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Voices and Spaces: Rethinking Silence, Speech, and Resources in Language Education

Redakcja:
Dat Bao, Anna Jaroszewska i Agnieszka Kałdonek-Crnjaković

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Voices and Spaces: Rethinking Silence, Speech, and Resources in Language Education. Introduction

The present issue draws together diverse perspectives on *silence*, *speech*, and *resources* in language education from many international contexts, including Australian, British, Japanese, German, and Polish educational settings. These three themes intertwine in language education (Figure 1). Silence represents the strategic space for listening and reflection, aiding conceptualization and thought processing (Alerby, Alerby, 2003; Creely, 2024; Gruber, Henriksen, 2024); speech signifies the overt practice and self-expression essential for language learning and fluency attainment (Choi, 2024; Nava, Pedrazzini, 2018), whereas resources encompass various teaching tools, including digital and multimodal platforms that support and enhance language acquisition (Eng, 2005; Mumtaz, 2000).

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Figure 1. The silence-speech-resources relationship diagram

The synergy between *silence and speech* fosters reflective and sharing practice; as Harumi (2024: 110) explains, silence contains ‘preludes to speech’. The link between *silence and resources* underscores thought processing and output; and the connection between *speech and resources* showcases verbal discussion and output, which according to Greenwalt, Hadeer, and Kothari (2024: 93), should be meaningful and should stretch beyond ‘idle talk’. At the centre, where all three intersect, lies the essence of effective language education—integrating listening, speaking, and varied resources to cultivate a comprehensive learning experience.

The first five articles in this special issue explore silence and communication regarding language learning and pedagogy. They commonly address the significance and multifaceted nature of silence, whether as a tool for fostering reflection and emotional intelligence, an interactional resource in language practice, or a phenomenon shaped by cultural dynamics. They also collectively emphasize silence not merely as an absence of speech but as a dynamic and constructive element of communication that can significantly influence language education and learner engagement.

Anna Bąk-Średnicka examines the multifaceted roles of silence within educational contexts, particularly concerning health and well-being in Poland and Japan. Her main argument posits that silence holds significant communicative value and implications for mental and emotional health. The author argues that silence can benefit student behaviour and teacher pedagogy when being perceived differently across cultures and educational settings. Her article explores the dual nature of silence, depicting it as both a healthy, productive state that fosters reflection and as a potentially harmful silence linked to discomfort, anxiety, or bullying in educational environments. The author advocates for teachers to recognize the varied reasons

behind student silence, whether they are cognitive challenges, emotional states, or the result of health issues. She suggests that educators should receive “silence pedagogy” training to enable them to better navigate and utilize silence as a constructive educational practice.

The article by **Seiko Harumi** presents a narrative case study that investigates how a Japanese learner of English utilized various forms of silence as interactional resources during her study abroad experience in the UK. The concept of “multi-contextual silences” refers to diverse and purposeful uses of silence that foster collaborative second language (L2) interactions, particularly in unfamiliar socio-cultural environments. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding silence comprehensively, although it is traditionally perceived as a negative aspect of interaction for Japanese EFL learners. It shows that silence can be a productive interactional tool, manifesting in different contexts such as solitude, creative expression, and active listening. The paper calls for a shift in pedagogical approaches to recognize the value of silence in cross-cultural communication and promote a more inclusive understanding of interaction styles. By raising awareness about the multifaceted roles of silence, learners and educators can enhance their interactions in multicultural settings, ultimately fostering deeper connections and understanding in language learning contexts. Harumi contributes to the field by presenting silence as a valuable interactional resource rather than a negative aspect of communication. The Individual Network of Practice (INoP) framework highlights the importance of social networks and learner agency in shaping language experiences.

Luis Javier Pentón Herrera re-evaluates the role of silence in foreign language education through the lens of social-emotional learning (SEL). Traditionally, silence has been seen as a barrier to communication; however, this paper argues for a transformation of that perspective, promoting silence as a valuable tool for deep learning, introspection, and emotional intelligence. The author discusses how silence is deeply embedded in various cultural and social contexts and highlights its significance in internal dialogues during communication. From a socio-emotional perspective, the paper emphasizes silence as a form of affective communicative competence—highlighting its potential to enrich language learning and emotional literacy. The author proposes six practical strategies for incorporating silence into classroom practices that help to foster empathy, self-awareness, and autonomy among students. Pentón Herrera contributes a new idea to the field by positioning silence as an active and valuable tool for fostering introspection, emotional awareness, and effective communication. He introduces the concept of affective communicative competence, integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) principles to enhance language instruction.

Marzanna Pogorzelska presents the findings of the analysis of over 80 English language textbooks published to explore how these texts address (or fail to address) the themes of colonialism and the identities of colonized peoples. Utilizing content analysis and critical discourse analysis, the study identifies three main categories reflecting dominant trends regarding colonialism: the absence of the colonized, the portrayal of the colonized in folkloric terms, and the invisibility of colonization itself. The findings reveal that many textbooks background or exclude references to colonized groups, often portraying colonization as a neutral event, thus reinforcing a narrative that privileges colonizers over the colonized. This silencing contributes to a significant gap in the representation of colonial histories and the experiences of indigenous peoples. The author emphasizes the need to critically examine language textbooks and suggests that incorporating a decolonial perspective could foster greater intercultural sensitivity in language education. The discussion contributes to the field of language education by highlighting the colonial narratives present (or absent) in English language textbooks. It uncovers practices of silencing and marginalization of indigenous identities, demonstrating how textbooks often reinforce colonial attitudes.

Agata Klimczak-Pawlak examines the role of silence, specifically silent pauses, in the fluency of L2 English academic presentations. Highlighting the dual nature of pauses, the paper discusses how these can facilitate effective communication or indicate dysfluency, especially among non-native speakers. The study involved three advanced Polish EFL students with varying levels of proficiency who participated in an academic presentation course. They delivered impromptu speeches and prepared presentations, which were analyzed for pause duration, frequency, and placement. The study emphasizes the importance of teaching students about the strategic use of pauses to enhance fluency and presentation skills. The analysis suggests that academic instruction positively impacts mid- and lower-proficiency students more than their high-proficiency peers, who benefit more at the level of presentation finesse. Klimczak-Pawlak's work contributes to the field of L2 acquisition and public speaking by analyzing silent pauses in academic presentations among L2 English speakers. It highlights the positive impact of targeted instruction on fluency, particularly for mid- and lower-proficiency students. It also offers a nuanced understanding of pause types that can enhance assessment metrics for spoken proficiency.

The second overreaching theme of the present issue rethinks speech in language education in connection to silence. The two articles in this section explore communication dynamics in the classroom, specifically focusing on the role of teacher verbal communication and its impact

on student engagement and learning outcomes. The article by **Dat Bao** examines how Japanese students perceive their lecturers' verbal communication in an Australian higher education setting. The findings highlight positive lecturer talk, which enhances student engagement through effective pedagogical strategies, and negative lecturer talk, which impedes learning through being unclear and unengaging. The findings also stress the importance of recognizing the impact of teacher talk on student well-being and the awareness of the long-term effect of teacher talk on students' desire for and commitment to learning. The practical recommendations offered by the author emphasize the significance of student-centred, engaging, and inclusive teaching practices in promoting compelling lecturer talk.

Dat Bao and **Jonathan Shachter** explore the experiences and desires of three Japanese university students who identify as 'pro-verbalisation learners'—students who grapple with classroom silence yet yearn for more verbal engagement in their English language learning. Despite their quiet demeanour in class, the student participants expressed a strong desire to participate verbally, highlighting a disconnect between their internal aspirations and the external classroom dynamics that contribute to their reticence, regardless of the challenges, including feelings of inadequacy, fear of negative evaluation, and pressure from peers, which hinder their ability to speak up. The study emphasizes the importance of acknowledging student voices and modifying teaching strategies to foster a more verbally proactive learning environment for silent students who wish to engage more fully in their education. It contributes to English language teaching by amplifying the voices of quiet learners who wish to engage more verbally in the classroom. The introduction of 'proverbalisation pedagogy' offers a new framework for educators to enhance student engagement, especially in the context of Japanese language learners, while encouraging further research on silent learners' needs and dynamics in various educational settings.

The third theme concerns resource adaptation in language education. The articles in this section emphasize the role of feedback and technology in enhancing learning experiences. Both articles advocate for strategies that foster engagement, motivation, and comfort in learning languages, underscoring the intertwining of technology and psychological factors in effective education.

Katarzyna Sierak explores the evolution of language learning amid rapid technological advancement. She emphasizes that technology significantly influences contemporary education, drawing parallels to past industrial revolutions that reshaped learning. Highlighting the concept of multimodality, the study underscores the importance of integrating diverse

communication forms—such as language, images, and sound—into educational practices. Her study findings indicate that students favour internet-based and multimedia resources over traditional textbooks, seeking visually engaging and interactive content. Sierak makes a significant contribution to the field of language learning by examining the intersection of technology and education through the lens of multimodality, that is, integrating diverse communication forms in education.

The article by **Czesław Kiński** and **Bartosz Kiński** investigated the relationship between positive orientation (POS) and feedback perception among foreign language learners, alongside factors such as gender differences and feedback frequency. The study results, derived from large data obtained from 429 university students, indicated that POS correlated positively with comfort in receiving feedback from both teachers and peers, suggesting that students with a positive attitude viewed feedback as an opportunity for growth rather than criticism; however, gender differences were salient. Moreover, higher frequency of feedback improved students' comfort levels and perception of various feedback elements, underscoring the need for regular feedback to normalize educational processes. This study's findings contribute to the field of L2 acquisition by integrating positive psychology to examine how positive orientation influences perception of feedback.

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Reflections on educating prospective ELT teachers: Silence and health in Polish and Japanese school settings

In this paper we reflect on patterns of silence related to health within both Polish and Japanese school settings. This study goes beyond the typical perception of silence as a positive or negative phenomenon. While it refers to the utilization of agential silence as a pedagogical and learning tool, expertly employed by teachers, it also draws educators' attention to the need to raise teacher-candidates' empathic concern about students' various reasons for keeping silent. In this sense, the study transcends the understanding of student silence as merely highlighting their low communicative skills, as it may, in fact, indicate they have physical and mental health problems. The present study took a grounded theory approach. The corpora consisted of 320 utterances expressing primary, secondary, and tertiary subjects' opinions about silence, accessible in studies by Olearczyk (2016) and King (2013). Manual and software-based data analysis identified eight major categories of the meaning of silence. These categories enabled the selection of the core category of silence in relation to health, providing a fuller picture of the silences presented in the two abovementioned studies.

Keywords: English language teacher education and silence, silence and health

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja nauczycieli języka angielskiego a cisza, cisza i zdrowie

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1. Introduction

Silence goes hand in hand with sound. The significance of speech is in the words: "[d]eath and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18, 21 King James Version). A notable case is the human-driven accelerating global-scale biodiversity loss, with vanishing traces of the sound of insects and birds, critically influencing our planetary well-being (WEF 2021, CITES 2024). Simultaneously, "noise pollution is one of the greatest environmental problems facing society" (Alerby, 2020: 49). Silence is also part of verbal communication. The way we speak and use pauses contributes to our unique conversational styles (Tannen, 1985: 107). Tannen (1985: 109) clarifies that a pause is a silence "when it is longer than expected, or in an unexpected place and therefore ceases to have its 'business as usual' function and begins to indicate that something is missing." Assuming that "speech is one of the most important aspects of functioning of a person as a rational being" (Czaplewska, 2016: 258), silent moments in spoken discourse *can* signal cognitive-communication difficulties. According to the World Health Organization (2020: 1), "[h]ealth is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Ergo, silence is connected with health.

In line with this, this study aims to uncover linguistic conceptualisations of silence signifying health in Polish primary and secondary, as well as Japanese tertiary school settings. The rationale behind this study is that a deep and intuitive understanding of various reasons for student silences, recognizing their patterns, and the underlying emotional states or thoughts can inform (future) (English language) teachers' professional decisions (e.g. Alerby, 2020; King, 2013; Olearczyk, 2016; Smith, King, 2018; Deocampo, 2020; Juma et al., 2022).

2. Research on silence: An overview

Research on nonverbal behaviour in education began in the early 1960s (Smith, 1995: 275). The concept of silence has been the topic of study in linguistics since the 1970s. It was initially associated with "negativity, passiveness, impotence and death" (Ephratt, 2008: 1910). In the 1990s it became obvious that

> [d]epending on when and where it occurs in an interaction, silence can communicate the full range of emotional expression from scorn and dislike to indifference to sympathy and love. In many cultures around the world, such

> as the Japanese, silence does not mean emptiness but instead is an effective and powerful means of communication. Unfortunately, many teachers tend to perceive student silence as passivity and indifference rather than as respect and attention (Smith, 1995: 277).

Since then there has been a growing interest in the role and place of silence in education. For example, Su et al. (2023) reviewed nine empirical articles published between 2000–2021 on the concept of silence as a pedagogical approach. There were four themes that emerged from this review, namely (1) **paradoxes of silence as a pedagogy** (Zembylas, Michaelides, 2004; Ha, Li, 2014; Hao, 2011; Ollin, 2008); (2) **cultural dimensions of silence** (Ha, Li, 2014; Hao, 2011; Lee, Sriraman, 2013; Ollin, 2008); (3) **different uses of silence as a pedagogy** (Ollin, 2008; Caranfa, 2006; Ha, Li, 2014; Lee, Sriraman, 2013; Hanna, 2021; Mazzei, 2011); (4) **silence, power and critical pedagogy** (Mazzei, 2011; Hao 2011; Wong, 2013; Hanna, 2021) (Su et al., 2023: 35). In the words of Su et al. (2023), incorporating training in silence pedagogy can help future teachers understand the value of silence in the classroom, as stated below:

> The findings of this article may stimulate and support teacher reflections on how they use silence and how silence is perceived by students. In order to achieve this aim, educators may benefit from appropriate training and experience of this silence pedagogy first hand. This could feature within ongoing professional development programmes and we suggest it might form a part of the initial teacher education course curriculum so that silence as positive pedagogical practice could be studied and explored in depth. Also, getting students used to positive silences from the very start of their school lives is important so that these become an accepted staple of classroom practice (Su et al., 2023: 39).

Likewise, Bao (2023) reviewed 22 books on second language acquisition published between 2001–2022, where the meaning of silence was used as regards: (1) **the silent period** (Piske, Young-Scholten, 2008; Ritchie, Bhatia, 2009; Jordens, Lalleman, 2010; Larsen-Freeman, Long, 2014); (2) **silence as low fluency** (Carroll, 2001; Breen, 2001; Loewen, Sato, 2017); (3) **silence as a resource** (Mercer, Williams, 2014; Han, Cadierno, 2010; Schwieter, 2013; Robinson, Ellis, 2008; Gass, Mackey, 2012; Jordens, Lalleman, 2010; Larsen-Freeman, Long, 2014); (4) **silence as pauses** (Arabski, Wojtaszek, 2011; Doughty, Long, 2003; Ritchie, Bhatia, 2009; Taguchi, 2019; Herschensohn, Young-Scholten, 2013; Robinson, Ellis, 2008); (5) **silence in communication** (Derwing, Munro, Thomson, 2022; Taguchi, 2019; Hall, 2018; Nicole, Marta, 2022; Breen, 2001; Housen, Kuiken, Vedder, 2012; Herschensohn,

Young-Scholten, 2013; Robinson, Ellis, 2008; Saville-Troike, Barto, 2017; Gass, Mackey, 2012; Jordens, Lalleman, 2010; Loewen, Sato, 2017; Tomlinson, 2016); (6) **silent learning strategies** (Gass, Mackey, 2012; Jordens, Lalleman, 2010; Larsen-Freeman, Long, 2014; Loewen, Sato, 2017; Tomlinson, 2016); (7) **silence in pedagogy** (Breen, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, Long, 2014; Loewen, Sato, 2017; Tomlinson, 2016) (cited in Bao, 2023: 21–22).

The overlapping themes in the abovementioned reviews are 'silence as a pedagogy' and 'silence in pedagogy'. 'Silence as a pedagogy' has been problematized in journal articles as a complex, bifurcated construct unfavored by modern didactics, sensitive to various cultural settings, with a potential to be used "productively in teaching and learning," as well as to express varied objectives and interpretations (Su et al. 2023: 35). Likewise, there are only three books that conceptualize silence as helpful for classroom pedagogy: those by Larsen-Freeman and Long (2014), Loewen and Sato (2017), and Tomlinson (2016). Among these, Tomlinson's work is "the most silence-friendly," identifying various learning benefits associated with silence (Bao, 2023: 23).

Other studies focus on, *inter alia*, silence in the classroom (Jaworski, Sachdev, 1998; Wiśniewska, 2012; King, 2013), silence and speech (Caranfa, 2004, 2010, 2013); classroom silencing (Julè, 2004); cultivating nature through silence and solitude (Cooper, 2012; Forrest, 2013; Lees, 2022); silence as a pedagogical tool (Lees, 2012; Lees, 2016; Olearczyk, 2016; Alerby, 2020; 2019; Korol, 2022; Bao, 2023); silence as signs of language anxiety (Nessler, 2018; Maher, King, 2020).

In one respect, there are intentional, healthy silences (Alerby, 2020) with their various productive functions in the educational process, as well as health prevention. An instance of productive *classroom* silence is a moment when important information is followed by quiet moments for L2 learners to process, understand, and internalise it (Bao, 2014: 3). In post observation feedback conferences silent spells within an educative conversational framework – characterised by cognitively-demanding questions, critical comments, clarifications and recommendations – can possess 'agential qualities' that foster deeper understanding and critical thinking skills among prospective ELT teachers (Bąk-Średnicka, 2024).

In another respect, the presence of unintentional, unhealthy silences that cause discomfort, can signal problems with health. For example, children, adolescents, and adults who have not fully recovered from long-COVID can experience, *inter alia*, cognition-associated language difficulties within cognitive-communication disorders (e.g., Cummings, 2023; Lopez-Leon et al., 2022; Premraj et al., 2022; Davis et al., 2021; Cha, 2020; Gotlib et al., 2023; Kung et al., 2024). Apart from Covid-19, memory and verbal fluency

performance can be negatively impacted by non-communicable diseases and mental health issues, which may manifest themselves in a person being overweight or obese (Azzopardi et al., 2019; Li et al., 2008), such as thyroid disease (e.g. Holmberg et al., 2019; Vliet, 2021), diabetes (Sola et al., 2024), Lyme disease (McAuliffe et al., 2008; Gorlyn et al., 2023), disorders in cholesterol level (e.g. Yang, et al., 2020), or depression and anxiety (e.g. Loades et al., 2020; AlKandari, 2021; Kowalchuk, et al., 2022). Additionally, silence can be a reaction to fear of (cyber) bullying (Alerby, 2020; King, 2013; Bosacki, 2022; WHO, 2024).

In the context of English language classrooms a lack of spoken engagement and verbal reaction poses "a significant threat" to efficient language learning (King, 2013: 15, 62; Wiśniewska, 2012: 62–63). Students' silence may be a manifestation of low self-confidence, anxiety, an inferiority complex, or lack of knowledge and skills. Inability to communicate in a language of our choice or when we need to is akin to being deprived of "a typically human form of activity," or being "condemned" to "tragic" misunderstandings (Krzyżak, Michalik, 2020: 88)[1]. There are also infamous examples of how "schools teach silencing" (Losey, 1997 as cited in Lemak, 2012: 25) by means of rhetorical questions (Alerby, 2020: 47−48), when teachers do not expect any answers, and when they do not actually create a space for students to exercise their autonomy in practising and experiencing silence (Su et al., 2023: 39; Cleveland, 2022: 138; Caranfa, 2013: 577; Olearczyk, 2016: 131).

3. Retrieving information from semantic memory: Silent moments

Retrieving information from memory is an activity of the entire mind and is comparable to the processes involved in problem-solving and thinking (Bruner, 1973 as cited in Hankała, 2009: 151). This mental activity involves physio-chemical changes within the nervous system (Hankała, 2009: 12). It is in the form of both strategic (largely controlled) and non-strategic (largely automated) information retrieval, with the latter occurring at a much faster pace than the former (Hankała, 2009: 14). Working memory capacity participates in retrieval of information based on "controlled effortful search" rather than "search that is based on automatic activation" (Conway, Engle, 1994: 354). In Collins and Quillian's model of working memory (Collins, Quillian, 1969: 246) retrieval times or reaction time depend on memory organisation and are shorter in the

[1] Cf. Alerby (2020: ix) recollects a critical event when she did not know a foreign language well enough to converse with ease, recalling that "the situation became more and more uncomfortable, and I felt incredibly frustrated at not being able to express what I really wanted to say."

case of human memory with "well-ordered hierarchies" for storing semantic information that are "part of the common culture." In some cases, though, "hierarchies are not always clearly ordered"; also, "people surely store certain properties at more than one level in the hierarchy" (Collins, Quillian, 1969: 242). In Collins and Loftus' models of semantic memory (Collins, Loftus 1975: 409) the strength and travel time of connections and associations between different concepts or nodes within the semantic network determine how quickly the search will proceed in the semantic memory. The activation and the reaction time is determined by "the amount the first concept primes the second concept" (Collins, Loftus, 1975: 417).

In normal conversations there occur slips of the tongue, speech errors, disfluencies (Fromkin, Bernstein Ratner, 1998: 312−313), or 'Freudian slips' (Baars, 1980 as cited in Fromkin, Bernstein Ratner, 1998: 324). The tip-of-the-tongue phenomenon is when we have a feeling-of-knowing (FOK) experience, but we do not remember a piece of information. Hart's experiments (Hart, 1965: 210, 214) confirmed that FOK metacognitive assessment "can be used as relatively accurate indicators of what is and is not in memory." Failure to retrieve some information does not mean that it is not stored in memory (Hart, 1965: 214). Reder (1987: 37) discovered that we "assess our memories before we do a careful search of memory." If the FOK is weak, we either conclude that the answer is not known and hence, we do not initiate a memory search, or we resort to other strategies such as calculation or inferential reasoning. As we get older working memory deficits result from our "reduced ability to inhibit irrelevant information" due to our "reduced attentional resources" (Hasher, Zacks, 1988 as cited in Conway, Engle, 1994: 369). In turn, in young people working memory can be affected by the side-effects of Covid-19, or some non-communicable diseases.

L2 learner desire to communicate (DC) develops, or fails to develop into willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre, Legatto, 2011: 165). L2 learner WTC is dependent on their vocabulary retrieval and subject to their language anxiety (Peng, 2020: 144). Learner language anxiety can lead to speech avoidance and silence (MacIntyre, Legatto, 2011:166). Moreover, L2 learners' cognitive resources are used up in ensuring the accuracy of their communication, which in turn affects their "ability to search for new vocabulary and plan the next utterance" (MacIntyre, Legatto, 2011: 166), which can also cause silent spells and pauses.

To sum up, there are many psychological, linguistic, educational, and communicative factors that are dynamic in character and prone to variation during speech (Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2015). There are also health-related reasons that may affect the process of retrieving information from the semantic memory and which result in silent moments.

4. A case study: Patterns of silence and health

The research method in the present study is the grounded theory approach. This qualitative procedure was used to identify and understand patterns of silence in relation to health in Polish and Japanese school settings. This study used manual and software-based[2] data analysis. The corpora consisted of 320 utterances (C320) expressing students' and teachers' opinions about silence in Polish primary and secondary schools (C277), as well as Japanese tertiary students' perspectives on silence during EFL classes (C43) (see Table 1). The corpora were accessible in studies by Olearczyk (2016) and King (2013).

Table 1. The corpora used in this study

Corpora of utterances	Source	Tokens
C277	Olearczyk 2016 / Poland	5 873
C43	King 2013 / Japan	1 679

During the process of reviewing book-format publications on silence for this study, three books discussing silence in education from Polish, Japanese, and Swedish perspectives were initially selected. However, the Swedish book had fewer citations of subjects' opinions compared to the others and was ultimately rejected. The manual and software-based data analysis identified a core category of silence in relation to health built on eight major categories of the meaning of silence, which will be presented below.
This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the intracultural major categories of silence in C277 and C43?
2. What is the core category of silence related to health in C320?

Study 1:
Patterns of silence
in the context of Polish primary and secondary school settings

Olearczyk's (2016: 85) exploratory study explored the possibilities of introducing 'the culture of silence' in schools in Poland as a context that is more conducive to focus and learning. 3152 primary, lower secondary, and secondary school teachers (and school heads), as well as students from the Małopolska region took part in the study in 2015 and in 2016. They shared their opinions via a diagnostic survey method, i.e., questionnaires and

[2] LancsBox 6.0 and X software packages: Lancaster University corpus toolbox. Tools available in the LancsBox software package are: KWIC, GraphColl, Whelk, Words, Ngrams and Text. Descriptive statistical analysis applied in this study includes absolute and relative frequency, dispersion, collocations, and concordances.

unstructured interviews. To summarize, the respondents believe that silence has educational value *only* in specific situations, such as solemn moments (2016: 111). About 20% of primary teachers feel ready “to shape the need for silence in pupils” (2016: 123); yet, they do not know how to use it as a ‘pedagogical rule’ (2016: 138). Their understanding of shaping silence in schools is associated with green space near the school and classrooms with good acoustics (2016: 264), rather than, for example, meditation (2016: 262). They believe that the family plays a key role (2016: 152); and yet, many primary teachers do not see the possibility of collaborating with parents on this topic (2016: 251). Primary teachers still need to understand that silence is a way of working, such as in *observation, listening, waiting, being patient*, and *holding a pause* (2016: 140). When it comes to silence in language classes, primary pupils’ responses are not consistent, since while some pupils indicated subjects such as Polish and English (or mathematics) as “noisy”, others referred to these lessons as “always quiet” (2016: 179). This corresponds with a secondary teacher’s note that “*in foreign language classes, silent and speaking moments must alternate*” (U255). Overall, the opinions indicate that in the primary school silence is a positive and desirable state and its lack is linked to low authority in the teacher, which negatively determines students’ behaviour during the lessons (2016: 179). About one third of the pupils experience negative emotions with silence in the classroom linked to time for questioning and being unprepared (2016: 126, 179, 230).

Category 1. In Olearczyk (2016) (**C277**; 5 873 tokens) 277 respondents’ phrases, single- sentence, and several-sentence utterances are displayed. The respondents are primary and lower secondary students (sub-corpus C97); secondary students (sub-corpus C31); primary and lower secondary teachers (sub-corpus C107); as well as secondary teachers and school heads (sub-corpus C42). Their expressions illustrate how they understood the role and place of silence in their lives and in their schools. The most frequent words in this small corpus show that they talked about silence and positive and negative topics related to it, constructing subordinate clauses trying to place this concept within physical and mental entities that they had at their disposal in their conceptual repertoires. Interestingly, the high frequency of the negation *not* (2.5%) implies that they expressed their opinions through a negative lens, communicating what silence is not, or what silence does not give, or its emptiness, rather than what it is, or what it offers.

Category 2. C277 contains **C97** (1 207 tokens) with primary and lower secondary students’ utterances[3]. The most frequent words in C97 re-

[3] Prior to the school reform of 2017 in Poland primary school was 6 years, followed by a 3 year lower secondary school. Now there is an 8-year primary school for pupils aged 7 to 14 years.

vealed that the negative scope of phrases in C277 was due to C97, where the primary and lower secondary students shared their negative opinions about silence (see Olearczyk, 2016: 122, 149). Overall, primary pupils in 5th and 6th grades as well as lower secondary pupils shared these negative opinions. The most frequent phrases in C97 (*I don't like, silence is, (don't like) silence, there isn't, at home, is for, silence when, and not, there is silence*) and most frequent collocates of 'silence' (*is, silence, not, needed, then, during, and, me*) confirm that silence might be neither desired at home (U2, U75, U77) nor at school, or when with friends (Table 2). The youngest respondents are afraid of silence and do not like it. They may prefer noise. This corresponds with the fact that primary schools are noisier when compared to secondary schools. In C31[4] this state of mind was verbalized by a secondary student who, in his extensive statement, talked about his childhood and memories when he was scared of silence when alone at home, and when he wanted to break it (U17).

Table 2. C97 – The utterances of Polish primary and lower secondary pupils, available in Olearczyk (2016)

C97		
Top ten types[1]	**Top ten 2-grams types**	**Collocates of 'silence'**
nie [no, not]	nie lubię [I don't like]	jest [is]
jest [is]	cisza jest [silence is]	cisza [silence]
się [oneself]	lubię ciszy [(I don't) like silence]	nie [no, not]
i [and]	nie ma [there is no]	potrzebna [needed]
cisza [cisza]	w domu [at home]	wtedy [then / at that time / when]
kiedy [when]	jest dla [is for]	podczas [during]
w [in]	ciszy gdy [silence when]	i [and]
ciszy[2] [silence]	ciszy kiedy [silence when]	mi[3] [to me]
(nie) lubię [(don't) like]	i nie and not]	–
na [on / for]	jest cisza [there is silence]	–

[1] i.e. no, is, oneself, and, silence, when, in, silence (in the accusative), (do not) like, on.
[2] *ciszy* is in the accusative case in Polish.
[3] *to me* is an informal form of *mnie*.

Category 3. **C107** (2 952 tokens) is a sub-corpus of C277 with utterances of primary and lower secondary teachers and school heads. The most

[4] C31 (1 080 tokens) is a corpus within C277 of secondary students' utterances, where the perception of silence was problematized into the phrase '*silence is for me something like … .*'

frequent words in this small corpus are: *in*, *oneself*, *on, and, not, is, with, to, silence* in the nominative and accusative. The teachers describe their attitude towards silence by referring to certain places and situations that best illustrate their point. The picture becomes clearer when we consider the collocates of 'silence' (*is*, *silence*, *and, not, this, in, with, oneself*) as well as the most frequent phrases (*oneself on, is not*, *during, in silence, can be, maintain silence, at school, good manners, with parents, oneself*) which pinpoint that the teachers talked about silence in the context of shaping students' cultural behaviour at school, and in collaboration with their families. The language employed by the teachers, including phrases such as 'they are not able to', 'as a consequence', or 'lack of skills', subtly reveals their underlying focus on gaps in their students' competences. The primary teachers have a pragmatic attitude towards silence, linking 'remaining silent' or 'maintaining silence' in certain situations with the overlapping concepts of cultural behaviour[5] and good manners; they also mention students' parents as desired partners in shaping in their students' behaviour and manners, even though collaboration with parents is a challenge[6]. When compared to secondary teachers in C42[7], though, primary teachers were hedging their opinions with modal verbs, as if they did not want to "sound completely certain about something" (Julé, 2004: 34).

Category 4. In C277 health is conceptualized one-sidedly. Silence is a desirable but undervalued state in Polish schools. Most examples provided by the respondents illustrated the unfortunate physical and mental side effects of noise. There are a few instances, though, of mentioning health problems that might have been caused by being silent as a result of being unable to speak. An instance is the opinion of a lower secondary teacher about 'silent pupils' who are *different* or *weaker* than their *normally behaving* peers, whose aggression rises when the noise is unbearable, and who direct their aggression towards those quiet pupils (U66). This intolerance towards the use of silence by other people can indeed lead to misjudging not only the language of those people, but also their overall competencies (Lemak, 2012). Another lower secondary teacher said that when a pupil keeps silent, it can be a sign that they are 'paralysed with fear', for example, when expected to speak publicly in front of their peers (U79). This fact was confirmed by

[5] cf. "according to many primary school teachers silence is an element of cultural behaviour" (Olearczyk, 2016: 137, 173, 177).

[6] cf. "in getting to know and introducing silence, the key role should be played by family upbringing and school education, as a conscious process of the person's development and changes in social relations" (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 1999: 8).

[7] C42 (615 tokens) is a sub-corpus of secondary teachers' utterances, where the word 'silence' collocates with the phrase used to define it as '*an element of ….*'

a lower secondary respondent who said that she has to face silence when at group meetings, when other peers ignore her; she handles silence poorly and it is a negative and unpleasant feeling for her (U86). These examples stand in opposition to the idea of shaping creative silence in Polish educational settings as “solitude, [and] free from fear” (Olearczyk, 2022: 164).

Study 2:
Patterns of silence in the context of Japanese tertiary ELT classrooms

In junior schools and colleges in Japan the English language, which is a compulsory subject at pre-tertiary education, is taught by Japanese teachers using the Yakudoku Method, which resembles the Grammar Translation Method (Hino, 1988: 53). This pedagogical approach effectively silences Japanese EFL pupils and students (King, 2013: 8). In practice, when in communicative situations, Japanese students make “long pauses” or have “the agonizing period of silence” for “translating what has been said into Japanese and then going through the same process when answering” (Mulligan, 2005: 33 as cited in King, 2013: 73). To sum up, students “loath to stand out by vocalising in the L2 during lessons” because of “[t]he pervasiveness of bullying (*ijime*) within the education system” (King, 2013: 82).

King’s study (2013) is on 924 EFL Japanese tertiary students in Japan. The data were gathered from nine universities in the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 Japanese academic years. The macro-level silence of non-participation during English classes was analysed by an observation instrument, the Classroom Oral Participation Scheme (COPS); whereas micro-level silence was analysed via semi-structured and retrospective interviews. In total, 90 students’ modality was audio-coded during a period of 48 hours of classroom observations; also, 13 Japanese interviewees’ opinions were examined through the abovementioned interviews. The findings were interpreted through dynamic systems theory (DST). In the DST interpretation, either cognitive or sociocultural routes attract L2 learners into certain behaviour, and into a state of stability which, even though never long lasting, is difficult to reorient towards different behaviour (King, 2013: 85, 99). This study reveals a “strong, national trend towards silence in Japan’s second language classrooms” (2013: 84).

Category 5. In King’s study (2013), (**C43**; 1 679 tokens), 43 phrases, single-sentence, and several-sentence utterances of 13 Japanese interviewees, collected through the abovementioned semi-structured and retrospective interviews, are displayed. The respondents are eight Japanese university students from non-English majors (C30) and five university students majoring in English as a foreign language (EFL) (C13). Their main phrases are: *I think,*

I don't, the teacher, to be, the class, in the, want to, you know, a question, and I. These phrases may indicate the interviewees' tendency to focus on expressing their opinions and beliefs about the behaviour of their specific teacher and a specific group of students by means of negative statements, specifying also a location. The point of reference here is the word *a question* or *questions,* used in C43 eight times, and shown in a negative context, as in these examples:

> "But um af- after asking **a question** nobody answered it and teacher went on the class so nobody answered it. So the atmosphere is absolutely awkward (107–108); "The teacher told us exactly what **questions** were on the test during the class so getting the credit was easy (112); "I think when the teacher nominates me to answer **a question**, I feel I become the centre of attention and also I feel I'm being watched whether I get it right or wrong" (115); "You know when a teacher asks students '**any questions?**' and everybody goes quiet, then I wouldn't say 'yes, I have **a question**' because I don't want to be the centre of the attention, you know. Yeah." (115); "As soon as I catch the teacher's eye, and say something like 'good morning' or whatever, if this impression stays with the teacher, once class starts and teacher looks for someone to answer **a question**, I'll definitely be the first to be nominated and will be the centre of attention only because my eyes met the teacher's just before. So, as I don't want to answer **any questions**, I stay silent when the teacher enters the room" (121); "We simply translate texts and answer some **questions**, page after page from a textbook. I couldn't be bothered" (124).

The interviewees express also an intention to explain their point by using the conversational filler *you know,* to engage the listener and get them on their side.

Category 6. C30 (1 216 tokens) is a sub-corpus of C43. It contains 30 utterances of Japanese students from faculties other than English at Japanese universities who shared their views on silence in English lessons. The most frequent words, the top ten phrases, and the contexts of using the words *silent* and *silence* (Table 3), when examined in the 30 utterances, give an overall impression of Japanese tertiary EFL students in the English lesson. Average EFL Japanese tertiary students who do not major in English studies feel self-conscious when confronted with their EFL teachers with whom they are to either interact or answer questions. They feel the English language is incomprehensible for them, they cannot answer teachers' questions correctly, and they have low motivation to change this situation. The interviewees talk about strategies to survive in English classes, such as cliques, curling up in the chair, and keeping silent. As stated by Bosacki (2022: 158),

young people who are neither verbally nor physically aggressive, use silence as “a form of resistance”, or as “a strategy to preserve their agency and a sense of self.”

Table 3. C30 – the utterances of Japanese tertiary students NOT majoring in English, available in King (2013)

C30		
Top ten types	**Top ten 2-grams types**	**Contexts of ‘silent, silence’**
I	the teacher	I stay silent
the	I don’t	what is this silence for?
to	I think	so the silence is so noticeable
and	the class	I tend to fall into a long silence or think about something else
n’t	to be	–
it	youknow	–
a	say something	–
of	want to	–
be	to the	–
do	when the	–

Category 7. C13 (449 tokens) is a sub-corpus of C43 that comprises 13 utterances of 5 interviewees majoring in English as a foreign language. In C13 the most frequent words, the ten most frequent phrases, and contexts of *silent* and *silence*, as shown in Table 4, indicate that the interviewees perceive their English classes as a collective endeavor to remain silent given their inability to alter the teaching methods, or the teacher (King, 2013: 155). Here one Japanese tertiary student used *we* seven times (44% of all 16 uses in C13), indicating their belonging to the community of students. Yet, there are individuals contemplating individual learning in the future. They explain the phenomenon of silent lessons by referring to the Japanese community and cultural norms where people are mindful of others and where silence has meaning. They break silence hesitantly, if at all, and remain listeners instead. Yet, they express their shared discomfort that students ‘do not understand the teacher’s class,’ as well as disappointment that good students choose to remain silent.

Category 8. In C43 (see Category 5) health was a point of reference for attributing the silent behaviour of some Japanese students, or cases of sleeping in the classroom to an “ill-effect of insomnia” (King, 2013: 99). Public speaking in the English language is here synonymous with “the fear” of humiliation and a face-threatening act (FTA) that arise from “acute

hyper-sensitivity" towards others and "an almost neurotic dread of negative evaluation" (King, 2013: 127, 156). The problem of bullying/*ijime* (King, 2013: 65, 77–8, 82, 87) may be also linked to suicidal behaviour.

Table 4. C13 – the utterances of Japanese tertiary students majoring in English, available in King (2013)

C13		
Top ten types	**Top ten 2-grams types**	**Contexts of 'silent, silence'**
I	I think	teamwork to make silence
to	kind of	the silent students were not 'pulling their weight'
it	to be	all they did was to keep silent and say we don't understand this teacher's class
the	we were	–
we	talking about	–
's	to speak	–
a	were talking	–
so	my role	–
n't	–	–
in	–	–

The core category of silence related to health

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5) (2022) outlines disorders diagnosed in children and adolescents that can be mechanically traced in the corpora of utterances available in Olearczyk (2016) and King (2013). These disorders, followed by diagnostic code numbers, include social anxiety disorder (229, 233), apathy (685), bullying (333), conduct disorder (533), shyness (233, 766), panic disorder (234), and depression (186). The manifestation of social anxiety here is speaking anxiety. There are mental health conditions that affect (English language) students. **Firstly**, in English language (secondary) classes there are small groups of students with high level of speaking anxiety (e.g. Nessler, 2018), but they do not exert the same *collective* influence on class dynamics as in Japanese (and Korean) schools and universities known as *taijin kyofusho symptoms (*対人恐怖症*)* (DSM-5, 2022: 371). **Secondly**, conduct disorders are manifested through bullying others into silence (*ijime*) in Japanese educational settings. In Polish schools, moments of silence can create internal tension for students, which can find an outlet through teasing and intimidatory

interactions with others, as well as uncontrolled laughter. **Thirdly**, apathy is a neurocognitive disorder characterised by "diminished motivation and reduced goal directed behaviour accompanied by decreased emotional responsiveness" (DSM-5, 2022: 922). These symptoms can be traced, for example, in the utterances of Japanese non-language majors. To sum up, these points draw a connection between the concept of silence in school settings and neurocognitive disorders. They align with the perspectives presented in Olearczyk (2016), where silence is a desired state beneficial for cognitive health, as well as in King (2013), where silence can help explain and manage neurocognitive disorders.

5. Conclusions

Silence can be imposed upon an individual by an external force, or as a result of memory access failure as a reaction to being forced to speak in public in a foreign language in which one is not sufficiently fluent to communicate comfortably. Silence can be also an expression of lack of knowledge. It can be caused by mental health issues, chronic illness, sleep disorders, or it can occur due to fear of (cyber)bullying. We can observe a growing concern to include the concept of silence pedagogy in preservice ELT teacher education (e.g. Harumi, 2020; Karas, Faez, 2020; Su et al., 2023; Bąk-Średnicka, 2024). A richer understanding of the role and place of silence, especially in relation to health-related reasons for student silence, can be provided by incorporating Young Adult literature into teacher education programs (e.g. Pytash, 2013).

6. Limitations

The corpora used in this study are small, targeted, and collected under very specific and narrow circumstances. The small size of the corpora can also be their advantage as the "tight and even" population of teachers and students allowed us "to drill deep into the banal – the frequent and common features of speech and writing whose high recurrence even in small amount of data underpin their importance in the unfolding discourse" (Farr, 2011: xv). Likewise, even though the Japanese case describes tertiary students, the respondents indicate that their fear of public speaking in English started at the earlier levels of education, as is the case of Swedish upper secondary students in Nessler's study (2018). Problems with inadequate speaking practice are partly attributed to the neglect of primary school teachers and the

high rate of teacher turnover in pre-tertiary schools (King, 2013: 77; Nessler, 2018: 22).

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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

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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 socio-cultural 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.

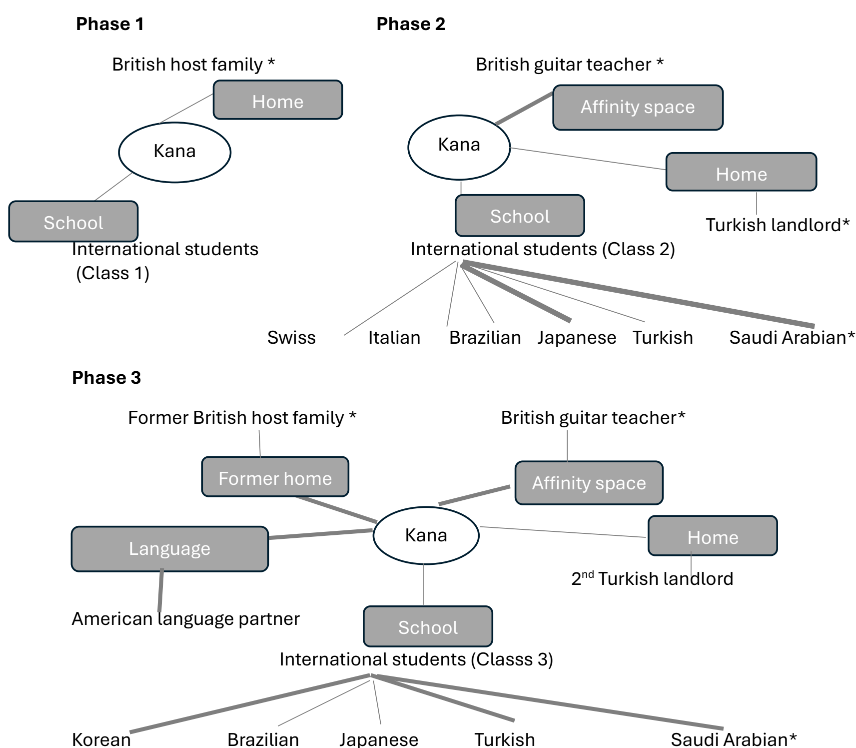

Figure 1. Kana's developmental trajectories of INoP

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.

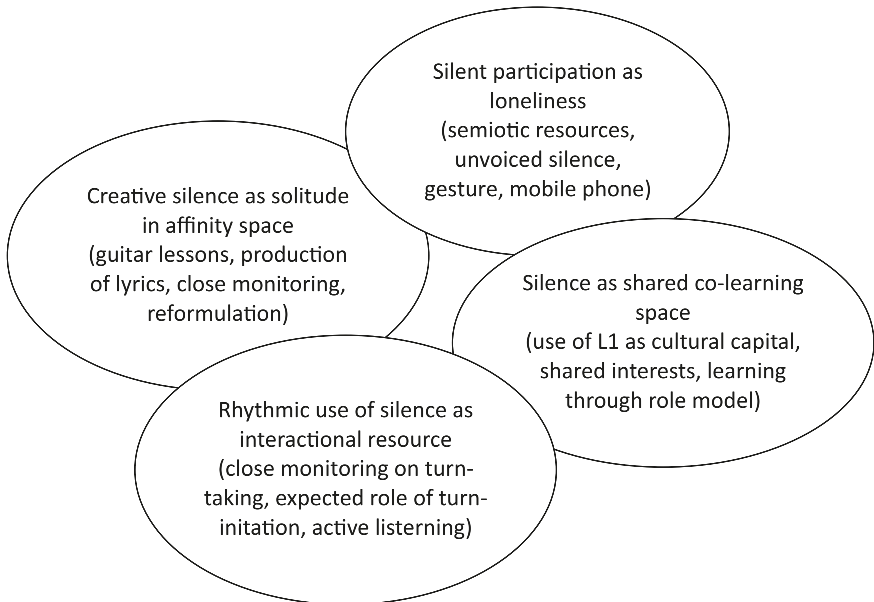

Figure 2. Multi-contextual silences

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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Into the void: Re-envisioning silence in foreign language education through a socio-emotional learning lens

Historically marginalized and often misunderstood, silence has predominantly been viewed as a barrier to effective communication and engagement in educational settings. This paper argues for a re-evaluation of silence, viewing it not as an absence of speech, but as a potent tool for fostering deep learning, introspection, and emotional intelligence. By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) principles, it is posited that silence can enhance, and is an essential element of, affective communicative competence (Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024), aiding the development of empathy, self-regulation, and a more profound connection to the language learning process. This conceptual paper explores the nuanced role of silence within the context of foreign language classrooms through a SEL lens. Traditional perceptions of silence are critically examined, a shift towards an asset-based view through SEL is proposed, and practical strategies for educators to incorporate silence meaningfully into their pedagogy are suggested. To conclude, perspectives on utilizing silence as a transformative element in SEL-driven language education are offered, aiming for a harmonious integration that enriches the teaching and learning experience.

Keywords: affective communicative competence, foreign language classroom, silence, social-emotional learning

Słowa kluczowe: afektywna kompetencja komunikacyjna, klasa języka obcego, cisza, społeczno-emocjonalny proces uczenia się

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1. Introduction

In 2014, while teaching Spanish at a K-8 school in Virginia, United States, I stood at the front of the classroom and posed a question I thought would spark enthusiasm and debate among my students. Instead, what followed was a palpable silence that filled the room—a silence that weighed heavily on my shoulders, marking what I initially perceived as a failure in my teaching approach. This was not the reflective silence that teachers hope to inspire, where each student delves into their thoughts, preparing to share insightful responses. It felt more like a barrier, a collective hesitation stemming from fear of making mistakes, or the discomfort of being spotlighted. I recall feeling unprepared and unequipped to deal with my students' silence, and my mind began to spiral, wondering if I had done something wrong, or if my students did not know the information. Reflecting on that episode, I view it as a turning point in my career, because in that moment I acknowledged the power that silence has in foreign language classrooms.

In my teacher preparation programs, I was instilled with the belief that silence was something undesired or something to avoid, especially in the context of language teaching and learning. Looking back, it seems as if my preparation as a foreign language educator was built around expecting students to produce language repeatedly (i.e., in speech and writing) during instruction, with little space for reflection or critical thinking. While writing this article, I recognize that to this day, silence continues to be a "belittled construct" (Bao, 2023: 1) that continues to be widely under-researched, misunderstood, and "extremely rare" in language education (Bao, 2020: 4). For this reason, teachers continue to struggle with, and often do not know how to react to, silence and silent students (Svaricek, 2024), being unable to decide whether silence "is part of communication, mental processing, or low engagement" (Bao, 2023: 3). The uncertainty surrounding silence, whether it signifies thoughtfulness, or lack of engagement, (dis)interest, or even (dis) respect (Liu, 2002), perpetuates a cycle of tension within foreign language classrooms, thereby complicating the teaching and learning process.

Many years have passed since my young teacher-self acknowledged the weight that silence carries in the classroom. I have grown to understand silence not as something to be afraid of, but as a vital element of language teaching and learning that needs to be valued and embraced. Nevertheless, I am aware that silence is hardly explored or talked about in language teacher education, "apart from the discourse which recognizes the roles of the silent period and inner speech in relation to learning" (Bao, 2014: 3). The complexity and evasion of silence within the language learning environment leads me to propose a re-envisioning through the lens of social-emotional learning

(SEL). By doing so, I hope to illuminate how silence can be understood as an element of affective communicative competence (see Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024), thereby contributing to the enhancement of emotional intelligence and well-being.

Thus, following this introduction, I divide this manuscript into several key sections. First, I explore traditional perceptions of silence in foreign language classrooms and the cultural contexts that shape these views. Then, I review recent literature, highlighting key themes such as context, social communication, emotions, self-regulation and self-reflection, voices and power, options and decision-making, and support and awareness. I move forward to propose a framework for re-envisioning silence through the lenses of social-emotional learning (SEL) and affective communicative competence, highlighting the role of silence in enhancing emotional intelligence and linguistic proficiency. Then, I provide practical SEL strategies for educators to integrate silence into their teaching practices. I conclude by discussing the transformative potential of silence in SEL-driven language education and its implications for fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

2. Silence in the Foreign Language Classroom

The discourse on silence within foreign language education is rich and varied, yet historically, it has often been imbued with a negative cast. Earlier discussions in the literature predominantly framed silence as something to be avoided or overcome. Gouin (1892) initially highlighted silence as acondition imposed on students, with other scholars hinting at a negative undertone linked to embarrassment or mistrust (Applegate, 1975; Wolfgang, 1977). Further compounding this perspective, more contemporary research has, at times, associated silence with psychological discomfort, suggesting a phase that learners must overcome, especially during the initial stages of language acquisition (Le Pichon & de Jonge, 2016). Such viewpoints underscore a pedagogical inclination to perceive silence as a void needing to be filled to avoid discomfort, or as an indicator of an individual's educational or intellectual deficits (Applegate, 1975; Bao, 2020). This framing situates silence as a barrier to effective language learning and classroom interaction, portraying it as something that educators and learners should actively work to minimize or eliminate.

Contrary to the often negative connotations attached to silence in Western pedagogical narratives, its role and interpretation can differ greatly in other cultural contexts. The conceptualization of silence as merely

a lack of speech overlooks its potential as a powerful learning, communicative, and reflective tool that allows learners to engage in deep thought (Kim, 2002). Silence can serve multifunctional roles in the learning process, from providing students with the space to process and internalize new information, to serving as a respectful pause, giving others the opportunity to articulate their thoughts while being attentively heard (i.e., active listening). Deep learning and personal introspection can occur within these moments of non-verbal reflection, suggesting that silence, when acknowledged and integrated thoughtfully into teaching methodologies, can enhance the foreign language learning experience, rather than detract from it (Bosacki, 2005; Deans, 2013). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that for many language learners, silence is a vital requisite and their preferred method of engagement in the classroom (Bao, 2020; Pentón Herrera, 2024a).

Moving forward, we, as a field, need to transcend the view of silence as a classroom hindrance and embrace silence's inherent value in fostering a conducive learning environment. Recognizing silence as a potent pedagogical tool and a helpful learner resource involves making a paradigmatic shift towards viewing it as an active element of communicative competence that enhances emotional intelligence, empathy, and critical thinking skills. Viewing silence through a SEL lens redefines this concept not just as an absence of speech, but as a strategic classroom dynamic that enriches teaching and learning. A SEL perspective underscores the importance of silence in the development of affective communicative competence, transforming it into a scaffold for nuanced thought and emotional expression. By valuing both verbal and non-verbal modes of expression, educators can foster resilience, understanding, and connection among students, thereby converting silence from a perceived obstacle into a pivotal resource for holistic learning experiences that bolster learners' emotional well-being and intellectual growth.

3. Related Research and Theoretical Foundations

Before I venture to re-envision silence through a SEL lens in the next section, I would like to situate my article within ongoing scholarly discussions. Thus, in this section, I provide a brief review of current literature on silence as it relates to the major points discussed in this paper, as well as the major and most salient points in recent publications about silence in education. By examining the latest research on the topics of: (a) context, (b) social communication, (c) emotions, (d) self-regulation and self-reflection, (e) voices and power, (f) options, choices, and decision-making, and (g) support and aware-

ness, we can better understand how silence functions in educational settings and its implications for foreign language education.

3.1. Context

Silence is inherently situational and deeply embedded within cultural and social contexts. Petkova (2021), for example, highlights how the silence of individuals can reflect the status and reactions of their communities, offering a nuanced understanding of what silence signifies in various social settings. Further, Bao and Ye (2020) emphasize that the use of silence is influenced by communicators' personalities, the sociocultural climate, and the cognitive load of communicative content. Findings by Petkova (2021) and Bao and Ye (2020) underscore the complexity of silence and its varied meanings across different contexts, suggesting that educators need to consider these factors when addressing silence in the classroom. Understanding the contextual nature of silence can help teachers create environments that are both responsive and adaptive to the diverse backgrounds of their students. Recognizing silence as a meaningful aspect of communication ensures it is seen not merely as a void but as an integral part of social and cultural interactions.

3.2. Social Communication

Silence serves as a critical component in the internal dialogue between listeners and speakers. Bao and Thanh-My (2020) argue that focusing solely on speech production limits our understanding of social communication, which is heavily influenced by silent, internal formulations. Bao (2020) extends this notion, suggesting that the integration of silence in communication reflects a complex interplay between spoken and unspoken interactions. Recognizing silence as part of the communicative process, which also includes body language, helps educators appreciate the full spectrum of student engagement and participation. By acknowledging the role of silence in social communication, teachers can foster a more holistic approach to language instruction that values both spoken and unspoken contributions. This perspective allows for a richer understanding of classroom dynamics, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience for students.

3.3. Emotions

The emotional dimensions of silence are significant, particularly in relation to anxiety and interpersonal relationships. For instance, Maher (2021) discusses how silence can result from social anxiety, affecting individuals' engagement in communication. Similarly, Karas and Uchihara (2021) note that online communication can provide a safer space for those with anxiety, allowing them to participate more actively. Furthermore, Turnbull (2021) provides a case study of an adult immigrant navigating social contexts in the U.S., revealing how silence intersects with anxiety, isolation, and power dynamics. Additionally, Zebdi and Monsillion (2023), researching child mutism, explore how social anxiety can manifest as psychosomatic symptoms in children (e.g., headache, stomachache), highlighting the importance of addressing emotional well-being in educational settings. Collectively, these studies emphasize the need for educators to be sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, the emotional underpinnings of silence and to create supportive environments that address these challenges.

A final point I would like to highlight in this section is that, as one of the peer reviewers pointed out, silence can be the symptom of a problem. While the aim of this article is to push beyond our current understanding of silence in the foreign language classroom, it is important not to romanticize silence. Educators and educational staff should recognize that silence can also indicate that students are experiencing emotional distress, withdrawal, or other types of difficulties. It is crucial for educators to discern the context and causes in which silence takes place in order to address the underlying issues effectively. By doing so, they can provide the necessary support and interventions to help students overcome the challenges they are experiencing.

3.4. Self-Regulation and Self-Reflection

Silence is often a deliberate choice for self-regulation and reflection. Bao (2014) and Huynh and Adams (2022) find that individuals use silence to exercise self-control and cautiousness. Shachter and Haswell (2022) observe that in culturally complex settings, such as among Japanese learners, silence can serve as a protective mechanism. Umino (2023) explores how silence can hinder self-expression, particularly among Japanese students studying abroad. Liu and Martino (2022) highlight that children often use nonverbal methods to express their preferences and opinions, which reflects their agency in early childhood education. Choosing to remain silent allows individuals to preserve their privacy, or avoid possible conflicts or adverse

outcomes. In some cases, silence is strategically used to send a message or indicate disagreement. When people refrain from speaking, they might be signaling their dissent or disapproval, compelling others to consider their stance or presence in a new light. These observations underline the twofold function of silence: it not only promotes self-regulation and reflection, but also serves as a tool that educators can utilize to enhance students' emotional and cognitive growth.

3.5. Voices and Power

The power dynamics associated with silence in educational settings are profound, and educators hold a power that we may not be aware of. Alerby and Brown (2021) discuss how teachers can influence who speaks and who remains silent, affecting visibility and inclusion. Petkova (2021) examines the silencing of Roma minorities, illustrating how societal prejudices can suppress voices inside and outside learning spaces. Umino (2023) indicates that when students hold back and do not express themselves, it frequently leads to a problematic form of silence, while Takahashi (2023) reports how silence can be a response to shyness and internalized shame among students. Bosacki and Talwar (2023) discovered that adolescents commonly experience unhappiness and stress when they perceive that their peers and family are not attentive to them. This emotional strain is often triggered by critical behaviors and a perceived absence of support, which can lead to isolation and diminished self-esteem in young people. Such conditions can significantly impact their sense of identity and life trajectory. These studies underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing the power dynamics that influence silence both inside and outside learning spaces, thereby advocating for equitable classroom practices that amplify all voices.

3.6. Options, Choices, and Decision-Making

Silence can also reflect personal choices and the need for solitude. Harumi (2023) suggests that allowing students to write rather than speak can reduce tension and facilitate expression. Harumi's (2023) study was supported by Pentón Herrera's (2024a) findings, who recorded a student's preference for silence instead of working in groups because it was too loud, which affected the student's focus and ability to perform. Dubas (2022) explores how individuals learn to value solitude, finding solace and learning in silence. Musaio (2022: 34) observes that, although the digital age allows contact with

anyone anywhere on the planet instantly, humans continue to live in a time of loneliness and complex human relationships. Despite being in close contact with others, "we defend our spaces for fear of being invaded by others, and we place limits on the relationship".

Bosacki et al. (2022) highlight the significant role that solitude serves in the lives of adolescents. It offers a secure environment for various activities, and the manner in which adolescents utilize their alone time can influence their overall well-being. Additionally, social withdrawal is recognized as a crucial aspect of typical adolescent development. This perspective is relatively recent in academic discussions, as solitude has traditionally been viewed negatively during adolescence, with previous research concentrating primarily on adverse outcomes such as loneliness or social exclusion. These insights suggest that educators should provide opportunities for students to choose silence, in this way fostering autonomy and supporting individual learning preferences and emotional needs.

3.7. Support and Awareness

Building supportive environments that recognize the value of silence is crucial. Shachter (2023) advocates for social networks and support systems to boost self-esteem and combat depression. Lees (2022) notes the rising popularity of mindfulness and meditation in education, which incorporates silence as a social-emotional learning practice, as also pointed out by Pentón Herrera and Martínez-Alba (2021). Wałejko and Stern (2022) argue that silence allows one to explore one's inner world and discover potentials that one might not have known before. Webster (2022) finds that guided reading during the pandemic facilitated meta-social immersion through isolation, demonstrating the productive possibilities of silence in learning. These publications highlight the importance of creating supportive educational environments that leverage silence for emotional well-being and deeper learning.

4. Re-envisioning Silence Through a SEL Lens

Before we begin to re-envision silence through a SEL lens, it is necessary to clearly define and introduce the concept. The term *social-emotional learning*, as we understand it and operationalize it in the field today, was introduced in 1994 by Elias et al. (1997) to describe the process in which learners acquire and develop skills (sometimes referred to as competencies), necessary for success in the classroom and beyond. Although a multitude

of definitions exist, most agree that, at its core, SEL is concerned with the successful improvement of individuals and with the vision of inculcating practices and values that will contribute to a better world (Pentón Herrera, 2020; Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). Although scant and sparse, emerging research in foreign language education shows the benefits of SEL for students and teachers alike (Bai et al., 2021; Pentón Herrera, 2024b; Yeh et al., 2022). Equally important, SEL is concerned with the flourishing of the *whole* student, which challenges pervasive educational practices that solely prioritize cognitive prowess and academic production.

Pentón Herrera and Darragh (2024) make a case for the importance of situating SEL in foreign language education, suggesting that emotional literacy, emotional development, and emotional intelligence are central to elevating the linguistic proficiencies of learners, while also preparing them for the intricate emotional complexities of real-world communication (Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024: 21). Concluding that to be successful communicators in today's world individuals must have the skill set to understand, deploy, and engage with the emotions captured in all forms of language (including silence!), we propose the term affective communicative competence, which we define as a vital life skill and as:

> an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and convey emotions and feelings within the context of communication. It encompasses the skills to interpret and produce language that accurately reflects emotional nuances, as well as the capability to respond empathetically and appropriately to the emotional content in others' communication. This form of competence goes beyond the mere structural and functional aspects of language, emphasizing the importance of emotional resonance and understanding in authentic communication (p. 21).

4.1. Silence as Affective Communicative Competence

Re-imagining silence through a SEL lens offers an innovative perspective in foreign language education, highlighting silence not as an absence but as a present component of (affective) communicative competence. This approach aligns with the broader goals of SEL by fostering introspection, empathy, and deeper connections in learning environments. Silence, as a nuanced form of communication, invites learners to engage in reflective practices, thereby enhancing their ability to interpret and respond to the emotional content in communication (Kim Pham et al., 2023). Recognizing silence as an integral aspect of affective communicative competence, educators can encourage students to explore their own and others' emotions in a con-

templative manner, thereby cultivating a more welcoming and understanding classroom atmosphere. Further, it gives both teachers and learners in the foreign language classroom the opportunity to explore their connection and response to silence, allowing them to build a relationship with, and a healthy response to, silence in a safe environment.

Re-examining silence through a SEL lens in the foreign language classroom also means acknowledging its role in social engagement that extends beyond verbal expression. In real-world scenarios, from professional interactions to social gatherings, silence punctuates our communications, carrying meanings that words alone cannot convey (Bao, 2023). For language learners, grasping how silence functions within the target culture's communicative practices is crucial. It equips them with the skills to navigate, respect, and engage with moments of silence effectively, ensuring they are prepared not only linguistically, but also culturally and emotionally, for the complexities of real-world communication. This holistic approach to language learning—where verbal and non-verbal elements are equally valued—underscores the importance of silence as a tool for fostering emotional intelligence and resilience among learners (Pentón Herrera & Darragh, 2024; Szymańska, 2021).

As a final point, revisiting silence through a SEL lens in the language classroom offers a pathway to enhancing students' emotional literacy. Identified by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a 21st-century skill (Chatterjee Singh & Duraiappah, 2020), emotional literacy is described as the ability to recognize, understand, and express one's emotions and to interpret those of others (Steiner & Perry, 1997). By creating spaces for silence, educators can facilitate moments where students reflect on their feelings, empathize with others, and gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their peers. This reflective practice is beneficial for personal growth and also enhances learners' communicative competencies (Szymańska, 2021), preparing them to engage more meaningfully in a multilingual and multicultural world. Through this reimagined perspective, silence has the potential to become a bridge to understanding, an opportunity for development, and a vital component of a comprehensive foreign language education that champions emotional well-being alongside linguistic proficiency (Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021).

5. Implementing Silence as a SEL Practice in the Foreign Language Classroom

How, then, can silence be successfully implemented as a SEL practice in the foreign language classroom? In this section, I suggest six practical techniques

for teachers to incorporate silence into their classrooms. While navigating these examples, I recommend that practitioners take into consideration (a) their context, and (b) the culture of the language they are teaching. Silence cannot be divorced from cultural contexts, neither in society nor in educational settings. For this reason, it is important to modify the examples shared below to best align with the teachers' and their students' settings. Similarly, when employing silence as a SEL practice, cultural sensitivity and individual differences must be at the forefront of educators' planning and execution. A SEL approach to silence acknowledges and leverages the diverse norms, values, and preferences regarding silence and speech across different cultures and individuals. It is crucial for teachers to understand that students come from varied backgrounds, where the meanings attached to silence can significantly differ. By respecting these differences and integrating them into the curriculum, educators can create an inclusive environment that honors and utilizes silence in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to all learners.

5.1. Silence for empathy and social awareness

Silence plays a critical role in fostering an environment where empathy and social awareness flourish. Silence provides a reflective pause, allowing students the space to actively listen and deeply understand others' perspectives and emotions. This practice of attentive silence facilitates the development of empathy, as it encourages students to consider and appreciate diverse viewpoints without the immediate need to respond verbally (Bao & Thanh-My, 2020). Engaging with silence in this manner supports the SEL competency of social awareness by enabling learners to recognize and respect cultural nuances and emotional expressions that transcend linguistic barriers. By integrating periods of silence into classroom interactions, educators can create a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment that values and cultivates social awareness alongside linguistic skills. Three practical examples of silence for empathy and social awareness include:

- **Silent reflection activity:** Following a group discussion or presentation, allocate a few minutes of silence for students to reflect on the content discussed. Encourage them to think about how the information changes or enhances their understanding. After the silent reflection, ask students to share their insights through their preferred medium (e.g., written format, small group discussion, visuals etc.).
- **Active observation exercise:** Assign students to silently observe a video showcasing an unfamiliar practice or tradition (it could also be

a silent movie!). Instruct them to pay close attention to non-verbal cues and the emotional context of the interaction. After the observation, students can discuss or journal their perceptions and any new insights they gained about the video, highlighting the role of silence in active observation.

- **Empathy mapping:** Use silence as a tool for empathy mapping, where students silently consider a scenario from the perspective of someone from the target language culture. They should think about what that person might see, hear, think, and feel. After the silent contemplation, students can create empathy maps in groups, visually representing the insights they have gathered. This activity not only fosters empathy but also deepens students' cultural and social awareness.

5.2. Collaborative silence

In this paper, I define collaborative silence as integrating intentional quiet periods into group activities to enhance focus, foster active listening, and promote a deeper understanding of shared ideas, thereby fostering a unified and creative group dynamic. In group work, collaborative silence facilitates a space where students can develop deep listening skills, respect for peers' contemplative processes, and an appreciation for the diverse ways individuals contribute to collective learning. By consciously incorporating periods of silence, educators encourage students to internalize and reflect on the language and content being learned (Bao, 2019). This practice not only nurtures relationship skills by promoting empathy and mutual respect but also enhances responsible decision-making as students navigate the balance between silence and speech to achieve collaborative goals. Three practical examples of collaborative silence include:

- **Silent brainstorming:** Begin group projects with a silent brainstorming session, during which students individually write down their ideas without discussion. After a set period, students share their ideas with either a small group or the whole class, allowing a diverse range of thoughts to be heard and considered without the influence of dominant voices.
- **Quiet collaboration time:** Allocate specific times during group work for silent collaboration, where students work on their assigned parts quietly within the group setting. This period of silence helps students focus deeply on their contributions and gives them the opportunity to respect their and other people's silence while in a group. Quiet colla-

boration time can then be followed by a session where they discuss their work and how it fits into the group's overall project.

- **Reflective silence after feedback:** After groups present their work and receive feedback, incorporate a moment of reflective silence. This practice of silence allows students to process the feedback individually before discussing as a group how to incorporate the suggestions, thereby fostering a collective approach to decision-making and improvement.

5.3. Silence for teacher and student well-being

Integrating moments of silence into the classroom routine offers a dual advantage for both student and teacher well-being. For teachers, these periods serve as an opportunity to engage in self-reflection and slow down for a moment, a practice that can significantly reduce feelings of burnout and enhance job satisfaction (Pentón Herrera et al., 2023). Simultaneously, for students, silence creates a calm and focused learning environment, conducive to emotional regulation and increased engagement (Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2021). This symbiotic relationship between teacher and student well-being, facilitated through silence, underscores the importance of reflective practice as a foundational component of SEL. Three practical examples of silence for teacher and student well-being include:

- **Mindful silence start:** Begin each class with a minute of mindful silence, encouraging both ourselves (i.e., teachers) and students to center our/themselves and set intentions for the lesson ahead. This practice not only helps reduce anxiety but also improves concentration, preparing everyone to be physically and mentally present for the session.
- **Silent reflection post-learning:** After a lesson or activity, incorporate a brief period of silence for reflection. Teachers can use this time to contemplate the day's successes and areas for improvement, while students can reflect on their learning gains and challenges. Sharing reflections can be optional, promoting a sense of safety and personal growth.
- **Silent gratitude moments:** At the end of the week, dedicate a few minutes for students and teachers to silently reflect on what they are grateful for in their teaching/learning journey. This can strengthen the classroom community, enhance positivity, and foster a supportive learning environment.

5.4. Silence for cultural and individual appreciation

Cultural nuances in the perception and use of silence can deeply affect how students interact in the language learning process. In some cultures, silence is a sign of respect, contemplation, and a way to maintain harmony, whereas, in others, it may be interpreted as disengagement or disagreement (Bao, 2014). Educators can create a classroom culture that respects and validates the silent expressions of learning by teaching about, and incorporating, these diverse perspectives of silence as a form of communication. This approach not only supports the SEL competency of social awareness by fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity, but also enhances relationship skills by encouraging respectful and empathetic interactions among students. Three practical examples of silence for cultural and individual appreciation include:

- **Cultural silence gallery walk:** Create a gallery walk featuring stories, proverbs, and anecdotes from various cultures that highlight the value and meaning of silence (the gallery might be teacher- or student-created). Students silently move around the room during the walk, reflecting on these different perspectives. This activity encourages students to appreciate the depth and breadth of silence as a communicative and cultural practice.
- **Silent cultural exchange:** Pair or group students from different cultural backgrounds and ask them to share their personal and cultural experiences with 'silence' without using words, using only non-verbal cues or written notes. This silent exchange fosters a deeper understanding and respect for the diverse ways cultures engage with silence.
- **Reflective silence journal:** Encourage students to keep a journal where they reflect on their own cultural and personal understanding of silence before and after learning about its varied interpretations. This reflective practice can lead to greater self-awareness and appreciation for how silence is valued differently among their peers.

5.5. Silence and inner dialogue

The concept of inner dialogue, or internal speech, plays a pivotal role in cognitive development and language acquisition theories (Vygotsky, 1986). It is during moments of silence that learners can actively engage in this internal discourse, reflecting on their learning, questioning their understanding, and mentally practising language skills. This silent engagement fosters a deeper linguistic comprehension and emotional connection to the language, fa-

cilitating both cognitive and affective development (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015). By recognizing and nurturing inner dialogue in the classroom, educators can support students in developing a more nuanced understanding of the language and themselves, promoting both linguistic proficiency and emotional intelligence. Three practical examples of silence and inner dialogue include:

- **Silent role-play preparation:** Before a role-play or speaking activity, provide students with silent time to prepare their parts/speech internally. This preparation might involve mentally rehearsing phrases, anticipating conversational turns, or emotionally connecting with the character they will portray. This silent prep time enhances linguistic readiness and emotional engagement with the role-play scenario.
- **Reflective silence for goal setting:** Regularly incorporate moments of silence for students to reflect on their personal language learning goals and the emotional aspects of their journey. Encourage them to consider silently what they hope to achieve, any barriers they feel, and how their emotions intersect with their learning process. This reflective practice can be followed by journaling or sharing goals with a peer, fostering self-awareness, goal-setting, and accountability.
- **Post-speaking internal summarization:** After speaking exercises, students silently reflect on their performance, noting strengths, areas for improvement, and key vocabulary or phrases to work on. This quiet time for personal assessment encourages students to identify their own learning needs and emotional reactions, fostering both linguistic growth and emotional awareness. This practice not only aids in solidifying the language skills exercised during the speaking activity but also cultivates a long-term introspective habit in language learning.

5.6. Silence as Autonomy and Agency

Offering students the autonomy to choose silence enables them to use it as a tool for concentration, reflection, and/or emotional regulation. This practice aligns with SEL principles by promoting self-awareness, agency, and responsible decision-making, as students learn to recognize their needs and make choices that support their well-being and learning. By integrating opportunities where students can choose silence in language learning, educators cultivate a classroom environment that honors each learner's individual pathway to comprehension and emotional balance. Such an approach not only enhances agency, but also empowers students to take charge of

their learning and emotional responses, recognizing the value of silence as a strategic resource for personal and academic development. Three practical examples of silence as autonomy and agency include:

- **Choice and focus sessions:** Respect students' learning preferences by offering them the option to engage in silent reading, writing, or speaking activities. During these sessions, 'focus periods' can also be introduced, where the entire class agrees to work silently on individual tasks, allowing everyone to concentrate on their work. This activity honors students' preferences and underscores the value of silence for personal and academic growth, catering to different learning styles and the collective need for focus.
- **Silent feedback exchange:** After presentations or speaking activities, use sticky notes for students to write constructive feedback or questions, facilitating anonymous exchanges. This technique respects students' preferences for expression and cultivates an environment where silent reflection and written communication are valued equally with spoken interaction, promoting a balanced approach to language learning and emotional intelligence.
- **Emotional regulation through silence:** Teach students about the use of silence as a strategy for emotional regulation. Introduce activities that encourage students to use silent moments to calm down, gather their thoughts, or prepare emotionally for participation. Activities like this one aid in managing classroom dynamics and equip students with valuable life skills for emotional self-care.

6. Final Thoughts

The discourse on silence within the realm of foreign language education and its sister fields (i.e., applied linguistics, second language acquisition, etc.) has historically oscillated between extremes: either casting silence as a discipline to be enforced, or dismissing it entirely in favor of constant verbal engagement. This binary perspective overlooks the nuanced and multifaceted role that silence can play in an educational setting. Drawing from insights in the available literature, it becomes evident that re-evaluating our approach to silence is not only beneficial, but necessary (Su et al., 2023). By stepping away from traditional dichotomies and embracing silence as a beneficial communicative and educational tool, we encourage a more holistic and balanced pedagogy. Silence, when integrated thoughtfully, can enhance the communicative competence of learners, fostering a deeper connection to the language and to each other. As educators, our ultimate goal is to facilitate ef-

fective communication, a goal that becomes unattainable if we continue to sideline silence. Embracing silence prompts us to reconsider our pedagogical philosophies and leads to the pivotal question: Are we effectively teaching communication if we overlook silence as a crucial form of expression?

As we continue to consider new approaches and paradigms in the field, adopting an asset-based perspective on silence can revolutionize how we perceive and implement it in language education. In this paper, I advocate for a shift in vocabulary and mindset, from perceiving silence as a passive absence to recognizing it as an active and strategic component of learning. Phrases such as attentive silence, reflective silence, mindful silence, and silent feedback underscore the potential of silence to serve as a medium for engagement, introspection, and collaboration. By valuing silence as a performative communicative act, alongside verbal expression, we not only enrich our pedagogical practices, but also validate the diverse communicative styles of our students, preparing them for the complexities of real-world interaction where silence speaks volumes.

Finally, the integration and acknowledgment of silence as a SEL competency within foreign language education opens new avenues for research and practice. Questions such as *How do we assess the impact of silence on learning?* and *What are the best practices for incorporating silence into SEL-driven curricula?* beckon further exploration. By investigating silence as a SEL tool, we can uncover its potential to enhance emotional literacy, linguistic development, and overall student well-being. Future research should aim to develop frameworks for the systematic incorporation and assessment of silence within language education, including language teacher preparation programs, ensuring that it is recognized, not as a gap in communication, but as a bridge to deeper understanding, connection, and learning. As I conclude this piece, it becomes clear to me that silence, far from being a void, is a vibrant space brimming with potential for teaching, learning, and connecting. I invite the readership to continue this conversation in a different space, where, through the lens of SEL, we continue to reimagine silence as an essential form of human expression.

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Blind spots in language textbooks. The issue of colonialism

The article presents the results of the analysis of over 80 English language textbooks published between 2000 and 2024. The aim of the study was to answer the question whether English textbooks contain elements of the discursive reproduction of colonialism as a practice of creating superior and subordinate identities, and what potential role textual absences and silence may play in this process. The study used the content analysis method with coding in the programme Atlas.ti and Critical Discourse Analysis to allow for qualitative examination of texts. As a result of the analysis, four main categories were distinguished which at the same time were dominant trends in textual references to colonialism(*Colonization without the colonized, The colonized in a folklore trap, Invisibility of colonization, A different approach*).The conclusions of the study show the textual absence of topics related to colonialism and the use of various types of silencing strategies to obfuscate the issue, whether in the form of backgrounding or exclusion of the colonized people, or by naturalizing the process of colonization itself. While critical research on textbooks, also in the context of blind spots, has had a long history, it has rarely focused on language textbooks, so the study aims to fill the gap in this area and contribute to further research.

Keywords: English textbooks, silence, colonialism, content analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis

Słowa kluczowe: podręczniki do nauki języka angielskiego, kolonializm, analiza treści, Krytyczna Analiza Dyskursu

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1. Introduction

Silence tends to be treated as a domain of social interaction, a sphere of nonverbal communication contrasting or complementing verbal expression. In social communication, also in the school context, silence, or more precisely silencing, may have an exclusionary character when not all entities feel treated equally in terms of the possibility of full existence and expression of their identity. In the scientific literature examples of research can be found on the relationship between silencing (for example, by not allowing a voice, interrupting, omitting mention of the experiences of marginalized groups, presenting the reality only through the perspective of the dominant group, or the invisibility of particular groups in a language), power and privilege based class, race or sexuality (Francis, 2011; Hanna, 2021; Jaworski, Sachdev, 1998; Mazzei, 2008, 2011).

However, silence in the form of silencing, or the absence of certain voices, can also be analyzed with reference to the content of written texts, including these present in school textbooks. As Czech-Włodarczyk notes, silence is not neutral, because "what is not said is more important than what is said. (…) what has been said is only a camouflage covering the real ideological premises on which the discourse is created (…)" (2012: 176).

Textual silence is often associated with blind spots in historical narratives, but this article argues that language textbooks are not free from them either. For textual silence in relation to this kind of textbook, the term PARSNIP (from the words: politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms, pork) was coined, referring to topics that are avoided, as potentially controversial, on their pages. Different authors have broadened this catalogue of taboo topics with references to ethical problems (abortion, euthanasia, divorce), various forms of discrimination and violence, non-heteronormativity, conflicts or death (Akbari, 2008; Banegas, 2010; Gray, 2002; Majer, 2018; Thornbury, 2010).

In the case of the presented study, the explored area of silence concerns a topic that is directly related to the process of spreading English around the world, namely colonization. One of the important inspirations for this were Pennycook's words:

> There are many ways in which the current spread of English, teaching methods, and textbooks can be seen as a recapitulation, if not an intensification, of (neo-)colonial relations. (…) ELT and colonialism has had long-lasting effects on the theories, practices, and beliefs of ELT. From classroom practices to beliefs about the cultural makeup of our students, many aspects of ELT reproduce cultural constructs of colonialism (2007: 13).

Equally important, when constructing the main research question, was the notion of colonialism as a process which "perpetuates a set of discourses and practices that produce a submissive or dependent culture (the ignored culture) while increasing their own set of cultural values (the valid culture)" (Soto-Molina, Méndez, 2020: 14). Following on from research on history and geography textbooks which demonstrated discursive erasure of some topics and groups of people, e.g. Native Americans (Gellman, 2023; Müller, 2018), and studies focused on the role of silence in discourse (Pogorzelska, 2023; Schroeter, Taylor, 2018), the aim of this research was to answer the question whether English textbooks contribute to reproduction of cultural constructs of colonialism, viewed as a practice of creating superior and subordinate identities, and to consider the potential role textual silence may play in this process. Whereas critical research on textbooks, also in the context of blind spots, has had a long history(Pogorzelska, 2023), it has relatively rarely focused on language textbooks. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap in this area and, hopefully, contribute to further research.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework

The research presented here is embedded in critical applied linguistics. Introducing a critical orientation into applied linguistics is defined as "reflection on the inextricable connection of language and power" (Curdt-Christiansen, Weninger, 2018: 2), where power means, among other things, having the capacity to exclude and silence (ibidem). The scope of critical applied linguistics includes issues of privilege, inequality, oppression and resistance in the teaching process, also in the context of the expansion of the English language and colonialism (Phillipson, 1992). In his meta-analysis, concentrated on textbooks and their colonialism-related contents, Müller distinguished three theoretical research perspectives applicable in such studies: "the Self and Other, memory, and knowledge" (2018: 285). The presented analysis fits within the second of these perspectives, memory, in the sense of "exploring colonialism in cultural memory" (ibidem) and answering the question "how the colonial past is represented and (…) what is considered worthy of remembrance and therefore assigned significance in the present" (ibidem).This perspective corresponds to the description of colonialism from Soto-Molina and Méndez, (2020), mentioned earlier, and sets the methodological framework for the present study, which is focused on examining absences and silence. This approach results from the assumption that the topic of colonialism is subject to erasure in textbook narratives.

Textual silencing is related to tracking the absence of certain topics, and it is worth noting that "as linguists and discourse analysts, we only need to be concerned with meaningful absences and that for absences to be meaningful, they require an arguable alternative of presence" (Schroeter, Taylor, 2018: 6). Stibbe explains this issue in a similar way: "The concept of discursive erasure is frequently used in social science to denote the absence of something important – something that is present in reality but is overlooked or deliberately ignored in a particular discourse" (Stibbe, 2014: 3). Schroeter and Taylor explain further:

> Absences can be as multi-layered as discourses themselves, in terms of the levels of language use at which they can manifest and include phenomena dealt with by different approaches to linguistic description. They can manifest, for example, as vague terms, ellipsis, implication and presupposition. They can arise from the interplay of highlighting and hiding or foregrounding and backgrounding in the framing of topics, use of the passive voice or in metaphorical conceptualisation (Schroeter, Taylor, 2018: 11).

This quote serves to introduce the methodology adopted in the presented study, which is derived from Critical Discourse Analysis. For the study the categories of foregrounding and backgrounding, as explained by von Münchow (2018) and van Leeuwen (2008), were found particularly relevant. Backgrounding is one of the less radical forms of absence implemented by, for example, mentioning key characters not directly, but at some point in the text, as Van Leeuwen puts it "They are not so much excluded as deemphasized, pushed into the background" (2008: 29). More radical forms of absence, such as suppression or exclusion, manifested through the use of passive voice or nominalizations, were also explored (ibidem: 29–30). Additionally, the analysis involved searching for presuppositions, understood as statements of certainty that require no justification and which present phenomena as natural, causeless, and permanent, thus positioning them as unquestionable aspects of reality (Fairclough 2001; Pogorzelska, 2023). Finally, attention was paid to vocabulary and the use of euphemisms which can contribute to the softening of a possibly disturbing message.

The research sample consisted of texts from 83 English language textbooks at levels A2-C1, most of which represented the B1/B2 level, published between 2000–2024.The study analyzed texts that formed a coherent and logical whole, each consisting of over 50 words. In the initial phase of the research, selection of texts was guided by a list of codes, which were subsequently saved in the Atlas.ti data coding program for use throughout the analysis process. The list included key words (e.g. colonialism, colonists,

indigenous people, migration, Native Americans, Pilgrims, slavery, Thanksgiving), but during the iterative reading of the texts, those that did not explicitly contain the key words yet clearly referred to colonization were also included. In the first coding cycle, using the initial list of codes, texts were assigned to the relevant codes and the data were initially categorized. During this cycle, 73 texts were isolated, and this sample was further coded using an additional set of codes derived from Critical Discourse Analysis(e.g. backgrounding, foregrounding, presuppositions, the use of passive voice, nominalizations, euphemisms). Finally, all the excerpts were subjected to axial coding, which meant combining fragmented data, reorganizing them, grouping similar codes, reducing their number, selecting dominant codes and creating analytical categories (Saldaña, 2013).

3. Research results

The analysis of the collected data led to the identification of four distinct categories, which were at the same time dominant trends in the textual references to colonialism, i.e. Colonization without the colonized, The colonized in a folklore trap, Invisibility of colonization, and Another approach. The following section presents these categories, accompanied by representative examples.

3.1. Colonization without the colonized

One of the most common strategies used in the examined texts is backgrounding of the colonized groups, which is particularly visible in texts devoted to the history of North America. The example below comes from an article entitled *Who really discovered America?*:

> **Technically, the Native Americans were the first people to discover America**[1] when they travelled across from Asia about 12,000 years ago. **But who was the first European to discover the Americas?** The most common answer is Christopher Columbus […] (Mitchell, Malkogianni, 2022: 150).

Apart from the mention that Native Americans were "technically", and therefore nominally rather than actually, the first on the continent, the rest of the text, devoted entirely to European explorers, leaves no doubt that

[1] Bolded fragments of quoted texts indicate parts considered particularly important in the context of the interpretation of the collected material.

the *real* discovery belongs to Europeans. In some cases, short references to Native Americans appear sporadically in texts about US history, for example being placed among information about the construction of a railroad crossing the continent, or about the introduction of prohibition (Harris et al., 2002: 76). A special case of being pushed to the background can be found in texts about Thanksgiving:

> It dates back all the way to the arrival of the Pilgrims, the first people from Europe to permanently settle in what they called the New World. A small group of these people **had arrived** in Plymouth, Massachussetts, but had had a very difficult winter. So hard was it in fact, that without the help of the local Native American tribe, the Wampanoags, it is likely that they would not have survived. **With their help too**, the Pilgrims **planted** their crops in spring. By autumn **they had grown** a great quantity of food, enough to ensure their survival through the following winter. They **wasted no timein inviting** their Native American friends to join them in a huge feast giving thanks for this wonderful harvest (Dobb et al., 2022: 120).

In the quoted text, the Pilgrims are the ones who have the agency, which is well illustrated by the active verbs used in reference to them (*arrived, planted, had grown, wasted no time in inviting*), while Native Americans appear in association with the nominalized forms (*with their help*) as providers of help or passive objects of thanks.

However, in most texts that refer in any way to the history of North America, the presence of Native Americans is completely erased. The following excerpts, the first of which concerns the celebration of Independence Day, and others which refer to historical events, illustrate this erasure:

> You would be pushed to find another country where people come from such diverse origins (**Irish, Africans, Poles, Mexicans**), yet share such a strong sense of national and cultural identity (Dummet, 2011a: 110).

> The first people who “discovered” America came from Asia 25,000 years ago. Then the Norse explored the country in the ninth century. When Columbus came to America in 1492 there were over **500 nations** with agricultural systems and different languages, religion, and culture. After the “discovery” people from the old continent started to come (Andryszczyk, Jaźwiec, 2002: 28).

> In 1620 the **Pilgrim Fathers sailed** in the *Mayflower* from Plymouth in England to New England in America. […] After over a month of searching for a suitable place to establish a colony, the Puritan **Pilgrim fathers eventually landed** in Plymouth […]. **This was the first American colony** […] [although] Puri-

> tan political influence had greatly disappeared after the 17th century, many of the ethics of the day have remained. **Attitudes such as self-reliance, frugality, industry, energy, and a focus on education** are still current priorities of American life (Andryszczyk et al., 2004: 94).

> The revolutionary war gave birth to the United States, which still stands as a great example of **a nation created by a colonial people**, free and governed by its own people (ibidem:136).

In the first of the cited texts, the indigenous people do not appear among the "diverse origins" of those who create the modern USA, just as in the other three pieces. The mention of "500 nations" in the second text does not have to be synonymous, for an average student, with the presence of Native Americans. These texts, like many others in the research sample, ignore the existence of indigenous people altogether, together with their contribution to the system of the ethical values of contemporary society.

3.2. The colonized in a folklore trap

The images of Native Americans, although backgrounded in most cases, do appear on the pages of textbooks. Yet, these indigenous people of North America are described in terms of historical or ethnographic curiosity, and virtually all the descriptions somehow refer to the past. Typical examples are the following texts about places of residence, the Grand Canyon and the Rocky Mountains:

> **Native Americans have lived here for thousands of years in settlements and caves**. For them, the Grand Canyon is a sacred place and in their language it is called 'Ongtupqa' which means holy site (Evans, Dooley, 2019: 135).

> **Many Indian tribes used to live there** when Europeans first arrived in North America (Evans, Dooley, 2002a: 49).

The folklore trap also applies to evoking Native Americans in the context of traditional way of life or beliefs:

> For centuries, different cultures have recorded visitors from other planets. Native Americans, like the **Hopi or the Cherokee, called these visitors 'the star people'** (Harris et al., 2001: 118).

> When Europeans first arrived in North America, they found **Native Americans using sassafras roots** in various drinks (Dobb et al., 2022: 109).

Sometimes Native Americans are invoked as depositories of knowledge and wisdom, as in a poem about environmental disaster (the text is illustrated with the image of a Native American in traditional colourful costume with a feather, warning against the dangerous carelessness of "the white man" (Evans, Dooley, 2002b: 104).

The past is actually the only context in which Native Americans are visible in the textbooks. Although they still exist and are the members of contemporary society, in the textbooks they have been petrified in past times and traditions. Such depiction is a particular kind of erasure; the indigenous people, trapped in a folkloristic set of images, resemble rather creatures in an ethnographic museum than human beings living, active and present in the here and now.

3.3. Invisibility of colonization

Colonization, wherever it takes place, is a process of imposing control, carried out using more or less coercive methods and this was no different in North America. Meanwhile in the studied textbooks colonization itself is shown as an innocent, natural and neutral phenomenon. Such an effect is achieved in two ways. Firstly, by using presuppositions, the application of which makes it possible to present even the most negative events as having occurred naturally, as *just the way it is/was*. This can be seen in the fragments below, where colonization appears as a neutral historical event that simply took place and that requires no justification:

> […] at the start of the 20th century, when **Britain had an empire that stretched** from Canada to India, British society was very different (Spencer, 2025: 101).
> During the second part of the 16thcentury, **the English were colonizing lands in America**. From this time comes the story of the Roanoke Colony, established by John White (McBeth et al., 2022: 46).
> People speak English in many parts of the Caribbean **because it was colonised by the British, who grew sugar there (**Naunton, Polit, 2011: 153).

The effect of invisibility and the naturalness of colonization can be also achieved in another way, namely by using specific vocabulary:

> In the 16th and 17th centuries, **British sailors started to travel outside Europe. They were looking for profitable trade in exotic products.** They began colonising many different countries for many different reasons. Many

> British people **went to these colonies to settle and start a new life** (Cornford, 2014: 114).
>
> […] we do know when and where sports were first organized […] in the nineteenth century the **British sent their soldiers, engineers and businessmen across their Empire** and the rest of the world learnt to play by British rules (McKinley et al., 2016: 131).
> In the late 16th and early 17th centuries […]London was undergoing dramatic changes. **It was growing rapidly […]** undergoing an economic revolution as **a centre of commerce with ships from London going all over the world** (Harris et al., 2002, 103).

Similar examples of naturalizing or obscuring the actual process of colonization through the use of euphemisms are found in other texts. In this way, colonizing becomes just a journey, not related to any conquest, as in the phrases: “pioneers moved west” (Casey, Szuwart, 2019: 102), “Europeans first arrived…” (Dobb et al., 2022: 109), “For three centuries immigrants have flocked to New York City” (Dummetet al., 2011a: 27).

The topic of slavery and its consequences, such as discrimination and racial segregation, as related to colonization, was also analysed in the study. Unfortunately, in the whole research sample the issue appeared only in 14 texts. In most cases, this appearance was barely a mention, and even then suppression, either through the use of the passive voice, or nominalization which was clearly visible in the texts:

> Today, the southern state of Alabama is known for its modern aerospace industry as well as its cotton. Yet two hundred years ago **African Americans were used as slaves** on its cotton farms. Even though **they had been given** their freedom in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln, fifty years later black people **were still treated** as second-class citizens (Naunton, Polit, 2011: 160).
> Martin Luther King […] a civil rights activist who fought against **racial discrimination** in the USA in the 1950s and 60s. (Dummet et al., 2011b: 65).

3.4. A different approach

Across the entire research sample, three texts were identified that challenge the universal invisibility of colonialism and work to restore the memory of erased groups or historical processes. The first example concerns historical monuments and protests related to them:

> The summer 2020 brought protests over racial injustice in the USA and in other countries. The supporters of Black Lives Matter movement started vandal-

> izing the statues of those historical figures who represent racism. In Boston, Massachussetts, **the protesters damaged the monument of Christopher Columbus whose discovery of America brought the death and suffering of many Native Americans**. In Richmond, Virginia they graffiti-painted the statue of Robert E. Lee, the confederate general during the American Civil war who fought to keep slavery (Bowell, Sałandyk, 2022: 127).

Although after the fragment about protests there are references to the history of these events, which significantly neutralize the message and place contemporary protests in ordinary, even routine practices carried out regularly in the history of humanity, this does not deprive the text of its uniqueness compared to others in the research sample.

The next text, titled *Iroquois Constitution*, describes the sophisticated Native American legislation that allowed for a stable confederation of various indigenous groups. As it is emphasized:

> **The Iroquois constitution** […] **would then become the model** that developers of the U. S. Constitution would use when designing a nation that was, in theory, a set of independent nations: The United States (Andryszczyk et al., 2004: 149–150).

The text contains a detailed description of the solutions that the creators of the American constitution borrowed from The Iroquois constitution. This way of including the cultural heritage of indigenous people in textbooks is an absolute exception, especially since it is presented in the form of a long text, not a short mention. The same applies to another text about Cahokia Mounds in Illinois: "America's first city and arguably the American Indians' finest achievement", "[the] apogee, and perhaps the origin, of what anthropologists call Mississippian culture" (Dummet et al., 2011b: 21). Not only does the author express regret for the neglect and forgetting of this heritage, but they also explain it in the following way:

> **The idea that American Indians could have built something resembling a city was so foreign to European settlers**, that when they encountered the mounds of Cahokia, they commonly thought they must have been the work of a foreign civilization […] (ibidem).

The story of Henry Brackenridge is then introduced, detailing his 19th-century attempts to engage the press and high-ranking politicians, including Thomas Jefferson, with his extraordinary discovery. However, his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful:

> Unfortunately, **it was not word most Americans, including Presidents, were very interested in hearing**. The United States was trying to get Indians out of the way, not appreciate their history. Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830, which ordered the relocation of eastern Indians to land west of the Mississippi, was based on the idea that Indians were nomadic peoples who couldn't make good use of land anyway. **Evidence of an ancient Indian city** [...] **would have mucked up the story line** (ibidem).

The pieces cited are, as mentioned, exceptions, but it is worth noting their presence because they are an example of a decolonizing attitude, filling in blank spots and restoring historical events and processes to their rightful place.

4. Conclusions

Answering the research question related to the depiction of colonialism on the pages of English textbooks, the first conclusion that can be drawn from the study is of the textual absence of this topic in the research sample. The connection between colonialism and the spread of the English language is obvious, so one would expect more significant presence of the issue in language textbooks. However, only a subtle trace of the presence of colonialism is found, with 73 texts selected from more than 80 textbooks. Moreover, when the examined topic appears, various silencing strategies are applied to obfuscate it, whether in the form of backgrounding, or by use of the foregrounding of colonizers to the exclusion of the colonized people, or by making the process of colonization itself seem natural. In the textbook narrations superiority and significance is definitely given to the colonizers. This is accompanied by equipping the colonized with rather passive and subordinate identities, subject to *inevitable* colonization.

The conclusions from this study correspond to those presented by other researchers analyzing textbooks (Gellman, 2023; Müller, 2018; Popow, 2015). As one of the authors noted, with regard to history textbooks used in the USA:

> Socially dominant groups have a monopoly on crafting the historical record. History's victors ingrain specific narratives in social consciousness. […] this means that the recounting of history is mostly through a lens of White settler glorification that supports the colonization of land and people, and the drawing of borders to keep others out. Such practices are standard in contexts of nation-building and nationalism, but the long-term effects are corrosive on pluriethnic, multicultural democratic coexistence (Gellman, 2023: 91–92).

The process of "crafting the historical record", "whitening" or "reinventing" the history of colonization (Gellman, 2023; Soto-Molina, Méndez, 2020) are also visible in English textbooks. Features of their narration include presenting history from the point of view of the colonizers, with a dominant tale of a land whose history began after the arrival of Europeans, avoiding any references to violence, and reinforcing the stereotypical image of Native Americans immobilized in traditional images of the past. What is missing from this story are the indigenous inhabitants of the continent, the colonized victims of European violence.

As Soto-Molina and Méndez note, "An alternative way to respond to this, from a decolonial viewpoint, is to design an emancipatory and decolonizing curriculum" (2020: 14). The examples of some of the texts cited, although unique, show that a postcolonial approach, which not only reminds us of the achievements of marginalized groups, but also deconstructs the process of the appropriation of the narrative by dominant groups, is possible. Adopting this approach would support language education by fostering the development of communication skills which are rooted in profound intercultural sensitivity.

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Exploring Silence as an Element of Fluency in L2 English Academic Presentations

Viewed from the perspective of a monologue, silence may be interpreted as a means of organizing speech for the purpose of leading the listeners and attracting their attention or, alternatively, as a sign of dysfluency and consequently, an obstacle to easy comprehension. The effect depends on the placement of silent pauses and their function, a criterion that becomes particularly relevant in the case of non-native speech. This paper explores the development in the use of silent pauses by EFL students enrolled in a coursein academic presentation. The three participants selected for the study represent different general EFL proficiency levels. They participated in an academic presentation course during which their presentations at the beginning of the course (an impromptu speech) and after four weeks of specific language-focus training (a prepared short presentation) were recorded. The analysis of the silent intervals in the collected samples reveals differences in the use of silent pauses as an element of dysfluency vs. increased fluency in presenting. The results are discussed from the perspective of fluency measures on the one hand, and successful presentation skills on the other.

Keywords: silent pauses in EFL, academic presentations, EFL fluency

Słowa kluczowe: ciche pauzy w angielskim jako obcym, prezentacje akademickie, płynność w angielskim jako obcym

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1. Introduction

The value of silence in public speaking has long been recognized. A quote directly connected to silence and pauses used in numerous publications on the art of public speaking is that of Mark Twain: “no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause” (e.g. in Halbert and Whitaker, 2016: 15). Having observed many academic presentations in presentation classes, however, one may come to the conclusion that L2 users seem to have taken to heart a 2001 advertisement slogan recalled by Ferguson (2002: 2): “silence is weird”. It seems that, due to the myriad of challenges which public speaking poses, students tend to either speak very quickly, with limited pauses, or to use filled pauses.

Listening to silence, which is a natural element of speech, noting how it is used, and what effect it allows a speaker to achieve, is advised when developing public speaking skills by handbooks such as that by Horn (2024). In her “Principles of Public Speaking” she notes that pauses which are “the intervals of silence between or within words, phrases, or sentences” (Horn, 2024: 162) can be used to create suspense, add emphasis, and express feelings in a way words cannot. Horn also warns against filled, or vocalized pauses, those filled with sounds such as “um” and “er,” and other fillers which do not fulfil any function and only draw attention to the speakers’ lack of confidence or hesitation.

Delivering a longer speech, be it in a social, professional or an academic setting, tends to result a certain level of anxiety in many of us. Not only do we typically want to deliver our message, make a certain impression, evoke specific feelings or reflections, but at the same time we may have a certain level of fear connected to our performance and to what our listeners might think about us, their judgements and negative evaluations. Public speaking is challenging for most of us for one reason or another. It may be so when we use our first language (L1) to present, and for most even more so when we use another language (L2).

Delivering a successful academic presentation involves ability to communicate effectively in the language in which one is to present. More than this, it involves the ability to use the voice appropriately, to transmit messages in an engaging manner which will ensure the audience’s attention and involvement, and indeed to establish and maintain rapport with the audience. It also involves the ability to speak in an organized manner, to design visual aids, to have control over one’s body language. The list of elements one needs to master in order to deliver a successful presentation is long, and becomes even longer for L2 users, who face one more challenge: their knowledge and ability to communicate in a non-native language.

Silent pauses in academic presentations can be viewed from two perspectives: on the one hand, they are an indispensable tool for organizing speech and directing listeners' attention, on the other, however, they can signal issues with fluency. While the use of pauses seems crucial in public speaking as such, it is particularly challenging in the case of L2 speakers, who have been shown to use longer and more frequent pauses than L1 speakers (Riazantseva, 2001; Kahng, 2014, 2018; Segalowitz, 2010). The resulting effect of lower perceived fluency has been found to be related most strongly to the placement of pauses – the number and length of silent pauses within clauses (de Jong, 2016; Kahng, 2018). However, as one of the aspects needed for a good presentation is the use of silence as a rhetorical device, speakers practicing academic presentations in L2 may find managing pauses particularly challenging.

This study explores the way Polish advanced students of English meet this challenge during the course of academic presentations. The study is motivated by the need to increase our knowledge and understanding of pausing patterns in learners for the purpose of assisting both teachers and students in the difficult task of improving fluency in academic presentations. As noticed by Chang and Windeatt (2024: 2), there is a lack of "research which goes beyond a statistical analysis of second language (L2) learner pauses in academic presentations". Their study, aiming to fill this gap by investigating pause placement and reasons for pausing, hopes to provide insights for teachers. The belief that the development of understanding of pausing patterns in academic presentations will help students and academic instructors is shared by the focus of the present study, which examines the effect of instruction (language-use focus) and awareness raising on the use of pauses in monologues.

2. Silence and fluency

Fluency, defined as "simply the ability to talk at length with few pauses" (Fillmore, 1979: 51), seems to be in direct opposition to silence, which –as the definition has it – requires to be kept to the minimum for the speech to be perceived as fluent. Still, pauses are a natural element of oral performance, as we need to breathe, although, as noticed by (Cruttenden, 1986: 37), "we pause for other reasons and take the opportunity to take the breath". Thus, from a fluency perspective, it is not only whether silent pauses do or do not occur in speech, but how long they are, how frequently and where they occur that matters. One way to distinguish between pause types is to recognize the difference between performance and prosodic pauses, with the

former reflecting planning and production, and the latter organizing speech into major prosodic constituents (Ferreira, 2007). In L1, pauses tend to occur at major constituent boundaries and it has been found that one of the major differences between the use of pauses in L1 and L2 is in the more frequent uses of performance pauses by non-native speakers of English (Tavakoli, 2011; Kahng, 2014).

One of the major reasons for the study of speech fluency in L2 is its importance for spoken proficiency, as shown by Iwashita, Brown, McNamara and O'Hagan (2008) in their large-scale study examining the relationship between speaking and different internal features, including grammatical accuracy and complexity, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency. In order to find predictors for the perception of fluency, studies investigate the effect of individual aspects of utterance fluency, such as speed, breakdown and repair (Tavakoli and Skehan, 2005; de Jong, 2018; Tavakoli and Wright, 2020). Speed is typically expressed by speech rate (number of syllables divided by total time), articulation rate (number of syllables divided by phonation time (total time minus pause time), breakdown by pause characteristics, including such features as pause length, mean pause duration, pause ratio and finally, repair fluency, which refers to the number and/or proportion of false starts, repetitions and reformulations. The results point to speed and breakdown fluency as strong predictors of L2 fluency, more so than repair fluency. Speed fluency, measured by speech rate, was found to correlate with overall assessment more strongly than breakdown fluency, with minimal effect of repair reported by Saito, Ikan, Magne and Suzuki (2018).

As defined above, breakdown fluency in L2 is most often measured by the duration and frequency of pauses; however, as mentioned above, it is the placement of pauses that has been shown to determine the perception of fluency in L1 vs. L2 speech as well as in spoken L2 fluency. In an interesting study of the effect of pause location on perceived fluency, Kahng (2018) found that the rate of silent pauses within a clause had the strongest correlation with perceived fluency ratings and when controlled for the number and length of pauses, fluency ratings were higher for the no pause condition than for the pause condition, and then higher for pauses between clauses, than pauses within clauses for L1 and L2 speakers. In a similar vein, de Jong (2016) found the level of L2 proficiency to be correlated with silent pauses within clauses, but not between clauses, with the pauses becoming fewer and shorter with increased level of proficiency.

Another aspect of L2 fluency research relevant for the present study refers to the educational context. Tavakoli, Cambell and McCormack (2016) found a positive effect for short, 4-week awareness-raising activities and fluency strategy training on speed fluency measures; by contrast, it was

found that "the results imply that the development of breakdown fluency (i.e. silence and pausing) is slower and less sensitive to pedagogic intervention" (Tavakoli, Cambell and McCormack, 2016: 464). The observation that many students in the experimental group increased the number of pauses after the intervention, both within and across clauses, leads the researchers to the conclusion that pausing may be related to personal style and fluency in L1 and may act as a covert monitoring process, as distinct from repair fluency as an overt-monitoring one.

Another approach to the development of fluency is based on task repetition. The early study by Bygate (1996), who observed fluency, accuracy and complexity benefits of retelling a story immediately after watching a cartoon video and then repeating it 10 weeks later, was followed by other studies (e.g. Bygate, 2001; Lynch and Maclean, 2000) in which learners were asked to repeat the same speaking task, with the results showing gains in fluency in the repeated task. Another technique reported to have brought positive results with respect to fluency development is based on repetition with a diminishing time condition, called the 4/3/2/ technique (Nation, 1989; de Jong and Perfetti, 2011; Thai and Boers, 2016).

Investigating L2 fluency in academic presentations, Chang and Windeatt (2024) concentrate on breakdown fluency, exploring the location, type and frequency of pauses as well as the reasons for pausing among L2 students from different L1 backgrounds enrolled in an English for Academic Purposes programme at an Australian university. The data come from short academic presentations prepared by the students at the end of the course, after training, practice and preparation. Silent pauses were categorized as either planned (between clauses and pauses associated with lexical units and formulaic expressions, e.g. 'first of all', 'generally speaking' etc.), or unplanned (within clause). When asked to reflect on their pauses, students recalled linguistic problems, anxiety and confidence problems (psychological reasons) and content-related ones (cognitive). The authors conclude that in the case of academic presentations, the analysis of silent pausing needs to take into accountthe complex conditioning of this particular type of speech production.

3. The Study

The present study aims to explore the development in the use of silent pauses by L2 English learners in monologues (an impromptu speech and a short presentation on the same topic) by analysing characteristics of pausing in selected samples elicited from students enrolled in an academic presen-

tation course. Participants were all advanced speakers of English, however, the levels of their language proficiency differed. The academic presentation course included a 4-week training focusing on language use. Students were first recorded in a monologue task, an impromptu, and then a prepared short oral presentation on the same topic. The recorded samples were analysed for the location and function of pauses from the perspective of fluency and presentation features, with silent pauses classified for their between-clause and within-clause location, as well as their rhetorical function of emphasizing key elements in the presentation. The observation takes into account task type and the effect of instruction and training in relation to the proficiency level of the student.

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

RQ 1: What is the use of silent pauses (length, proportion, location and function) in L2 impromptu and short academic presentations in speakers with different level of L2 proficiency?

RQ 2: What is the difference between the use of silent pauses (length, proportion, location and function) before and after the 4 week instruction on the use of pauses?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the use of pauses for the development of L2 fluency and academic presentation features?

The use of silent pauses is investigated with reference to their length, proportion, location and function (non-rhetorical or rhetorical); the development of fluency is interpreted in terms of a lower proportion of pauses, especially within-clause pauses, and the development of academic presentation skills with reference to rhetorical pausing for emphasis.

3.1. Data collection procedure

The aim of the academic presentation course during which the data was collected was to prepare students to deliver effective speeches in an academic context. The focus of the class was on how to effectively prepare the content of a presentation (focus, organization of information), how to use body language, voice, and visual aids to ensure the most effective realization of one's presentation goals. The students were asked to deliver impromptu speeches numerous times throughout the course and on their basis the focus on pauses was chosen as an important element which needed to be worked on. The initial step in the 4-week training on the use of pauses was to overtly draw students' attention to pauses, so that they would recognize their types and functions. Initial activities included observations and evaluations of the effect of pauses in presentations delivered by the instructor and

selected presentations from TEDtalk. Students were then taught the basics of sound scripting, which involves planning how to use one's voice, specifically, where to pause and which words to stress. The materials used for this stage included activities from Powell's (2002) "Presenting in English". Students' awareness of the importance of pauses and their location was raised both in theory and practice. After a month the students prepared a short presentation on the same topic as their initial impromptu speech. They had time to sound script the presentation and practice it at home before, finally, delivering it in class. The impromptu speeches and the presentations were recorded by the instructor during the class with the permission of the students; and the recordings were made available to the students for further practice.

The course was open to BA and MA level students majoring in English at the University of Warsaw. Participants were all estimated as representing B2-C1 on the CEFR scale with respect to their general L2 English proficiency level. Out of 15 participants who enrolled in the course, the recordings of three females (aged 23–24) were selected for the analysis,on the basis of differences in the general level of proficiency. All students agreed to the use of their recordings for research purposes. The names of participants were coded as A, S and K, with the impromptu sample as 1 and presentation samples, analysed together, as 2. The proficiency of Speaker A was assessed as the highest, Speaker S as mid and Speaker K as the lowest within this small group. It needs to be remembered, however, that although there were noticeable differences between the students in their linguistic competence, they all represented advanced proficiency level in the L2.

3.2. Data analysis procedure

The recordings were first transcribed manually and then analysed for silent pauses with the use of Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2007). In contrast to an earlier study (Klimczak-Pawlak and Waniek-Klimczak, 2023), no automatic pause extraction was used and the data were analysed manually. This procedure allowed for a less conservative approach as to the length of pauses. Rather than setting a specific lowest silent pause boundary, the investigator decided to analyse each pause both acoustically and auditorily. The decision was motivated by the exploratory character of the study, as well as the lack of unanimity as to the best threshold for silent pauses. The automatic extraction of pauses requires strict conditions set on the pause duration and "the traditional cut-off point of 250ms is a good choice" (de Jong and Bosker, 2013). However, shorter pauses which are not a part of articulatory closure,

in the range of 130–250ms or even 60ms, have also been reported (de Jong and Bosker, 2013). Consequently, in this study each fragment of silence was treated as a pause, unless it resulted from an articulatory closure.

For each recording, silent pauses were extracted from Praat, measured manually and verified auditorily. The analysis of pause placement and function criteria is based on Cruttenden (1986) and further modified to include the rhetorical function of a pause. As suggested by Cruttenden (1986: 37) "Pauses seem typically to occur at three places in utterances: (i) at major constituent boundaries (principally between clauses and between subject and predicate (…), (ii) before words of high lexical context (…), (iii) after the first word in an intonation group". The first place largely corresponds to a pause between clauses, however, the reference to a major constituent in prosodic terms (typically an intonation group) seems more accurate than a syntactic reference with reference to speech. Cruttenden (1986) refers to pauses of type (ii) and (iii) as reflecting hesitation, with pause type (ii) interpreted as difficulty with word-finding and type (iii) as having a planning function. Most generally, hesitation (within-clause) boundaries are expected to be shorter than pauses at boundaries. These criteria were selected for the analysis in this study as they offer the possibility of recognizing different within-clause pause places and consequently, allow the performing a more detailed analysis when compared to the between-clause and within-clause distinction used in other studies. What was needed, however, was a criterion reflecting the rhetorical function of pauses. The problem was solved by adding the rhetorical function criterion to within-clause boundaries of type (ii) and (iii). Supplemented by deliberate pauses of type (ii) and (iii) the analysis used the following categorization of pauses, with pauses of types (2b) and (3b) recognized on the basis of the contents of the speech and the length of the pause(they were expected to be longer than hesitation pauses).

- **(1)** Major constituent boundary
  - **(1a)** Neutral
  - **(1b)** Rhetorical effect
- **(2)** Before words of high lexical content:
  - **(2a)** Word finding difficulty (hesitation)
  - **(2b)** Deliberate pause for rhetorical effect
- **(3)** After the first words in an intonation group – planning pause

3.3. Results and analysis

Six speech samples were analysed, two for each participant, the impromptu speech and 2 fragments of the short, prepared, presentation: opening and

mid-presentation fragments. The length of the samples, the duration of silent pauses, mean duration of a pause and the proportion of pause time to the phonation time plus pause time have been tabulated for the three speakers in Table 1 (Speaker 1: A, Speaker 2: S, Speaker 3: K).

Table 1. Data for impromptu and prepared speech samples for each speaker: length of the sample, pause duration, number of pauses, mean pause duration, standard duration of mean pause duration, the proportion of pauses to the length of the sample

	A 1 Impromptu	A 2 Presentation	S 1 Impromptu	S 2 Presentation	K1 Impromptu	K 2 Presentation
Length	52.7s	36.87s	44.78s	38.35s	69.12s	39.94s
Pause duration	11.12s (N=19)	6.107s N=16	10.951s N=14	3.159s N=8	7.708s N=16	3.856s N=12
Mean pause duration	0.585s *SD* 0.23	0.381s *SD* 0.22	0.782s *SD* 0.48	0.394s *SD* 0.26	0.481s *SD* 0.42	0.321 *SD* 0.13
Pause proportion	21%	16.5%	24%	8%	11%	9.6%

The measurements show a general tendency for less pausing in the second task for each speaker, suggesting a major change between tasks in the amount of pausing. As elements of a measure of fluency, both the decrease in pause proportion and the mean length of the pauses indicate a positive effect for instruction and practice. However, on closer inspection, the results also bring unexpected results from the point of view of the relationship between the general proficiency level and the proportion of silent pauses. The impromptu data suggest the lowest proportion of pauses in the least proficient Speaker K, and a similar proportion in the other two speakers, the most proficient Speaker A and the mid-proficient Speaker S. The change in proportion of pauses after the instruction and practice was found to be the greatest in the case of mid-proficient speaker S, and the smallest in the least-proficient speaker K. Speaker A, the most proficient, uses a relatively large proportion of pauses (21% in impromptu and 16.% in prepared speech). She is also consistent in her pausing, with the mean pause duration lowering for the second task, but also becoming more varied, as shown by standard deviation measures (*SD* remains almost the same, in spite of a lower mean value).

While these results suggest a positive effect of instruction and practice on pauses from the perspective of L2 fluency, the further criterion of the location of pauses can provide more insights into pausing patterns. The generalized results for pause placement with the use of the pausing criteria

are tabulated in Table 2. The criteria were applied on the basis of auditory analysis of the contents of the speeches and individual pauses were allocated to individual categories. The summarized results show major differences between speakers, as well as between the tasks. The most proficient Speaker A uses the highest number of pauses, however, the majority of them are used either between major constituents, or for rhetorical emphasis, both between major constituents and within, with an increase in rhetorical before-word pauses in the second task. Speaker A does not use within-constituent planning pauses in either task. This type of pause is also successfully avoided by Speaker S in her second task – here the effects of instruction and practice seem evident, both with respect to the lack of planning pauses and the use of rhetorical pauses in the short presentation task, once between and once within constituents. Speaker K exhibits the least change in her use of pauses across the tasks, although she does seem to move in the right direction, with the lowered number of hesitation pauses (2a) and planning pauses (3) in the second task.

Table 2. Type of pause data: number of pauses and pause duration for impromptu and prepared speech samples for each speaker between major constituents (1), neutral (1a) with rhetorical function (1b), Before words of high lexical content (2), word finding difficulty (hesitation) (2a), deliberate pause for rhetorical effect (2b), After the first words in intonation group – planning pause (3)

	A 1 Impromptu		A 2 Presentation		S 1 Impromptu		S 2 Presentation		K 1 Impromptu		K 2 Presentation	
	N	**Length**	**N**	**Length**	**N**	**Length**	**N**	**Length**	**N**	**Length**	**N**	**Length**
(1) Between major const.	13	7.508s	6	2.141s	7	5.75s	5	2.374s	7	2.99s	6	2.143s
(1a) neutral	9	4.842s	5	1.635s	7	5.75s	4	1.47s	7	2.99s	6	2.143s
(1b) Rhetorical	4	2.667s	1	0.506s	0	0	1	0.904s	0	0	0	0
(2) Within – words	6	3.61s	10	3.96s	5	2.614s	3	0.785s	5	2.89s	3	0.928
(2a) Hesitation	5	3.018s	2	0.447s	5	2.614s	1	0.38	4	2.61	1	0.268
(2b) Rhetorical	1	0.593s	8	3.519s	0	0	2	0.405	1	0.282	2	0.66
(3) Within – planning	0	0	0	0	2	1.587	0	0	4	1.817	3	0.785

Thus, when analysed from the perspective of placement, silent pauses present an interesting pattern which seems to be conditioned by the general proficiency of the speaker and the effect of instruction and practice. An interplay between the two factors can be seen in mid-proficiency Speaker S, who uses fewer pauses, especially those for hesitation and planning and starts to use pauses for rhetorical purposes after instruction and practice. The effect of instruction can also be noticed in lower-proficiency Speaker K, similarly shown by a lower number of hesitation and planning pauses. The most proficient Speaker A, on the other hand, increases the number of within-constituent pauses in the second task, but does it for rhetorical emphasis. An interim conclusion that can be drawn as the result of data analysis so far is that the instruction and practice seems to have affected the fluency of the less proficient speakers, particularly the mid-proficient one more than their presentation skills, while the most proficient Speaker A benefitted the most at the level of organizationof the academic presentation, in the use of silent pauses for rhetorical effect.

The generalized picture based on empirical data provides information as to the main tendencies. The analysis presented below looks at the specific pause-usage of each participant and the details of the coding of pause types.

Speaker A

The most proficient speaker A uses a relatively large number of pauses in her impromptu speech. Unlike the other speakers, she seemed to use rhetorical pauses for emphasis not only within constituent units, but also at major unit boundaries from the beginning of the course. Examples of clause-boundary pauses which perform a rhetorical function, are coded **1b**as in

> [A:IM1] *Hello everyone I'm gonna talk to you about a very (0.177)* ***2a*** *interesting topic (0.449)* ***1b does*** *education kill creativity (0.949)* ***1b or*** *(0.414)* ***1a*** *should we make it a question or a* ***statement*** *(0.957)* ***1b****.I think we may say it does...*

The opening excerpt of the impromptu already promises a good talk. The speaker makes long silent pauses (0.449 to 0.957) in important places, emphasising the most relevant words, pausing before and after them. The structure of the opening sentences is simple and straightforward, the message clearly stated and delivered. Emphasis is achieved by pauses as well as pitch change, as she consistently uses higher pitch for stressed syllables. The second part of the impromptu loses the original easy flow, as the talk has not been thought-through, and consequently requires online planning. However,

the time for planning comes from pauses before words and filled pauses rather than pauses for planning.

> [A:IM2] *think we may say it does because from the first day on (0.439)* ***1a*** *children are made to sit (0.792)* ***1a*** *– em (filled 0.644) – (silent 0.118)* ***1a*** *just sit and make some exercises that are very (0.447)* ***2a*** *– em (filled 0.429) – (0.859)* ***2a*** *that don't allow much spontaneity and are very (0.951)* ***2a*** *there are very clear rules they have to follow.*

The prepared speech follows a similar pattern as the opening of the impromptu, however, within-major constituent pauses are used even more frequently, in many cases shorter than before. The decision to assign silent pauses as rhetorical, particularly the short ones (e.g. 0.176ms before *interesting*) came from the pitch pattern and auditory impression. The talk begins with a filled pause, a sign of stress corresponding to the delivery of a prepared speech, with a higher degree of anxiety than in the case of the impromptu.

> [A:P1] *Emm emmsooem – (filled 1.96) I'd like to discuss an (0.176)* ***2b*** *interesting and I think a quite important question (0.280)* ***1a*** *because (0.270)* ***2b*** *I think it is important to all of us (0.182)* ***1a*** *in a way (0.40)* ***1a*** *And the question is* ***2b*** *(0.432) why (0.266)* ***2b*** *does education kill creativity and (0.363)* ***2b*** *does it really* ***2b*** *(0.700) kill* ***2b*** *(0.312) creativity.*

In the mid-presentation excerpt a similar pattern can be observed, however, the number of emphasized words drops.

> [A:P2] *I think the main reason (0.506)* ***1b*** *why school kills creativity is (0.341)* ***2a*** *that it is (1.00)* ***2b*** *not predicated on the ideas of academic ability (0.238)* ***1a*** *and this academic ability the idea of academic ability (0.485)* ***1a*** *also dominates our view (0.106)* ***2a*** *of intelligence.*

To recapitulate, Speaker A uses pauses regularly across and within major constituency boundaries, but the flow of her speech is easy to follow and the pauses do not hinder fluency due to their good motivation and placement.

Speaker S

The mid-proficiency speaker comes across as a good presenter in her impromptu from the perspective of audience reaction (laughter); as with Speaker A, she is much more fluent in the opening section than later on, however, unlike Speaker A, her use of pauses in the second part of the

impromptu is based on planning and word-searching. She finds it difficult to build a coherent argument spontaneously, so it is difficult to assess the grammar and/or rhythm of the speech.

> [S:IM] … *and I'm going to talk about education kills (0.248)* ***2a*** *creativity (1.10)* ***1a***. *I quite agree with it(0.326)* ***1a*** *because (laughter 2.07) because I think that people have to study we have to (0.352)* ***2a*** *read what (0.70)* ***3*** *what we have to not what we want to (laughter 2.169). We em – (filled 1.004) – can't (0.887)* ***3*** *we can't (1.237)* ***3*** *we can't study (0.615)* ***2b*** *more than we have to (0.573)* ***1a*** *because it is focused only (0.496)* ***2a*** *on main topic (1.97) we can't use creativity in in (0.903)* ***2a*** *education system (1.038)* ***1a*** *and I think that's all (0.506)* ***1a*** *It's all for now*...

In the prepared speech, however, the speaker is much better in control of the delivery. Nervous at the beginning, she emphasizes the first key word by a long pause followed by a filled pause, and then gets the rhythm of speech.

> [S:P1] *and today I'm going to answer the question 'does education kill creativity (0.904)* ***1b*** *– emmm (filled 0.867) – first of all we have to focus (0.380)* ***2a*** *on the the other aspect which is connected with the previous question (0.242)* ***1a*** *what is the role of education nowadays. (0.634)* ***1a*** *In today world many people want to study and they do this.*

The same pattern, with silent pauses followed by filled pauses continues throughout her speech, but the use of rhetorical pauses and emphasis makes her speech sound fluent and well-organized. The control of the grammar is also very different, with the making of pauses better motivated by the structure of the talk.

> [S:P2] *what's more creativity (0.129)* ***2b*** *is very important in our life because it helps us to create something new to think about something (0.438)* ***1a*** *and it helps our brains to – eem (filled 0.708) to think* ***1a*** *(0.156) – ee (filled 0. 122) and to (0.276)* ***2b*** *think about something in various ways*.

Speaker K

Speaker K is the least proficient and the proficiency level coincides with problems in presentation, i.e. pauses, repetitions, incomplete clauses, etc. However, she is a lively speaker, provoking a lively reaction from her audience. In her impromptu speech, she begins with many repetitions performed in a playful manner.

> [K:IM1] *and today I would like us to think to think ab ab a (laughter 1.823) a little bit (0.372)* ***1a*** *about whether modern education is possible without modern technologies (0.684)* ***1a*** *– em (filled 0.384) – my personal point of view is that we – em (filled 1.73)* ***3*** *– in nowadays world we can't have modern education without modern technologies (0.506)* ***3*** *technologies (0.707)* ***1a*** *because (0.737)* ***3*** *because because (laughter 2.16) many things which – nowa which nowadays – we are doing everything is (1.60)* ***1a*** *mostly associated with modern technologies starting from (0.314)* ***2a*** *the presentations which we have (0.287)* ***1a*** *and ending fr about and – em (filled 0.411) – ending on presentation in our work for example (0.246)* ***1a****.*

The second part of the impromptu provides further evidence of relatively frequent use of mid-major-constituent pauses, repetitions and filled pauses, but the structure of the talk continues to be focused on the audience (notice the closing of the impromptu).

> [K:IM2] *And I think that (0.248)* ***2a*** *from the first stages of lives of the students and lives of every child (0.409)* ***1a*** *we should start (0.0.417)* ***3*** *we should start to teach them modern technologies because (0.448)* ***2a*** *– em (filled 1.67) – it is more – em (filled 0.447) very important and in their future life and in their future work it would be (0.282)* ***2b*** *very essential and they would (0.157)* ***3*** *will be using it from all of the time (0.294)* ***1a*** *I think that your opinion is the the same and thank you….*

The pressure of the prepared short presentation makes the speaker in the second sample seem nervous, but progress has clearly been made. The speaker builds a more coherent argument, and although she still uses repetitions, filled pauses and pauses for planning, the flow of her speech has improved. The mid-presentation fragment [K:P2] illustrates a more even rhythm of presentation, coupled with grammatically complete structures. Interestingly, however, the relatively low proportion of pauses to the whole speech results from the use of numerous very short pauses, which does not make the presentation easy to follow.

> [K:P1] *OK (0.104)* ***1a*** *so my topic is (0.186)* ***1b*** *there is no modern education without modern technologies and I would like to talk a little bit about this (0.473)* ***1a*** *and what I would like to say at the beginning (0.281)* ***3*** *At the beginning (0.117)* ***3*** *I would like to say that I agree with this statement because as we (0.387)* ***3*** *as we know (0.431) 3****1*** *– em (filled 0.671) – (silent 0.345)* ***1a*** *modern technologies are everywhere today and we are using it (0.268)* ***2a*** *on a daily basis*

[K:P2] *But we shouldn't (0.474)* ***2b*** *also forget about the thing that modern technologies are also helpful for the teachers (0.427)* ***1a*** *because thanks to modern technologies teacher can prepare presentations* ***1a*** *(0.363) and they can search many interesting – em (filled 0.325) so… sources.*

The main observation from the above overview of the major tendencies in the use of pauses in context relates to two features: the use of prosody and building a coherent argument. The two aspects interact, with prosody helping to highlight important aspects and cover up for grammatical or logical incoherence. It seems that this interaction works for Speaker S more than for Speaker K, with Speaker A the most systematic in the use of both aspects. Thus the conclusion from this section is similar to the one based on the empiricaldata: it is Speaker A who develops her presentation skills best, with Speaker S and K following. The present section discussed students' performance in terms of pauses as well as prosody, however, the prosodic aspect was added on an auditory basis only and calls for further study.

3.4. Discussion

To summarize the results and analysis and to address the research questions, a comparison between the use of pauses by the speakers in each task (RQ1) and across tasks (RQ2) will open the discussion section, to be followed by the key aspect of the relationship between pausing in the development of L2 fluency vs. L2 academic presentation skills (RQ3).

The first aspect, the use of pauses across students in each task, makes it possible to assess their utterance fluency, as well as the ability to make part of a public speech with virtually no preparation. The participants use different resources to make their speech successful: besides the structure and rhetorical devices, they make contact with the audience in moments of doubt, provoking laughter. This interesting strategy is employed by mid-proficiency Speaker S and lower-proficiency Speaker K, with the latter resorting to it to a greater extent. While laughter is excluded from the speaking time, and cannot be treated as a pause, it is a successful device to buy time and connect with the audience. The use of pauses for planning, defined in the current study after Cruttenden (1986) as pauses after the beginning of a major constituent, has an additional ally in the form of audience-created planning time. Not surprisingly, just as laughter accompanies the performance of the two lower-proficiency students, so do planning pauses, with Speaker S using them twice and Speaker K four times in their impromptu speeches. Speaker A, the most proficient, does not provoke laughter, nor does she

stop for planning. What she does, however, is use longer within-constituent pauses, both hesitation and rhetorical ones. With respect to the proportion of pauses, however, the low-proficiency Speaker K has the lowest pause-time to whole speech (11%), with the other students at a similar level (24% in Speaker's S impromptu and 21% in Speaker A). In the case of the second task, the short prepared presentation, it is Speaker S who uses pause-time the least (8%), followed by Speaker K (9.6%) and finally, Speaker A (16.5%). Apart from instruction and practice, the very nature of the task, a speech prepared earlier by the students, and consequently less challenging as regards on-line processing, has a clear effect on the number and duration of pauses. However, while the less proficient students seem to have concentrated on avoiding pauses, especially planning and hesitation ones, the most proficient speaker uses rhetorical pauses to a much greater extent (3.519s in A, 0.282 in S and 0.660 in K). The strategies used by the speakers in the prepared speech suggest different aims depending on the proficiency level: the less proficient speakers aim to improve their fluency, while the most proficient speaker concentrates on presentation skills rather than avoiding pauses, and uses them for rhetorical purposes more in the practised than in the impromptu speech.

With respect to RQ2, the positive effect of the 4-week training on the use of pauses can be seen in the change in the pause proportion, which is lower in the second than in the first taskfor each student (see Table 1). This difference can be attributed to awareness raising, instruction and practice during the 4-week training, as well as task-type. While the before-intervention impromptu task may seem more difficult, the prepared short presentation put an additional pressure on the speakers, making the monologue possibly more challenging. The comparison between impromptu and prepared speech is based on the whole length of the impromptu and on two fragments of the presentation: from the beginning and mid-presentation. The motivation was to compare the spontaneous presentation of speech from the impromptu with prepared speech in the opening section, which is most likely memorized by the speakers, and mid-speech, when they resort to a more natural flow of speech. The comparison based on the overall data suggests a tendency of lowering of the length and proportion of pauses in all the speakers, with the most noted effect in mid-proficiency Speaker S (the proportion of pauses dropping from 24% in the impromptu to 8% in the prepared short presentation). The analysis of the short presentation data does not show noticeable differences between the initial fragment and the mid-presentation one, other than the tendency to use opening phrases, e.g. filled pauses in Speaker A, 'and today…' by Speaker S and 'OK' by Speaker K.

The empirical data suggest that while there is a change in the use of pauses in all the speakers, there is a difference in the change with respect

to the within-major constituent and between-constituent boundary pauses (see Table 3). The analysis based on the placement of pauses generalized into these two major categories suggests increased problems with the within-major constituent (within clause) pauses in the case of the most proficient Speaker A. In view of the earlier discussion, however, this conclusion does not seem to reflect this speaker's performance at all. Thiscalls for more detailed analysis of pausing in specific tasks,type of instruction, and practice. Thus, in the case of academic presentations, analysis based on the two categories of pauses as a fluency measure is not sufficient,and alsocalls for recognition of the rhetorical function of pauses.

Table 3. The number, length and mean duration of pauses within two major categories, between and within major constituents in impromptu and short presentation samples for individual speakers

	A1 Impromptu		A2 Presentation		S1 Impromptu		S2 Presentation		K1 Impromptu		K2 Presentation	
	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length
Between major const.	13	7.508s (0.58s)	6	2.141s (0.356s)	7	5.75s (0.82s)	5	2.374s (0.474s)	7	2.99s (0.427s)	6	2.143s (0.357s)
Within major const.	6	3.611s (0.601s)	10	3.966s (0.396s)	7	4.201s (0.60s)	3	0.785s (0.261s)	9	4.709s (0.523s)	3	1.713s (0.571s)

The relationship between the use of pauses for the development of L2 fluency and academic presentation features (RQ3) proves to be particularly interesting, as it suggests a connection between general L2 proficiency level and the type of progress that is made by the student. When interpreted for pause use from the perspective of pause duration, proportion and location, the data suggest that the mid-proficiency Speaker S makes the greatest progress, followed by the lower-proficiency Speaker K. The high-proficiency Speaker A, on the other hand, is the only one to increase the use of within-major constituent pauses in her second recording; meaning that with the pausing pattern interpreted in terms of fluency development, she seems to be the least successful. However, this assessment is clearly contrary to the auditory data, as speaker A comes across as the most fluent of the three. In fact, the fluency of this speaker does not vary greatly across the tasks, which is similar to what was noticed for pitch-accent ratio in an earlier study (Klimczak-Pawlak and Waniek-Klimczak 2023). What does change, however, is the organization of speech. There is an increase in the number of within-clause pauses specifically in the prepared academic presentation. The

four weeks of instruction, practice and preparation may have increased the anxiety level, leading to a complex conditioning of pausing, which partly justifies the change. However, what explains the difference best is the distinction between two types of within-clause pauses: hesitation vs. rhetorical-pauses used for emphasis.

The application of L2 fluency research to academic presentations needs to take into account the complex conditioning of pausing, as postulated by Chang and Windeatt (2024). Moreover, research pointing to the negative effect of within-clause silent pauses for fluency (e.g. de Jong, 2016; Kahng, 2018; Chang and Windeatt, 2024) requires further analysis in these specific speech tasks, so that the conditions for a good presentation are taken into account. With silent pauses encouraged, and filled pauses discouraged in public speaking handbooks (e.g. Horn, 2024), the use of silent pauses is a notable feature of a good presentation in L2; however, for the sake of analysis and practice, it is of paramount importance to specify the conditions for recognizing a rhetorical pause from a hesitation pause. The present study resorted to auditory analysis of the data for this purpose, however, further research is needed in order to develop well-defined and motivated criteria.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the recorded samples shows that the use of silent pauses differs between tasks (impromptu speech and prepared presentation) for each speaker and across speakers, pointing to the relevance of the level of general L2 language proficiency on the use of pauses, and the effect of the 4 week training. The results for the individual speakers show that the analysis of empirical data provides different results depending on the level of detail that is included in the analysis. The comparison of the length of pauses, pause duration, mean pause duration and pause proportion points to the training having been of the greatest benefit to mid-proficiency Speaker S, while the lower-proficiency Speaker K and the highest-proficiency Speaker A seem to be in a similar position. However, a more detailed analysis of pauses shows that the distribution of pauses and their use for the purpose of making the presentation easy to follow differs. When viewed from this perspective, the most advanced student A proves to use silent pauses in the most proficient way, but only when their use for a rhetorical function is recognized as a separate category. If generalized for between- and within- major constituent placement, the change in pause usage suggests opposite results, with Speaker A using more within-constituent pauses after instruction in the

prepared short presentation sample. These observations lead to the conclusion that academic instruction has had the effect of increasing utterance fluency for mid-proficient Speaker S and lower-proficient Speaker K, with greater positive change in the case of the former and less in the latter student. The most proficient Speaker A, on the other hand, has implemented the emphasis of key words with rhetorical pauses in her speech, characteristic features of a good presentation.

The observations made in the course of the analysis lead to tentative conclusions which can offer initial insights into learning and teaching the use of pausing in L2 academic presentation courses. The small number of observations and the length of analysed samples are the main limitations of the study. The analysis itself includes only some possible measures and criteria. There are several aspects that could provide further insights into the development of fluency in academic presentations, including the analysis of filled and unfilled pauses and the prosodic organization of speech. One of the aspects that was noticed as relevant in the recognition of the rhetorical function of pauses is the stress pattern and the emphatic use of pitch, syllable length and loudness. Further studies are needed before recommendations for the teaching of pausing in L2 academic presentations can be offered. However, even at this stage, the results of the study suggest the need to concentrate on the development of general L2 fluency by focusing on the limitation of within-clause pauses in the case of lower or mid-proficiency students, while the use of within-clause pausing with rhetorical function can be successfully practiced with those of high-proficiency.

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The long-term impact of lecturer talk on student learning: Japanese students' reflections

This pragmatic case study explores Japanese students' perceptions of lecturer talk in an Australian higher-education setting. The main findings cover two sections. The first section discusses positive talk focusing on pedagogical strategies that enhance student engagement. Teachers can create a stimulating learning environment that fosters active participation and meaningful connections with students through personal anecdotes, real-world applications, and interactive discussions. The second section examines negative talk with poor impact on student learning experiences. Issues such as lack of clarity, low interaction, and undesirable teaching approaches hinder students' comprehension and engagement, highlighting the importance of effective communication strategies in facilitating learning. The article concludes with practical recommendations provided by students to improve teacher communication and enhance the overall learning experience, emphasising the significance of student-centred, engaging, and inclusive teaching practices in promoting compelling lecturer talk.

Keywords: teacher talk, learning engagement, helpful talk, unhelpful talk, student learning

Słowa kluczowe: mowa nauczyciela, zaangażowanie w naukę, pomocna rozmowa, rozmowa niepomocna, nauka ucznia

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1. An opening anecdote

Below is a critical incident drawn from one of the interviews conducted by the researcher for the current project. In the scenario, a Japanese student shared an experience during an encounter with his lecturer during a lesson at an Australian university.

> "Although a decade has passed, Nobuyuki still vividly remembers the lecturer's tone of voice and facial expression on that day. During an interview for this study, he couldn't help but recall an experience beyond just words. 'My lecturer didn't believe in me,' he recounted. 'I remember when returning my essay, he asked: Are you sure this was your writing?
>
> Despite receiving a High Distinction for his essay, Nobuyuki couldn't shake the doubt lingering in his mind. While awarding the grade, the teacher seemed puzzled by how a quiet and seemingly passive student with unfluent verbal English could produce such exceptional work.
>
> The look in my lecturer's eyes and his attitude were unforgettable. It was evident that my abilities were being questioned,' Nobuyuki reflected. This brief moment of doubt had a lasting impact on him for so long. When asked why he still thought about it, Nobuyuki explained, 'It wasn't just the words, but the overall impression on me. The lack of trust from someone I respected deeply affected my self-esteem. I started doubting myself and lost my passion for learning. For the remaining time of the course, every interaction with my lecturer brought back those feelings of inadequacy.
>
> Nobuyuki concluded, 'I never want to make my students feel the way I did. I think my trust is essential for their learning."

This scenario is not uncommon, but can be evidenced in a humble body of research discourse. Fisher and Rickards (1998), in a study on student perception of good teaching, reveal a preference for teachers' kind behaviour and acceptance towards students' feelings. Research by Black & Mayes (2020) discovered that student fear and uncertainty may result from power relations. When this happens, students feel lost, wondering how to let teachers know their frustration with the lack of interpersonal connectedness. As Biddle and Hufnagel (2019) note, students "voicing their experiences can be emotional work" (p. 488). The opportunity to express personal needs is often challenging, resulting in a culture of silence among students (Baroutsis et al., 2016).

When students fail to voice their concerns about teachers' everyday behaviour and ways of talking, they suffer from stress. Such restraint can be

severe and long-lasting, primarily when the learning process is controlled by educator expectations (McCluskey et al., 2013) more than by student priorities (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Teacher talk exerts a long-term impact on student learning, including knowledge retention (Jin & Webb, 2020), ability to communicate (Aukrust, 2007), and student achievement (Mahmoodi, 2016).

Research on the long-term impact of teacher talk on student learning and development is rare. At least three sensible reasons contribute to this scarcity. Long-term studies necessitate substantial time and resources to track students over extended periods (Bertinetto et al., 2016). Secondly, the influence of numerous factors on student learning and development complicates the isolation of the specific impact of teacher talk over time. Such factors may include family background, peer interactions, environmental factors, and individual characteristics. Thirdly, ethical concerns may arise in longitudinal studies when students are reminded of the adverse long-term effects of certain teaching practices (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

2. The focus of the study

This article looks at how Japanese students feel about the verbal performance of their lecturers in the classroom, given the valuable and useless impacts of such talk. The work does not examine the objective reality of teacher talk but gathers the perception and experience of students through their lenses. The project does not analyse talk as discourse; it does not try to identify or classify talk into categories. Many empirical studies have already investigated these areas profoundly. Instead, the present work delves into how students feel and what they want from teacher talk in a holistic, impacting way. The study focuses on determining how students perceive teacher talk as practical to their learning needs.

Every word uttered by the lecturer plays a crucial role in shaping the learning experience and outcome of international students who sometimes struggle while studying in a foreign academic environment. Understanding Japanese students' perceptions of lecturer talk in the context of Australian higher education can provide valuable insights into the cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical factors that influence their academic engagement and success. This case study explores Japanese students' nuanced perspectives, attitudes, and experiences to shed light on the impact of communication styles, language proficiency, teaching approaches, and sociocultural interactions on their educational journey in Australia. The project aims to uncover the

complexities of teacher-student understanding and its implications for education, specifically focusing on talk dynamics and talk pedagogy.

3. Researcher positioning

The researcher, positioned at the intersection of language education and silence studies, wishes to investigate the dynamic of lecture talk from a student perspective. With a focus on the efficient use of speech and silence, the researcher is keenly interested in how these elements, from a learning standpoint, contribute to effective pedagogy. Motivated by a passion for enhancing student learning experiences, the researcher aims to explore Japanese students' perceptions of lecturer talk at an Australian university. This demographic choice is not random; it stems from the researcher's familiarity with Japanese culture and experiences as a lecturer for many Japanese students. By examining students' favoured and unfavoured aspects of teacher talk, the researcher seeks to uncover insights into how these learners value instructor communication and envision ideal teaching performances. Ultimately, this inquiry aspires to inform strategies that support optimal learning environments tailored to the needs of Japanese university students in Australia.

4. Rationale of the study

Dialogue in the classroom or spoken interactions throughout instructional sessions are pivotal in shaping students' grasp of academic disciplines and cognitive growth. It significantly influences not only the content absorbed by students but also the manner in which they comprehend, assimilate, and apply that content to suit their needs. Teacher talk plays a guiding role in such dialogues between the lecturer and student and among peers, not only for vibrant interaction but also for intellectual engagement.

5. Definition of teacher talk

Teacher talk is the formal spoken discourse that teachers use when addressing students in the classroom (Nurpahmi, 2017). It is the language produced by teachers addressed to the students in classroom interaction. Rasyid and Hafsah (1997) maintain that talking is the most outstanding behaviour by teachers in the classroom which they would find it extremely difficult to minimise.

Celcia-Murcia (1989) highlights several vital functions of teacher talk, including accepting students' feelings, stimulating students' motivation and interest, using students' perceptions, and offering questions. This article is about student perceptions of the efficiency of teacher talk as a whole. The discussion does not classify types of teacher talk, but looks into the overall impact of such talk as received and evaluated by students, that is, from a lay view, rather than an expert view.

6. Background: Japanese university students in Australia

Australia views Japan as a highly valued ally, with the latest survey indicating that 74% of individuals expressed positive sentiments towards Japan (Kassam, 2022). 2004 saw the peak number of Japanese students in Australia at 16,500. Japan ranks 17th on the list of international students (Hanada, 2023). Australian universities provide a unique educational environment that significantly shapes the learning experiences of Japanese students. Australia's diverse and multicultural society promotes an inclusive atmosphere that is particularly appealing to international students, including the Japanese. This exchange enhances language acquisition and helps these students navigate and adapt to cultural differences, enriching their learning experience.

Australian institutions' curriculum and teaching styles often emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and student-led learning approaches. Students are encouraged to engage actively in discussions and collaborate. Such an environment allows Japanese students to develop essential soft skills and better understand their subjects. For many Japanese students, studying in Australia provides an immersive environment in which to improve their English language skills. Universities offer support services, including language workshops and conversation partners, as well as practical tools for mastering a second language. In a word, Australian universities play a vital role in shaping the learning of Japanese students by offering a culturally rich, supportive, and innovative educational environment. This experience enhances their academic achievements and prepares them for successful careers in an increasingly interconnected world.

6.1. Why Japanese students choose to study in Australia

Japanese university students once comprised a significant demographic among international students in Australia. Regarding choice, Japanese university students are attracted to studying in Australia for various reasons. The

country's high-quality education system, diverse courses and programs, multicultural environment, and the opportunity to improve English language skills are key factors influencing their decision to study abroad. Australia's reputation for safety, innovation, and research excellence also motivates Japanese students to pursue higher education there.

6.2. Levels of satisfaction

Among key factors contributing to student experiences are the quality of education, supportive learning environment, access to facilities and resources, and the opportunity for cultural exchange and personal growth. Examination of survey data based on these factors uncovers notable disparities in the responses provided by Australian and Japanese students (Edwards, 2016). Feedback and surveys indicate that Japanese university students in Australia generally report far less satisfaction than local students. Compared to their Australian counterparts, Japanese university students demonstrate significantly lower satisfaction levels in developing skills, engagement in learning, quality of teaching, support services for students, and availability of learning resources.

The welcoming and inclusive nature of Australian universities and the support services provided to international students contribute to a sense of belonging and well-being among Japanese students. The diverse student community and exposure to different perspectives also enhance their cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills, valuable assets in an increasingly globalised world.

7. Research on Japanese preferences regarding teacher talk

An intensive literature search by the researcher resulted in only a few existing studies on Japanese students' perspectives regarding lecturer talk in educational settings, highlighting the impact of communication styles on student engagement, comprehension, and overall academic experience. The cultural context of Japan plays a significant role in shaping students' views on lecturer talk. The respect for authority and hierarchical structures in Japanese society could impact students' receptiveness to different communication styles. Japanese students saw teachers who fostered open and inclusive communication channels favorably.

Research by Leichsenring (2017) highlights that Japanese students value overcoming their shyness, speaking more in the classroom, and enhancing

their communication skills. A study by Knowles (2023) on 45 Japanese students reveals that Japanese students 'appreciate the ability of the instructor to recast what they've said, taking their awkward or incorrect statements and distilling them into their essential meaning' (p. 159). A project conducted by Miller (1995) on 14 Japanese students who received a preparatory course before entering the United States for their PhD study reveals that many Japanese students do not simply respond to a request for active participation simply by participating actively. A survey by Tsuneyasu (2017) of 36 university students reveals that Japanese students need to feel comfortable before they become willing to share ideas. Many prefer to be inspired to express themselves rather than being told or forced to do so, and teacher talk plays a massive role in making that happen.

The Japanese students in the current study expressed a preference for a balanced communication approach that valued student perspectives and encouraged dialogue rather than teacher-centred communication. Excessive lecturer talk without opportunities for student interaction or input could lead to disengagement and feelings of passive learning. The findings from these studies have important implications for educational practices in Japan and beyond. Compelling lecturer talk that prioritises student engagement, clarity, and inclusivity can enhance learning outcomes and foster a positive academic environment. By contrast, prolonged lecturer talk negatively impacts students' motivation and engagement. Teacher domination of classroom discourse without allowing student interaction or input opportunities can lead to disengagement, hinder comprehension, and impede active participation. Excessive lecturer talk can limit students' cognitive processing and retention of information. Overwhelming students with a continuous stream of information through lengthy monologues can hinder their ability to absorb and internalize the material effectively. Redundant lecturer talk can hinder student understanding and critical thinking skills, limiting their opportunities for active engagement, reflection, and discussion.

8. Popular research topics related to teacher talk

Before pointing out the gap in the research, it is essential to highlight popular study topics within teacher talk. Topics that have been researched include four significant themes as follows:

- The impacts of particular pedagogies, that is, how pedagogy targets the growth in children's thinking, understanding and learning through interactions with teachers and peers (Khong et al., 2019; Jay et al., 2017).

- Dialogic interactions between teachers and students (conducted by Wells, 1999; Wells and Arauz, 2006).
- Talk intervention, understood as experimenting with ways of making classroom talk in general (not only teacher talk) productive. Studies conducted by Mercer et al. (2004), Rojas-Drummond et al. (2003), Rabel, Wooldridge (2013), and Wegerif, Mercer (2000) demonstrate the need for students to receive coaching in exploratory talk.
- Talk during teacher training. Such experimental and observational studies were based on workshops, in-class coaching/mentoring, and long-term on-site professional development. Webb and Treagust (2006) conducted research of this type, providing two one--day workshops for teachers to promote exploratory talk among students. Other researchers represent this line of research (Gillies, 2013, 2016; Gillies, Haynes, 2011; Gillies et al., 2012, 2014; Reznitskaya, 2012). The list runs on as this theme represents a vast area of research.

9. Gaps in teacher talk research

Among the themes mentioned above, teacher talk in professional development has received considerable attention, as teacher communication skills are essential in training and professional development programs. Despite such rich development, there are four areas in which empirical research remains slim. They include:

9.1. The cultural and contextual variability of teacher talk

There is a need for more research that considers the cultural and contextual factors that influence teacher talk. Understanding how cultural norms, educational systems, and classroom dynamics impact teacher-student communication can provide valuable insights for effective pedagogy. Very few studies have such a scope. Among those few is a framework called Cultural Modelling (see, for example, Lee et al., 2004), which is used to understand and interpret different cultural behaviors, beliefs, and practices by analyzing how individuals and groups create meaning and develop identities within their cultural contexts. Examples of such studies are those looking at youth of African descent in the United States (Lee, Rosenfeld et al., 2004; Rosebery et al., 2005). Cultural Modelling requires a detailed analysis of routine everyday practices, examining modes of reasoning, concepts, and habits of mind in everyday problem-solving (Lee, Spencer & Harpalani, 2003).

9.2. The impact of teacher talk on diverse student populations

Research on teacher talk often focuses on traditional classroom settings and may not sufficiently address the needs of diverse student populations, including English language learners, students with disabilities, or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Investigating how teacher talk can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse learners is a crucial area for further study. Teacher competence, knowledge, and skills for working with students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds are a complex issue that many teacher development programs struggle to cover and teach in their curriculum (Aisling, 2005). Student diversity is sometimes overlooked by many teachers, especially those with ethnocentric minds who see what lies beyond their own culture as a sociocultural problem rather than international richness (see, for example, Moţăţăianu, 2018). In this vein, research by Bao (2014) reveals that teacher talk is sometimes perceived by students as being of a lengthy, untimely, repetitive and disorganized nature (Bao, 2014). Based on empirical data, it was recommended that a reasonable amount of silence provided by the teacher can demonstrate adaptation of teaching to the learning pace of learners.

9.3. Technology-mediated verbal communication

With the increasing use of technology in education, there is a gap in research on how teacher talk is influenced by digital communication tools such as online platforms, video conferencing, and educational apps. Exploring the role of technology in teacher-student communication and its impact on learning outcomes is an area that requires more attention.

9.4. The long-term effect of teacher talk on student's learning passion

Many studies on teacher talk focus on short-term outcomes, such as immediate student engagement or understanding. There is a gap in the research with regard to the long-term effects of teacher talk on student learning, retention of information, critical thinking skills, and academic achievement over time. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into the lasting impact of effective teacher communication. Research on the longitudinal outcome of teacher talk on student thinking and learning is scarce. One example is a study conducted three decades ago by Nias (1993) exploring the lasting value of teacher talk for students.

10. Methodology

10.1. Research approach

This study employs an adapted form of pragmatism, an educational paradigm that emphasises practical knowledge over the traditional dualistic thinking of positivist versus constructivist approaches. These traditions create a false dualism (Bradley, 2003; Pring, 2015) and a dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methodology (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Educational research has been confronted by an increasingly complex and uncertain world that requires a more nuanced and comprehensive approach. According to Crotty (1998), our postmodern world "calls all our cherished antinomies into question, and we are invited today to embrace 'fuzzy logic' rather than the logic we have known in the past with its principle of contradiction" (p. 15).

Pragmatism, which originated from the work of philosophers such as Pierce, James, Dewy, and Mead (Crotty,1998), holds that human thought is intrinsically linked to action, which is informed and influenced by experience. A core assumption of pragmatic inquiry is that it should stem from a desire to produce valuable and actionable knowledge (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020, p. 3). This assumption is congruent with one of the principal motives for conducting this research which is to identify what students receive from teacher talk that influences their learning and development. Ontologically, pragmatism accepts that reality and how individuals see it can come from their interpretations of experiences (Morgan, 2014).

As far as methodological adaptation is concerned, the elements of pragmatism employed for this study include an emphasis on practical consequences and real-world applications of ideas and theories. In other words, the researcher prioritises outcomes and the usefulness of findings over theory and philosophical perspective. Secondly, the approach cares about real-world applicability. The elements common in pragmatic research, but not used in this project, include multiple data collection and analysis techniques. Instead, the researchers employ in-depth semi-structured interviews, believing that they work best for the context of this study. Secondly, the adaptation does not integrate techniques and theories from various disciplines to enrich the research process and expand understanding. Thirdly, the project does not involve collaboration with stakeholders other than the researcher.

10.2. Research questions

In this case study, data mainly come from participants' experiences rather than the researcher's knowledge and perception. The project offers the flexibility and space to explore student perceptions and experiences with the long-term impact of teacher talk on student lives. There are two research questions:

- What, in Japanese students' views and experiences, are some positive aspects of lecturer talk in the classroom?
- What, in Japanese students' views and experiences, are some unhelpful aspects of lecturer talk in the classroom?

10.3. Researcher positioning

Lecturing in the Australian classroom setting for the past seventeen years and having never been a student there, the author is both an insider to and an outsider of the educational system. Serving as an insider I have developed knowledge and understanding of this context; being an outsider I am in the position to remain independent in my discussion of classroom behaviour. On the one hand, I am acutely aware of the need to refrain from telling academic readers what I know. Instead, abandoning prior knowledge to keep qualitative research as unbiased as possible is essential. On the other hand, I also understand that part of my interpretation might be unavoidably impressionistic and personal, which are features well recognised in interpretive research. Arguably, it might be hard to always remain neutral in judgment. With this understanding in mind, significant efforts have been made to be as loyal as possible to what the researcher listens to, an essential attitude in qualitative inquiry.

10.4. Research location

Studying teacher talk in the context of Australian universities offers a unique opportunity to gain insights into effective communication strategies and pedagogical practices in a diverse and multicultural educational setting. Australian universities are known for their high-quality education system, innovative teaching methods, and emphasis on fostering positive teacher-student relationships. In choosing an Australian university to study teacher talk, the researcher hopes to see how students from another cultural background perceive their experience with lecturer talk in an international education setting.

Nevertheless, due to the limited space of an article, it would be hard to build a coverage of all the countries represented by international students in Australia. Due to personal interest and frequent work contact with Japanese students in Australia and Japan, the author decided to focus on this group. A second reason for this choice of participants is because of emerging concerns among the community of Japanese students in Australia, part of which seems related to the fact that the number of Japanese students in Australia has seen a gradual decline and that the satisfaction with their study experiences is not very high, with evidence provided in this work.

10.5. Participants

Six Japanese students, three males, and three females, volunteered to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews about their experiences with teacher talk. Their names (pseudonyms) are Kazuki, Nobuyuki, Takashi, Yurie, Setsuko and Sayo. Their majors are mainly teacher education, and their ages vary from early twenties to late forties. Besides studying in Australia, most of them have been teachers in Japan for one to eight years. All the participants learned in an initial teacher education program in Australia. Except for one person currently studying, the remaining students graduated from one year to ten years ago. The reason for choosing alumni is to serve long-term reflective purposes.

Nobuyuki is a physics and chemistry high school teacher. He returned to Japan a decade ago and studied in Australia for five years, first in an English study program and later in a graduate program. Being a creative person, he sometimes uses English in his teaching in Japan to familiarise students with vocabulary in case they might need it for their future reading in English. His view on teaching and learning is that students must connect school study with real-world applications.

Setsuko graduated from her Master's program in adult teacher education eight years ago. She is a primary teacher who teaches a range of subjects, especially English. Her husband is a school principal, and she assists him in many lesser projects. Thanks to this experience, she is aware of skills that inspire learning engagement.

Yurie, who completed her Master's in Language Education nine years ago, is a team leader who manages her English language school in Japan. She works well with children and helps them learn through social play and active communication. She believes that learning must be fun and rewarding both academically and socially.

Takashi, who is in his final semester in a Master of TESOL program, is a part-time high school teacher and photographer. He has travelled extensively through 45 countries across five continents to take photographs as a hobby and for teaching. For him, the more life experience one has, the more attractive one will be as a person and as a teacher. He believes that charisma should be a part of teaching practice.

Kazuki, who graduated from a teacher education program in 2023, is a young teacher with some experience in private tutoring and school assistantship. He is a break dancer who enjoys experimenting with music and movement. He dreams of incorporating art into teaching when he has a chance to. He is currently a tutor of English in Australia but hopes to become a full-time teacher in this country for the experience before returning to Japan.

As learned from interviews with participants, the unique characteristics of these student teachers are that they are all passionate not only about teaching but also about a desire for performance. In their ways, they are highly observant and critical towards pedagogical practice. They believe teaching is more than a job, but rather a leadership mission that can make a difference in society. One participant cited this slogan from their former teacher in Japan: 'Teachers change the world.'

10.6. Data collection tool and method of analysis

In-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to gather rich and detailed data on Japanese students' experiences, perspectives, and attitudes toward their lecturers' talk. This approach allows me to explore complex phenomena deeply, uncovering nuanced insights and understanding the subjective meanings attributed to participants' experiences. Each student was interviewed once, and each session lasted about 45 minutes at a location of the student's choice, which was often a quiet place on a university campus.

The researcher employed thematic discourse analysis as a qualitative data analysis technique to identify patterns, themes, and underlying meanings within interview transcripts The project uncovered the underlying structures and relationships that shape individuals' narratives and perspectives by systematically coding and categorizing the data based on recurring themes and discourses. This method enables a deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of the qualitative data, providing meaningful interpretations and insights into the research topic.

11. Data presentation, analysis, and findings

The article is next divided into two sections. The first discusses helpful talk by lecturers, which supports learning engagement, and the second presents unhelpful talk, which complicates learning. In this study, the concept of 'helpful talk' refers to talk favoured or preferred by the student participants, based on their perspective and experience, rather than the researcher's judgment.

As the data from this project show, moments of helpful teacher talk include clear instructions, encouraging words, thought-provoking questions, incorporation of wait time, recapping key points during a lecture, connecting learning to real life, inviting reflections, and managing classroom dynamics. Below are some of these ideas being emphasised in the data.

11.1. Helpful lecturer talk

Learning must be enhanced through student engagement with teacher communication (Heilporn et al., 2021). Effective teacher communication is crucial in creating an engaging and meaningful learning experience for students. As the interview data shows, such talk includes moments at which lecturers connect with students through personal anecdotes, real-world applications, and interactive discussions to foster comprehension and engagement.

11.1.1. Relevance of personal anecdotes

Students value hearing narratives or vivid explanations related to the learning content as they provide a context that enhances understanding and retention. Learning through realistic stories can make lessons more relatable and memorable, establishing a connection between theoretical concepts and practical applications. Below are students' own words pointing in this direction:

> "I enjoyed hearing incidents about teachers' personal experiences relevant to the class material." (Yurie)

> "I appreciate the following aspects of teaching: learning through realistic discussions; seeing meaningful connection between lesson content and real-world application; and recapturing what has been discussed for easy remembering." (Kazuki)

> "As a student, I preferred teachers who shared engaging stories and encouraged active class participation through meaningful questions. These dynamic classes were enjoyable, and time seemed to fly by quickly." (Takashi)

These insights point to the need for an educational environment that fosters connection, applicability, and interactive learning. The use of lecturers' personal experiences bridges the gap between theory and practical application. Participants prefer learning experiences that are abstract and anchored in tangible contexts, allowing them to see the immediate relevance of learning content to student interests. Such engaging narratives make learning more enjoyable and enhance cognitive engagement, leading to better retention and understanding.

11.1.2. Connecting lesson content to real-world applications

An engaging teaching approach involves demonstrating the relevance and applicability of lesson content to students' daily lives. By linking theoretical concepts to practical situations, teachers can make learning more meaningful and engaging for students. Data show that establishing connections between classroom lessons and real-world scenarios facilitates a deeper understanding of the material. Students reveal these thoughts:

> "My lecturer has effective communication. She strives to make learning content relevant and applicable to students' daily lives. In my opinion, an engaging teaching approach involves connecting theoretical concepts to practical, real-world situations." (Setsuko)

In participants' experiences, ways of applying theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios include using case studies, sharing solutions to common problems, using metaphors to simplify complex concepts, employing simulations and role-playing exercises, incorporating guest speakers from industry, organising field trips, and creating opportunities for internships or work placements. All these can help students see how theoretical concepts operate in professional environments.

11.1.3. Effective dialogue styles

Students appreciate teachers who share engaging stories and actively encourage class participation through thought-provoking questions. Dynamic

classes that promote interaction and discussion create an enjoyable learning environment where time flies by quickly. This interactive approach fosters student engagement and facilitates a deeper understanding of the subject matter. One student shares:

> "Teacher discussion is a valuable tool for imparting knowledge and fostering communication. Effective teacher dialogue should be informative and engaging and promote meaningful interactions. However, teacher monologues can have adverse effects on students if they become repetitive and drain students' motivation to learn. This can lead to feelings of distrust and discrimination among students, as exemplified by suspicions of plagiarism." (Nobuyuki)

Teacher communication is a valuable tool for imparting knowledge and promoting meaningful interactions in the classroom. Effective teacher communication promotes learning and meaningful interactions in the classroom. However, if teacher monologues are habitual this can lead to disengagement and decreased motivation among students, negatively impacting the learning experience and relations with and between students. instances of suspected plagiarism, such as the case presented at the beginning of this article.

To sum up this section, compelling lecturer talk has the power to engage students through personal anecdotes, real-world applications, and interactive discussions. By making lessons relevant, relatable, and interactive, teachers can create a stimulating learning environment that promotes comprehension, engagement, and active participation among students. It is crucial for teachers to employ varied, engaging, and relevant communication strategies to enhance the learning experience and foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment. Along this line, research by Tomlinson and Bao (2014) reveals that teacher talk needs to "develop from instances of student talk so as to actively involve the students in sustained interaction related to their personal thinking, and to pose them to purposeful input." (p. 214).

11.2. Unhelpful lecturer talk

This section presents students' views on and experiences with the negative impact of teacher verbal communication on student engagement and understanding. Students were invited to explore the negative effects of certain communication styles on student comprehension and engagement. It emphasizes the importance of bridging the gap between theoretical con-

cepts and practical applications. In this study, the concept of 'unhelpful talk' refers to talk unfavoured by the student participants from their view and experience, rather than in the researcher's judgment.

As learned from the data of the study, moments of unhelpful teacher talk include vague instructions, excessive monologue, discouraging feedback that creates a hostile environment and diminishes self-esteem, oversimplified or boring discussion without engagement, self-centred talk that shows off knowledge while neglecting student needs and interests, overuse of jargon, lengthy and confusing speech lacking in clarity, inconsistent guidance that causes unclear expectations, a lack of wait time, and failure to connect content to student experience. Below are some of these ideas are emphasised in the data.

11.2.1. Poor clarity and low interaction

The students express dissatisfaction with lecturers whose talk does not support clarity and interaction, leading to difficulties in understanding the material. In specialised university lecture settings, the absence of interactive teaching methods, such as writing on the board, can hinder students' ability to grasp complex content, highlighting the significance of clear communication strategies in enhancing comprehension. One student expressed his view:

> "I dislike lecturers who give monologues and fail to build vibrant interaction with students, leading to a lack of clarity and understanding among the class. Specifically, in a university lecture setting with specialised content, having a teacher who avoided writing on the board made it challenging for me to grasp the material." (Takashi)

Other participants in the study also admit that the lecturer's lack of interaction and engagement made it difficult for them to stay focused and follow along. Some comment that teacher talk alone, without writing on the whiteboard, further complicates their learning process. They believe more opportunities for discussion and visual aids would aid in their understanding of challenging content. Another participant stated a similar concern:

> "I wish my lecturer made an effort to incorporate more interactive elements into our lectures moving forward. It's important for students to feel engaged and for the material to be easily understandable." (Yurie)

This comment goes well with the views expressed above in highlighting that the lack of interaction and engagement from the lecturer made it difficult for students to stay focused and follow along (see, for example, Barkley & Major, 2020). One participant commented that teacher talk alone, without writing on the whiteboard, might further complicate the learning process. Arguably, more opportunities for discussion and visual aids would aid in their understanding of challenging content. One student interviewee elaborates on why lectures are often uninspiring:

> "When my lecturer reads the PowerPoint slides, he speaks too slowly, causing me to read ahead silently. As I often reach the end of the text before he does, my mind starts to drift, and I lose focus. I find myself wishing for the lecture to conclude sooner. Additionally, the texts presented are all citations from sources I am already familiar with. I could easily review them at home. This makes me question the necessity of attending the lecture and investing more time than needed compared to studying independently at home." (Takashi)

The participants recommended incorporating real-life examples into the lecture to fend off such dullness. Such suggestions go well with the relevant academic discourse, which highlights that teachers need to connect knowledge with practical contexts in teaching abstract concepts (Mezirow, 1991). Besides receiving knowledge, students would appreciate opportunities for problem-solving scenarios, hands-on experiments, and critical thinking skills (Johnson et al., 2024). Along this line, Mayer (2005) recommends using multimedia tools, such as videos, interactive websites, and online simulations, to engage students during a lecture. These resources can bring complex concepts to life and cater for different learning preferences, making the material more accessible and engaging. Brookfield and Preskill (2012) highlight the connection between lecturing skills and student feelings. They argue that by promoting a culture of intellectual curiosity and debate, teachers can inspire students to participate actively in their learning process. Research by Bao (2020), however, shows that teachers' efforts to pressurise students to come up with quick answers to challenging questions, without allowing thinking time, might ruin learning with poor-quality discussion.

11.2.2. The long-term impact of negative teacher dialogue

Negative emotions induced by ineffective teacher communication can negatively impact students, influencing their future learning experiences. As the introductory anecdote in this article shows, teachers' enduring influence

on young people's thinking underscores the need for educators to choose their words carefully and focus on constructive messages in student interactions in order to foster a positive learning environment. One participant explains:

> "Negative emotions induced by teacher dialogue can have a lasting impact on students beyond the immediate lesson, impacting their learning experience in future classes. In Japan, this lingering impact on learning is highlighted, emphasizing teachers' lasting influence over young minds. Therefore, teachers must be mindful of their words and prioritize the educational value they impart during interactions with students." (Nobuyuki)

11.2.3. Relevance and practicality in teaching

Students express disinterest in teachers who delve into personal ideologies or focus solely on abstract theories without providing practical context or real-world applications. Bridging the gap between theory and practicality, such as through anecdotal explanation and suggestions for practice, is crucial in engaging students and deepening their understanding of the material. Teachers can enhance student interest and engagement by demonstrating how classroom lessons can be applied in real-life scenarios. Two students touch on this tendency whereby lecturers either fail to be practical, or try to be, but travel beyond the lesson content:

> "What I find unappealing is when instruction solely focuses on abstract theories without providing context or demonstrating how the material can be utilised in real-life scenarios. By bridging the gap between theory and practical application, teachers can foster a deeper understanding and engagement among students." (Setsuko)

> "I found it uninteresting or boring when teachers discussed their ideologies about life, such as how young people should conduct themselves or the importance of study in students' future." (Yurie)

11.2.4. The dominance of teacher views

Teacher talk can be a tool for suppression. Two students in this study express aversion to teacher-centred communication styles that prioritise teacher opinions over student input, or rely on reading quotes without adding value. Engaging students through interactive discussions and eliciting

their views is essential in creating a dynamic, inclusive learning environment that values student perspectives and encourages active participation.

This section has underscored the critical role of effective teacher communication in enhancing student engagement, clarity, and understanding. Teachers can create a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes deep comprehension and long-term educational growth by prioritising interactive and student-centred teaching methods, bridging theoretical concepts with practical applications, and fostering meaningful dialogue that values student input. Educators must be mindful of their communication approach and seek to inspire and connect with students through relevant, engaging, and practical teaching practices. One interviewee expresses such concerns:

> "I find two major problems in teacher talk: lengthy periods of teacher-centred communication through teacher opinions without sufficiently eliciting student views; and teacher reading from quotes without adding anything novel and practical." (Kazuki)

This comment on teacher talk goes well with similar evidence in a study by Bao (2023). Sayo, a Japanese student, believed that if teachers asked students to think about an issue, they should be able to follow through with that request. Sayo shared an anecdote:

> "During one class, our teacher asked us: 'What skills and qualities make a good leader?' After students tried hard to come up with their responses, one commented that a good leader should care about the opinions of others. However, the teacher acknowledged the contribution without commenting and swiftly moved to the next part of the lesson. From then on, I became less passionate about contributing to the discussion topic." (Bao, 2023: 63)

In many cases, teachers' domineering talk without following up on what students think and know represents a poor conversation. Sometimes, even when students do not respond promptly to a question, it may be worth giving a little time or finding ways to receive student input. If the teacher has decided to wait for students to prepare to participate, the outcome of that processing space has to be pursued, such as with teacher comments or in-class discussions. In other words, how teachers monitor wait time and support for cognitive processing should be as helpful as how they monitor talk. Along this line, another study by Dallimore et al. (2004) reports that students greatly appreciate teachers who take students' ideas and expand upon them, such as by inviting the other students to discuss them.

12. Students' recommendations for improving talk pedagogy

This section is a synthesis of what the participants propose to make lecturer talk more supportive of active learning. The students also shared examples of tasks which they experienced during their study in Australia, or their own suggestions of solutions for how to make lecturer talk more efficient. Below are twelve practical suggestions, which do not come from the researcher's interpretation but are summarised from participants' suggestions.

1) Foster Connection and Acceptance: Develop strong connections with students through effective communication to enhance engagement and comfort. One engaging activity could involve creating a 'connection circle' where each student shares personal reflection and peer response.
2) Ensure clarity of purpose and relevance in teacher talk to maximize class time and student acceptance of material. A practical activity could be a 'Purposeful Communication Workshop,' where students analyse and discuss real examples from volunteers who wish to share experiences connected to lesson content. In this way, teacher talk is supported by student talk.
3) Encourage a patient and supportive teacher approach that values student input to create a positive learning environment. A relevant activity could be a 'feedback forum' where students provide constructive views on the teacher's approach and suggest ways to enhance patience and supportiveness.
4) Avoid intimidating or rigid communication styles that may stifle student interaction and lead to disengagement. A beneficial activity could be a 'communication style swap' where students role-play different communication styles and discuss how each impacts engagement and interaction.
5) Effective explanations of difficult subjects and engagement with new information are key to student learning satisfaction. An engaging activity could be a 'concept exploration gallery walk,' where students collaboratively create visual representations of complex topics and explain them to their peers.
6) Teachers should strive to capture student attention through enthusiasm and interactive teaching methods to make learning enjoyable and fruitful. One dynamic activity could be a 'passion presentation day,' where students share a topic they are passionate about in an engaging, interactive way.
7) Provide reciprocal learning opportunities to facilitate active learning by listening, absorbing, and internalising insights during teacher-led

instruction. A helpful activity could be a 'reflection relay' where students summarize critical points after a teacher-led session and pass on insights to their peers, fostering active listening and engagement.
8) Prioritise engagement and interaction to enhance knowledge acquisition and create a dynamic learning experience. A common activity in Australia is 'think-pair-share' where students analyse complex scenarios individually, discuss their insights in pairs, and then share with the class, encouraging active engagement.
9) Maintain a balanced approach to teacher talk.
10) Incorporate engaging and personal discussions to keep students attentive and foster a supportive classroom environment. A 'silent debate' task could be engaging, where students express their views using written notes before discussing collectively.
11) Tailor teacher communication practices based on individual student preferences and feedback. One way to make this possible is through a 'communication preference survey' where students provide input on their preferred communication styles, and the teacher adapts accordingly.
12) Offer engaging discussions for interactive learning while ensuring focus and inclusivity to support the learning process effectively. The lecturer might organise a 'roundtable discussion' where students take turns sharing their thoughts on a topic and are encouraged to build on each other's ideas.

13. New contributions of the project to teacher talk studies

To a small extent, this research offers two notable values. First is the importance of recognising the impact of teacher talk on student well-being. Second is the awareness, if not the emphasis, of the long-term impact of teacher talk on students' desire for and commitment to learning.

13.1. The impact of teacher talk on student well-being

The impact of teacher talk on student well-being is powerful and multifaceted. Positive and supportive teacher communication can foster a sense of belonging, build trust, and create a safe and nurturing classroom environment for students. When teachers communicate effectively and empathetically, they can enhance students' self-esteem, motivation, and engagement with learning. Clear and encouraging teacher talk can help students feel valued, respect-

ed, and understood, contributing to their emotional and mental well-being. Furthermore, teachers who use constructive feedback and praise in their communication can boost students' confidence and sense of accomplishment, promoting a positive attitude towards learning and academic success. Conversely, negative or demeaning teacher talk can have detrimental effects on student well-being, leading to feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, and disengagement from learning. Therefore, teachers' language and tone play a crucial role in shaping students' overall well-being and educational experience.

13.2. Awareness of the long-term impact of teacher talk on students' futures

The long-term impact of teacher talk on student desire for and commitment to learning is profound and enduring. Effective teacher communication that is engaging, encouraging, and supportive can significantly influence students' motivation and passion for learning. When teachers use positive and inspiring language, they can instil a sense of curiosity, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation in students, fostering a lifelong love for learning. Furthermore, constructive feedback, meaningful discussions, and personalized encouragement from teachers can enhance students' self-efficacy and belief in their abilities, leading to increased perseverance and dedication to their academic goals. Teacher-student solid relationships built on open communication and mutual respect can create a nurturing learning environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to achieve their full potential. On the other hand, negative or discouraging teacher talk can diminish students' intrinsic motivation, hinder their desire to learn, and erode their commitment to academic pursuits in the long run. Therefore, the quality of teacher talk plays a critical role in shaping students' long-term attitudes, aspirations, and dedication to learning throughout their educational journey.

14. Concluding insights

The exploration of Japanese students' perceptions of lecturer talk in an Australian university setting has unveiled a spectrum of insights into the dynamics of effective and ineffective teacher communication. The first section highlights the transformative power of positive lecturer talk, demonstrating how engaging communication strategies can foster comprehension, engagement, and active participation among students. By leveraging personal anecdotes, real-world applications, and interactive discussions, teachers can cre-

ate a stimulating learning environment that resonates with students and enhances their learning experiences. On the other side, the negative impacts of unhelpful lecturer talk, characterized by poor clarity, lack of interaction, and disconnected teaching approaches, underscore the critical need for educators to prioritize effective communication strategies that promote student engagement, comprehension, and inclusivity.

As the voices of Japanese students shed light on the importance of teacher-student communication in the learning process, their practical recommendations for improving lecturer talk pedagogy serve as valuable insights for educators seeking to cultivate a supportive and engaging learning environment. From fostering connections and embracing student input to tailoring communication practices based on individual preferences, these recommendations emphasize the importance of student-centred, interactive, and inclusive teaching approaches. By adopting these suggestions and fostering meaningful dialogue in the classroom, educators can create a transformative learning environment that promotes engagement, comprehension, and long-term educational growth for all students. Ultimately, the collaboration between students and teachers in enhancing the discourse of lecturer talk can enrich the educational experiences and outcomes of diverse learners, transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries to create a dynamic, inclusive, and impactful learning environment.

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Japanese students contributing to a pro-verbalisation pedagogy

Investigating the perspectives of three individual Japanese learners of English from a university in Japan on the nature of their classroom reticence, this project highlights the voices of silent learners who yearn to speak. Unfortunately, silent student perspectives often go unheard in the classroom and are under-reported in research studies. We intended to search out these silent 'pro-talk' voices and investigate conditions that might assist these students in (a) moving away from reticence, (b) increasing verbal communication, and (c) developing their verbal English proficiency. Drawn from in-depth interview data and to contribute to English language teaching (ELT) pedagogy, the following article outlines strategic ways of assisting the learning of quiet students who do not wish to be silent anymore. Although, in their ideology, these students yearn for a verbally proactive classroom process, they often experience verbal limitations in the everyday classroom. While on the outside, these students seem to be peacefully quiet, within each, there is an accumulation of feelings and thoughts that cause internal tension and, at times, intense disappointment. For this study, we have labelled these silent students as

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'pro-verbalisation learners'. Speaking entirely in Japanese, the three pro-verbalisation learners in this study shared critical views toward undesirable classroom processes and offered possible solutions to improve limitations in existing classroom methods. According to these students, ideal conditions for verbal change can only occur if the teacher is willing to modify their pedagogy to establish new participation rules, ease classroom tension, nurture peer cohesiveness, and build verbally supportive elements into the learning process.

Keywords: reticence, talk, pro-talk, pro-verbalisation, classroom culture, pedagogy

Słowa kluczowe: powściągliwość, rozmowa, rozmowa aprobująca/wspierająca, werbalizacja aprobująca/wspierająca, kultura klasy, pedagogika

1. Scope of the study

This article reports three case studies conducted at a Japanese university on how silent learners of English aspire to switch to a more verbal learning mode for their good, based on their belief that English language communication must involve verbal discussion. At the start, we surveyed 1st and 2nd year Japanese students of English (n=116) who were enrolled in a compulsory Listening & Speaking course at a private university in Japan. After collecting data regarding learning behaviour and aspiration, the study identified three individuals who wished to talk about their undesirable silence and the need to speak up more for their learning benefit.

The voices of these students, who are quiet learners but who dream about achieving high verbal proficiency in English through practice, were captured through in-depth interviews. In the discussion, they will be called "pro-talk" silent learners. We felt this label was apt because although these students exhibit quiet behaviour during classroom learning, they expressed the need to break away from such silence. The data generated from individual interviews with these participants point to a set of ideal conditions for verbal participation to take place. Moreover, these conditions suggest the importance of establishing classroom practices that make it easier for silent learners who desire to move out of silence and toward active verbal participation. While some learners consider silence an essential element in verbal exchanges (Bao, 2014), these learners do not.

2. What pro-verbalisation means

Pro-verbalisation pedagogy is not an established term in the discourse. The authors coined it to denote a specific concept that remains under-explored in language education. Most of the time, pedagogy across all education disciplines promotes teaching approaches that foster verbal interaction (Glew, 1998; Tatar, 2005). Recent education research, however, discovers that effective learning does not always embrace speech but, in many cases, takes place during student silence (Bao, 2014; Bellino, 2016; Caranfa, 2004). It is learned that advanced language proficiency can be achieved through either active verbalisation or active mental processes. Some silent learners (those who rarely participate in class discussions) are content with their quiet behaviour and do not wish to change it. Others, in the meantime, hope to move away from silence and speak out if classroom conditions (which include pedagogical, cultural, and social dimensions) allow them to do so. Unfortunately, many teachers do not know how to make these conditions happen, since methods to assist the speaking of individuals are not universal. Depending on personality and learning style, every student would prefer specific ways of being helped to participate. As Shachter (2023) recommends, based on empirical research, it is helpful to develop a social network and support system to respond to student learning needs. Such an opportunity allows one to explore potentials one might not have known before (Walejko & Stern, 2022).

This case study focuses on the voices of silent learners who wish for a pedagogy to minimise their silence. We shall refer to this group as pro-verbalisation learners or pro-talk; their silence will be seen as reticence. While silence is a neutral concept, reticence means undesirable silence. The reason for selecting this group for research (through the help of a survey that will be presented later) is because their perspectives are currently under-researched. Many studies designed to help students speak often rely on a teacher or researcher perspective, that is, what teachers and scholars perceive as helpful for student learning, such as research by Alerby and Brown (2021), Liu and Martino (2022), Webster (2022), Zebdi and Monsillion (2023) that observes quiet children from scholarly angles, by Lees (2022) that examines silence in a therapist stance, by Huynh and Adams (2022) that investigate adult learners from a teacher perspective, among many others. This article, however, chooses to do the opposite by asking students to say what pedagogy they need to move them to a more verbal learning mode.

3. Discourse on scholarly perceptions of reticence

Many language teachers love seeing their students actively participate in classroom discussions because such collaboration can illuminate comprehension, motivation, classroom dynamics, mood, etc. A teacher's expectation of "active participation" can be established when a language teacher throws the class into the "deep end" (i.e., simply asking questions and unconditionally waiting to hear student responses without scaffolding). As research shows, students can be guided in a scaffolding process by teachers connecting silence and speech with task types (Bao, 2020; Bao & Ye, 2020). When hit with a wall of silence, teachers may become confused, annoyed, or even embarrassed (Harumi, 2011). At the very least, an outside observer may perceive increased classroom tension (King, 2013). To compound this tension within silence, teachers are left "exposed," so to speak, because they cannot possibly understand what is happening in every student's mind (Maher, King, 2020). Consequently, it is difficult to employ "pro-talk" strategies with a broad brush (i.e., catering to both individuals and the class as a whole). In summary, tensions occurring within silent incidents may stem from *what teachers want* rather than from the need to comprehend *what students w*ish.

This disconnect between students and teachers can be exacerbated when expectations are contrary. For instance, at the beginning of a lesson (or learning point), a Western-trained educator may expect that teacher prompts should be followed by quick student responses (Panova, Lyster, 2002; Wang, Loewen, 2016). These prompts and, to a lesser extent, the reactions (whether correct or not) are often used to help a teacher gauge understanding or skill level. Moreover, prompts are frequently utilized to help students contextualize learning points (e.g., If you had $1,000,000, what would you buy?). This contrasts the Japanese learner perspective, for example, whose priority is to give the 'correct' response – regardless of the time needed to produce the result (Saito, Ebsworth, 2004). Recognising such subjectivity in teacher positioning, many scholars have investigated silence from a learner perspective, and have found that learner resistance to speech falls into four significant categories, namely linguistic, cultural, sociopsychological, and academic challenges.

Research that reveals learners' undesirable silence due to weak linguistic proficiency in the target language includes projects focusing on Korean students in the U.S. (Lee, 2009; Choi, 2015; Kim, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), international students in Canada (MacIntyre, Noels, Clément, 1997), and Chinese students in Canada (Karas, Faez, 2020). These studies recognise that students withdraw from openly expressing themselves simply

because they cannot speak the target language. Students are aware that their English is flawed, broken, and slow. Their emotion is filled with worry about error-making and fear of being unfavorably judged.

Research that identifies learner silence as part of cultural norms has been conducted on: Chinese students in the U.S. (Liu, 2002), Asian international students in Australia (Tani, 2005), Korean students in the U.S. (Lee, 2009; Choi, 2015), Japanese students in Japan and Australia (Nakane, 2006), Chinese students in the in the U.S. (Reid, Trofimovich, 2018), students in China (Wang, 2011), students in Japan (King, 2011), students in Indonesia (Santosa, Mardiana, 2018), and students in Vietnam (Nguyen A., 2002; Nguyen H., 2002; Yates, Trang, 2012). These studies conclude that students who move from one society to another would tend to bring their previously established behaviour with them. Those who used to be quiet in the classroom in their home country might not effortlessly become articulate in a new educational context regardless of the new expectation for verbal activeness.

Research that highlights learner silence as a response to socio-psychological factors comes from studies in classrooms in the U.S. (Howard, James, Taylor, 2002), on Korean students in the U.S. (Kim, 2013), on Chinese students in the U.K. (Gallagher, 2013), in classrooms in Poland (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, Pawlak, 2014), in Canadian classrooms (MacIntyre, Gardner, 1994; Peirce, 1995), in Turkish classrooms (Turnbull, 2019); on Spanish learners of ESL in the U.S. (Steinberg, Horwitz, 1986; Auster, MacRone, 1994), and various American classroom contexts (Coombs, Park, Fecho, 2014). These studies explain that student silence can be the consequence of an unbalanced power relationship (Bosacki and Talwar, 2023; Turnbull, 2021), public-speaking apprehension (Karas and Uchihara, 2021; Shachter & Haswel, 2022), the feeling of isolation (Musaio, 2022), the inability of authentic self-expression (Umino, 2023), and unfamiliarity with socialisation rules in a new environment (Bao & Thanh-My, 2020) as well a lack of teacher-student bonding and community cohesiveness (Maher, 2021; Petrova, 2021).

Research that emphasises silence as a matter of struggle in coping with academic pressure is found in projects in Indonesian classrooms (Fadilah, 2018), in Pakistani classrooms (Syed, Kuzborska, 2020), and in Japanese classrooms (Yashima, MacIntyre, Ikeda, 2018), among others. These projects connect student quietness in the classroom with the overwhelming requirements of new academic skills, foreign-language medium of instruction, new participation rules, and the pressure of peer competition during classroom discussions.

Research that recognises learner silence as resistance to uninspiring lesson content comes from a study focusing on native English speakers enrolled in an American university-intensive graduate business school

communication class (Dallimore, Hertenstein, Platt, 2004). Other research that constructs more than one view on reticence can be found in studies that look at a mismatch in teacher and student expectations (Bao, 2002; Harumi, 2010). Results show that different students might exhibit conflicting views on what drives them to remain quiet in the classroom.

These studies highlight the specific challenges of learner reticence in the learning environment. Nevertheless, while the discourse covers a range of dimensions that illuminate various causes and the nature of students' resistance to verbal participation, the role of teacher practice in perpetuating such reticence seldom receives a strong focus. Instead, most pedagogical recommendations tend to come briefly at the end of every discussion, often as additional thoughts rather than as the main argument. In response to the gap, this article will counterweigh such inattentiveness to teacher roles. Informed by interview data, we have discovered that learner reticence in the case study originates from lack of everyday support in classroom settings. Participant voices indicate that teacher pedagogy would have the power to create changes through a clear understanding of the assistance and concrete teaching strategies students most needed .

4. Rationale for focusing on Japanese language learners (LLs)

While it is true that Japanese L.L.s are sometimes grouped with other Confucian-heritage learners in studies that investigate learner communicative behavior in the university classroom (Woodrow, 2006), research focusing specifically on Japanese university L.L. silence has increased in recent years (Humphries et al., 2020; Maher, King, 2020; Maher, 2021). In our view, the increased attention on Japanese silent behavior in the classroom (as opposed to large-scale studies that include a range of Confucian-heritage learners) indicates that Japanese university L.L. student silence may be increasing.

Falling proficiency levels (or perhaps motivations to become proficient in English) in Japan may explain why this is the case. For example, while other countries in Asia have steadily increased their English proficiency (Singapore is currently ranked 4th in the world), Japan's English proficiency rating has dropped considerably (14th in 2011 to 78th in 2021) (E.F. English Proficiency Index, 2021). To be clear, the goal of this study is not to investigate the correlation between English proficiency and Japanese L.L. student silence. It explores how Japan seems to be moving in a different linguistic direction (in relation to English globalism) compared to neighboring countries like The Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, and China. We agree with other researchers

that student silence in Japan continues to be a prevalent influence in university language classrooms.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research location

We collected data at a private university in Kyushu, Japan, to further investigate student silence in Japanese university language classrooms. At this university, all 1st and 2nd year students (regardless of major) are required to earn 8 credits of compulsory English (4 credits Reading & Writing, 4 credits Listening & Speaking). If 8 credits are not earned during the two-year window, students can take remedial English classes each term to satisfy the requirement. Language courses are primarily delivered within a department named the "Language Education and Research Center" (LERC). Because of (a) the large number of students taking compulsory English and (b) the university's emphasis on research aimed to strengthen the language curriculum, students are accustomed to being asked to volunteer in research that has investigated a broad spectrum of issues (e.g., motivation, interest, textbook design, pedagogical strategies, learner anxiety). Perhaps the university is best known for researching motivation (Fryer et al., 2016) and interest (Fryer, 2015) because many students dislike the compulsory requirement and consequently display low motivation and disinterest in English.

5.2. Survey Participants

In the winter term of 2021 we surveyed 116 Japanese L.L.s (M=73, F=43) who were recruited from 4 classes (two 1st-year and two 2nd-year) at the LERC. When entering the university, all students take a university-specific English proficiency test, and based on these results, students are divided into 3 levels. The students in this data collection were classified at the top level. Level 3 students are considered at the A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). A2 is the second lowest of the CEFR's six proficiency levels. At the A2 level, students have sufficient skills for tourism and basic conversations but are not yet ready for academic study or the use of English media. The 4 classes represented various majors, including Art, Science, Engineering, Architecture, Economics, International studies, and so on. Students were given the survey during the first class of the winter term. Because of COVID-19, previous English courses had

been delivered via Zoom. At the time of the survey, students had not received face-to-face instruction at a university level.

5.3. Overview of survey

To address the complexity of silence in Japanese university classrooms, our survey investigated (a) individual learning styles, (b) classroom behaviours, and (c) student-perspectives, as they pertain to "ideal" conditions for language development. All questions were crafted within our investigative scope, which pertained to the causes, frequency, and impact of silent incidences in Japanese university English-language classrooms. In the survey (data will be presented later in the paper), there were twelve 10-point Likert questions, two short-answer questions, and 2 open questions, which elicited long-form answers. The survey's primary purpose was to identify a pool of potential interviewees. Focusing on ideal behaviour for English language development in English classrooms, our goal was to classify students who identified as 'pro-silent,' 'both,' or 'pro-talk.' The survey results informed our selection criteria and helped pinpoint ideal candidates for our qualitative data (in-depth interviews). Students were first categorized by their Likert scores, and then a pool of 18 students was chosen, based on their short and long-term answers. From there, we narrowed our search to 9 students (3 from each category) to equally represent sex and age.

5.4. Interview data collection

We organized 27 questions linearly within a framework of 5 categories: (1) Peer work (e.g., What kind of people do you work well with?), (2) Self-contradiction (e.g., You say that you should speak to achieve proficiency, so why do you remain silent?), (3) Ideal learning conditions (e.g., What are the best opportunities to speak/ stay silent?), (4) Tension in the learning process (e.g., Are there factors which are impeding you?), (5) Changes over time (Have you always thought/acted this way?).

Using the 5 categories as a base, the 27 questions were written in English and then translated into Japanese by our R.A., a professional Japanese interpreter/ translator. The R.A. was instructed to go through the questions in order and to say the number of each question before asking the participant. This helped when coding and grouping the answers from the Zoom recording. The R.A. was also instructed to automatically ask follow-up questions (e.g., Why? Could you give an example?) to elicit detailed responses. If

a participant expanded on an answer that covered subsequent questions, the R.A. was directed to skip questions. During the 3 interviews, all 27 questions were unnecessary to cover the 5 categories (i.e., participants were detailed in their responses, allowing us to skip questions).

Participants were offered blocks of available time on Zoom and voluntarily signed up for the most convenient times in their schedules. When entering the Zoom room, the participants were again informed by the R.A. (in Japanese) that the interview was voluntary and that responses may be included in a future academic publication. The interview commenced with Question 1, and each interview lasted about 22 minutes. The students seemed to be open to questioning and gave detailed responses. 'Mari' seemed especially interested in the topic (as was noted by the R.A.). After the participants left the Zoom room, the Zoom meeting was closed to export the audio and video files. Occasionally, some internet connection issues caused minor delays, but generally speaking, the technical aspect of the recording over Zoom was smooth.

After exporting the audio files, the Mp4 was uploaded to the transcription service "Sonix." The R.A. reviewed the transcriptions (while listening to the recordings) and made corrections (in Japanese) as required. The R.A. estimated that Sonix produced a 60% accurate transcription, so considerable time was dedicated to ensuring that the Japanese transcripts were accurate. Once the transcriptions were ready, we used the translation application Deepl to translate Japanese into English. Once again, the R.A. reviewed the translations and deemed that the accuracy was closer to 85–90%. As such, there was less time needed to adjust translations.

5.5. Qualitative Analysis

Informed by the quantitative results of our survey, this project followed the protocols of a critical qualitative case study, whose methodological choice serves in-depth analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and which is informed by a constructivist, interpretive perspective to bring out the potential complexity of the issue in question (Bryman, 2012). Data generation, analysis, and interpretation take on critical features of a post-qualitative research tradition (St. Pierre, 2013), (Thomas & Bellingham, 2020), in which theorisation is developed with the help of metacognitive thinking (Flavell, 1979), reflexivity and self-knowledge (Ellis, 2009; Saldaña, 2018). At the same time, the study is inspired by Husserl's (1931/2013) oeuvre on phenomenology in the need for bracketing, which means the researcher must bracket themselves from their participants to avoid potential bias-and to stay as neutral as possible.

The method for data handling is abductive thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, 2006) combined with creative theorising (Swedberg, 2014). Abductive thematic analysis is a process in which the research goes back and forth between data and relevant theory to achieve the most practical theorisation possible (Braun, Clarke, 2006). The six phases of conducting thematic analysis include familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing findings; we made a system comprising seven steps that include overviewing data for an overall impression, identifying themes, coding themes, elaborating themes, numbering themes, selecting illuminating quotes, and connecting themes or joining the dots. (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Below is what we performed in each stage.

Overviewing data for an overall impression—We read data the first time to get an overall impression of the tone of what is said. The purpose is to see the participants' positions regarding what areas they support and what areas they resist.

Identifying themes – We reread data to find critical issues or themes. These issues are identified first of all through words and concepts that are mentioned repeatedly (such as 'joyful', 'mood', 'tense', 'good,' 'perfect,' etc. in the data of this report); secondly through synonymous words (such as 'don't like,' 'nervous,' 'uncomfortable,' 'not interesting,' 'not good' in this data); thirdly through ideas that seem to deeply bother or interest the participant (such as their recurring resistance to the behaviour of the class, their constant desire to practice speaking, their desperation towards the way peers treat their participations. These moments occur multiple times throughout the whole interview).

Coding themes – We give names to every issue. This will require either imagination or knowledge of the relevant discourse. For example, when the participant describes how they struggle to phrase English sentences in their head and how they suffer from the pressure of having to come up with good ideas simultaneously, I capture that phenomenon as 'tension between cognitive and linguistic loads.'

Elaborating themes – We explain and interpret the nature of every issue. Based on various things the participants say (they usually do not say something just one time but tend to go over it with consideration of word choice and idea formulation), I gather different clues to understand what they mean. For example, when Mari describes that she is 'not good at English' but tries to 'paraphrase a lot' in her head, working hard to decide and finalise 'what' she wants to 'say,' delaying as she cannot say 'anything right away,' and feeling that her 'presentation has to be perfect,' I put all these ideas together and narrate her process of what is involved in her attempt to

reach perfection in her verbal performance. That process is constituted by a cognitive, linguistic, and social nature. I describe it as such because I am sure I can collect specific words to string all these elements together.

Numbering themes –Once I have identified, understood, and named an issue, I give it a number and put a page number next to it. The issue number will help me decide which dot point will go into the report, and the page number allows me to come back and read further if I have any doubts about the meaning.

Selecting illuminating quotes—We decided what to quote in our study report. Immediately after performing step 5 above, we underline key expressions and sentences that seem to help demonstrate the lively voice and attitude of the participants. We make sure that for every issue, we have at least one if not more than one, direct quote from the raw data. We also edited the participants' words slightly when the grammar seemed inaccurate.

Connecting the dots – We looked for and established associations among themes. This is made possible by rereading all the points to determine the links which may fall into these three types. One, we identify themes that can be collapsed together logically. Two, we decided which themes could be grouped under the same categories. We used numbers, signals, or arrows to indicate such systematic choices. We also created a mind map to write the data analysis report.

Our data interpretation also incorporates three steps in theorising (Swedberg, 2016). The theory includes observation, conceptualisation, and explanation. Theorizing often comes before theory, and emphasizes the significance of prior theoretical understandings of a particular field, so that the researcher can avoid conducting the research from nothing and falling into the trap of reinventing the wheel (Swedberg, 2016). This way of working is known as a constructivist, interpretive paradigm that stresses the inter-dependence and dynamics of social phenomena (Bryman, 2012), whereby we work simultaneously deductively and inductively by oscillating between "theory in the clouds" and "data on the ground" (Lingard, 2015: 187–188).

Quantitative analysis

Table 1 below presents the findings (n=116) from 12 Likert questions. Investigating within the scope of "pro-talk" versus "pro-silence" in an English language classroom in Japan, these questions were designed to ascertain learning style, learning preferences, insights on processing information, interactional preferences, creative thinking, generating ideas (quality and quantity), and so on. Mean, standard deviation (S.D.), and internal consistency were calculated using SPSS. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was .74—a score considered within the acceptable range of .70 –

.90 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Notwithstanding question 2 (SD 2.5), all items could be rounded down to an SD of 2.0. Likert questions were prefaced with "on a scale of 1 to 10" with specific definitions of 1 and 10 according to each item. The question details and mean scores are presented below.

6. Findings

Quantitative

Table 1. Survey findings

1. What kind of language learner are you? Don't like speaking (1). Like Speaking (10).	**Mean score** 4.3
2. What is the ideal way to learn English? When you're listening, thinking in silence (1). When talking in English with others (10).	5.5
3. Is it easier to process information when you are studying English? When silent (1). When talking (10).	4.8
4. The only way to learn to speak English well: Take time to think in silence (1). Talking to/with another person (10).	7.9
5. The ability to generate quality ideas in English: When I'm silent (1). Talking to/with another person (10).	6.4
6. Creative thinking is enriched in English through: Quietly listening to others (1). Talking to/with another person (10).	6.9
7. What kind of person do you want to interact/communicate with in English class? Quiet person (1). Talkative person (10).	7.2
8. If the other person is silent during English class: It is important not to ask direct questions but to guess the reason for their silence (1). To understand why they are silent, it is important to ask questions (10).	6.7
9. In my experience, the most painful and uncomfortable part of an English class is... When I'm silent (1). When I'm speaking (10).	6.3
10. I can collaborate well in English class with: Silent people (1). Talkative people (10).	7.5

Table 1 – cont.

11. The only way to get more ideas in English: Silently thinking (1). Talking with others (10).	7.4
12. The quality of your thinking when you think in English depends on: The quality of silence (0). The quality of conversations with others (10).	6.4

Findings from our survey reveal that students view a 'pro-talk' mindset as conducive to positive language learning outcomes. However, results from item 9 (In my experience, the most painful and uncomfortable part of an English class) suggest that although speaking in English class is ideal, students are cognizant of uncomfortable incidences that may occur more during classroom interactions. In the survey, we also asked students directly whether they were verbal or reflective learners. Table two displays the results of this question:

Table 2. Verbal or reflective learner (n=116)

Verbal	66–56.8%
Reflective	33–28.4%
No Answer	11–9.4 %
Both	6–5.1%

While the majority of students in our survey classify themselves as 'pro-talk,' there is data to suggest (e.g., Likert questions 1 & 9) that many students may feel uncomfortable speaking. This tension between one's *ideal language-learning self* and the reality of what a learner may negatively experience in class requires more examination. As such, we identified 9 students for in-depth interviews (3 pro-talk, 3 both, 3 pro-silence). This paper will explore the viewpoints of the 3 pro-talk interviewees. Before sharing the findings of the interviews, we will briefly provide a general overview of the 3 pro-talk interviewees.

Rationale for interest in the 'pro-talk' group

Of the twelve 10-point Likert questions, the question with the highest or lowest average score (7.9) was question four: The only way to learn English well: (1) take time to think in silence – (10) talk to another person. From the mean score it seems that the class seems to agree that active communication will facilitate language development, and the class views a "pro-talk" attitude as ideal. However, when asked what kind of language learner they

are currently (from a scale of (1) don't like speaking – (10) like speaking), the class average was 4.4. Results from the survey indicate that Japanese students do not view silence as a facilitator of language development. We found this interesting because (as we argued in the background section of this paper) silence in Japanese university language classrooms seems to be increasing. Using this dichotomy as a springboard, we endeavored to learn more about learners who identified as "pro-talk." We were interested in "pro-talk" learner viewpoints regarding "ideal" classroom conditions for active communication.

Participant profiles

After selecting 6 potential candidates for the 'pro-talk' group, we selected 3 students, using the pseudonyms of 'Mari', 'Kenta', and 'Hiro'. As mentioned, these students were first identified as "pro-talk" via Likert scores and then selected because of more extended responses in the qualitative portion of the survey. After reading their thoughtful responses, we thought they would make ideal candidates for in-depth interviews. Mari is a 2nd-year female student in a mixed-major class (her specific major is unknown). Kenta is a 1st-year student majoring in Art. Hiro is a 1st-year male student in a mixed-major class. All three students were evaluated as having similar levels in English (the highest classification for compulsory English). Personality and classroom behaviour was relatively unknown during the interview because the spring term classes had been held on Zoom. Socioeconomic status is also unknown. However, private universities in Japan are significantly more expensive than public universities. The three students were contacted by the second author and asked to participate in an approximate 25-minute recorded interview (via Zoom) with a Japanese research assistant (RA). Students were informed that the audio and video would be recorded. They were also informed that the second author would be present in the Zoom room. Participants understood that the interview (conducted in Japanese) was utterly voluntary, would have no bearing on their grade, and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time (and/or request that data be deleted).

Qualitative

As highlighted, all 3 interviews lasted approximately 22 minutes each. No interview had to be cut short (i.e., when the last question on our list was completed, we ended the interview). The transcriptions for the male participants (Hiro and Kenta) were both 6 pages, while the transcription for the female participant (Mari) was 7 pages. At first, Hiro seemed more reserved in his answers, while Kenta and Mari appeared open and willing to speak openly from the start. Mari was perhaps the most energetic interviewee –

often elaborating on answers without cues from the R.A. In sum, the 3 interviews produced a corpus of 6,958 words. Table 3 shows favourable and unfavourable conditions for speaking. These key themes were drawn from each interview.

Table 3. Favourable and Unfavourable Conditions for Speaking according to interviewees

Name	Favourable	Unfavourable
Kenta	• Connection (through shared understanding) • Positive classroom mood/ the essential role of the teacher • English speaking *as practice* (rather than a formal assessment or learning activity)	• Unintended discouraging attitudes from listeners (e.g., silent learners with delayed responses)
Mari	• Verbal harmony • Positive classroom mood • The helpful role of acquaintances • The need for an open discussion to overcome pressure • The collaboration of a verbal learning partner	• Tension between cognitive and linguistic processing loads • Fear of being misunderstood or poorly evaluated • Unintended discouraging attitudes from listeners • Uncertain relationship with the English language
Hiro	• Teacher's role in facilitating/continuing motivation • Teacher's role in facilitating more opportunities to learn/ more interactions with foreigners/ increased exposure to foreign cultures	• issues with confidence • discouraging attitudes from listeners • teacher who is not able to guide understanding

Table 3 shows that our three pro-talk participants outlined favourable and unfavourable conditions for speaking in class (i.e., practicing verbal communication). These conditions can be broadly labeled within the categories of 'social sphere,' 'personal dynamics,' and 'interpersonal dynamics.' All three shared similar views regarding the detrimental effects of unintended/ discouraging attitudes from speaking partners. While Kenta and Mari highlighted the role of the teacher, student-student classroom dynamics were given more attention. In contrast, Hiro emphasized that the teacher's role in the classroom is the main affective factor.

Kenta expressed his need to feel connected to his speaking partner. For this to occur, (a) the teacher needs to establish ideal conditions for speaking, and (b) speaking partners must actively engage in speaking sessions. Tangentially, both Kenta and Mari agree that speaking partners need to be cognizant of their role and how their behaviour has the power to positively or negatively shift classroom dynamics. Mari spent more

time highlighting her insecurities in English class—these included linguistic and social elements. Mari also spoke of how the role of the teacher and her classmates can influence classroom dynamics and her own personal confidence levels. Of the three, perhaps Mari established the most dynamic factors with the most corresponding variables. Hiro spoke at length regarding how the teacher can influence motivation and his issues with confidence. In summary, the three participants highlighted numerous intersecting factors and variables that affect silent students in language classrooms (e.g., teacher-student, student-student, enthusiasm, motivation, and linguistic ability).

7. Emerging Themes

Tension arising from self-perception and peer dynamics

Data reveals two kinds of tension experienced by participants and suffered by others. The first kind occurs within every student (intrapersonal pressure), and the second kind is between the student and the social environment of the classroom (interpersonal pressure). Intrapersonal pressure happens due to the discrepancy between students' cognitive and linguistic processing loads; the ability to think and share that thought with the class is not at the same level, but the former tends to be higher than the latter. To come up with a good idea for sharing is already a challenge; to put that idea in a foreign language is even more demanding. The transfer from thoughts to articulation is a burden for Japanese learners with minimal exposure to English use in the real world. Mari clearly articulates this challenge:

> 'If [the language of classroom communication] were Japanese, I could somehow get through, but in English, I can't think of something to say right away. This is not to mention that when I think of an idea in English, I might easily forget it or struggle to articulate it'.

Such tension within the self, which causes students to remain quiet, becomes even more severe when students get into the habit of comparing their English proficiency with their aspired competence and with the skills of native speakers. As Hiro explains:

> 'I think I should talk in class more, but I don't think I have enough confidence in my communication skills yet, and when I see foreign people communicating so actively, I feel embarrassed as I feel I'm not good enough. When this impression takes over, I lose my enjoyment in speaking English.'

This negative self-evaluation constantly reduces confidence in communication. Hiro believes that for his confidence to increase, he would need more exposure to and more experience in international communication, rather than relying on unauthentic interaction with Japanese partners. Since Japanese students share the same mother tongue, conversing in English often feels unnatural, and many prefer communicating with native English speakers. Unfortunately, such opportunities do not come quickly, and Hiro's motivation for verbal practice has decreased.

Besides unfavourable self-perception, participants such as Hiro and Mari also fear being misunderstood or poorly evaluated by others. Mari, for example, notices that her classmates tend to underestimate her competence as they often laugh at her every little attempt to speak English. Mari feels that if she could participate frequently, her actual competence would be revealed, she would make progress, and peer negative judgement would be less likely. Unfortunately, the unfavourable classroom conditions constantly intimidate her speaking efforts. Mari resents being in a very quiet class and yearns to communicate verbally: 'I don't want to stay in a corner forever and let others make assumptions about me. I wanted to speak.'

Interpersonal pressure also occurs when participants are paired with an introverted partner who is not keen on sharing ideas. When faced with a quiet classmate, Kenta feels clumsy in communication, worried about being misunderstood and about causing embarrassment. For these reasons, he prefers being paired with a more verbal partner than himself.

> 'Why do I prefer someone talkative? I think it's because if you can converse, things can move on smoothly. When I speak, and the person doesn't respond, I am unsure how to behave. I'm afraid I will make a mistake or cause embarrassment.'

Hiro, in the meanwhile, adopts a more flexible attitude toward both articulate and silent peers. He believes that both options can bring learning benefits. Speaking of the highly verbal partnership, he comments: 'I think [that] makes the conversation go smoother, and it's easier to express my opinion.' Reflecting on his experience with silent partners, Hiro explains: 'If you don't actively talk [to silent peers], they won't open up to you. I think both [types of partners] are good because you need to find ways to know the person better.' Hiro sees a silent partner as an opportunity to speak more actively, an attribute he identified as necessary for target language improvement. With a talkative partner, he associates talkativeness with more opportunities for listening practice.

Tension in communication is highly complex, as it is caused by a range of factors, including learners' unfavourable self-perception of L2 proficiency, social constraints when peers do not show respect towards the participation of others, the gap between wishing to express complex ideas and having rudimentary speaking skills, the time taken to transfer thoughts to words, individual preferences for working with articulate partners versus quiet partners, and the fear of misunderstanding and embarrassment. While some of these factors come from the social environment of the classroom, others are related to students' specific experiences and observations. The conflict between the perception of each student and their classmates' behaviour is central in all these cases.

Research in peer dynamics concerning silence and talk has primarily focused on how the classroom climate damages learners' self-esteem, which discourages communication. Examples of such studies are adverse peer reaction (Kurihara, 2006), the challenge of social forces over learner reticence (Kim, 2004), intimidation from teacher authoritativeness (Hwang, Seo, Kim, 2010), intimidation from more eloquent peers (Cheng, 2000; Jackson, 2003, 2004; Liu, 2002; Campbell, Li, 2008), and poor learning efficiency (Hanh, 2020). The finding in this section offers additional nuances to the existing research literature by identifying learners' complex perceptions of the self. While peer actions heavily influence silence, it is also triggered by a learner comparing their abilities with others. This also happens when students compare their current competence with their goal competence, their cognitive skills with their speaking skills, and when they consider the difference in the benefits of working with silent compared with talkative partners. All of these were attributes contributing to their reticence to speak in class.

The need to reform classroom rules

All three participants wanted to see classroom rules changed to move everyone's learning style towards a more verbally active mode. They suggested:

- Explicitly requiring verbal involvement from everyone
- Developing explicit norms for participation
- Systematically teaching verbal participation strategies to students, guiding them through intensive rehearsal and positive experience.
- Obtaining consensus from all class members to a class culture where ideas are shared openly without quality judgment

To Mari, the ideal classroom behaviour would involve everyone being trained in the same self-expressive approach. She elaborates:

> 'An ideal learning environment? There is no disparity between people. It's not interesting when some speak a lot, and others don't. Instead, everyone should participate at the same level.'

Similarly, Kenta argues that verbal harmony is more important than silent harmony. This means that the ideal classroom behaviour needs to be mutually supportive of speech. In his view, effective communication involves more recurrent responses than mere instigation of a conversational topic. He believes that silent partners sometimes might cause communication to be filled with misunderstanding and embarrassment, as he reasons:

> 'If they don't answer me, I feel like I made a mistake, and then I feel embarrassed. That's why I try not to stay silent and respond actively – if I stay silent, my speaking partner will think I don't understand them.'

Mari adds that if the above ideal cannot be achieved as a whole class resolution, change can occur gradually in small groups. She also yearns for a mutually respectful classroom climate where everyone is genuinely interested in the voice of others, rather than mocking each other's contribution through irritating giggles. After all, the impact of a supportive mood on speaking does not depend on participation alone. Instead, it is contingent upon how one feels about the support from the whole class. Mari explains:

> 'I'm like a chameleon and'll match the common mood. If it is cheerful like a parrot, I will be a parrot. If it's sullen, I'll be sullen too, and I'll try to erase my presence as much as possible.'

One important reason for having agreeable classroom rules is to strengthen a positive social partnership. Along this line, Kenta strongly desires social rapport with peers beyond mere learning affiliation. Mari also emphasizes the helpful role of acquaintances in facilitating an open spirit of verbal communication. They believe that when one student is paired with another, the nature or history of their relationship dictates the ease of the conversation; that is, familiarity and mutual understanding will make the discussion comfortable. Not knowing a person's behaviour, personality, or interests tends to cause discomfort or reluctance. Mari reflects:

> 'Knowing what kind of person you're talking to is a big thing. When I was in high school, I knew what kind of person each classmate was and could tune myself to their way. In university, however, people are not close anymore, making me nervous, especially when I'm paired up with someone I don't know.

Mari feels uncomfortable with silence and wants an articulate learning partner. If a partner has a silent nature, there is the pressure of having to think more intensively either to make up for the lost time, or to find ways

to facilitate a conversation. She also expresses distress towards 'unintended discouraging attitudes' (in Mari's words) from listeners every time she tries to speak. In her view, the listener's attitude exerts a powerful influence over the openness of a speaker. Listeners need to be well-behaved, which means being attentive, remaining silent, and avoiding making disruptive sounds to show respect and encouragement. In Japanese culture, listening is as important as speaking. Not knowing how to listen would be as destructive as not knowing how to communicate. Any visibly critical attitudes exhibited by a listener could be discouraging to the speaker, as Mari recalls:

> '[My experiences with speech in junior high school and high school were not particularly positive]. When I gave my speech, other students just went 'oohs' and 'aahs.' [I found this behaviour very mocking, and I felt extremely uncomfortable]. [Despite this], I must continue to think about what to say. I had the feeling that I was going to keep my speech in my head forever. It would have been easier for me to speak if others were listening quietly'.

Hiro, by the same token, points out scenarios in which some peers' uncooperative behaviour impedes on communication:

> 'For example, if you're doing group work with two people, and you reject the other person's opinion outright, or if the other person doesn't listen to your opinion, or if you have a judgmental attitude.'

This finding essentially confirms what has been commonly advocated in the discourse. Arguably, every society has its own rules for how to communicate. Agreeable rules lay the foundation for communication, understanding, and mutual acceptance. Scholars who are influenced by the works of Vygotsky have unanimously agreed that language, thought, and behaviour cannot be disassociated from the values of their surroundings, but are subject to the influence of social context (Davydov, 1995; Margolis, 1996a, 1996b; Leontiev, 1981; Halliday, 1985). Furthermore, disempowerment occurs when the expected classroom interaction does not conform to learner styles, manners, and values, but is imposed on the learner through teacher authority (Hwang, Seo, Kim, 2010). As widely stated in the discourse, participation rules need to be as explicit as possible (Moeller & Ishii-Jordan, 1996).

Complying with the rules, which is part of conventional wisdom, is the key to success in verbal and non-verbal communication (Burgoon, 1983). The only new nuance in this finding is the extension from social support to strategic support. The students in the current study are concerned about being

explicitly taught verbal participation strategies, that is, intellectually and metacognitively guided, rather than only being told how to behave socially.

Making communication authentic rather than pedagogical

The data points to the need for exposure to authentic communication with international friends. Hiro desires exposure to global cultures, including content and behavioural adaptation. Although he is willing to modify his conventional learning style, such readiness exists only in his thoughts. In reality, he would wait for the teacher to assist him in making that connection. Hiro believes it is the teacher's responsibility to remind students *why* they are studying English and *how* to use these skills abroad or when interacting with foreigners in Japan. He argues that if a teacher does not emphasise such motivation and trigger students' practical needs, unhealthy silence will persist in the classroom. Hiro explains:

> 'What do I think teachers should do for their students? I think I'd like to know more about the appeal of English or the benefits of being able to do these things if you can speak English.'

Hiro has the impression that foreigners often interact more actively than Japanese; thus, keeping to Japanese communication conventions would not help. He sees the teacher's role as creating learning opportunities to prepare students for international interaction and exposure to other cultures. He recalls:

> 'When I see foreign people, I imagine they are more active in communication. I once worked with a Nepalese person as a part-time job, and he was very active in talking to me.'

Moreover, Hiro thinks that teachers should not 'force' students to practice but rather inspire students and provide them with opportunities for language practice. Such opportunities would include, for example, inviting international guests to the class, setting up language exchange sessions through Skype, and organising excursion tours outside of the classroom for authentic interaction with non-Japanese. He elaborates:

> 'Do I think it's good for me and the class to feel the pressure to speak English? No, I don't think so. I think there is a big difference between being forced to do something and doing it voluntarily... I think the ideal environment is to communicate with people from abroad and overseas.'

Along the line of learning inspiration, there is the need to bring enjoyment into language practice. All the participants believe that the nature of English-speaking practise needs to be rethought. Kenta stated that he became more serious about studying English when preparing for college entrance exams. However, he sees classroom speaking activities as enjoyable practice, rather than opportunities to acquire new knowledge. In this way, speaking practice is a barometer for what has been learned so far. All other studies (such as learning writing and vocabulary) prepare one for the litmus test of the speaking experience. As he argues:

> 'Why was English speaking practice fun? I think it's a sense of accomplishment. I think it's because it's easy to demonstrate the knowledge you've gained. I don't know what to say about writing; it's a direct way to prepare for exams, but the other half is just for fun. I do it because it's fun.'

Among the causes of anxiety influencing Japanese students are their inexperience with Western teaching methods, the teacher's demeanor and attitude, students' shy personalities, and evaluation paradigms associated with an activity, such as learning for exams (Maftoon, Ziafar, 2013). Kenta feels that a great deal of tension will be removed if an activity is not graded.

Very much of the discourse in ELT recommends being aware of communication styles in local cultures (Franks, 2000). While authenticating local behaviour is essential, one should also learn to accept variations that enrich one's life experiences. Since the alternation of talk and silence forms classroom discourse, both should be seen as components of participation (Schultz, 2009). Teachers must broaden their understanding of silence and talk in classroom interaction. If talk is permanently assigned or agreed upon by the teacher, it may not be authentic communication, but only 'allowed talk.' Sometimes, if the teacher finds the act of whispering among peers (which could be learning-related) disruptive to the lesson, this narrow interpretation could create a false assumption about students' learning styles and ability, which could result in inappropriate pedagogical decisions.

Language teachers are often trained to work with talk, such as organising discussions, raising questions and responding to ideas. Since it is uncommon for teacher development programmes to explore the use of silence, it often becomes confusing when many teachers encounter this phenomenon in the everyday educational setting and so silence quickly interferes with pedagogy. For this reason, teachers and learners should develop sensitivities for timely talk, or silent reflection, in response to changing needs and classroom conditions. As a tool for both learning and communication, silence should be cognitively functional and socially authentic, that is, functioning

well in the classroom and making sense in the broader social context of L2 use.

The need for pedagogical modification

Participants request modifications for teachers to consider, in four main areas. Precisely: changing the culture of learning, reducing tension, building social rapport, and increasing teacher support and guidance. Regarding the culture of learning, Mari sees the need for an open meta-cognitive discussion between teachers and students (i.e., discussing how to learn), as initiated and guided by the teacher, for everyone to be aware of new rules of participation and so overcome the pressure of not daring to share ideas openly. According to her, if there is pressure in the classroom climate that seems to obstruct communication, it may be helpful if the class agrees to bring this up and discuss it, with the teacher's guidance.

Kenta believes that to build a positive classroom climate, the role of the teacher is essential. He highlights how important it is for teachers to foster an ideal atmosphere for speaking practice. Most language teachers organise icebreakers at the beginning of a school term. Still, he stresses the importance of an icebreaker at the beginning of *every* speaking activity (especially if the partners do not know each other). In his view, in Japanese culture, students are used to this behavioural pattern, and when it does not occur in language classes, this adds tension. Kenta elaborates:

> 'Is there anything that makes me nervous when I do pair work? Well, I get a little bit nervous when talking to new people or when pairing up with people I've never met before, not just in English, but in a different language.'

He highlights that a sense of social connectedness must start before speaking practice. A lack of such bonding would create tension. He also highlights the role of the teacher in lowering student anxiety:

> 'I think it's important to get used to the first contact because once you start talking, the tension will go away, so it's important to have an ice breaker. So, I think it's important to have an ice breaker, a little conversation. The teacher can suggest something like this. The ideal learning environment is to be able to concentrate, but also to be able to ask questions easily.'

Kenta also said he had positive experiences with native English teachers in junior and senior high school. They created a low-stress atmosphere where students could freely ask questions or discuss topics with the teacher, making English much more fun. In fact, he sometimes encountered his

teacher on the train, and they had casual conversations. He said he was not nervous about these encounters at all.

> 'I had two native speaker teachers in my three years, and one of them was a teacher that I would run into on the train sometimes, because we would be on the morning train together, and I would be able to talk to him casually. In English, we would talk about how difficult tests were.'

Hiro emphasises that he needs increased teacher support throughout class processes:

> 'I need a teacher who teaches me what I don't understand. For example, I often hear that the pronunciation and accent of Japanese people and native speakers are different, so it would be nice if I could learn those things.'

From a practical perspective, it may be helpful for teachers to poll students before term and specifically ask them areas in which they need guidance. This may be useful because it is rare for Japanese students to instigate conversations or pro-actively ask teachers questions during class. Hiro highlights the importance of the teacher being proactive:

> 'I need a teacher who is proactive and communicative. I think that a teacher who is polite and instructive will motivate me more to learn English.'

This implies that Hiro expects a teacher to know how to help his individual learning goals. This is an exciting area of the interview and may be a cause of silence and tension between foreign teachers and Japanese students. Shared understanding is a theme often highlighted in Japanese society. Usually, Japanese people need to read the room and read between the lines to gain understanding. This is mainly to avoid insulting someone and to maintain social harmony. The next section will unpack some of the requests described above in concrete terms. These include ways of reforming classroom rules, enhancing socialisation, bringing enjoyment into language practice, and making communication authentic.

Learner contribution in the classroom decision-making process has been a classic theme in the discourse of language education (Allwright, 1984: 167; Barkhuizen, 1998: 85). There has been a strong awareness among scholars that students and teachers do not view the experience in the same way (Tomlinson & Bao, 2004). In a study of learners and teachers of Greek and French backgrounds, for example, only 20% of the teachers considered this helpful practice compared to 81% of the learners (McDonough,

2002). Similar discrepancies between teacher and learner perceptions of the usefulness of classroom activities have also been reported in numerous studies (Nunan, 1988; Williams, Burden, 1997: 201–202; Barkhuizen, 1998; Spratt, 1999). This divergence between teacher and learner perceptions has often been attributed to culturally influenced determinants of classroom behaviour. Learner voice in pedagogical practices is essential in education research because learner views would remain forever unknown without investigation, and teachers would unknowingly impose their decisions on their students. Arguably this is critical as teacher practice impacts on a learner's sense of identity.

8. Concluding remarks

Although the 'pro-talk' learners in these case studies have clear motivations for verbal participation and, by nature, also seem to be socially-minded, they feel incapable of taking the initiative to boldly change their behaviour and disregard what other classmates think about them. Instead, they need help from the teacher to facilitate an ideal learning environment.

This tension occurs on two levels: personal tension caused by participant personality, perception, and communication ideology, and public tension shaped by the learning culture, with classmates' attitudes, behaviour, and learning styles that do not favour the spoken word. Because of this, the participant suffers from an inability to participate and fear of being misjudged and misunderstood. Being part of high-context society, the Japanese students expect to be able to "read the air' in a classroom, (i.e. understand the situation without the need for words) and yet this commonly accepted cultural practice does not appear to work productively in second-language classroom settings.

Previous language-learning experiences in junior and senior high school must have made an impression on the thinking of these students, so they now know what to ask for and the ideal conditions they need to learn. Although their experiences may have been either positive (such as enjoyable communication with a native speaker in and outside the classroom), or negative (such as the lack of support from the teacher and seemingly mocking responses from classmates), some native English teachers modeled what for the students was authentic and inspiring communication, as many of them recalled these helpful learning moments. Previous experiences with Western cultures and meeting a foreigner played a motivating role in student learning. Thanks to those memories, students are aware of what effective communication looks like, and anything less than that would cause

disappointment. Together these students believe that the teacher holds the power to recreate the classes of those lovely reminiscences and enable a vibrant communicative learning style to continue. In many cases it seems that the students have quite high expectations, and teachers, who may or may not be aware of this, might need to work much harder to satisfy these legitimate needs.

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Fremdsprachenlernen in der digitalen, multimodalen Welt. Perspektive der Studierenden

Foreign language learning in the digital, multimodal world. A students' perspective

With machine learning-powered digital solutions influencing foreign language learning, it is crucial to understand students' perceptions of language learning. In this article, multiple questions related to the increasing digitalization of language are discussed. A survey design was employed in this study to understand students' preferences in institutional education versus independent learning. A total of 70 participants completed a questionnaire related to their language learning preferences. All the participants enrolled in this experiment were students of *Lingwistyka w biznesie* [Linguistics in business] at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn[1]. The results focus on how "Digital Natives" learn today, what they expect from traditional face-to-face teaching and how the education system needs to adapt to such demands.

Keywords: foreign language learning, digital technologies, multimodality

Słowa kluczowe: uczenie się języków obcych, technologie cyfrowe, multimodalność

[1] Die Auswahl der Forschungsgruppe wurde dadurch bestimmt, dass die Forscherin an der betreffenden Universität angestellt ist und Lehrveranstaltungen in dem genannten Studiengang abhielt, was ihr den direkten Kontakt zu seinen Studierenden ermöglichte.

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1. Einführung

"Our students have changed radically.
Today's students are no longer the people our educational system
was designed to teach."
(Prensky, 2001: 1)

Die Welt unterliegt einem ständigen Wandel. Einen wesentlichen Einfluss darauf hat seit einigen Dekaden die sich immer schneller entwickelnde Technologie. Das Ausmaß dessen, inwiefern sie zusammen mit dem Internet das gegenwärtige Leben der Menschen bestimmt und verändert, ist so groß, dass man es schon mit den Veränderungen vergleicht, die durch die industrielle Revolution im 18. Jh. ausgelöst wurden. Demzufolge werden die gegenwärtigen modernen Technologien nach dem Zeitalter der Elektrizität (Zweite Industrielle Revolution) und nach dem Zeitalter des Computers (Dritte Industrielle Revolution) als Vierte Industrielle Revolution bezeichnet. Schwab (2021: 10) zufolge gilt:

> In diesem prekären politischen und gesellschaftlichen Kontext sehen wir uns mit den Chancen und Herausforderungen eines Spektrums wirkmächtiger neuer Technologien konfrontiert – von Künstlicher Intelligenz über Biotechnologien und fortschrittliche Materialien bis hin zu Quantencomputern –, die unser Leben radikal verändern werden und die ich als die Vierte Industrielle Revolution bezeichne.

Sind die Folgen der Technologieentwicklung in den meisten Bereichen des menschlichen Lebens präsent, so bleibt auch das Bildungswesen von ihren Auswirkungen nicht verschont. Wie lernen junge Menschen heute, was erwarten sie vom traditionellen Präsenzunterricht und wie sollten sich die (Hoch-)Schulen und der gesamte Bildungssektor den Gegebenheiten einer zunehmend digitalisierten Welt anpassen?

Das Ziel des Beitrages ist es, die Ergebnisse einer Umfrage zu präsentieren, in der 70 Studierende des Studienganges *Lingwistyka w biznesie* (dt. Linguistik in Wirtschaft) an der Warmia und Mazury Universität in Olsztyn vor dem Hintergrund ihrer bisherigen Erfahrungen zu der bevorzugten Art und Weise des Fremdsprachenlernens 1) in der institutionellen Bildung sowie 2) beim selbstständigen Lernen befragt wurden. Die auf diese Weise gesammelten Daten ermöglichen es, eine holistische Perspektive der jungen Menschen bezüglich des gegenwärtigen Schulwesens zu erlangen sowie die Antworten auf die oben aufgeworfenen Fragen zu finden.

2. Das Konzept der Multimodalität

Die gegenwärtige zwischenmenschliche Kommunikation zeichnet sich durch große Vielfalt und zunehmende Komplexität aus. Genau diese Kombination und wechselseitige Beeinflussung unterschiedlicher semiotischer Zeichensysteme (u. a. Sprache, Bild, Ton) innerhalb eines Textes oder einer kommunikativen Handlung wird durch den Begriff Multimodalität definiert (vgl. Stöckl, 2011: 45). Wildfeuer u. a. (2020: 19) betonen Folgendes:

> Alle Formen von geschriebenem Text, gesprochener Sprache, Gestik, Mimik, Bildern, Zeichnungen, Diagrammen, Musik, bewegten Bildern, Comics, Tanz, Typographie, Seitenlayout, Intonation, Stimmqualität, etc. werden so als Ausdrucks*modalitäten* bezeichnet und Kombinationen von Elementen aus dieser Liste führen automatisch dazu, eine grundsätzlich ‚multimodale' Natur der Dinge anzunehmen.

Obwohl das Phänomen der Multimodalität der Menschheit seit jeher begegnet ist[2], wurde es erst relativ spät benannt[3], was sich in den Worten von Stöckl (2004: 9): *„Multimodality – the last discovery oft the obvious*" deutlich zeigt. Mit der natürlichen Entwicklung der Technologie veränderten sich auch die zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikationswege – sie wurden zunehmend digital. Die neuesten Medien ermöglichten es ihren Nutzer*innen, neue Kommunikationsformen zu schaffen, diese schneller zu verbreiten und intensiver in alle Lebensbereiche vordringen zu lassen (vgl. Wildfeuer u. a., 2020: 23).

Bucher (2011), einer der bedeutendsten deutschen Medienlinguisten, unterscheidet zwei Haupteigenschaften der medialen Kommunikation, und zwar: Multimodalisierung und Delinearisierung (vgl. Bucher, 2011a: 125). Der erste Begriff beschreibt „de[n] Gebrauch und die Kombination verschiedener semiotischer Modi – Sprache, Design, Fotos, Film, Farbe etc." (Bucher, 2011a: 132). Der zweite Begriff bezieht sich auf die diskontinuierliche Anordnung und den Zusammenhang dieser Elemente (vgl. Bucher, 2011a: 140). In Anbetracht dessen kann man die medialen Kommunikationsformen, dem Autor folgend, als dreidimensional bezeichnen. Sie sind:

[2] Als die ursprünglichste Form der Multimodalität kann man die ersten Gespräche zwischen zwei Menschen bezeichnen, da sie neben der sprachlichen Modalität auch andere Modalitäten wie: Gestik, Mimik oder Tonfall umfassten (vgl. Stöckl, 2004: 9; Maćkiewicz, 2017: 33; Wildfeuer u. a., 2020: 11).

[3] Das Wort *multimodality*, von dem sich das deutsche Wort Multimodalität ableitet, tauchte in der englischsprachigen Literatur zum ersten Male an der Wende vom 20. zum 21. Jahrhundert auf (vgl. Maćkiewicz, 2016: 19). Wie die Autorin jedoch in Anlehnung an Michalewski (2009: 7) hervorhebt, war dieses Wort in Form eines Adjektivs in der französischsprachigen Literatur noch früher (schon in den 70er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts) präsent (vgl. Maćkiewicz, 2016: 19).

1. *multimedial*, indem sie verschiedene Mediengattungen wie Print, Hörfunk, Fernsehen verbinden,
2. *multimodal*, indem sie gleichzeitig verschiedene semiotische Kodes wie Text, Sprache, Sound, Design, Layout, Farbe, Grafik, Bild, bedienen,
3. *non-linear*, insofern das Arrangement der verschiedenen Kommunikationselemente dem Rezipienten eine Selektionsleistung abverlangt (Bucher, 2011b: 113; Kursivschrift im Original).

Das Besondere am Konzept der Multimodalität ist, dass die Bedeutung solcher Kommunikate multiplikatorisch und nicht additiv konstruiert wird (vgl. Baldry, Thibault, 2006: 19; Bucher, 2011: 127; Schmitz, 2011: 34f.; Makowska, 2018: 218; Wildfeuer u. a., 2020: 18; Maćkiewicz, 2021: 19; Sierak, 2022: 136). Das stellt sowohl die Produzent*innen als auch die Rezipient*innen im Kommunikationsprozess vor große Herausforderungen. Sie müssen in der Lage sein, 1) die verschiedenen Elemente eines solchen Kommunikates zu identifizieren, 2) deren Bedeutung sowohl einzeln als auch in ihrem wechselseitigen Zusammenhang zu verstehen und 3) diese kritisch und reflektierend zu interpretieren (vgl. Wildfeuer u. a., 2020: 20; Sierak, 2022: 138). In der Fachliteratur spricht man zunehmend von einer multimodalen Kompetenz[4], die einen angemessenen Umgang mit solchen Botschaften ermöglicht.

Die gegenwärtige Studentengeneration ist im frühen 21. Jahrhundert geboren und in einem Zeitalter technologischer Entwicklung aufgewachsen. Sie sind von Anfang an mit technologischen Neuigkeiten in Berührung gekommen, weshalb sie in der Gesellschaft oft als *Digital Natives* bezeichnet werden. Dieser Ausdruck wurde erstmals von Prensky (2001: 1) gebraucht, der sich über seine damaligen Student*innen folgenderweise äußerte:

> […] the most useful designation I have found for them is ***Digital Natives***. Our students today are all “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet (Hervorhebung sowie Kursivschrift im Originaltext).

[4] Stöckl (2011: 45) spricht in diesem Falle z. B. von kognitiven und textpraktischen Tätigkeiten, die man zur Lektüre von Sprache-Bild-Texten benötigt. Zu diesen zählen u. a.:
– Sorten bzw. Typen von Bildern kategorisierend zu erkennen,
– dem Bild eine im Verwendungskontext relevante Bedeutung zuzuweisen,
– den Sprachtext im Abgleich mit der visuellen Botschaft zu verstehen,
– semantisierte Sprache und kontextualisiertes Bild zu integrieren sowie die Bildlichkeit der Sprache und der Textfläche bzw. des Schriftköpers in den Prozess des Gesamtverstehens einzubeziehen.
Mehr zum Thema multimodale Kompetenz siehe z. B. Baldry, Thibault (2006); Müller (2012).

Laut Prenksy (2001) erfordern die Digital Natives im Unterricht andere Lehrmethoden:

> They are used to the instantaneity of hypertext, downloaded music, phones in their pockets, a library on their laptops, beamed messages and instant messaging. They've been networked most or all of their lives. They have little patience for lectures, step-by-step logic, and "tell-test" instruction (Prensky, 2001: 3).

Es genügt heute nicht mehr aus, ausschließlich mit langen, rein sprachlichen Texten zu arbeiten. Studierende benötigen Aufgaben, die semiotisch komplex und interaktiv sind – ähnlich wie die Kommunikationsformen, denen sie täglich begegnen. Diese sog. multimodalen Texte, bzw. multimodalen Kommunikate (vgl. Kress, van Leeuwen, 1996: 183; Stöckl, 2011: 45; Müller, 2012: 24; Żebrowska, 2013: 183) zählen seit einigen Jahren zu den wichtigsten Formen der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation[5]. Es ist daher nicht verwunderlich, dass ihr Einsatz im Fremdsprachenlehr- und Lernprozess oft thematisiert wird (vgl. Ballstaedt, 2005; Kukowicz-Zarska, 2008; Abraham, 2009; Leitzke-Ungerer, 2009; Adamek, 2010; Jawniak, 2011; Skura, 2011; Abraham, Sowa, 2012; Abraham, 2013; Schmäling, 2014; Basińka, 2017; Szumera, 2017; Chmielewska-Molik, 2019; Gałan, Półtorak, 2019; Lütge, Owczarek, 2019; Deczewska, 2020). Auch die vorliegende Arbeit befasst sich mit dieser Thematik, jedoch mit dem Unterschied, dass sie einen ganzheitlichen (holistischen) Blick auf das Konzept wirft. Sie versucht zu erfahren, welche Funktionen die multimodalen Texte (in Form von Text-Bild-Kombinationen) gegenwärtig für junge Menschen erfüllen. Haben sie nur eine ästhetische Funktion und dienen lediglich der Unterhaltung und dem Zeitvertreib oder bieten sie auch eine nützliche Funktion, etwa beim Erlernen von Fremdsprachen? Die Antworten auf diese Fragen werden durch die Ergebnisse der nachfolgenden Umfrage beleuchtet.

3. Fremdsprachenlernen in der digitalen, multimodalen Welt – Perspektive der Studierenden

Die in diesem Abschnitt präsentierte Studie bildet einen Teil der im Rahmen einer Doktorarbeit durchgeführten Forschung, deren Schwerpunkt auf dem Phänomen der Multimodalität sowie ihrer Anwendung im Fremdspra-

[5] Das kommt u. a. darin zum Ausdruck, dass die multimodalen Texte schon als „Universalie des Medienwandels" (Bucher, 2010: 41) oder „Normallfall des Kommunizierens" (Stöckl, 2011: 47) bezeichnet wurden.

chenlehr- und Lernprozess liegt. Das Ziel der vorliegenden Studie war es, die Präferenzen der aktuellen Studierenden in Bezug auf die in der institutionellen Bildung sowie beim selbstständigen Fremdsprachenlernen verwendeten Arbeitsmittel[6] zu ermitteln. Zur Datenerhebung wurde ein Fragebogen eingesetzt. Um die Gefahr zu verringern, ein verfälschtes Bild zu erhalten, wurden die geschlossenen Fragen durch offene Fragen ergänzt und die quantitative Analyse durch eine qualitative Analyse erweitert. Die der Untersuchung zugrunde liegenden Hypothesen lauteten:

1. Visuelle Formen[7] stellen für Studierende das bevorzugte Arbeitsmittel im Fremdsprachenunterricht dar.
2. Studierende ziehen es in der Freizeit vor, Fremdsprachen mithilfe von visuellen Formen zu erlernen.
3. Die Befragten meinen, dass die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen ihre Motivation zum Fremdsprachenlernen steigert.
4. Die Befragten meinen, dass die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen es ermöglicht, neues Sprachmaterial schneller und effektiver zu erlernen.
5. Die Befragten sind der Ansicht, dass die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen die Nachhaltigkeit des neu erlernten Sprachmaterials positiv beeinflusst.

3.1. Organisation und Durchführung der Umfrage

Die Umfrage wurde auf Polnisch bearbeitet und mithilfe eines Google-Formulars in derselben Sprache erstellt[8]. Anschließend wurde ein Link generiert, der, nachdem er per MS Teams weitergeleitet wurde,

[6] Bielska (2016: 101) weist darauf hin, dass man den im Unterricht eingesetzten Mitteln viele unterschiedliche Bezeichnungen vergibt. Sie verdeutlicht: „In dem Bereich der Sprachdidaktik waren noch im vergangenen Jahrhundert viele Termini zu unterscheiden: Lehrmittel, Lernmittel, Arbeitsmittel, Anschauungshilfen, Hilfsmittel, Unterrichtshilfen oder Unterrichtsmittel, die jeweils eng mit der Funktion zusammenhingen, die sie im Lehr- oder Lernprozess zu erfüllen hatten und von wem sie benutzt wurden“. In dem vorliegenden Beitrag wird in diesem Zusammenhang der Terminus „Arbeitsmittel“ gebraucht.

[7] Da in den Umfragen der Stil und das Register der Sprache an die Art und Weise angepasst werden sollte, wie sich die Befragten gewöhnlich über die fraglichen Themen äußern (vgl. z. B. Wilczyńska, Michońska-Stadnik, 2010: 169; Smuk, 2023: 16), wurde vor allem aufgrund der Tatsache, dass der Ausdruck „multimodaler Text“ in der Gesellschaft unbekannt ist und sogar unter polnischen Linguist*innen als kontrovers erscheint, beschlossen, den Begriff „visuelle Form“ zu verwenden.

[8] Da die Studierenden unterschiedliche Sprachkombinationen lernen und einige davon kein Deutsch sprechen, wurde beschlossen, den Fragebogen auf Polnisch abzufassen. Die Antworten der Studierenden wurden für diesen Text in der Übersetzung der Autorin auf Deutsch wiedergegeben.

direkt zum Fragebogen führte. Die befragte Gruppe bestand aus Studierenden des Studienganges Linguistik in Wirtschaft (Bachelorstudium, Altersspanne: 19–25 Jahre) an der Warmia und Mazury Universität in Olsztyn, die die Sprachkombinationen Englisch/Deutsch oder Englisch/Russisch studieren. Die Umfrage wurde im Zeitraum vom 5.06.2023 bis zum 11.06.2023 online mithilfe von Smartphones durchgeführt, insgesamt nahmen 70 Studierende (49 Frauen und 21 Männer) daran teil. Die Befragung fand an der Universität in der Anwesenheit der Forscherin statt. Bevor mit dem Ausfüllen des Fragebogens begonnen wurde, wurden die Befragten gebeten, eine der beiden Fremdsprachen in Betracht zu ziehen und die Fragen aus deren Perspektive zu beantworten. Dies ermöglichte es letztlich, eine breite Vielfalt an unterschiedlichen Fremdsprachenperspektiven zu erfassen. Der Fragebogen enthielt neun Fragen, darunter sechs geschlossene, zwei offene, und eine halb-offene Frage. Für die Zwecke des vorliegenden Beitrages wurden sowohl die Fragen als auch die Antworten von der Autorin ins Deutsche übersetzt und werden im Folgenden in dieser Form dargestellt.

3.2. Analyse der Ergebnisse

Das folgende Balkendiagramm (siehe Diagramm 1) veranschaulicht, dass das Internet derzeit die beliebteste Alternative zum traditionellen Fremdsprachenlernen an der Universität darstellt. In der ersten Frage sollten die Befragten Angaben zu ihren bisherigen Fremdsprachenerfahrungen machen, also zur Art und Weise, wie und wo sie Fremdsprache(n) gelernt haben. Da die Befragten Studierende linguistischen Faches sind, war die Antwort „Schule/Universität“ (N=70) mit 100% erwartungsgemäß die häufigste. Wichtiger für die Studie ist jedoch, dass das Internet mit 87,1% (61 Personen) die übrigen Antworten deutlich übertraf und den zweiten Platz belegte. Dies zeigt, dass es fast alle Studierenden mindestens einmal genutzt haben, um eine Fremdsprache(n) zu lernen oder ihre Kenntnisse zu verbessern. Die Kategorien: „Sprachkurse im Inland“; „Nachhilfestunden mit einer*einem Lehrer*in“ sowie „Auslandsreisen“ erzielten ähnliche Ergebnisse und belegten somit den dritten Platz (jeweils: 42,9%, 40% und 40%). Auffällig ist zudem, dass „Sprachkurse im Ausland“ mit nur 4,3% (3 Personen) die am wenigsten genutzte Lernform darstellen. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass sich die aktuellen Studierenden weniger für diese Lernaktivität entscheiden, um ihre Fremdsprachenkenntnisse zu erweitern. Da es sich bei der Frage um eine halb offene Frage handelte, konnten die Befragten auch eigene Lernform(en) hinzufügen. Zu den zusätzlichen Antworten zählten: „Computerspiele“; „Filme/ Serien“, die in der Kategorie „Sonstiges“ zusammengefasst wurden.

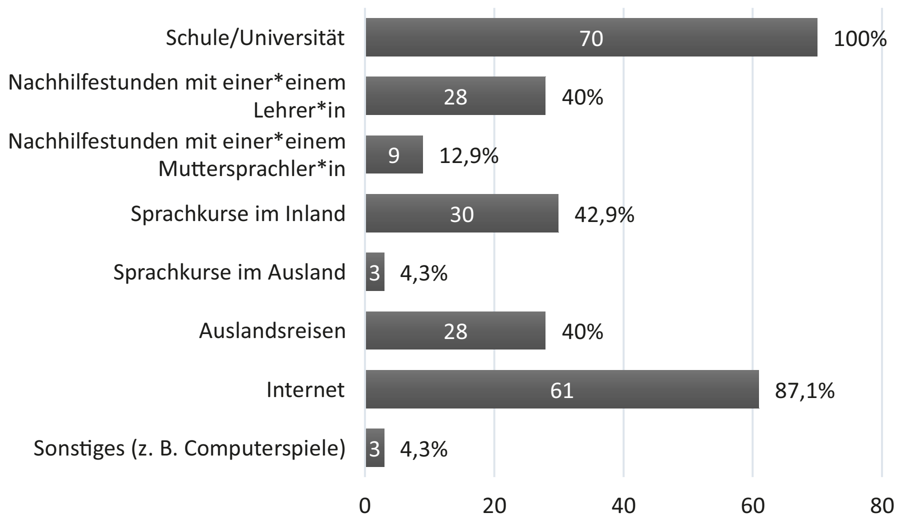


Diagramm 1. Bisherige Fremdsprachenerfahrung von Studierenden (eigene Bearbeitung auf Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

Im traditionellen Präsenzunterricht erfreut sich die Nutzung des Internets bei den Studierenden großer Beliebtheit (siehe Diagramm 2). Die Präferenzen hinsichtlich des verwendeten Arbeitsmittels wurden ermittelt, indem die Studierenden fünf genannte Arbeitsmittel: „Arbeit mit dem Kursbuch“; „Arbeit mit Multimedia“; „Arbeit mit dem Internet“; „Arbeit mit literarischen Werken“ und „Arbeit mit visuellen Formen“ auf einer Skala von 1 bis 6 bewerten sollten[9]. Dabei ergab sich folgendes Bild: Die meisten Studierenden bevorzugen die Arbeit mit dem Internet und Multimedia. Insgesamt bewerteten 47 Personen das Internet und 46 Personen Multimedia mit den Noten 5 oder 6[10], was jeweils 67% bzw. 66% der Befragten entspricht. An dritter Stelle steht die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen, die von 39 Personen (56%) positiv bewertet wurde, gefolgt von der Arbeit mit literarischen Werken, die 25 Personen (36%) bevorzugen. Auffällig ist, dass die Arbeit mit dem Kursbuch am wenigsten beliebt war. Lediglich 16 Personen (23%) zogen es vor, im Unterricht damit zu arbeiten.

Die Studierenden hatten in der folgenden, offenen Frage die Möglichkeit, detailliert zu erläutern, welches der oben genannten Arbeitsmittel ihrer Meinung nach am effektivsten sei und warum. Die Ergebnisse sind in Tabelle 1 zusammengefasst. Neben jedem Arbeitsmittel werden die am

[9] Es wurde die folgende Skala verwendet: Nummer 1 – passt mir überhaupt nicht; Nummer 6 – passt mir am besten.

[10] Beide Noten wurden bei jedem Arbeitsmittel summiert.

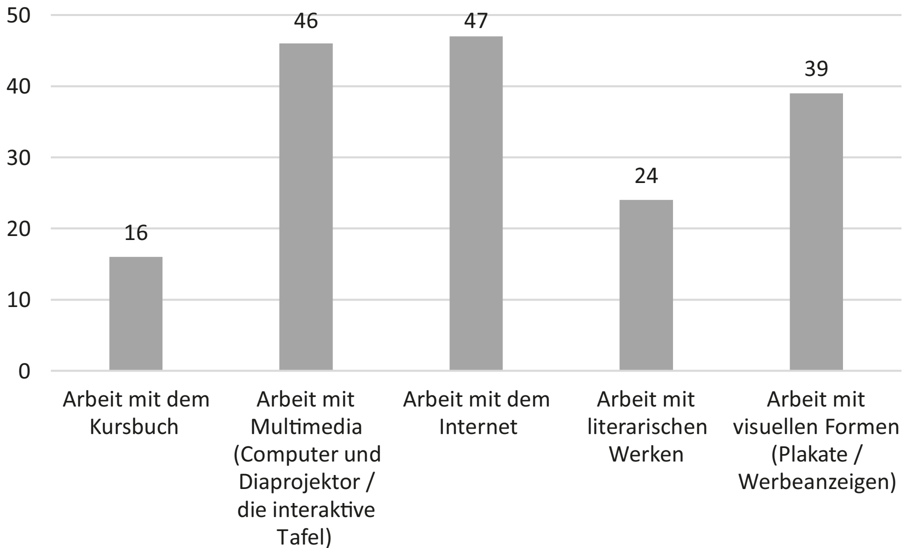


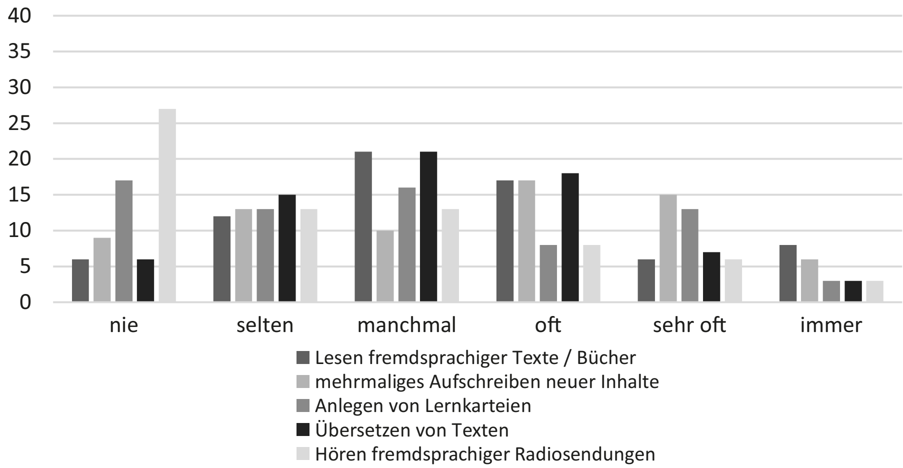
Diagramm 2. Präferenzen der Studierenden in Bezug auf das verwendete Arbeitsmittel im Fremdsprachenunterricht (eigene Bearbeitung auf der Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

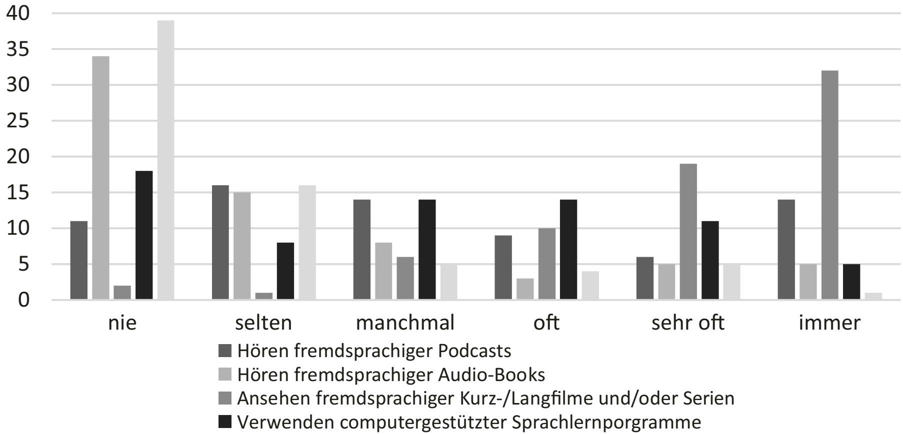
häufigsten genannten Gründe aufgeführt, wobei in Klammern die Anzahl der Nennungen angegeben ist. In der letzten Spalte werden beispielhafte Aussagen der Studierenden präsentiert, die das jeweilige Arbeitsmittel bevorzugten.

Tab. 1. Präferenzen der Studierenden bezüglich der Arbeitsmittel im Fremdsprachenunterricht – Zusammenstellung der Ergebnisse (eigene Bearbeitung auf der Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

Arbeitsmittel	Gründe	beispielhafte Aussagen
Kursbuch	alles an einem Ort (3) effektive Darstellung von Inhalten (2) geringe Fehlerwahrscheinlichkeit (1)	*„Die Arbeit mit dem Kursbuch, weil ich immer wieder ohne Probleme auf die behandelten sprachlichen Fragestellungen zurückgreifen kann und alles dort klar beschrieben ist.“* *„Die Arbeit mit dem Kursbuch als Informationsquelle – das gesamte Wissen ist dort an einem Ort gesammelt. Dadurch wird es einfacher, den Stoff zu wiederholen und den eigenen Lernfortschritt zu bestimmen.“*

Arbeitsmittel	Gründe	beispielhafte Aussagen
Multimedia	hohe Einprägsamkeit der gezeigten Inhalte (visuell orientierte Lernende) (4) Lernen mit allen Sinnen (4) fesselnd und interessant (4)	*„Die Arbeit mit Multimedia. Meiner Meinung nach ist sie am fesselndsten und ermöglicht es, Lernen mit Spaß zu verbinden.“* *„Die Arbeit mit Multimedia, weil man den dargestellten Inhalt sehen und sich ihn demzufolge leichter merken kann.“*
Internet	*Digital Natives* (1) aktuelle Sprache und Themen (2) große Auswahl an Materialformen (Audio/Video) (1) leichter Zugang zu Inhalten (1)	*„Die Arbeit mit dem Internet ist für mich am effektivsten. Ich denke, dass das mit den Zeiten, in denen ich aufgewachsen bin, sowie mit der ständigen Entwicklung der Technologie zu tun hat. Hierzu kommen auch meine Interessen, die hauptsächlich mit verschiedenen Formen von Multimedia und dem Internet verbunden sind.“* *„Die Arbeit mit dem Internet, weil man dort viele Materialien (sowohl in Schrift- als auch in Audio- und Videoform) finden kann. Außerdem sind die Materialien nicht veraltet, sondern sie betreffen aktuelle Themen.“*
literarische Werke	Wortschatz im Kontext (3) natürliche Sprache (2) die Möglichkeit, nebenbei die Kultur und somit die Sitten und Bräuche der fremden Länder kennenzulernen (1) hohe Einprägsamkeit von Gedichten und kurzen Geschichten (1)	*„Die Arbeit mit Texten, vor allem mit Büchern, weil man damit die Sprache auf eine immersive Art und Weise lernen kann. Das Lernen der Sprache im Kontext.“* *„Die Arbeit mit Texten, weil die Lernenden dann den Kontakt mit einer echten, natürlichen Sprache haben und nicht mit der künstlichen von Kursbüchern.“* *„Das Lernen mit literarischen Texten, weil man dabei nicht nur die Sprache selbst lernt, sondern auch etwas über die Kultur, Sitten und Bräuche des anderen Landes erfährt, was mir mehr Befriedigung als trockenes Sprachenlernen gibt.“*
visuelle Formen	hohe Einprägsamkeit der gezeigten Inhalte (visuell orientierte Lernende) (7) visuelle Formen als Sprach-/ Schreibimpulse (1)	*„Die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen – meiner Meinung nach sind die meisten Menschen Augenmenschen (darunter ich) – es ist einfacher und schneller, sich auf diese Art und Weise verschiedene Vokabeln, Informationen u. dgl. m. zu merken sowie leichter, etwas aus dem Kontext zu erschließen.“* *„Die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen, denn dann entsteht im Unterricht eine Diskussion über das Thema und man kann sich leichter die Schlüsselwörter oder unterschiedliche Fragen merken.“*





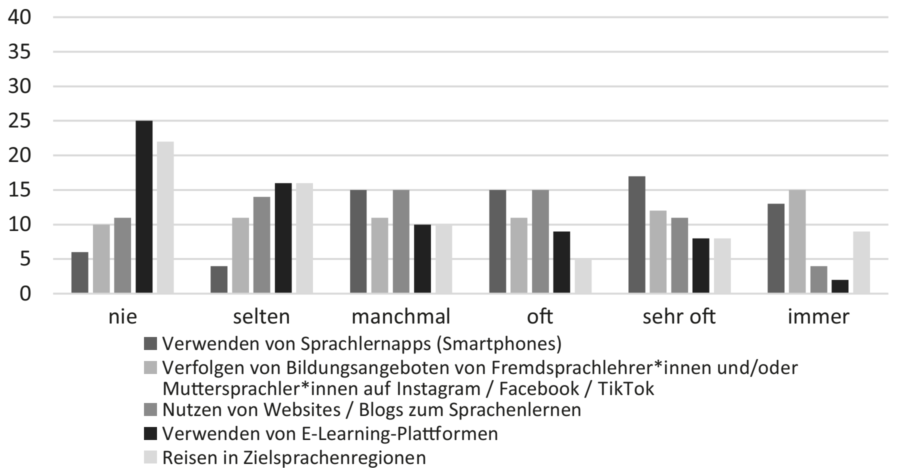


Diagramm 3. Selbständiges Fremdsprachenlernen bei Studierenden – Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse (eigene Bearbeitung auf Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

Ziel der Studie war es ebenfalls, zu ermitteln, auf welche Art und Weise die Studierenden am liebsten in ihrer Freizeit Fremdsprache(n) lernen. Die Teilnehmenden wurden gebeten, einzuschätzen, wie oft (nie, selten, manchmal, oft, sehr oft, immer) sie von den fünfzehn angegebenen Arbeitsmitteln Gebrauch machen (siehe Diagramm 3). Nahezu die Hälfte der Befragten (32 Personen = 46%) gab an, außerhalb der Universität immer „Kurz-/Langfilme und/oder Serien" zum Fremdsprachenlernen zu wählen, was den höchsten Wert darstellt. 15 Studierende (21%) folgen regelmäßig „den Bildungsangeboten von Fremdsprachenlehrer*innen und/oder Muttersprachler*innen" auf sozialen Netzwerken, während 14 Personen (20%) „fremdsprachige Podcasts" hören und 13 (19%) „Sprachlernapps auf Smartphones" nutzen. Es wäre nicht weiter überraschend, dass Podcasts so beliebt sind, wäre da nicht die Tatsache, dass gleichzeitig 34 bzw. 27 Befragte (49% und 39%) angaben, nie „fremdsprachige Audio-Books" oder „fremdsprachige Radiosendungen" zu nutzen. Am wenigen populär sind „Audiokurse". 39 Personen (56%) gaben an, dieses Mittel überhaupt nicht zu verwenden.

Die Befragten hatten erneut die Möglichkeit, ihre Antworten in der nächsten, offenen Frage des Fragenbogens ausführlicher zu erläutern. In Tabelle 2 sind die Ergebnisse der vier am häufigsten verwendeten Arbeitsmittel aufgeführt, also derjenigen, die in der Kategorie „immer" die meisten Nennungen erhielten.

Tab. 2. Präferenzen der Studierenden bezüglich der Arbeitsmittel beim selbstständigen Lernen – Zusammenstellung der Ergebnisse (eigene Bearbeitung auf der Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

Arbeitsmittel	Gründe	beispielhafte Aussagen
Filme/Serien	die Verbindung von Angenehmen mit Nützlichen (6) natürliche, alltägliche Situationen und Sprache (4) hohe Einprägsamkeit der Inhalte und des Wortschatzes durch Untertitel (visuell orientierte Lernende) (2) Übung/Verbesserung des Hörverstehens (5) Wortschatz im Kontext (1)	*„Durch das Anschauen von Filmen und Serien, weil ich dann die Konversation von Muttersprachler*innen in normalen Alltagssituationen mitbekomme und die Wörter, die ich nicht verstehe, aus dem Kontext erschließen kann."* *„Das Ansehen von Filmen in einer Fremdsprache, weil ich mir am besten merke, wenn ich Worte mit einem Bild oder einer Situation verbinde."*
Bildungskonten	originelle und interessante Inhalte, die leicht zu merken sind (2)	*„Durch das Verfolgen von Angeboten von Fremdsprachlehrer*innen und/oder Muttersprachler*innen auf Facebook/Instagram/TikTok, da die dort präsentierten Inhalte sehr informativ und leicht zu merken sind."*

Arbeitsmittel	Gründe	beispielhafte Aussagen
Podcasts	Lernen des aktiven Zuhörens (1) natürliche, alltägliche Sprache und Tempo (3) Verbindung von Angenehmen mit Nützlichen (1)	*„Fremdsprachige Podcasts, weil sie es ermöglichen, aktives Zuhören zu lernen und zu erfahren, wie Menschen normalerweise natürlich sprechen, in dem Sinne, dass es nicht so künstlich/übertrieben ist.“* *„Ich höre mir gerne Podcasts an, weil da in der Regel alltägliche und weniger formelle Sprache verwendet wird und es mehr Spaß macht, eine Fremdsprache zu lernen, während man etwas hört, das einen interessiert.“*
Apps	leicht zugänglich (unabhängig von Ort und Zeit) (3) benutzerfreundlich (1) vorteilhafte Art der Inhaltsdarstellung (3)	*„Am attraktivsten ist für mich das Lernen mit Apps, da sie jeder auf seinem Smartphone haben kann und es ist auch möglich, dort Materialien mit anderen Menschen zu teilen. Ich denke hier z. B. an Quizlet oder Duolingo.“* *„Wie ich oben geschrieben habe, ist die Arbeit mit dem Internet am effektivsten, ich denke hier vor allem an Sprachlern-Apps, wie: Quizlet oder Duolingo, weil man dort die Lernzeit selbst bestimmen kann, man kann oft das Niveau wählen, mit dem man beginnen möchte und man kann diese Apps zu jeder Zeit aufrufen. Außerdem sind diese Applikationen grafisch sehr ansprechend gestaltet.“*

Die Umfrage lieferte auch detaillierte Informationen über die Lerngewohnheiten der Studierenden in Bezug auf die vier Subsysteme einer Fremdsprache (Phonetik und Phonologie, Morphologie, Lexik, Syntax) sowie die vier grundlegenden Sprachfertigkeiten (Hören, Lesen, Sprechen, Schreiben). Die Teilnehmenden bewerteten auf einer Skala von 1 bis 5[11], wie oft sie die angegebenen Lernstrategien anwenden.

Beim ersten Subsystem, der Phonetik und Phonologie, bevorzugen die Studierenden besonders das „Hören fremdsprachiger Aufnahmen/Musik/Podcasts“ (63%) und das „Ansehen fremdsprachiger Kurz-/Langfilme und/oder Serien“ (70%). Fast niemand lernt dagegen phonetische Regeln „auswendig“. Im Bereich der Morphologie gaben 40% der Studierenden an, häufig die Formveränderungen von Wörtern (Konjugation, Deklination, Komparation) im Kontext zu lernen, indem sie „mit diesen Wörtern Sätze bilden und diese

[11] 1 – wende ich nie oder fast nie an, 2 – wende ich normalerweise nicht an, 3 – wende ich manchmal an, 4 – wende ich sehr oft an, 5 – wende ich immer oder fast immer an.

auswendig lernen“. Beim Lexik-Bereich (drittes Subsystem) lernen über die Hälfte der Befragten (56%) immer oder fast immer „das fremdsprachige Wort mit seinem muttersprachlichen Äquivalent“. Die grammatischen Strukturen werden am häufigsten durch die „Ausführung sprachlicher Aufgaben in Kurs-/Sprachbüchern“ geübt (44%).

Beim Training der Hörfertigkeit gaben 69% der Befragten an, sich immer „fremdsprachige Kurz-/Langfilme und/oder Serien [anzusehen]“. Beim Leseverstehen hingegen sind die Präferenzen weniger eindeutig. 54% der Studierenden lesen „sprachliche Texte in Kurs-/Sprachbüchern und bearbeiten dazu Aufgaben“, während ebenfalls 54% „Texte im Internet“ und 53% „Texte mit Visualisierungen“ lesen. Beim Üben der Sprachfertigkeit bevorzugen 43% der Studierenden „Gespräche zu den angegebenen sprachlichen Themen“, während 29% dies sehr oft tun. 24% der Befragten üben das Sprechen „immer“ durch „früher vorbereitete[n] und vor dem Publikum gehaltene[n] Präsentationen“, 20% tun dies „sehr oft“. Dagegen nutzen 21% nie oder fast nie Präsentationen zu diesem Zweck. Das Schreiben wird von 33% der Befragten bevorzugt durch „das Verfassen von schriftlichen Texten oder Aufsätzen zu vorgegebenen Themen“ geübt, wobei 30% dies sehr oft tun.

In den letzten drei Fragen der Studie lag der Fokus ausschließlich auf visuellen Formen. Die Studierenden wurden gebeten zu bewerten, inwiefern die Arbeit mit ihnen 1) ihre Motivation zum Erlernen der Fremdsprache(n) beeinflusst, 2) die Zeit, die sie zum Erlernen neuen Sprachmaterials benötigen, verkürzt sowie 3) die Nachhaltigkeit des neu Gelernten fördert. Die Antworten der Student*innen wurden gesammelt und in den Kreisdiagrammen 4, 5 und 6 dargestellt.

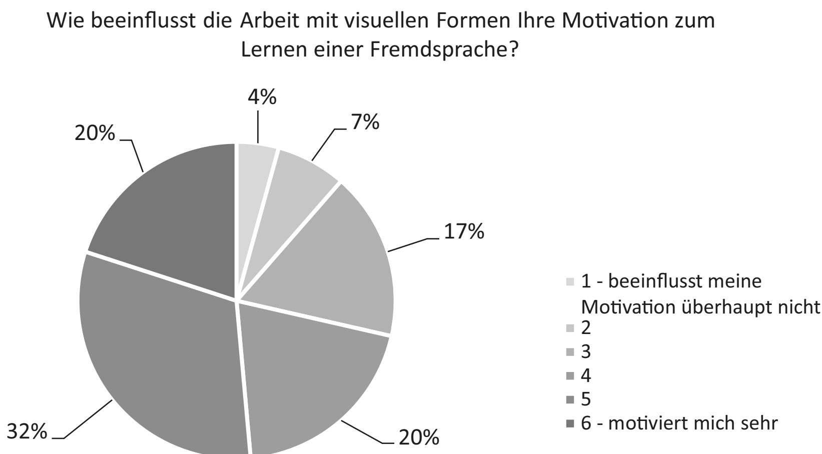


Diagramm 4. Einfluss der Arbeit mit visuellen Formen auf die Motivation (eigene Bearbeitung auf Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

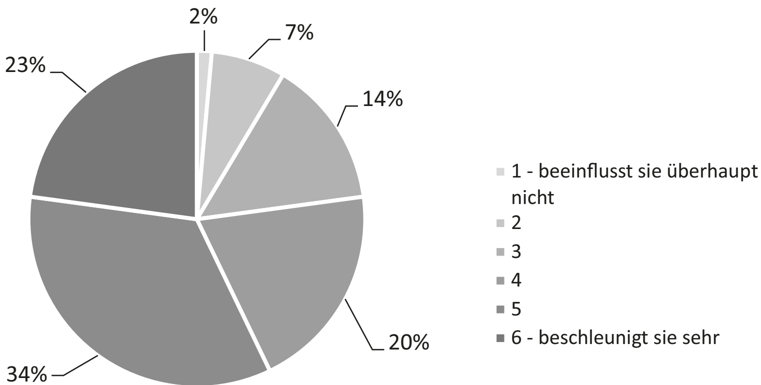


Diagramm 5. Einfluss der Arbeit mit visuellen Formen auf das Zeitmanagement (eigene Bearbeitung auf Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

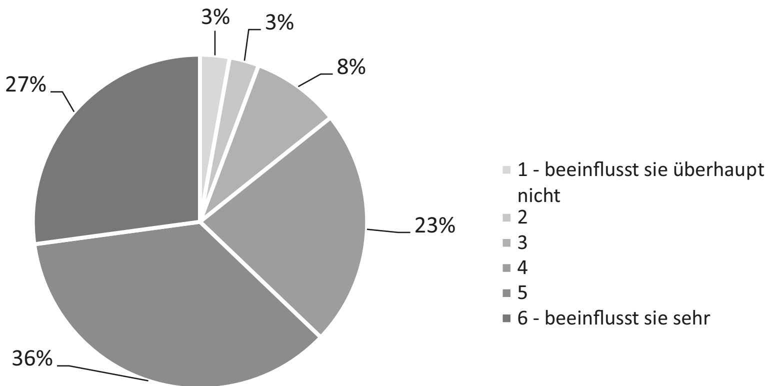


Diagramm 6. Einfluss der Arbeit mit visuellen Formen auf die Gedächtnisleistung (eigene Bearbeitung auf Basis der Umfrageergebnisse).

Wie aus den Diagrammen hervorgeht, stehen die Studierenden visuellen Formen positiv gegenüber. Insgesamt 36 Personen (52%) gaben an, dass die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen ihre Motivation zum Fremdsprachenlernen stark steigert (Noten 5 und 6). Nur 8 Personen (11%) äußerten, dass diese keinerlei Einfluss auf ihre Motivation hat (Noten 1 und 2). Ähnliche Ergebnisse zeigten sich bei der zweiten Frage: 57% der Befragten (40 Personen) meinten, dass die visuellen Formen das Erlernen neuen Sprachmaterials deutlich beschleunigen. Nur 9% der Befragten (6 Personen) fanden, dass dies

keinen Einfluss hat. Besonders positiv wurde die Arbeit mit visuellen Formen in Bezug auf die dritte Frage bewertet: 44 Personen (63%) waren der Ansicht, dass visuelle Formen die Nachhaltigkeit des neu erlernten Sprachmaterials stark unterstützen, während nur 4 Personen (6%) angaben, dass dies keinen Einfluss hat.

4. Fazit und Ausblick

Die durchgeführte Umfrage ermöglichte einen umfassenden Einblick in die Präferenzen der befragten Studierenden sowohl in Bezug auf das Fremdsprachenlernen an der Universität als auch auf das selbständige Fremdsprachenlernen in der Freizeit. Sie ermöglichte auch die Überprüfung der zu Beginn der Studie aufgestellten Hypothesen.

Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung zeigen, dass Studierende bevorzugt mit dem Internet und Multimedia im Unterricht arbeiten. In ihren Begründungen gaben sie an, dass sie Augenmenschen seien und sich daher Inhalte, die ihnen präsentiert werden leichter merken könnten. Außerdem schätzen sie die Aktualität der im Internet verfügbaren Materialien, die sich oft mit gegenwärtigen Themen befassen würden. Überdies betonen einige Studierende, dass ihre Vorlieben durch die technologische Umgebung und die Zeit, in der sie aufgewachsen sind, geprägt worden seien.

Im Falle der bevorzugten Art und Weise bezüglich des selbstständigen Lernens ergab die Umfrage, dass Studierende am häufigsten auf folgende Aktivitäten zurückgreifen: „Ansehen fremdsprachiger Kurz-/Langfilme und/oder Serien“; „Verfolgen von Bildungsangeboten von Fremdsprachenlehrer*innen und/oder Muttersprachler*innen“ auf sozialen Netzwerken; „Hören fremdsprachiger Podcasts“ sowie „Verwenden von Sprachlernapps auf Smartphones“. Sie begründeten ihre Vorlieben u. a. damit, dass sie dabei das Angenehme mit dem Nützlichen verbinden könnten und auf diese Weise mit authentischen Sprachsituationen konfrontiert würden. Überdies würde es ihnen helfen, aktives Zuhören zu üben.

Die Antworten auf die drei letzten Fragen zu den visuellen Formen und deren Auswirkungen auf 1) die Motivation, 2) die Lerngeschwindigkeit sowie 3) die Nachhaltigkeit des neu erlernten Materials zeigen, dass sich die Studierenden dazu positiv geäußert haben. Mehr als die Hälfte der Befragten hielt sie jeweils für nützlich.

Aus den Ergebnissen der Umfrage lässt sich ableiten, dass vier der fünf eingangs formulierten Hypothesen bestätigt wurden. Nur die erste Hypothese erwies sich als unzutreffend: die Umfrage zeigte, dass das bevorzugte Arbeitsmittel der Studierenden im Unterricht das Internet ist, während

visuelle Formen, die in der Studie als multimodale Texte galten, dennoch von den Studierenden positiv bewertet wurden. Die Analyse verdeutlichte, dass die Studierenden die visuellen Formen insbesondere in ihrer Freizeit zum Sprachenlernen gebrauchen.

Das Bildungswesen steht zweifellos vor bedeutenden Herausforderungen. Studierende, die in einer Welt der neuen Technologien aufgewachsen sind, haben ein starkes Bedürfnis, Multimedia und Internet im Unterricht zu nutzen. Allerdings setzt der sinnvolle Einsatz solcher Technologien sowohl bei den Lernenden als auch bei den Lehrenden bestimmte Kompetenzen voraus, darunter: 1) Medienkompetenz[12], 2) digitale Kompetenz[13] sowie 3) – oft übersehen – multimodale Kompetenz als reflektierten und kritischen Umgang mit den über technologische Medien generierten Kommunikaten. Es ist wissenschaftlich belegt, dass „die meisten (jüngeren) Lernenden zwar medienaffin sind, aber nicht (umfassend) medienkompetent" (Würffel, 2020: 220). Wenn Lernende nicht ausreichend medienkompetent sind, ist es unwahrscheinlich, dass ihre Lehrkräfte, die im Gegensatz zu *Digital Natives* als *Digital Immigrants*[14] gelten, diese Fähigkeiten in vollem Umfang besitzen. Gleiches gilt für die digitale Kompetenz. Die Corona-Pandemie hat die bestehenden Defizite in diesem Bereich deutlich offengelegt. Besonders in der Anfangszeit des Fernunterrichts wiesen viele Lehrer*innen in Deutschland auf ihren Bedarf an Weiterbildungen hin (vgl. Forsa Politik- und Sozialforschung 2020). Auch in Polen waren diese Schwächen spürbar. Laut

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[12] Die Medienkompetenz wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit in Anlehnung an Brüggen, Bröckling (2017: 156f.) verstanden als die Kompetenz, die das Wissen über Medien (technische Handhabung) sowie die Reflexion von Medien (kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Mediensystemen und (eigenem) Medienverhalten) miteinschließt. Die Autoren erklären: „Es geht nicht allein darum, Medien ‚richtig' für eigene Zwecke nutzen zu können, sondern übergreifend ist mit Medienkompetenz auch Kritikfähigkeit impliziert, d. h. die Fähigkeit, Medienangebote oder auch individuelle Medienhandlungsweisen auf ihre soziale und gesellschaftliche Funktion hin zu hinterfragen und entsprechend auszurichten". Die Medienkompetenz bezieht sich auf alle Medienarten (u. a. Zeitung, Fernsehen, Computer).

[13] Digitale Kompetenz wird von dem Europäischen Parlament und dem Rat definiert als die „sichere, kritische und verantwortungsvolle Nutzung von und Auseinandersetzung mit digitalen Technologien für die allgemeine und berufliche Bildung, die Arbeit und die Teilhabe an der Gesellschaft. Sie erstreckt sich auf Informations- und Datenkompetenz, Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit, Medienkompetenz, die Erstellung digitaler Inhalte (einschließlich Programmieren), Sicherheit (einschließlich digitales Wohlergehen und Kompetenzen in Verbindung mit Cybersicherheit), Urheberrechtsfragen, Problemlösung und kritisches Denken" (Empfehlung des Europäischen Parlaments und des Rates, 2018: 9).

[14] Laut Prensky (2001: 1f.) bezeichnet man mit diesem Begriff Menschen, die vor der Ära der Digitalität geboren sind: „Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and always will be compared to them, ***Digital Immigrants***" (Kursivschrift und Hervohebung im Originaltext).

einer Umfrage, die nach der Pandemie durchgeführt wurde, gaben sowohl Lernende als auch Lehrkräfte an, dass sich ihre digitale Kompetenz – vermutlich aufgrund der Notwendigkeit, sich schnell diese Fähigkeiten anzueignen – während dieser Zeit verbessert hat (vgl. Myszka, 2022: 102f., 106). Trotz dieser Fortschritte betont der Autor, dass bei einer möglichen Rückkehr zum Fernunterricht „verschiedene Arten von Schulungen in Bezug auf die Computerkenntnisse sowie die Arbeitsweise in der virtuellen Realität nützlich sein [werden]". Eine wichtige Kompetenz ist auch die angesprochene multimodale Kompetenz. Diese hat bisher wenig Beachtung gefunden, da viele Menschen nach wie vor glauben, sie könnten mediale, multimodale Kommunikate intuitiv verstehen. Schließlich könnten sie „schauen" und Lesen lerne man ja in der Schule. Doch die reine Lesekompetenz reicht bei der Interpretation solcher multimodalen Kommunikate nicht mehr aus. Sie erfordert eine spezifische Kompetenzart, um die Struktur, Botschaft und Wirkung solcher Texte in ihrem multimodalen Zusammenspiel vollständig zu erfassen – die sog. Sehlesekompetenz, die es zu üben und zu beherrschen gilt (vgl. Schmitz, 2015: 9; Sierak, 2022: 143).

Es ist klar, dass die (Hoch-)Schulen auf den Wandel in der Gesellschaft angemessen reagieren müssen. Es ist entscheidend, diese veränderten Bedingungen im Unterricht zu berücksichtigen und den Unterricht entsprechend anzupassen. Um die bestehenden Kompetenzlücken zu schließen, wären Workshops und Schulungen für Lehrkräfte sinnvoll, um sowohl theoretisches als auch praktisches Wissen über neue Technologien und Multimodalität zu erweitern. Im Falle der Lernenden hingegen sollte man diesen Aspekten mehr Nachdruck z. B. im Informatik- und muttersprachlichen Unterricht verleihen.

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Positive orientation and the perception of feedback in foreign language learners

The primary aim of the present study is to examine the relationship between foreign language learners' positive orientation and their perception of teacher and peer feedback. It also investigates gender differences and the relationship between the frequency of receiving feedback and the perception of its different dimensions. 429 foreign language university students were asked to complete an online questionnaire. Subsequently, statistical analysis of the data was carried out in order to obtain results, which indicated that positive orientation positively correlated with the feeling of comfort while receiving feedback, regardless of source or setting. Regarding the differences between genders, it was found that men felt more comfortable than women receiving feedback highlighting their mistakes and feedback given in public; conversely, women preferred feedback focused on positive aspects and feedback given in private. Finally, it was observed that students who receive feedback often feel more comfortable with the potentially stressful dimensions, such as a public setting and focus on mistakes. The most important pedagogical implication is that teachers should provide feedback regularly and employ

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strategies to boost their students' positive orientation levels, which may in turn lead to their increased satisfaction from receiving feedback.

Keywords: foreign language learning, positive orientation, teacher feedback, peer feedback, teaching strategies

Słowa kluczowe: nauka języka obcego, orientacja pozytywna, informacja zwrotna nauczyciela, koleżeńska informacja zwrotna, strategie nauczania

1. Introduction

The growth of humanistic psychology resulted in increased interest in the role of emotions and positive affect (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961). However, almost a decade ago, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) indicated that despite the fact that emotions play a huge role in human life, they had been rather neglected by second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, attributing this state of affairs to the prevalence of the cognitivist tradition within this particular field of science. This situation may have changed due to the exploration of the role of affect in language learning (Arnold, 1999) as well as the development of positive psychology and its focus on the factors that help people thrive and flourish (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman, 2011). Interest in building positive emotions, increasing student engagement and boosting the appreciation of life consequently led SLA scholars to move away from the emphasis on negative emotions, i.e., foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), and adopt a more holistic view of language learners and study a broader range of emotions, such as foreign language enjoyment (Dewaele, MacIntyre, 2014). One of the positive psychology theories that have found their way into education studies in general, and SLA studies in particular, is positive orientation (POS), defined as "a basic disposition predisposing people to appraise life and experiences with a positive outlook" (Caprara et al., 2012a: 702). It has been observed that students with higher POS levels tend to have more positive emotions towards their teachers, peers and class events (Alessandri et al., 2012) and suffer from lower levels of classroom anxiety (Yin, Dewaele, 2018).

This study aims at examining the relationship between POS and the perception of feedback in foreign language students, our main intention being to verify whether students with a more positive orientation will have a more positive view of classroom feedback as well. In addition, it plans to investigate the influence of gender and feedback frequency on the perception of different dimensions of feedback.

2. Literature review

2.1. Positive orientation

Positive orientation (POS), previously known as "positive thinking" (Caprara, Steca, 2005), emerged within the positive psychology framework (Sheldon, King, 2001), which examines the components of well-being that comprise optimal psychological functioning and allow people to flourish (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is conceptualized as a fundamental trait, representing a tendency to perceive life experiences with a positive attitude, allowing individuals to fulfil their potential (Caprara et al., 2013). POS consists of high self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism, three major indicators of optimal functioning (Caprara et al., 2012b). Caprara et al.'s (2009) research confirmed that it serves as a common, latent factor that explains the covariation within these traits.

It is reasoned that this predisposition is crucial because seeing oneself as worthy, life as worth living, and the future as promising is what allows people to cope, despite various setbacks, adversities, and difficulties (Caprara et al., 2009). Positive orientation is positively correlated with hedonic balance, physical health and perceived social support from parents, friends and teachers (Caprara et al., 2010). It positively and significantly predicts positive affectivity, the quality of friendships and ego resiliency (Alessandri et al., 2012). There is also a positive relationship between POS and generalized self-efficacy (Oleś et al., 2013), extraversion and conscientiousness and a negative one between POS and neuroticism (Miciuk et al., 2016) as well as foreign language classroom anxiety (Jin, Dewaele, 2018).

2.2. Feedback

Feedback may be conceptualized as information provided by an agent concerning aspects of one's performance or understanding, the agent being animate, e.g., teacher, peer, parent or self, or inanimate, e.g., a book or experience (Hattie, Timperley, 2007). This conceptualization covers a number of dimensions, such as source (Brett, Atwater, 2001; Fujii, Mackey, 2009), timing (Druskat, Wolff, 1999; Fu, Nassaji, 2016), specificity (Goodman, Wood, 2004), sign (Vancouver, Tischner, 2004), type (Earley et al., 1990; Nassaji, Swain, 2000), sociocultural setting (Lee, Kong, 2014) and frequency (Anderson, Kulhavy, Andre, 1971; Lyster, Ranta, 1997). Lam et al. (2011) observe that a substantial amount of research has focused on dimensions other than frequency, and it is commonly assumed that more frequent feedback boosts

both individual learning and task performance. A popular explanation is that more feedback offers more information, which the learner can subsequently employ in order to learn and use more effective task strategies that will eventually have a positive impact in subsequent performance (Lam et al., 2011). Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have also studied feedback dimensions directly related to learning outcomes, such as grammar (Ellis, 2007; Adams, Nuevo, Egi, 2007), pronunciation (Saito, Lyster, 2012), and speaking (Hartono et al., 2022).

Foreign language performance requires some form of feedback for at least three reasons. First, mistakes are a natural part of learning in most life contexts, so instead of leaving the learner with an unsupported trial-and-error approach to language learning, teachers could use a set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining their students' errors (Ellis, Barkhuizen, 2008). Second, even in situations when a learner's language output does not contain mistakes per se, there may still be some discrepancy between the quality of the performance and the desired goal. Finally, students may benefit from feedback on progress, e.g., at the end of a semester or school year, which provides them with expert opinion on their achievement as well as the areas on which they need to focus in the future.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) propose that structuring feedback may occur at four levels. The first of these is feedback about the task, which may include advice aimed at acquiring extended, different, or correct information. Next, feedback can relate to task processing, focusing on the learning processes required to complete the task. The third level refers to the learner's self-regulation and self-evaluation mechanisms, which can influence their self-efficacy and self-beliefs. The last level is personal, directed to the "self," which, as it is unrelated to the task, is considered the least effective. While understanding the complexity of feedback is definitely desirable for both the foreign language scholar and the foreign language teacher, it must be observed that one of the most serious drawbacks in research on feedback has been the lack of attention devoted to the role of the individual in the learning process. As Papi et al. (2019: 1–2) claim, studies on feedback usually put language learners in the roles of passive recipients of feedback rather than "human agents who consciously, proactively, and selectively seek, attend to, and learn from such information." In contrast, SLA researchers who adopt a more interactionist view of learning have drawn attention to the learner's active role in the feedback exchange, proposing the effectiveness of mutually negotiated feedback (Nassaji, Swain, 2000). However, socially oriented studies tend to assume that learners, regardless of their motivational states and dispositions, respond to feedback in a similar manner as long as it is negotiated dialogically (Papi et al., 2019). Such

a view stands in contrast with research devoted to the importance of affective states or individual differences in the learning process.

In view of the abovementioned perspectives, our study aims to check to what extent a learner's positive orientation affects their perception of different feedback dimensions. Our research questions are as follows:

1) What is the relationship between a learner's positive orientation and their perception of feedback?
2) Are there any significant gender differences in the perception of feedback?
3) What is the relationship between the frequency of receiving feedback and the perception of its different dimensions?

3. Method

3.1. Context and participants

There were 429 participants in the study, (186 male, 226 female, 4 non-binary, 13 who preferred not to disclose their gender), foreign language university students from the following institutions based in Poland: the Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology in Warsaw, the University of the National Education Commission in Kraków, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, and the University of Warsaw. Average age was 20.81 (SD = 2.11). In keeping with the Polish regulations regarding formal foreign language instruction, prior to entering university, the informants had studied English for at least 12 years and should have reached a minimum of B2 (upper-intermediate) level, as specified by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The informants came from both Bachelor's (Years 1–3) and Master's (Years 4–5) programmes. At the time of the study, all the students were being given extensive tuition in English, both in practical, skill-based classes as well as professional courses.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. The P-scale

The P-scale, developed by Caprara et al. (2012a), is an 8-item scale designed to measure positivity, understood as the tendency to perceive one's life and experiences with a positive outlook. One sample item from the scale

is: *I have great faith in the future*. Item 6, *At times, the future seems unclear to me* is reverse scored.

All the items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with the following format: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *agree* (4), and *strongly agree* (5). The obtainable scores for the scale range between 8 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher levels of positivity. The scale was given in the original language, English, due to the fact that all the respondents were able to understand and respond to the items.

3.2.2. The feedback scale

Before the formulation of the feedback scale, a group of 10 foreign language teachers and a group of 16 foreign language university students were asked to provide the elements of feedback that they considered essential, usual, components. The two groups mentioned the following areas: frequency, nature (summative/ descriptive vs numerical), source (teachers vs peers), setting (public vs private), orientation (focus on strong points vs focus on areas for improvement), subjective usefulness, and the learner's need to respond.

Based on these areas, we created a 13-item feedback scale, with the items being rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale for the first two items, referring to the frequency of feedback, was given the following format: *never* (1), *rarely* (2), *sometimes* (3), *frequently* (4), and *always* (5), while all the other items were rated as follows: *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *agree* (4), and *strongly agree* (5). A sample item from the scale is *It's useful to get feedback that highlights mistakes*.

3.3. Procedure

Before the distribution of the questionnaires, participants were briefly informed about the purpose of collecting the data and encouraged to provide honest answers to the questions. In addition, they were informed that the questionnaire did not ask for any data considered sensitive by the General Data Protection Regulation, and that the information they provided would not be disclosed to anyone else nor used for any other objective than research purposes. The informants were advised that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. They were subsequently provided with a QR code and a link to the survey on Google Forms, which they completed electronically, using their mobile phones, tablets or laptops.

3.4. Data analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted using SPSS 29.0 to obtain information about the profiles of the 429 participants' levels of positive orientation and their perception of feedback. Since Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicated significant deviations from normality, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between positive orientation and the perception of feedback. The Mann-Whitney U test was then used to assess gender differences, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test was performed to examine differences in feedback perception among participants who received feedback from their teachers with varying frequencies. Post-hoc tests using the Mann-Whitney U test were also conducted following the Kruskal-Wallis H test to identify specific group differences.

4. Results

4.1. Simple correlation analysis

The relationship between positive orientation and the perception of various dimensions of feedback was examined using Spearman's rho. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlations between the variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. POS	--											
2. I like receiving feedback in the form of numerical grades.	.12*	--										
3. It's important for me to get feedback in the form of descriptive comments.	0.08	-.10*	--									
4. I am comfortable receiving feedback from my teachers in public.	.27**	0.09	.14**	--								
5. I like getting feedback from my teachers in a private setting.	-0.02	0.01	.33**	-.19**	--							

Table 1 – cont.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
6. I am fine receiving feedback from my peers in a public setting.	.22**	0.05	0.08	.63**	-.15**	--						
7. I like being given feedback from my peers in private.	0.07	-0.02	.31**	0.05	.48**	.13**	--					
8. I benefit from feedback that focuses on the positive aspects of my work.	.16**	-0.01	.26**	-0.03	.33**	0.08	.34**	--				
9. It's useful to get feedback that highlights mistakes.	.18**	.14**	.33**	.22**	.23**	.17**	.26**	.23**	--			
10. I need to respond to the feedback provided by my peers.	.11*	0.03	.15**	.20**	.13**	.15**	.22**	.10*	.20**	--		
11. I consider feedback from my peers to be as valuable as feedback from my teachers.	.10*	-0.03	0.09	.14**	0.02	.26**	.26**	0.09	.19**	.24**	--	
12. Feedback from my peers has helped me improve my academic work.	.12*	-0.03	.14**	.15**	.10*	.28**	.32**	.18**	.17**	.30**	.59**	--

Note. POS = positive orientation; * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

The correlation analysis using Spearman's rho coefficient indicates several significant relationships between positive orientation and the perception of feedback. The strongest positive correlation was found between POS and being comfortable receiving feedback from teachers in public ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$) and being fine receiving feedback from peers in a public setting ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, POS was positively correlated with liking receiving feedback in the form of numerical grades, benefitting from feedback focusing on the positive as well as feedback that highlights mistakes, and having the need to respond to peer feedback. Finally, positive correlation was also found between POS and perceiving peer and teacher feedback as equally valuable, and recognizing peer feedback as useful in one's academic work.

4.2. Mann-Whitney U tests analysis

Table 2 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U tests conducted to examine gender differences in the perception of different dimensions of feedback.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U tests show statistically significant differences between men and women regarding positive orientation and preferences for receiving feedback. Men (Mean rank = 231.81) exhibited higher POS than women (Mean rank = 185.67), (U = 16309.5, p < 0.001, r = 0.19).

In the context of feedback preferences, significant differences were observed in several areas. With respect to receiving feedback from teachers in public, men are significantly more comfortable (Mean rank = 255.18) than women (Mean rank = 166.44), (U = 11963.5, p < 0.001, r = 0.38). Men also reported feeling significantly more fine receiving feedback from their peers in a public setting (Mean rank = 243.06) in contrast to women (Mean rank = 176.41), (U = 14217.5, p < 0.001. r = 0.29). Other significant differences included men showing a higher need to respond to the feedback provided by peers (Mean rank = 221.31) compared to women (Mean rank = 194.31) (U = 18263.5, p < 0.017, r = 0.12), as well as men perceiving getting feedback that highlights mistakes as more useful (Mean rank = 223.4) than women (Mean rank = 192.59), (U = 18456, p = 0.023, r = 0.11).

On the other hand, women showed a stronger preference for receiving feedback from teachers in a private setting (Mean rank for women = 220.45 vs Mean rank for men = 189.55), (U = 17864.5, p = 0.006, r = 0.14). Women also believe that they benefit from feedback that focuses on the positive aspects of their work more (Mean rank = 217.84) when compared to men (Mean rank = 192.73), (U = 18456, p = 0.023, r = 0.11).

4.3. Kruskal-Wallis H tests analysis

As most informants reported receiving feedback from their teachers more often than from their peers (M = 3.34, SD = 0.94 and M = 2.96, SD = 1.06, respectively), we decided to investigate this source of feedback in more detail. Table 3 reveals the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H tests, which were conducted to assess differences in feedback perception based on the frequency of feedback received from teachers. The analysis reveals significant differences in the perception of different dimensions of feedback across different frequency groups.

Table 2. Results of Mann-Whitney U tests

	Male (n = 186)	Female (n = 226)				
Variable	**Mean rank**	**Mean rank**	**U**	**Z**	***p* value**	**r**
POS	231.81	185.67	16309.5	3.919	**<.001**	0.19
1. I like receiving feedback in the form of numerical grades.	216.73	198.08	19116	1.633	0.102	0.08
2. It's important for me to get feedback in the form of descriptive comments.	196.02	215.12	19069	1.727	0.084	0.09
3. I am comfortable receiving feedback from my teachers in public.	255.18	166.44	11963.5	7.694	**<.001**	0.38
4. I like getting feedback from my teachers in a private setting.	189.55	220.45	17864.5	2.771	**0.006**	0.14
5. I am fine receiving feedback from my peers in a public setting.	243.06	176.41	14217.5	5.813	**<.001**	0.29
6. I like being given feedback from my peers in private.	199.53	212.24	19721	1.131	0.258	0.06
7. I benefit from feedback that focuses on the positive aspects of my work.	192.73	217.84	18456	2.273	**0.023**	0.11
8. It's useful to get feedback that highlights mistakes.	223.4	192.59	17875	2.844	**0.004**	0.14
9. I need to respond to the feedback provided by my peers.	221.31	194.31	18263.5	2.377	**0.017**	0.12
10. I consider feedback from my peers to be as valuable as feedback from my teachers.	219.26	196	18645	2.038	**0.042**	0.10
11. Feedback from my peers has helped me improve my academic work.	226.25	190.24	17344	3.16	**0.002**	0.16

Table 3. Results of Kruskal-Wallis H tests

Variable	H	df	*p* value
1. I like receiving feedback in the form of numerical grades.	9.88	4	0.043
2. It's important for me to get feedback in the form of descriptive comments.	17.17	4	0.002
3. I am comfortable receiving feedback from my teachers in public.	13.21	4	0.01
4. I like getting feedback from my teachers in a private setting.	4.40	4	0.355
5. I am fine receiving feedback from my peers in a public setting.	4.26	4	0.372
6. I like being given feedback from my peers in private.	12.60	4	0.013
7. I benefit from feedback that focuses on the positive aspects of my work.	19.66	4	<.001
8. It's useful to get feedback that highlights mistakes.	23.39	4	<.001
9. I need to respond to the feedback provided by my peers.	6.52	4	0.164
10. I consider feedback from my peers to be as valuable as feedback from my teachers.	3.60	4	0.463
11. Feedback from my peers has helped me improve my academic work.	6.07	4	0.194

A post hoc analysis using the Mann-Whitney U tests was conducted to identify specific differences between pairs of groups following the significant results from the Kruskal-Wallis test. The Bonferroni correction was applied, setting the significance level at $p = 0.005$. The analysis provided a number of interesting findings. First, students who reported receiving feedback from their teachers very often enjoy receiving feedback in the form of numerical grades more than those who receive feedback rarely ($U = 1045$, $p = 0.003$, $r = 0.28$). Second, informants who receive feedback very often perceive receiving feedback in the form of descriptive comments as more important compared to students who receive feedback rarely ($U = 1101.5$, $p = 0.005$, $r = 0.26$), sometimes ($U = 2089$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.28$), and often ($U = 2270$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.24$). Next, respondents who receive feedback from their teachers sometimes feel less comfortable receiving feedback from teachers in public than students who receive feedback very often ($U = 2259$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.23$). Furthermore, students who receive feedback from their teachers very often like being given feedback from their peers in private, in contrast to students who receive feedback rarely ($U = 993$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.31$), sometimes ($U = 2316.5$, $p = 0.002$, $r = 0.22$), and often ($U = 2377$, $p = 0.004$, $r = 0.21$).

With regard to feedback that focuses on positive aspects, it was found that learners who receive feedback from their teachers sometimes

believe that they benefit from this kind of feedback less, compared to students who receive feedback often (U = 9221, $p < 0.001$, r = 0.19) and very often (U = 2108.5, $p < 0.001$, r = 0.27). In a similar manner, when it comes to feedback that highlights mistakes, students who reported receiving feedback from their teachers very often perceive this kind of feedback as more useful than students who receive feedback rarely (U = 1078, p = 0.003, r = 0.28), or sometimes (U = 2037.5, $p < 0.001$, r = 0.29). Additionally, students who receive feedback often perceive such feedback as more useful, in contrast to students who receive it sometimes (U = 9518.5, $p < 0.003$, r = 0.17).

5. Discussion

The present study investigated the relationship between a learner's positive orientation (POS) and their perception of feedback. It also examined gender differences in the perception of feedback as well as the relationship between the frequency of receiving feedback and the perception of its different dimensions.

The results showed that POS significantly predicted a feeling of comfort while receiving feedback in public, be it from teachers or peers. This may be explained by the fact that individuals with a positive mindset are more likely to approach feedback in terms of an opportunity for growth than to take it as personal criticism, suggesting that the content of the feedback may be more important than the setting. Such an explanation appears to be in keeping with the findings of Dewaele et al. (2008) and Shao et al. (2013) that foreign language learners who score high in Trait Emotional Intelligence, the facets of which are optimism, happiness, and emotional control, report lower levels of foreign language anxiety. Furthermore, POS was positively correlated with enjoying both feedback that focuses on the positive and that which highlights mistakes, as well as finding peer feedback valuable and useful in one's academic work. A likely explanation here is the fact that POS represents one's general inclination to respond to life experiences with a positive attitude and to rebound from frustrations more quickly (Caprara, Alessandri, Barbaranelli, 2010). In addition, foreign language students with a higher degree of POS view setbacks in learning as less threatening (Yin, Dewaele, 2018).

Regarding gender differences and the perception of feedback, the most important findings are that men are significantly more comfortable receiving feedback in public settings than women, regardless of whether it comes from their teachers or peers. In contrast, women prefer being given feedback from their teachers in private; however, the same preference

was not noted in relation to peer feedback. It was also found that men perceive feedback highlighting mistakes as more useful than women; men also have a stronger need to respond to peer feedback. One possible justification for the dissimilarities between men and women is the fact that the former exhibited significantly higher POS measures than the latter, as already noted. This, in turn, may explain a less optimistic approach to situations that are connected with stress or anxiety, which is the case with having one's performance discussed in public, not to mention having one's mistakes pointed out in a classroom setting. Some previous studies have also confirmed that women suffer from more anxiety, worry significantly more about their mistakes and are less confident in using foreign language than men (Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele et al., 2017). However, some studies have found the opposite pattern (Donovan, MacIntyre, 2004; Arnaiz, Guillén, 2012), and some have found no pattern for gender at all (Dewaele, Petrides, Furnham, 2008; Dewaele, 2013). Consequently, it seems that in order to obtain more conclusive results, gender studies in language research should receive more attention, as observed by Henry and Cliffordson (2013).

Finally, when it comes to the relationship between the frequency of feedback and the perception of its various dimensions, it was found that students who receive feedback very often tend to enjoy both numerical grades and descriptive comments more than those who receive feedback less frequently. Such a situation may be caused by the fact that students learn to treat both types of feedback as a routine element of their learning, rather than an exception to the regular functioning of the classroom. The same pattern seems to be true for feeling comfortable while receiving feedback from teachers in public, as more frequent exposure may make an individual accustomed to having their performance discussed or evaluated. With regard to feedback focusing on the positive elements and that which highlights mistakes, it was found that both types are more readily welcomed by students who receive feedback often, which may indicate that it is not the content that learners find either intrinsically desirable or harmful, but the frequency which can contribute to feedback being a classroom routine, or an unexpected disruption.

Needless to say, this study has at least two limitations. First, even though the participants were selected from a number of tertiary education institutions, they mostly came from one cultural background. Second, they were relatively homogenous in terms of their age and linguistic competence. For these reasons, it is recommended that future studies are carried out order to indicate whether the same tendencies are observable across other educational levels, other cultural contexts, age groups and levels of linguistic proficiency.

6. Conclusion

While the findings may not be generalized across all foreign language learning contexts, they may still have important implications for structuring feedback strategies in universities in mid-central Europe. First, the study reveals a relationship between the frequency of feedback and learners' feeling of comfort regarding the source and the setting. A possible pedagogical implication is that while educators may want to devote time and effort to devising their feedback strategies, it might be more efficient for them to pay attention to the regularity of feedback, ensuring that it becomes a standard classroom practice, rather than an irregular occurrence. By doing so, they may contribute to making the classroom a stable and consistent learning environment. Next, in view of the research results regarding gender differences, teachers may need to reconsider adjusting their feedback strategies, depending on the setting, (public or private), and focus, (stressing the positive elements, or highlighting mistakes). Last but by no means least, as the study indicates the importance of positive orientation in the perception of feedback, it may be beneficial for teachers to employ strategies aimed at improving their students' positivity levels, which will be conducive not only to language learning, but also to their overall emotional development.

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Voices and Spaces:
Rethinking Silence, Speech, and Resources in Language Education

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