Although Kana gradually developed her oral participation opportunities through INoP and made substantial progress, she found the operation of turn-taking practices in the classroom challenging until the end of her SA. She believed that bidding for a turn to speak is not the norm for classroom participation (Harumi, 2023b; Waring, 2013) (Interviews 2 and 6). She also felt "sorry" for the anticipated prolonged time she might need during her turn once she started talking and was concerned about 'others' reactions and the time they would have to wait for her to complete her turn. "I feel so sorry for others as I may take their time to speak and for waiting for me to finish my talk" (Interview 2).

Although Kana often reported concerns about her social evaluation by co-nationals in monolingual settings, her anxiety also extended to peers in multilingual settings. Referring to the initial questionnaire, she added, "I am not silent or not claiming a turn because I am shy, as is the generally understood idea of the silent behaviour of Japanese students" (Interview 6). Kana's statement challenges the accuracy of a perceived characteristic of Japanese EFL learners. Rather, she felt that turns should be allocated and waited to be called on as a point of interactional norm. This perception remained the same throughout her stay, especially when interacting in a teacher-fronted L2 classroom. Based on the questionnaire survey, she considered any long silences when an answer was expected impolite in any language, yet she found it hard to break silence by switching to a turn-initiation protocol in L2 classroom contacts. Her lack of turn-initiation was often seen negatively, with the simplistic assumption that her verbal interaction was not forthcoming in a situation where a self-assertive style was expected. However, as discussed in section 2 above, Kana was simply following the culturally oriented turn taking practice she had always been accustomed to, which is founded on self-contextualisation (Maynard, 1989). Kana was awaiting either other speakers' signals for her to start her turn, indicated by a space, or pause for the listener to join in, or turn-nomination by the teacher in the case of classroom settings. When it comes to this invisible turn-taking practice, there is a need to see the role of silence and associated expectations from

a global cross-cultural viewpoint which is open to more than one model and interpretation of user silence. This perspective has emerged as an interactional model which relies on pedagogical mediation to make learners aware of cross-culturally different turn-taking practices and associated interactional values across languages. This study shows that when learners interact with students from various sociocultural backgrounds for the first time, as in the case of Kana's intense experience outside her home country, such encounters can greatly affect their interactional practices, as reported by Hajar's study (2020) which identified Arabic students' struggles and reluctance to communicate with Asian students in a British EAP course. Kana's narratives illustrate how learning about invisible turn-taking rules represents a vital opportunity to improve L2 interactional repertoires to support L2 interaction. It should be noted that 'Silence is a part of an internal dialogue between the listener and the speaker' in social contexts (Bao, Thanh-My, 2020b: 188). As Bao's study affirms, focusing on speech production from a merely cognitive perspective would restrict our ability to see the nature of social interaction involving the use of silence in social contexts. These missed opportunities to develop rapport management skills, along with diverse pragmatic values across cultures, need to be addressed from a global cross-cultural perspective. Despite Kana's intended positive use of silence in her Japanese interactional management style, through careful monitoring of others, however mindful of turn-taking practice in multilingual contexts, dissonance was present. As scholars (Ōe, 1985; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2022) advocate, Japanese learners also need to be able to develop rapport skills by explaining their culturally enhanced interactional values as part of their identity.

5.4. Discussion

Kana's INoP underwent dynamic changes, and its evolution can be characterised as active agency. As Kimura (2019) notes, its connections can become closer, fade away, reconnect, or strengthen. Zappa-Hollman and Duff (2015) regard the phased shifts of an INoP as a principal factor in understanding how social interaction is enhanced through diverse types of INoP. However, in this study her agency as discursive practice included her self-engagement in silence through solitary activities, such as production of lyrics in an affinity space of solitude. Her use of silence, which she used in several communities, also highlights the multiple engaging aspects of silence, understood as a component in collaborative interaction. For example, Kana's overall INoP gradually expanded and, towards the end of her SA, she decided to visit her former host family to show them that she could interact

better in English. She explains: "It would have been more fruitful if I stayed with them now rather than before, then I could achieve what I expected" (Interview 5). Her reconnection with her former host family was a temporary but meaningful key event, or critical incident (Benson, 2017) and was facilitated through her active agency to create an opportunity for reunion. A holistic picture of Kana's INoP reveals coexistence of multiple layers of INoP within her network within which she made varying degrees of investment by manoeuvring multilingual and multimodal resources.

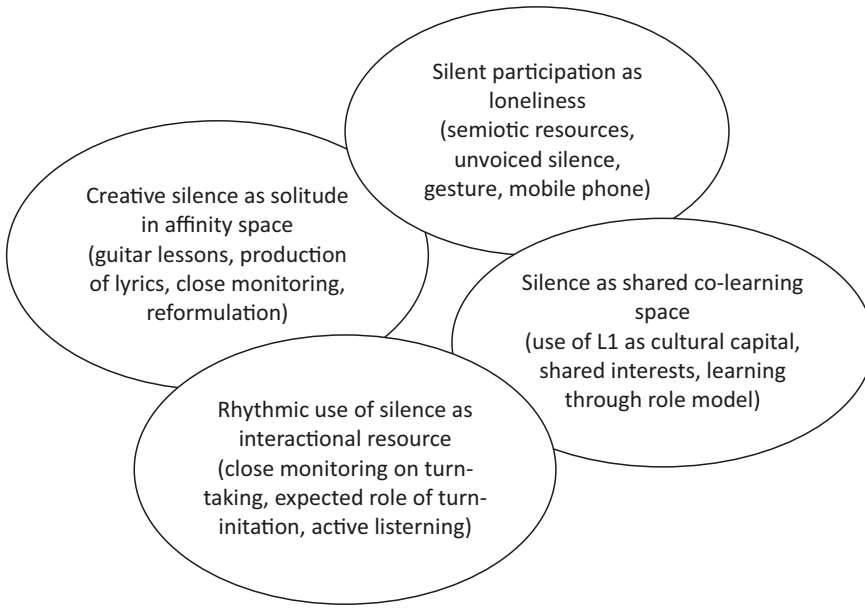

Figure 2. Multi-contextual silences

Through the development of an INoP, this study illustrates that Kana used various types of silence in different social contexts. The overall picture can be summarized metaphorically as multi-contextual silences (Figure 2). In this study, four types of facilitative silence have been illustrated: (1) silent participation as loneliness, (2) creative silence as solitude in affinity space, (3) silence as a shared-co-learning place and (4) rhythmic use of silence as interactional space, as part of listenership. In line with previous studies' findings, there was usually facilitative silence during the monitoring phase. However, this study illustrates that Kana used various semiotic and multimodal interactional resources during silence. For example, even during silent participation as loneliness, Kana used various multimodal resources such as gestures or her mobile phone as unvoiced interactional

resources. In the case of affinity space, she chose guitar lessons as an opportunity to compensate for her psychological inferiority in L2 interaction and in these lessons, she used close monitoring strategies to understand the English-speaking guitar teacher's comprehension of her talk. She also used reformulation strategies as manipulators when delivering her intended meanings in L2 interaction. Complementary to this, composing lyrics in her solitary activity time helped her to engage in silent self-reflection to overcome the difficulties in L2 interaction experienced during initial SA.

Within shared co-learning spaces, she silently learned how to facilitate oral interaction by observing international students she came to know well socially as role models. She also used her L1-mediated linguistic and sharable cultural resources to communicate with a language-exchange partner, bridging her role as an active silent listener to that of speaker. Finally, Kana's close monitoring skills in classroom turn-taking systems illustrate ways in which she adopted her Japanese interactional styles within multilingual settings, monitoring turn-initiation opportunities as signs of active listening to identify suitable times to join conversations. The antennae she brought from her cultural background were therefore a real asset in the L2 conversations she joined, which uniquely benefitted from her acute sensitivity to timing.

Ironically, from a verbally oriented viewpoint, Kana's use of silence may appear to be withdrawn from interaction, and this study suggests the need for pedagogical support to raise her self-awareness of ways in which silence can be interpreted by others, such as the teachers and other international students, and also ways in which she can bridge her silence by utilising other interactional resources. From another perspective, her intentional use of silence which operates in her Japanese interactional style also needs to be understood by other participants as 'external self-awareness' (Spencer-Oatey, 2022: 25).

Kana uses these diverse multimodal interactional resources to move to the next interactional step in various social contexts and through self-engagement. This shows how she initiated her agency, creating her own learning space, facilitating affective gain to control her emotional reaction to her use of the L2 and facilitating mutual benefits for co-learning with her international student colleagues with translanguaging. This case study illustrates how values of silence able to improve the quality of interaction can be explored as a part of the learning process, taking various forms. However, from a learner perspective, Kana vigorously took ownership of her learning approach, using various productive silence techniques which served as initial steps that facilitated subsequent progress.

This study suggests that the use of silence simultaneously accompanies multimodal resources and illustrates its dual aspect, both challenging

and facilitating in the gradual shift towards collaborative interaction. Kana's use of silence depicted in this study was not a result of withdrawal from interaction; rather it was a sign of silent facilitative engagement through self-initiated agency enhanced by the choice of INoP within a process of collaborative interaction, i.e., discursive practice. One crucial factor to facilitate L2 interaction highlighted in this study is the role of sharable resources used by interactants. These comprise mutual interest in specific topics, including one another's cultures, and rely on learners taking opportunities to share their own ideas to advance oral participation. These two-directional interactions are essential contexts for the learning process. Wenger (1998) also argues that impartiality of knowledge can function as a qualitative aspect of learning:

> Mutual engagement involves not only our competence but also the competence of others. It draws on what we do, and we don't do and what we don't know- that is, to the contributions and knowledge of others. In this sense, mutual engagement is inherently partial, yet in the context of a shared practice, this partiality is as much a resource as it is a limitation (Wenger, 1998: 74).

6. Pedagogical implications and concluding thoughts

Adopting the concept of global cross-cultural competence which nurtures the all-inclusive views and interactional practices of intercultural communication, this study has highlighted ways in which Kana used facilitative silence as an interactional resource in social interaction and through self-engagement in the process of L2 communication during the development of an INoP. Based on her narrative, this study has illustrated productive silences which play key roles in interaction. It should be noted that, as they are part of a case study, these findings cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, it has endeavoured to use in-depth narrative analysis and examine its subject from a fresh perspective to depict underexplored dimensions of productive silence within the process of talk-in-interaction in new cultural contexts.

Nevertheless, facilitative and productive silence are situated within a broader dynamic context, and this study has therefore foregrounded the need for pedagogical awareness of hidden values of silence in cross-cultural communication to be raised by Japanese learners themselves as 'internal self-awareness' (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2022). In conjunction with this, Japanese learners must become more aware of the impact and benefits of their values involving the use of silence for others. These values include emotions and thought. Japanese learners also need to develop enhanced

'external self-awareness,' understanding how other people view them through learning materials and activities. This self-awareness potentially relies on conversation analysis (CA) informed materials, utilising transcripts or audio-visual resources, along with self-observation of their own interaction and natural cross-cultural interaction such as language exchanges (Harumi, 2023a, b). Raising awareness of diverse interactional styles and their effects should also be a priority for teachers, as well as non-Japanese international students, who may not necessarily share Japanese learners' cultural values. Pedagogical practices adopting different types of turn-taking or active listenership can also be effective ways to promote rapport skills (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2022: 141). Good examples of these types of practice are responses which are made after a certain duration of silence, or include reflection on what the previous speaker has said. Raising individual awareness of the role of silence, as seen within diverse perspectives, can be a fundamental step towards fruitful interaction which allows all to feel they are able to contribute to cross-cultural interaction. Further, Bao (2022b: 83) addresses "the awareness for silence to be productive through agency and self-discipline rather than being left to chance." By incorporating everyone's point of view, interactional contributions from multiple perspectives can be optimised and democratised. The view of the poet and writer, Miyazawa on the role of awareness vividly brings to life the significant role individuals can play in initiating agency to enhance global competence in cross-cultural interaction.

"Awareness starts with the individual and gradually spreads to the group,
to society,
and to the universe beyond.
Isn't this path shown us by the saints of old?
A new age is coming when the world shall be one
in its awareness and become a living entity.
Truth and strength come from being aware of the galaxy of stars within us,
and living according to this knowledge.
Let us seek true happiness for the world – the search for the path
is itself the path".

Kenji Miyazawa
(1926, cited from Ōe, 1989: 102)

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