Understanding proficiency-oriented silence in the context of EAL

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods case study focuses on adult second language learning and their silences in a pre-intermediate level class, where they experience a potentially difficult time reaching the point of Target language proficiency. The findings of this study respond to the paucity of research on the problem adult student silence in a pre-intermediate language classroom by investigating the pre-intermediate language learning experiences of competent bilingual adults reflecting on learning English as a second language (EAL) in Australia. The findings give reason for why students are silent in class. Analysis of student reflections combined with the EAL teachers' interviews identified a pedagogical barrier. These barriers caused them to be silent because most of the teachers teaching content at this level were not trained to teach students who approximately break their silence at this level, and need a particular teaching approach to help them. The findings show that there needs to be a reform in approach during adult silent period which happens to be approximately at pre-intermediate level (Ekici, 2022). The need for teacher professional development on being able to adapt their English language classroom talk to foster spoken interactions was seen as priority. Finings have shown that the nuanced dynamic between what teachers think they are doing and what students know they are trying to achieve in many cases fail to match. Teacher and learner confusion about each other's' styles, the struggle to teach and learner in which both pedagogy and silence are mutually problematic, and above all else, the need for empathy for student learning and the need to customise a pedagogy to suit it to avoid untreated proficiency silence which can be detrimental (Ekici, 2022).
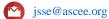
1. Introduction

This article portrays the findings of a study by Ekici in 2022. The study was initially shaped by reflection and observation of the researcher when she was a EAL teacher. She forwards that, as a teacher following a language teaching text about words that were unrelated to students' everyday context and then defining them seemed irrelevant especially in lower levels. This enabled teachers to do most of the talking in class. More importantly students could not use this content to make meaning outside class to break their silence. This approach did not allow students to practice the Target Language (TL) and improve language proficiency. Literature supports this and shows most teachers do the talking in a classroom (Khademi, 2022; Ekici, 2022), not allowing students to practice and develop their proficiency, making them deal with unfacilitated silence, prolonging their

silence. Despite the disposition of the prescribed textbook, teachers expected to get the classroom to reach its Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) expectations. Her discussions with other teachers suggest that students' silence was a common phenomenon in other pre-intermediate classes. Anecdotally, confused teachers complain that students from different cultures, particularly Asian, do not participate in classes for reasons they consider to be cultural: that of differences between Eastern and Western cultures. Further, the research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature suggests that silence should be part of the curriculum to enhance critical thinking and is not, and other research says it is from anxiety (Ekici, 2022: Bao, 2021), but there are no studies connecting silence to proficiency-oriented silence.

Silence in the EAL literature is not seen as an attribute of proficiency in adult language learning (Ekici, 2022). In fact, there are few studies that look at proficiency-oriented silence and its implication on the adult learners. Being unable to speak leads to adult students' anxiety (Ekici, 2022) because they cannot internalise the required phonetical practice to improve their proficiency building, which is not attested to in SLA and English as an Additional Language (EAL) literature. Due to this, all aspects of silence from this current emphasis on the communicative approach are based on the assumption that all learners need to be involved in speaking the TL to be able to learn it (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). Swain and Lapkin (1995) state that, language learner output maintains an emphasis on the need for production of the target language, arguing that student output gives learners the opportunity to notice their linguistic problems (Swain & Lapkin, 1995) and break their silences. Learners use their output to test whether their utterance is communicated successfully or not, but there needs to be facilitation from the EAL teacher for this. From this understanding of language learning from output, the CLT approach to teaching and learning gained impetus and impacted the undertaking of this study.

Proficiency-oriented student silences

The silent period is a mentalist concept in Krashen's (1982) language learning theory. This theory states that five hypotheses describe the second language learning process. One of the hypotheses, called the 'input' hypothesis, explains the silent period. Silence is a language-developing stage usually seen in the initial language learning, which is referred to as a competence-building stage through listening (Granger, 2004). Krashen (1982) "argues that usually adults are not allowed a silent period, in the same vein as they once did as a child. They are often asked to produce very early in a second language before they have learned enough syntactic competence to express their ideas" (Krashen, 1982, p. 27). Following from this, Krashen (1998 p.180) notes that learner production "is too scarce to make a real contribution in linguistic competence." He believed that language learners could learn the language, provided the input is comprehensible, but needs to state what this comprehension indexes. For example, a) does this comprehension involve phonetics practice b) how should teachers identify this? c) is there a checklist that identifies if adult students are ready to improve their proficiency as language teachers can ask this through surveys.

The adult bilingual comes into the TL with the ability to learn ways to break their silences on their own. For example, a participant in this study said they watched local movies to pick up the local dialect and practiced it independently. An awareness of the silent period can be useful when planning a pedagogy at this level. A view that stops the silent period from being theorised in SLA is that silence has a metaphorical predisposition, as explained by Yates and Nguyen (2012, p. 2). In this view, silence has a connection with "deference" within any given culture. This aspect of silence is responsible for this view in the metaphorical sense to override its literal meaning, according to Ollin (2008, p. 266). Silence is attributed to students who belong to cultures that "favour expert discretion over novice [student] talk" in classes (Yates & Nguyen, 2012, p. 1). Another critical reason for the silent behaviour of bilinguals remaining merely a concept is because most research methodologies are designed based on a socio-constructivist (CLT) aspect of a classroom learning environment that is counter-intuitive to the silent period.

At the beginner level, language learners claim that they listen and were more occupied figuring out structures of the language of the target language, and when they were ready at pre-intermediate, they were not assisted. Proficiency oriented silence becomes very problematic especially at pre-intermediate level as students need more pedagogical activity to verbally participate in a given CLT classroom to push through their silent period (Ekici, 2022). Adult students argued that pedagogical barriers (Ekici, 2022) were due to prescribed textbooks and teachers who did not know the situation

were unable to empathise and they felt rushed when they were trying to explain something. Students in this study said that their teachers needed to give them more speaking time to help them with pronunciation and speech despite their wanting to speak. Teachers need to be made aware of proficiency-oriented silence so they can focus on meaningful content to facilitate students' phonetical comprehension and practice to increase proficiency-oriented silence levels. Despite some discourse, there is still a gap about the implications of this on adult language learning. Another vexing question is how the British Council CEFL claims students reach automation without underpinning it with a theory.

2. Literature Review

There needs to be more understanding of the above problem in the literature. For example, a study by Baktash & Chalak (2015) explored a mixed method study to investigate the extent to which students experience silence in the EAL classrooms and to understand the contributing factors of reticence. Reticence in the literature is synonymous with psychological silence (Bao, 2021; Soo & Goh, 2013) and not connected to proficiency-oriented silence; anxiety is seen as the cause, but rather it is the effect of lacking proficiency-oriented silence (Ekici, 2022). The participants in their study were 104 Iranian undergraduate male and female EFL students who enrolled in EAL courses, all majoring in English and studying at Islamic Azad University in Iran. To collect their data, they adopted a Reticence Scale-12 (RS-12) questionnaire was used to measure the level of reticence consisting of six dimensions (anxiety, knowledge, timing, organisation, skills, and memory) was administered to the participants. The statistical analyses showed that the reticent level was high among the Iranian undergraduate students, and there were problems they felt anxiety in relation to delivery skills.

Moreover, the results revealed that factors such as low English were not connected to proficiency and teaching method but rather to lack of confidence, which contributed to the students' reticence in Iranian EFL classrooms. Language teachers' awareness of learners can help them choose more appropriate activities and provide a friendly environment, enhancing the more effective participation of EFL learners. The findings may have implications for teachers, learners, and policymakers.

The study by Soo and Goh (2013) research, along with Baktash & Chalak (2015), have been duplicated, showing the same results. All studies have found that a teacher's pedagogical approach leads to student 'tension and nervousness', the same results that have been found in this study, although they did not give reasons for this, such as what was causing the anxiety. The data similarities in these studies are all conducted in mixed methods methodology drawing from Competent Bilinguals' experiences, not from psycholinguistic theories of what educators think of silence (see, for example, Soo & Goh, 2013; Baktash & Chalak, 2015; Zuraidah, 2007). This may be because of the influence of EAL literature, which does not project this, and studies usually see silence as the representation of "denial, … frequently deemed as a sign of zeal, ignorance, boredom, and uncooperativeness" (Granger, 2004, p.445). The level of silence does not indicate the student's proficiency level when learning a language in EAL discourse. In Ekici (2022), it has been indicated that the only way to break student silence is to give students a chance to practice breaking it. However, this is not the case in general EAL practice, as teachers usually do the talking due to the paucity of understanding.

Miri & Qassemi (2015) conducted a conversation analysis methodology to understand how teachers planned or unplanned in-class teaching approaches that affected learners' oral participation. Their results showed that "extended teacher turn, limited wait-time, extensive repair, and teacher echo erected some obstacles in the way of learners' participation and consequently minimised interactional space" (p. 159). They were curious to know if teachers were minimising or obstructing learning opportunities for students in an EFL context. The researchers found that the non-existence of many detailed interactional features of teachers "referential questions, learner-initiated interaction, content repair and extended wait-time as opposed to predominance of display questions, excessive teacher turn as well as extended repair on accuracy might demonstrate a ritualised teacher behaviour with a lack of competency or/and awareness of interactional competence" (p. 159).Their study highlighted that teacher classroom behaviour in the Iranian context are "majorly teacher-fronted through which they tended to manage all learning stages, such as, topic management, turn-taking, repairing, mode shifting and terminating conversation" (p. 159). They concluded that adult

bilinguals were disadvantaged in language learning because they were not given practice "space through multiple intended or inadvertent teacher classroom talk and decision making, such as turn completion, extensive teacher talking time and repairs, a more dialogic approach otherwise was passed unnoticed" (p. 156). Furthermore, they argue that the lack of "classroom context mode debilitates learners' expressions of personal feelings and ideas but focusing on practice of linguistic forms as well as translation, can be regarded of the factors resulting in minimising students" participation and consequently learning opportunities in Iranian EAP context" (p. 159).

EAL teaching and learning draws precepts from sociolinguistics rather than cognitive linguistics (Ekici, 2022). According to Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 3), "theoretical linguists have attempted to decipher the fundamental concepts of language and how applied linguists have tried to turn some of those theoretical concepts into applicable pedagogical precepts" because learning is a social experience, and it is believed that teaching and learning are based on interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Due to this understanding, silence, or the silent period, is seen as representing a clash between the fundamentals of education that draw from sociolinguistic understanding and results in paucity of research on the silent period.

Furthermore, Bao's (2014) forwards that Krashen's silent period hypothesis claims that "there is little agreement between academics around what this period really means" (p. 26). He argues that the silent period is ambiguous, and the reason for this is that the stage usually passes over time, and language learners eventually begin to talk naturally anyway. However, early studies, such as Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), found that the silent period may last longer than a few months because the language learning process can be idiosyncratic and vary among individuals. There is also some agreement that the 'silent period' is a time for 'taking in' information or, in Krashen's terms, 'input' (Bao, 2014), but others take the view that it occurs because of students' low aptitude to learn a new language (Bao, 2013). Further, Bao (2014, p. 27) contends that conceptualisation about the silent period relies heavily on theorists' own observations of silence because of its symbolic, cultural, and contextual nature, and therefore silence needs "intellectual reasoning." Thus, this research explores the views of adult bilingual learners about their silent period and what helped them break it.

The understanding of silence needs to be better researched, and is usually connected to difference, as stated in Yates and Nguyen (2012). The connection is deeply rooted in psychology in education, and it has made silence be looked down on and has not developed into a theory of proficiency in education. Consequently, silence is further seen as the illustration of rejection, irresponsibility, and reliance. The literature on silence, particularly in education, needs to be clarified. The existing literature focuses on defining the traits of a good language learner (Zhang, 2022). According to Korol (2022), "reviewing the scholarship of silence could literally cause one to sink in silence, given the enormous amount of research that examines this topic from the perspectives of philosophy and psychology" (p.14)—remaining silent in the classroom seen as unwillingness, unmotivated and lacking the ability to participate (Bao, 2021) putting all the onus on students. Silence is assumed to constrict one's ability to learn and construct knowledge (Kaufman, 2008, p.169). Educational research values students who speak, and teachers spend a lot of time interacting with speaking students (Jaworski, 1993, p.22). Overt students in academic culture are praised for their participation (Ollin, 2008, p.265). AAs Ollin (2008) and Yates & Nguyen (2012) state, silence is also associated with "deference" within any given culture. They have also said that silence is attributed to students who belong to cultures that "favour expert discretion over novice [student] talk" in classes (Yates & Nguyen, 2012, p. 1) or silence is responsible for this view in the metaphorical sense to override its literal meaning according to Ollin (2008, p. 266).

According to Zhang's findings in 2022, language learner silence was due to the silent period. He did a comprehensive document on a 28-year-old male language-learning journey. His finding clearly showed that the participant claimed it was very crucial to understand others first. To do so, he watched films and paid attention to subtitles and mainly watched movies that had 'emotional envolvment" (p.6). This is in line with the finding in Ekici (2022), as the Bilingual participants all claimed that they relied on films and could not make meaning in the class as the teachers paid attention to form rather than meaning. To find out more, this study has explored the questions below.

Overarching Question:

1. What happens when there is silence in an EAL pre-intermediate classroom?

Sub-Questions:

1. How do language learners perceive their proficiency-oriented silence?

2. And what are the governing pedagogical factors?

2.1. New contribution to knowledge

The findings of this study contributed new understandings of the role and nature of the Adult silent period in the field of EAL. This article aims to also establish this as a theory that has been extended from Krashen's concept of the silent period. Proficiency-oriented silence explains the process of adult language learning, given that children's L2 learning and adults' L2 learning are very similar and depend on output (Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

The contributions in improving pedagogy and learning at the pre-intermediate level of English proficiency provide deeper insights into both the students' and teachers' perspectives on proficiency-oriented student silence. Gaining teachers' views is extremely important for the research to understand the two perspectives of those involved in the pedagogical situation – teachers and learners. There is tension in this regard as some teachers see it as beneficial, and most teachers see it negatively. For instance, Bista, (2012) and Armstrong (2007) state that teachers see silence as an "enemy of speech" (p.77). The contribution to knowledge would be compromised if teachers' views were ignored.

This insight will illuminate the current challenge or dilemma that the perspectives revealed are likely to conflict and negatively impact students' learning and teachers' teaching. Hopefully, the study will increase the understanding of the theory of proficiency-oriented silence underpinning the silent period and also reveal important new knowledge of the benefits of silence in EAL learning and teaching settings since it is generally viewed negatively as unhelpful. Understanding proficiency-oriented silence will give students the tools to improve and overcome proficiency silence.

3. Methodology

3.1 Mixed method case study

This study is a mixed-method case study of EAL. This approach is a social constructive worldview. This allows the researcher to explore meaning in people's experiences. The social-constructivist view particularly gives "the basic generation of meaning is always social" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8). To do so, often, open-ended questions are a means to understand participant experiences and views. There were 148 advanced-speaking adult bilingual Participants reflecting on their language learning experiences through a survey.

Bilingual participants have answered the questions in the survey, which are grouped into six dimensions. The dimensions were created to measure how they felt when they experienced breaking their silences in class as a beginner, such as anxiety, if they knew conversational topics, timing skills, organisation of thoughts, delivery skills, and memory. Under each dimension, two or three items are created to explore each dimension. When the Bilingual Participants replied 'sometimes,' it was assumed they had issues breaking their silence. The selected aspect(s) in that dimension on the frequency scale show the issues they experienced. On the contrary, if they answered either 'very rarely' or 'never' to the questions, they were counted as less silent or not silent (i.e., not having any issues breaking their silent period) under the dimension.

Data collection for this research involved three stages. The first stage included surveying 148 advanced-level bilinguals (Phase 1, advanced speaking bilingual participants) at the University of Southern Queensland College in Australia. Phase 2 involved analyses of a publicly available YouTube video of a pre-intermediate class using Walsh's (2006) SETT Framework (see Appendix A). Phase 3 is the Teacher interviews.

Table 1. Data collection summary

Stages	Instruments	Participants/tools	Information sought
Phase 1	Survey	148 advanced level Bilinguals	Post feeling of silence
Phase 2	Walsh's (2006) SETT Framework	Classroom video	The features are based on Walsh's SETT Framework, which locates teacher/student interactions and related key pedagogical points.
Phase 3	Interviews	Five teachers	Video-stimulated teacher responses

There were five teacher interviews. The interviews were conducted using a publicly available video as a Video Stimulus Recall Interview (VSRI) questions so that the teachers can comment on the reasons for particular behaviours in EAL language teaching. Their feedback from the VSRIs will also allow them to comment on the class atmosphere and raise other issues. The interviews were later analysed using the SETT framework. Returning the video-recorded class should prompt memory of their feelings and emotions, giving insights into their views on their silent period (Sturtz & Hessberg, 2012). The data collection tool of Video Stimulated Recall Interview (VSRI) is purposely chosen to gain an understanding of these students' silent periods during the initial stages of their language learning. In addition, the Walsh (2006) SETT classroom language pedagogical features checklist will be used to analyze the nature of the pedagogy, e.g., to gauge the extent to which CLT and the social constructivist approach are adopted. This is necessary since this approach is seen as a possible inhibitor of students' speaking., adding to the triangulation of the data. Thematic analysis was applied to the data to the survey data. Data, such as transcripts, will be analysed using Nvivo to identify common themes regarding the explanations of silence within groups of students and teachers.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Findings

The results of the Pedagogy Scale in the survey were designed to measure the Competent Bilingual's views of their teacher's pedagogical behavior referring to their pre-intermediate phase of language learning. It is based on five dimensions of the pedagogical approach, which are scaffolding/modelling, form-focused/content feedback topics, extended wait-time/learner turn, learner participation, and teacher role/talk/awareness, which were clustered items. These clustered items were created to assess if teachers gave students enough support during their silent period. If the Competent Bilinguals on the frequency scale replied 'sometimes' with the statement(s), they were said to have experienced the selected aspect(s) in that particular dimension. If they responded either 'very rarely' or 'never' with certain statements, they were considered to have yet to experience the aspect(s) under the dimension.

The analysis of data showed that most of the Competent Bilinguals believed that their teachers encouraged them to speak in English before they were ready to speak, which resulted in anxiety and delayed them in breaking their silence. For the 'learner participation' dimension, 84% (54) out of the Competent Bilinguals who reflected on their learning responded to this statement reported that their teachers did not encourage them to speak in English when they were at pre-intermediate level in the classroom without giving them enough explanation of vocabulary. The analysis of data also highlights that in the dimension of form-focused feedback, the majority of Competent Bilinguals experienced that their teacher was more focused on grammar than message (81.15%; 56) and believed that 145 the focus on grammatical issues rather than the message caused tension and anxiety and resulted in the delay of breaking their silent period. Thirty-seven Competent Bilinguals (56.92%; 37) expressed that their teachers at least sometimes focused on the message rather than the words when giving them feedback. And 40.58%; 28 responded that their teachers 'very rarely' or 'never' gave them feedback based "on my message but not on the words I should use" they were trying to convey. The reliance on form-focused behaviour of the teachers in beginner level classes indicates why most of the Competent Bilinguals may have reported 'lack of vocabulary' as an

obstacle for their talking in the classroom. Similarly, 49 Competent Bilinguals responded that their teachers gave them extended time and "gave me plenty of time to think of how to respond in English," and 50 reported, "a second turn to speak when I was answering a question." Many Competent Bilinguals believed that problems with timing, such as learners taking turns to talk in English, contributed to issues when breaking their silences.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the wait time they experienced might not have been enough for them to express themselves in English. In relation to the competent bilinguals' recall, 40 respondents noted that at least sometimes teachers "rephrased what I said, to show me what to say," while 27 responded that their teachers 'very rarely' or 'never' rephrased what they said or added to what they said or modelled the correct speech to show them how to say something. For the dimensions of teacher role/talk/awareness, the difference between high and low-frequency responses was small. Although they were competent bilinguals who claimed that they had problems in these dimensions, it was less serious than the dimensions discussed above. 146 The following five figures individually consider the results of each of the six pedagogical scale dimensions. In doing so, the positive percentage ratings of 'very often' and 'often' are compared with the 'sometimes' rating and the combined 'rarely and never' ratings. The data collected are displayed in graphs under each dimension below. The findings of the dimension anxiety, knowledge, timing, organisation, skills, and memory, and the knowledge dimension clearly show that these competent bilinguals were silent as beginner and this was due to a lack of teacher understanding of the disconnection between the silent period and pedagogical approach that resulted in teachers not helping them as beginners in breaking their silent period.

4.2. Discussion

Findings highlight that advanced-speaking adult bilinguals said their silences were due to experiencing confusion about teacher and students' roles in a pre-intermediate language learning class in Australia when they were learning English in an EAL classroom. These finding clearly shows:

1. Students in this study reported that their teachers usually focused on form rather than meaning. They said they did not have a safe place to practice and master the language because they were confused about their student role. Teacher and learner confusion about each other's styles, the struggle to teach and learn in which both pedagogy and silence are mutually problematic, and above all else, the need for empathy for student learning and the need to customize pedagogy to suit it was the apparent finding in this study. This is the attribute of not having an understanding of the silent period and silence in educational research; the silent period and proficiency silence barely exist in the literature.

2. The teachers did not show empathy when they were trying to speak, as they were usually rushed.

3. Pedagogical barriers are another very important aspect. This refers to out of context inappropriate teaching materials relevant to students' everyday use of language, so they could not play out what they were learning in everyday life.

4. As explained at the beginning of this article, a pedagogical approach needs to improve proficiency-oriented silence. Students claimed to experience pedagogical barriers caused by non-contextual content in Australian classrooms.

5. Teachers needed clarification and needed to know what silent period was.

1) Findings answers to the research questions

Teachers said the silence was related to culture, passive learning, context, and motivation. The collected data reveals, along with strengthening the argument, that silence is not a quintessential aspect of a particular culture or race, age, or gender but rather plays a huge role in lower-level language learning in relation to the pedagogical barriers affecting their proficiency in silence. The diversity of the data is valuable to this study because it demonstrates that an understanding of silence in language learning is not related to a particular culture as the sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic-centric literature review suggests (see Granger in Chapter 3). The main reasons for these assumptions by the interviewed teachers were connected to the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic-

centric educational research, not really connected to cognitive aspects of language learning. This study has filled in this gap by conducting a mixed method study because the research needed to focus on student and teacher experiences at lower levels to reduce discrepancies between theory and practice of CLT.

It is also apparent from adult students who participated in this study that all of the above findings resulted from confusion in class. In fact, adult students associated their silent behaviour with teachers not helping them practice breaking their silence when they were struggling to learn how to speak. This caused their anxiety and resulted in their proficiency-oriented silence lingering more than usual because it was untreated, making them feel very unmotivated. Research on the silent period is much needed (Ekici, 2022). To narrow the gap in education and SLA, there needs to be a reconceptualization of silence in education so that bilingual learners are assisted with a teaching method during their proficient silent periods that avoids pedagogical silencing barriers. These barriers can be expressed as a lack of explanation of the content or concept and assuming that students share the same background. The pedagogical understanding currently held by teaching professionals fails to facilitate students' language learning in the early stages. This is typically an attribute of needing to understand the pedagogical barriers of teaching beginner and pre-intermediate levels and the principles of internalising language. The calculations of each dimension were used to determinehe Competent Bilinguals experienced silence in this study. These findings were enough to show that teachers' use of the target language did not assist students in breaking their proficiency-oriented student silence.

These findings are significantly different from studies found in the literature review. Silence is attributed to the means of ethnographic stance (Ekici, 2022). Teachers really do need to adapt their language teaching skills and show empathy so that adult bilingual learners are supported rather than feeling like they are being interrogated for not knowing how to respond to out-of-context teacher questions. The Competent Bilinguals reflected back and explained that they needed more listening activities and modeling to understand how language is used on a daily basis. The effect of silent listening, for example, students having to listen knowing they cannot interact/participate can be debilitating during the silent period, and it also needs to be researched in depth. For example, authentic and current listening to a local conversation may positively affect the silent period. However, to do so, there needs to be an awareness of the silent period and its implications for language learning in education before this can be implemented. For example, Farangi and Kheradmand Saadi (2017) state that "being considered a passive skill for a while, listening skill is now recognised as an active and interactive process in which the learners use their linguistic and non-linguistic or background knowledge to make meaning" (p. 2) of activities that foster social communication for meaningful purposes.

2) *Historical views of silence in education and linguistics*
Many studies in the past projected diverse ideas about student silences that were not a part of language learning. The proficiency-oriented student silences in SLA need to be developed and designed so that there is a clear understanding within the domain of language learning and teaching. This is vital because then we can pedagogically treat it. For example, Granger says it is silence amongst adults in schools that is psychological, and this is very different from the finding of this study. There is a misunderstanding between learners' distress of unknowing the language and teachers' distress of not understanding the phases of the silent learning theory. The silence of language learners could be because they are in their proficiency-oriented silence mode, which is a period that lasts approximately somewhere between six months and a year (Krashen, 1982).

Moreover, it needs to be acknowledged that L2 learners begin without any way of using the L2 to communicate, and it is typical that their EAL teacher will not speak their language either. Their silences are also exacerbated by confusion, causing tension in them. Krashen (1987) argues that tension causes a high affective filter that prolongs the silent period. The silent period needs to be understood and treated to sustain a healthy language learning period. For teachers to comprehend the silent period and incorporate it into their teaching, it needs to be theorised in language education. This paper forwards the theory of proficiency-oriented silence. It enlightens this understanding of silence and adds that proficiency-oriented learner silence is an organic process that adults, just like children, go through when learning happens but are even more exasperated when there is a pedagogical block silencing them.

3) Teachers need professional development in the proficiency-oriented silence

All five teachers interviewed in this study did not know why students were silent. Most of them said it was cultural and did not associate with proficiency. Teachers also said that they talked in class most of the time, explaining topics in the textbook. Speaking is not a priority, and there needs to be a sense of improving student output and proficiency.

The interviewed teachers showed that students needed more opportunities to talk due to a cognitive overload of new content inappropriate for beginners and intermediate English learners. Their silence seems to be because L2 English adult beginners and intermediate learners do not have the appropriate English level to meet the teacher's expectations. They may not have the level to communicate to make any meaning in any way, and their teachers typically do not know how to adjust their use of English to help them begin to make meaning, such as using formulaic language and modelling common interchanges like meet and greet.

Unfamiliar content in an isolated environment limited students' opportunities to practise talk. Similarly, the significant themes like a 'pedagogical approach' and another argument were to be 'teacher expectations' shows major themes and their subthemes. The interviewees/teachers at the end of the interview reiterated their concerns about the pedagogical approach that had limited opportunities for students to use the English language. The major theme emerging from the transcripts with the underlined part being coded as a sub-theme where I have coded the teacher statements in their interviews to reflect this. Teacher 1 said: "*the students were not encouraged to speak*"; Teacher 2 said the "*talk between yourselves task needed to be structured*"; Teacher 3 said, "*I would have created an explicit pair-work task.*" So, another coded subtheme under the pedagogical approach might emerge as cognitive overload of new content where the teachers commented on the lesson content being unfamiliar, containing irrelevant information for students' communicative needs, where their ability to communicate was impeded by having to struggle with new irrelevant concepts and vocabulary for them to use to make meaning. Therefore, the results of these video-stimulated interviews with EAL teachers highlighted what might be called a 'pedagogical barrier' where, in this case, the intermediate English language learners in the video were silenced because of the above emergent issues.

4) What can teachers do to increase proficiency-oriented silence?

The teacher should model words with a triphthong; for example, the word 'hour' has three vowels, which she can make students practice. For example, teachers may model a local conversation with another teacher to prepare their students for their role plays. This way may allow students to understand how to construct the local dialect in use along with accent and phonetics pertaining within context, feeding into a wholistic comprehension while weaning off their pronunciation-oriented silence. However, for this to happen, there needs to be a substantial understanding of this theory in education.

Silent input strategies need to be revised in order to have output. How can one really produce output if they cannot make meaning of input that is unfamiliar and not easy to make meaning? There needs to be a build of knowledge with the environments where language is used to exercise meaning. Krashen talks about the input hypothesis in children but needs to expand it on adults L2. Teachers can use the below checklist to understand if their students are going through proficiency-oriented silence.

Table 2 shows the Adult Proficiency Silence (APS) checklist. This checklist can be used to identify if students are in their silent period. In a typical EAL classroom setting, many language teachers observed that the students showed silent behaviour. The act of being silent, hesitant to participate or speak, using the target language has always been considered a frustration and a failure for both teachers and bilingual students (Zhang & Head, 2009). It is a major obstacle for students to develop oral proficiency in English language classrooms (Jenkins, 2010). Findings clearly show that Competent Bilinguals were silent as beginners due to pedagogical barriers. This suggests that this was largely due to a lack of teacher understanding of the disconnection between the silent period and pedagogy and their inability or lack of experience around helping Competent Bilinguals break their silent period.

Table 2. The adult proficiency-oriented silence checklist for pre-intermediate teachers

Please Tick	5 - very often	4 - often	3 - sometimes	2 - very rarely	1- never
Question					
1 Do your students give only one-word answers?					
2 Do your students seem to be nervous when you ask them to talk in English?					
3 Do they need to remember their words often?					
4 Are they unfamiliar with what you say?					
5 Do they need to learn more vocabulary before they can speak English?					
6 Do they need help to participate in using English?					
7 Are they constrained when they are speaking?					
8 Do they need to be made aware of what to say?					
9 Do they have very long pauses?					
10 Do they lose sight easily of what they want to say when you ask them to talk in English?					
11 Do they seem tense when you ask them a question?					
12 Do they feel tense when you ask them to talk in English?					

Once teachers identify that their students are in the silent period, they can use strategies and ways to help them break their silence. This could be done by authentic modelling – as echoing or repeating students' responses is not modelling. Teachers who teach at proficiency-oriented silence level could examine their own approach based on their students' nervousness, tension, or unawareness of levels. Along with reading, it is dialogic, and students can only interpret things to which they can make meaning.

This will help to utilise an approach that would help students experiencing proficiency silence because they are in their silent period. This study has gained an understanding of the pedagogical barrier silences that no other literature studies have researched. A pedagogical barrier can be defined as a need for more training and knowledge of teaching how to speak. Having supporting resources available to implement a more communicative approach and teachers needing an understanding of teaching specific knowledge and how to talk to lower levels, need to be differentiated, and teachers should be more informed and aware. Knowledge of words that need particular schematic knowledge of unfamiliar content needs to be included in teaching at this level, and there needs to be speaking activities that foster social communication for meaningful purposes. Students have no choice initially when they have no language, and the teacher doesn't speak their L1. Many teachers do not typically understand this, so they should be doing activities catering to speaking for their social needs. Then, when students have learned a little, albeit formulaic knowledge, if they are still silent in

the lesson this could be cultural, shyness, lack of confidence, fear of making a mistake, embarrassment etc., basically the ingredients of the pedagogical barrier are teachers' insufficient formulaic literacy. These pedagogical silencing barriers need attention in ELICOS.

5. Conclusion

This study has contributed to language teaching and learning about student silences in education. The term 'pedagogical barrier' emerges as a new concept that supports and strengthens the argument that has already emerged that teachers need to be better prepared to be able to adjust their language use to meet the needs of learners at various proficiency levels, including – and very importantly – beginners. This study has formed an understanding of proficiency-oriented student silences. This theory may help teachers to refrain from a more traditional information transmission model of teaching that teachers seem to be defaulting to due to a lack of training. The pedagogical application needs to be understood based on the theoretical language learning frame of proficiency-oriented silence. Thus, based on the literature received in this paper, the silences of learners were not treated from the communicative perspective in a dialogic approach in class because of the lack of teachers' understanding of applying the CLT approach at this level. Education has a dialogic nature. If there is no content speaking to learning, then learning is delayed. According to Alyousef (2019), adult learners must first be familiar with their surroundings to make meaning. Meaning-making shows comprehension.

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Appendix A

WALSH'S SETT FRAMEWORK

- **Walsh's (2006) SETT key framework**

The teacher interview questions will be spontaneously used as the SETT frame work will be used to frame the questions.

SETT Key (Walsh, 2006, p.168) questions like, for example. What does the student silence mean to you? Will be used to understand teachers and their thinking about silent behaviour.

Interactional feature	Description
(a) Scaffolding	(1) Reformulation (rephrasing a learner's contribution) (2) Extension (extending a learner's contribution) (3) Modelling (correcting a learner's contribution.
(b) Direct repair	Correcting an error quickly and directly.
(c) Content feedback	Giving feedback to the message rather than the words used.
(d) Extended wait-time	Allowing sufficient time (several seconds) for students to respond or formulate a response.
(e) Referential questions	Genuine questions to which the teacher does not know the answer.
(f) Seeking clarification	(1) Teacher asks a student to clarify something the student has said. (2) Student asks teacher to clarify something the teacher has said.
(g) Confirmation checks	Making sure that teacher has correctly understood a learner's contribution.
(h) Extended learner turn	Learner turn of more than one clause.
(i) Teacher echo	(1) Teacher repeats a previous utterance. (2) Teacher repeats a learner's contribution.
(j) Teacher interruptions	Interrupting a learner's contribution.
(k) Extended teacher turn	Teacher turn of more than one clause.
(l) Turn completion	Completing a learner's contribution for the learner.
(m) Display questions	Asking questions for which the teacher knows the answer.
(n) Form- focused feedback	Giving feedback on the words/syntax used more than the message.

Applying the Self-evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) Framework

(Walsh, 2006, p.141)

1. Make a 10–15-minute audio recording from one of your lessons. Try **to** choose a part of the lesson involving you and your learners. You don't have to start at the beginning of the lesson; choose any segment you like.

2 As soon as possible after the lesson, listen to the tape. The first listening aims to analyse the extract according to classroom context or mode. As you listen the first time, decide which modes are in operation.

Choose from the following:

- Skills and systems mode (main focus is on particular language items, vocabulary, or a specific skill)

- Managerial mode (primary focus is on setting up an activity)

- Classroom context mode (primary focus is on eliciting feelings, attitudes, and emotions of learners)

- Materials mode (main focus is on the use of text, tape, or other materials).

3. Listen to the tape a second time, using the SETT instrument to count the different features of your teacher's talk. Write down examples of the features you identify.

4. If you need more clarification on a particular feature, use the SETT key (below) to help you.

5. Evaluate your teacher talk in the light of your overall aim and modes used.

To what extent do you think your use of language and pedagogic purpose coincided? That is, how appropriate was your use of language in this segment, bearing in mind your stated aims and the modes of operation?

6. The final stage is a feedback interview with me. Again, try to do this as soon as possible after the evaluation. Please bring both the recording and SETT instrument with you.

These steps need to be completed four times in total. After the final self-evaluation, we'll arrange a video recording and interview.