

Behind the invisible curtain: Silence as a multimodal negotiation space in group Q-and-A sessions at a Japanese university

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ABSTRACT

The interactional phenomenon of silence is interpreted in numerous ways from different perspectives. In many Western pedagogical settings, it is typically considered a void to be filled and seen as potentially representing a lack of knowledge or interest (Baurain, 2011), while many researchers have analyzed how and why silence occurs so frequently and is more widely accepted in Asia (Bao, 2014) (Harumi, 2011). Using the lens of conversation analysis (CA) on the data collected in two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing courses at a Japanese university, this study is twofold. First, it focuses on the frequent silent spaces that Japanese student-presenters create during question-and-answer sessions in their group presentations of their essays; second, it examines how teachers effectively steer such silences in a specific direction in the classroom discussion. In looking at the use of what I call multimodal silent negotiations and how presenters engage in them, silence no longer seems empty or meaningless but instead generative of new voices and ideas (Foster, 2012)(Schultz, 2010).



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1. Introduction

"Yet the silence is not silent. Contextualized with shared knowledge and relationships." (Baurain, 2011).

In Japan, it is said that among trusted people, family, and lovers, words are not required because they share a tacit understanding as members of the same community (Reischauer & Jansen, 1995). Even close friends typically observe and appreciate utter silence when riding public transportation together. At times, upset wives give their husbands the "silent treatment" to indicate their displeasure. These are only two instances that show how greatly Japanese people value silence in the various contexts of their everyday lives. Silence is pervasive in the classroom of any subject at any pedagogical institution in Japan, as students tend not to respond verbally when the teacher asks a question. This may be due to shyness or embarrassment (Kurzon, 1995) or due to the typical Japanese pedagogical format; here, the teacher is deemed the sole epistemic source, and students strictly assume the roles of knowledge recipients, meaning that one-directional classroom interactions are not unusual (Biggs, 1998; Jae Park, 2011; Paige, 2002). By contrast, in many Western classrooms, silence is frequently considered "awkward" (Takahashi, 2019) and typically is treated as an undesirable void to be filled. It is also understood to potentially represent a lack of knowledge or interest (Baurain, 2011). This is

even more common in second language (L2) classes, where L2 speakers may not yet possess sufficient communicative skills in that language (Bao, 2014), which may cause anxiety for students to speak up (Maher & King, 2022). How, then, is students' silence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms performed, treated, and processed? By looking closely at question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions during student group presentations, this paper explores what precisely these silences "do" and what they achieve in the Japanese EFL classroom, using a conversation analytic perspective.

2. Background

2.1. Empty silence vs. generative silence

Researchers can interpret the interactional phenomenon of silence in numerous ways that reflect their different viewpoints. For some, it is treated as a communication failure (Gregory, 2006), a meaningless absence of speech (Levinson, 1983), or an interaction deficit that should be avoided. In particular, in US educational institutions, silence among students could indicate that the class is uninteresting or that the students are too passive; thus, it may create embarrassment and awkwardness for both the teacher and students (Baurain, 2011). Baurain further adds political aspects that silence could signify, such as "marginalization, disempowerment, or disenfranchisement" (p. 92), and warns that those verbally left out may be ignored in the classroom. Calling it "unintentional silence," (Kurzon, 1995) elaborates on the psychological factors underlying students' silent responses when asked questions. If a student does not know the answer, Kurzon explains, he or she faces two options: either respond by saying "I don't know" or lapse into silence. However, because most people would be reluctant to admit their ignorance, they opt to hide it "behind the wall of silence" (p. 61). Thus, silence can be linked with ignorance, embarrassment, shyness, marginalization, and shame.

By contrast, other researchers have made another common claim about silence: that it is not meaningless emptiness; indeed, it is a time that generates new voices and ideas (Foster, 2012; Schultz, 2010). In advocating generative silence, philosophically criticizes the Western culture that tends to prioritize talk and overlook the significance of silence. Instead, she focuses on silent spaces in relation to listening, processing information, and, most of all, listening to one's inner thoughts. Fiumara explains what exactly such generative silence does: when interlocutors create and inhabit an actual period and space through their silence, they are making room for "a proposed interaction and an invitation to the development" (p. 101), which generates answers and opinions in the form of new language and words. Put differently, generative silence is an important, creative segment of an overall interaction that produces valuable thoughts and ideas that the entire classroom can learn.

2.2. Silence from a CA perspective

Conversation analysis (CA) is both a field of study and a research method; today, it is widely used to understand how interlocutors achieve specific social actions through interactions (Heritage, 1998; Sacks et al., 1974). Its analysis focuses on what is visible in the empirical data from an interaction not only the words and grammar usage but also prosodic elements such as speed, voice quality, emphasis, pauses, and so on, and embodied devices, including eye gazes and any facial or physical gestures. Using the lens of CA, silence is generally categorized as a space where no one takes the next speaking turn, and which is usually longer than one second (Sacks & Jefferson, 1995) this, CA makes no judgment about whether silence is positive or negative. Instead, when looking at it as a full-fledged interactional event within the surrounding sequential environment, silence is consequential for the ensuing talk (Schegloff, 1980). CA holds that every use of an interactive element, including silence, has a specific meaning. Researchers look at the entirety of interaction and ask, "Why that now?" ("Why is it happening now?") about each element; thus, the CA approach to silence is to identify the social action it achieves and how it does so. For instance, take the case of an adjacency pair, such as "Thanks a lot!" (first-pair-part) followed by "Oh, you're welcome" (second-pair-part). (Pomerantz, 1985) claims that if the second pair part were comprised of just silence, it would indicate some trouble on the part of the recipient. This would violate "relevance rules," which may reflect some meaning (Schegloff, 1980). Even delaying a response with a short silence to some speech acts—such as invitations, offers, and requests—would be indicative of a recipient's undesirable, dispreferred answer (Pomerantz, 1985). This, in CA, the "absence of talk can be an event in its own right" (Schegloff, 1980).

Another way of analyzing silence from a CA perspective is to carefully observe the participants' demeanor and multimodal conduct, such as gazes, facial expressions, head postures, and so on (e.g.,

(Jacknick, 2021; Kääntä, 2014; Mondada, 2018). (Jacknick, 2021) asserts that social interaction in the classroom is “a necessarily embodied phenomenon” (p. 26). That is exemplified in past explorations of gaze as a crucial device for both teachers and students (Sert, 2019; Waring & Carpenter, 2019). For instance (as many educators may have experienced), the lack of a mutual gaze between teacher and students can be observed during times of student disengagement (Goodwin, 1980; Mortensen, 2008) or students “claiming insufficient knowledge” (CIK) (Sert, 2019). By contrast, (Mortensen, 2008) shows that students’ gaze can help draw the teacher’s attention and demonstrate their engagement in-class instruction. Such mutual gaze can be considered a display of WTP – willingness to participate (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Sert, 2015, 2019).

2.3. (Un)willingness to participate and (un)availability

In analyzing silent multimodality in the classroom, when students generally use raised hands, gazes, and postures directed at the teacher to show their readiness to speak, they are often deemed to be displaying their “willingness to participate” (WTP) (Bezemer, 2008; Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011; Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Mortensen, 2008; Sert, 2015, 2019). In contrast, the reverse can be observed as well; for instance, students position away from the instructor or avoid eye contact so as to exhibit their “unavailability” (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015) or “unwillingness to participate” (UTP) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Sert, 2015). Students may also display their intentions not to participate by engaging in parallel activities, such as playing with an object or looking out the window (Bezemer, 2008; Koole, 2008).

Thus, UTP typically occurs in silence, performed by one's apparent gesture, such as gaze aversion, to show his/her intention to remain silent. This multimodal silence is comprised of such messages as part of classroom interaction. Some may wonder if “unwillingness” is a psychological state and, without any verbal conveyance, how we can infer from their embodied display. However, the participants' demeanor and multimodal semiotic delivery could be interpreted through a CA approach that they are ready or not ready, or desire or reluctant to speak (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Sert, 2015). Therefore, if they are not making themselves available to face the teacher, who is the turn-allocator of the class, they are silently announcing that they will not answer the question or state an opinion. Likewise, even when it is accompanied by silence and not by a raised hand, a student’s continued gaze at the teacher after a question has been provided can exhibit his/her WTP and “availability” (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015). All of these social actions can be conveyed during silence. Thus, from a CA point of view, silence is never an absent, meaningless, or empty space but emerges where it does for an objective. Whether it is a dispreferred response (Hellermann, 2009; Pomerantz, 1985) or semiotic signal, silence is always constructed with specific underlying messages, which is why it is a significant part of any interaction.

2.4. Silence and UTP in the Japanese classroom

It is easy to imagine a Western educator teaching in Japan for the first time becoming perplexed and feeling at a loss upon facing the reality of “the great wall of silence” (Harumi, 2011), with students typically not responding to the teacher’s questions or even greetings. Some researchers criticize this characterization of Asian students as “stereotypical” (Kumaravadivelu, 2007) however, the phenomenon has been well documented in the actual classroom in a sizable number of prior studies (Bao, 2014, 2020; Biggs, 1998; Harumi, 2011, 2020; Kang, 2005; Lee, 2009; Paige, 2002; Takahashi, 2019). Some predominant common factors that these studies identify as underlying silence are embarrassment and face-saving (Brown et al., 1987; Kurzon, 1995); politeness (Nakane, 2007); the traditional Confucian-influenced classroom culture (Biggs, 1998; Tran, 2013); and low L2 proficiency level and the anxiety it triggers (Maher & King, 2022). For instance, in a study from (Harumi, 2023), which surveyed 189 Japanese EFL students (some of whom had experience studying overseas), nearly 60% responded that they were “always” or “frequently” silent due to a lack of confidence, which can be related to embarrassment and face-saving. This lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity may also be profoundly related to UTP, as many Japanese students tend to look down and avoid mutual gaze with the teacher to avoid being called on. This explains Ishino’s study (2021) on a Japanese high school classroom which depicts a teacher allocating a turn to a student by acting as if he did not notice her avoiding eye contact with him and displaying UTP. The study indicates that UTP may be rampantly occurring in the Japanese classroom.

Another factor in Japanese students' non-participatory tendency can be the Confucian-influenced classroom culture. Following the traditional hierarchical social order, the teacher is the sole knowledge

provider, while students are strictly expected to assume the roles of knowledge recipients. This is exemplified in (Rao, 2002a) conducted at a university in China, which discovered how Chinese students perceived difficulty with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that was implemented in their EFL courses due to their traditional pedagogical values and behaviors. In other words, students' speaking up in class was against their notion of "being good students." (Rao, 2002b) also demonstrated how Asian students rarely question or challenge teacher instructions because the delivery of teacher epistemic should be in a complete package, or what was called a "final draft talk" by (Barnes, 1976) (Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008). In "final draft talk," the instructor does not lead the entire class to explore or exchange ideas on the learning material through discussions, but he merely conveys the conclusive talk; thus, students do not even raise their hands to ask a question, and instead remain silent.

In addition, because of this structure-oriented tendency, such as the aforementioned strict hierarchical social order in class and predetermined teacher-student roles, Asian students may not flexibly respond to questions outside of the formal initiation-response-evaluation/feedback (IRE/F) interactional sequence (Lemke, 1990; McHoul, 2014; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). This typical classroom exchange format consists of "an initiation (I) by the teacher, followed by a response (R) from a student, and by evaluation (E) or feedback (F) to the student's response from the teacher" (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Employing this IRE/F framework and taking a CA perspective, (Takahashi, 2021) depicts how Asian students may find it easier to provide teachers with short, precise answers—a participation style termed "answering" (p.5)—to open-ended questions since this style closely aligns with the IRE/F format. On the other hand, they may remain silent when the class is provided referential questions, which have no conclusive answers; or during exploratory talk (Barnes, 1976)(Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008), in which the teacher lets the entire class engage in improvisational conversation, collaborate, and explore their thoughts and ideas.

These studies, however, have not investigated what speakers concretely "do" or "accomplish" during their silences; recall, too, that CA claims there is no such thing as an empty, meaningless silence. With a particular focus on how Japanese students collectively utilize their wordless spaces after receiving a question during Q&A sessions of their group presentations, the current study attempts to discover the answers to the following research questions:

- How is silence constructed and used during Japanese students' Q&A sessions, and what social action does it achieve?
- How does the teacher utilize student silence to promote learning for the class?

3. Data collection and method

3.1. Study participants

The participants of the current study are 45 sophomore EFL students enrolled in two essay-writing classes at a university in Western Japan. Although the students were majoring in English and their grammatical and writing skills were advanced, their communicative fluency level in the language varied. According to the teacher of these classes, other than a few "returnee students" (i.e., students who lived in an English-speaking country for some years in the past and moved back to Japan) or students whose family member(s) used English at home, their English communication skill was generally at the level of someone putting together basic words using their grammatical knowledge and mostly lacking fluency. This element could affect WTP/UTP due to their confidence level in communicating in English before everyone's attention in class.

3.2. Research context and method

For the second half of the semester, students learned to write "argumentative essays," in which they must take a stand of whether they agree or disagree on a certain statement, followed by the justifications for their positions and some support by data/citations. During the final class sessions, students gave group presentations based on the essays they co-wrote in groups. The essay topics the groups could choose from included the following: "Should Japan legalize gay marriage?" "Should Japan implement a basic income system?" "Should couples cohabitate before marriage?" "Should the death penalty be abolished in Japan?" and "Should senior citizens over 75 years old return their driver's licenses?" One presentation group typically consisted of four or five students who took turns talking

about the PowerPoint slides they prepared. I videotaped ten such presentations in two 90-minute classes. Both classes were taught by the same teacher, who was Japanese and not the author of this study. The video was transcribed following (Jefferson, 1984), which included identifying the linguistic, prosodic, and embodied resources. It should be noted that although these classes taught essay writing, what students discussed in their presentations was not about their writing skills but the content of their writings, such as their positions, thesis statements, supportive facts and data, possible resolutions to the problems, and so on. At the end of their presentations, students were required to conduct Q&A sessions, which became the focus of this study. I observed frequent silences when presenters were leading these sessions and noticed that they typically occurred when the presenter could not immediately answer an audience question. In the next section, I will demonstrate my analysis in detail.

I conducted this study within the framework of conversation analysis (CA). CA was developed to fundamentally demonstrate the social actions being achieved through people's interaction (Sacks & Jefferson, 1995) and to empirically analyze "a shared understanding of the progress of the interaction" (Seedhouse, 2004). To that end, throughout my analysis, I paid careful attention to how interactional organization, order, and a shared understanding among the group members were constructed *in situ*. In particular, this study focuses on how multimodal practices are deployed during silences to construct underlying understanding and negotiate to reach a particular conclusion that is ultimately conveyed in the classroom.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1. Multimodal silent segment

Based on an analysis of videotaped group presentations that took place during two 90-minute class periods, I discovered that (1) presenters' long silences begin simultaneously as they gaze away from the audience; (2) during these silences, they actively employ embodied devices among themselves, such as the use of gazes, smiles, turning faces in specific directions, facial expressions, head tilts, and handling an object like a microphone; and, (3) these silent actions continue until someone returns to face the entire class and gazes at them, which shows his/her readiness and availability (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Mortensen, 2008) to answer their questions.

As model examples, I will present two extracts from the Q&A sessions that two different groups conducted below. They demonstrate all of the patterns—(1), (2), and (3)—described above during the group members' silence after receiving a question from one of the student audience members. In the first extract, Group A has just ended their presentation, arguing that "senior citizens should return their driver's licenses for public safety." The presenters are standing in front of the class, and they begin their Q&A segment.

Extract 1: It is very difficult

(Participants: P1-4 = Presenters 1-4; Ps=Presenters; S1 = Student 1)

1. P1: Okay, that's all. ((putting down her paper on the podium))
2. ((Steps forward, facing the class)) that's uhh yeah uhh.
3. Do you have comments or questions? [Image 1]
4. S1: ((Looks forward)) uhh (.) what is uhhh caused by old ↑people
5. >I one hundred percent agree with that<
6. But in terms of (.) uhm, if they're in a (.) hurry,
7. to go somewhere, and they live in a rural place
8. uhhh and the first picture you showed that-
9. as you said that in rural places, there's no- uhhh,
10. public uhh trans (.) portation,
11. so like, what (.) can we do (.) to satisfy that?
12. uhhh ((squinting eyes)) when they are in a rush?
13. P1: Uhhhh
14. Ps: → ((P1 turning to P2; P2-P4 smiling at each other)) [Image 2]
15. → ((P1-P4 gazing at each other; P5 looks down)) [Image 3]
16. P2: → ((tilting heads,))

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 17. | → | (5.0) |
| 18. | → | ((P1 & P 2 smiling at each other; P3, P4 & P5 gazing down)) [Image 4] |
| 19. | → | (7.0) |
| 20. | P2: | ((looks at P1)) °muzukashii::hahaha((laughs)) ° |
| 21. | | ('It's difficult') |
| 22. | → | ((Turns her gaze towards S1)) Uhh thank you uh-hh [Image 5] |
| 23. | | ((Hand gesture)) It is::s very difficult, I've never thought of that |

Immediately after the group finishes presenting and Presenter 1 asks if there are any questions or comments from the class, Student 1 begins his inquiry (line 4). He first emphasizes his agreement with the group's point that the number of car accidents caused by senior citizens in Japan is increasing; therefore, people 75 and older should return their licenses (line 5). This agreement serves as a *pre* (Sacks et al., 1974) to mitigate the opposite perspective that Student 1 then presents: asking what seniors living in rural areas where there is limited public transportation should do when they need to travel somewhere in a hurry (lines 6-12). Having received this question, Presenter 1 tries to respond, uttering "uh," and then turns to Presenter 2, perhaps to see if she has any possible answers. This marks the onset of their long silence, lasting more than 12 seconds. It continues from lines 14 through 19, during which all of the presenters' gazes are still directed away from the audience, but they look at each other: first smiling, then tilting their heads or looking down. In line 20, after an utterance in a soft voice to Presenter 1—"muzukashii" ("difficult"), followed by laughter—Presenter 2 finally gazes back at Student 1, the original questioner, and begins responding to him. Presenter 2 then looks at the entire class, commenting, "It is very difficult, ----" with a hand gesture (line 23).

Here are some detailed points to observe in this extract:

- Earlier during the presentation, and again when asking the class if they had any questions, all presenters looked directly at the audience (see Image 1 below). As soon as the silent segment begins, however, the presenters shift their gazes entirely away from the audience and toward the other group members (see Image 2). In the Background section above, I referred to previous studies of student-teacher interactions in the classroom that had observed students gazing off and looking down to avoid eye contact with the teacher. This was a way for them to hide their ignorance (Kurzon, 1995) and display their unwillingness to participate (UTP) (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Sert, 2015). Likewise, in the current extract, the presenters send a similar message by directing their gazes away from the audience: they are not yet ready to provide their answer. They thus must first display their "unavailability" (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015) to the entire class before they launch their negotiations with one another.
- The presenters appear to utilize various embodied devices within their group during their silence. For instance, a presenter gazing at another presenter could resemble the teacher searching for a willing student to answer his/her question. However, the mutual gaze—looking back at the original gazer here—does not seem to display any willingness to participate (WTP) or readiness to answer; instead, one presenter appears to be either conveyed to the other that he/she does not yet have an answer either, or just echoing the first gazer in searching for a response. Their smiles at each other (see Image 2) could be expressions of embarrassment (Kurzon, 1995), while in Image 3, Presenter 5, looking downward, shows his complete unavailability (Mortensen, 2008). In Image 4, Presenter 2's tilted head could be considered a display of incomprehension, doubt, uncertainty, or frustration (Nierenberg & Calero, 1990). Further, they may exhibit utter unavailability by still gazing away from the audience. In other words, during this long silence, the group members used all these various embodied resources to engage in the actions of thinking, attempting to search for answers from each other, and coming up with ideas themselves. However, since no one seemed to respond, they additionally demonstrated their embarrassment and unavailability by smiling and looking away or downward. Immediately prior to the end of the silence segment in line 20, when Presenter 2 softly utters "muzukashii" ("difficult") to Presenter 1 and follows it with her laughter ("hahaha"). As mentioned earlier, laughter or smiles may generally demonstrate the speaker's embarrassment (Kurzon, 1995); further, it is a culturally unique phenomenon in Japan, where one may frequently use laughter as a psychological defense by disguising his/her shame for not being able to do something well in front of others and thereby releasing anxiety or tension as well.

- The conclusion of the silence segment is marked as Presenter 2 turns to face Student 1 and gazes over the audience in line 22, which shows her readiness and availability to answer. Although her smiley response expresses the difficulty she experienced in answering this question, she does thank the questioner and provides an excuse with a hand gesture: "I've never thought of that..." (line 23).

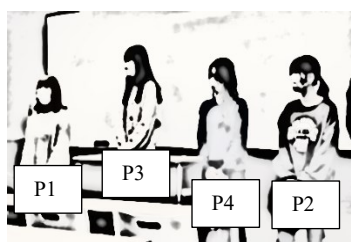


Image 1. P1, facing the class: "Do you have any questions or comments?"

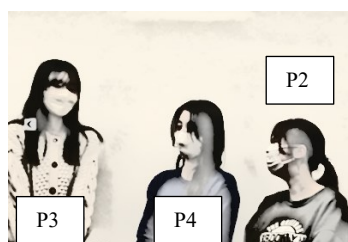


Image 2. Gazes shift away from the class and onto each other, smiling

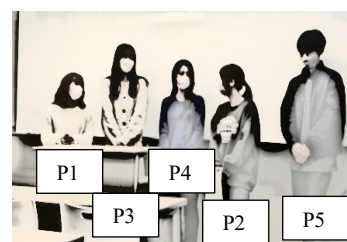


Image 3. P1-P4 gaze at each other;

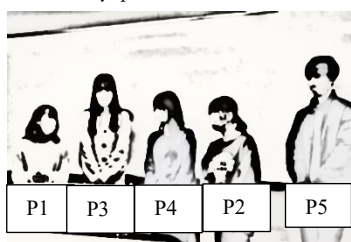


Image 4. P2 tilts head; P1 & P2 smile at each other; P3, P4 & P5 gaze down.

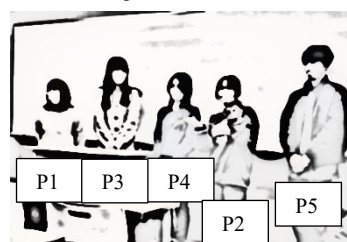


Image 5. P2 faces the class again and says, "Uhh, thank you, it's very difficult...." with a hand gesture

This, the presentation group's silence here is not a simple silence; instead, it is a space they have created to search for an answer and seek thoughts and ideas from other group members. One may wonder why the presenter does not pass it on to another presenter if he/she does not know the answer. These members are implicitly doing it – without verbally asking others, perhaps because they feel that searching, exploring, and passing the floor should be done discreetly while still in front of everyone in the class. The actions observed during this silent segment can all be termed *multimodal silent negotiation*. Because they cannot agree on a proper response, they quietly continue the search, exhibiting various behaviors and emotions in non-verbal ways. Finally, one member decides to face the audience and break the silence. The only member who did not participate in this negotiation was Presenter 5, who continued looking down for the entire segment, exhibiting his firm unavailability.

Fig. 1 below illustrates the basic three-part structure of multimodal silent negotiation as seen in the above extract:

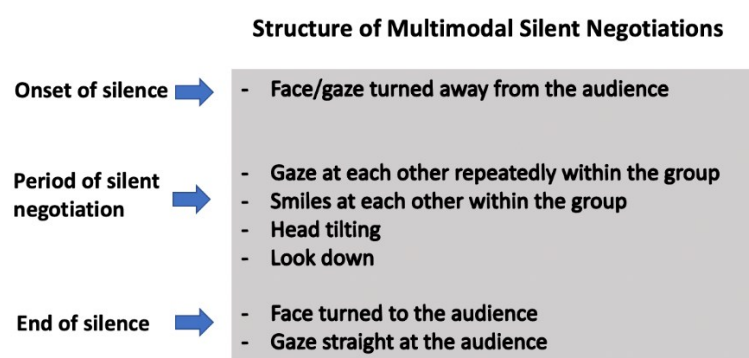


Fig. 1. Structure of multimodal silent negotiations

As this model depicts, the onset of the group presenters' silent segment with multimodal negotiations is marked by the shift in their gazes away from the class audience. Next, the negotiations among the members immediately begin as they gaze at one another in search of ideas or perspectives. As they look at each other, they may use head tilts to display that they are having trouble finding an answer or smile to hide their embarrassment. Some may look down to exhibit their unavailability. They continue to quietly convey these embodied signals within the group and against the audience

until one of them decides to answer the question. Finally, the clear end of these silent negotiations is marked by one member facing the audience and gazing at them, demonstrating his/her readiness and availability to provide a verbal response. Thus, this entire segment interestingly appears to follow a three-part structure.

Below, the following extract shows another group – Group B's *multimodal silent negotiation* segment. It follows a similar embodied routine, but this time it includes using an object: a microphone. The group's presentation was on the topic of LGBTQ equality ("Should gay marriage be legalized in Japan?"), and their position was in support of legalization. After the presentation has concluded, Presenter 6 begins a Q&A segment with the class.

Extract 2: Gay Marriage

(Participants: Ps=Presenters; S2 = Student 2; T=Teacher) (Object: Mic = Microphone)

1. P6: ((holding the mic, looking over class))
2. Do you have any questions or comments? [Image 6]
3. S2: ((Sitting in front, looking up, turns to teacher and smiles at her))
4. ((turns to the presenters)) I have a question.
5. P6: ((hand gesturing 'go ahead' toward S2))
6. S2: I'm (.) uh (.) how can I say uh,
7. I'm interested in the problem of LGBTQ,
8. and eerh (.) what (.) we (.) can we do for-
9. to >support them< ((hand gesture toward the group))
10. Japanese government (.) it is,
11. I think the Japanese government ((points a finger to front))
12. should do (.) more movement, but what,
13. we can (.) what can we do? Okahhhy ((laughter))
14. P6: → ((Silently gazing away from class, looking at other presenters)) [Image 7]
15. Ps7-9: → ((all gaze at P6))
16. → ((P6 slowly hands the mic to P7)) [Image 8]
17. → ((P7 smiles, holds the mic and gives it back to P6))
18. → ((P6 hands the mic to P8)) [Image 9]
19. → ((P8 receives the mic, gazes at P7 and P9))
20. (2.0)
21. → ((P6 gestures by circling arms and smiles at P8))
22. → ((P8 gazes at P6))
23. P8: → ((places the mic on the podium)) Uhh ((looks at the class)) [Image 10]
24. (2.0)
25. P8: → OK, we should (0.5) take part (0.5) in the actions ↑more, [Image 11]

The focal point of the extract begins in line 14. Prior to this point, the group had completed their presentation and asked the class if there were any questions. Student 2, looking up at the teacher with a smile and then prefacing her question with the preliminary-to-preliminary (pre-pre) (Schegloff, 1980) "I have a question." *Pre-pre* is an utterance that projects the speaker's upcoming action, and the difference from the single "pre" is that another "pre" immediately follows it, such as "I am interested in the problem of LGBTQ" by Student 2 in line 7. After this, she delivers the main question of what the Japanese government should do to provide more support to LGBTQ people. Upon hearing Student 2's question, Presenter 6's gaze shifts away from the class and towards all of the other presenters in line 14. They silently look back at Presenter 6 and then at each other in line 15. Just like in Extract 1, the presenters' multimodal silent negotiation in search of an answer seems to begin at this point.

What makes this silent segment different from the one before it is the second group's use of an object (a microphone) along with their embodied resources. Presenter 6, who was originally holding the microphone while asking the class if they had any questions (see Image 6), gazes away from the class after receiving a question. All of the presenters then look at each other (see Image 7). Presenter 6 slowly hands the microphone to Presenter 7 (see Image 8). Through this gesture, Presenter 6 appears to be visibly transferring the speaking turn to Presenter 7 and urging her to answer the question.

Having received the microphone, Presenter 7 smiles a little while holding it and not saying anything; thus, her smile may have shown her embarrassment. She then immediately hands the microphone back to Presenter 6 in line 17; Presenter 6 takes it, gazing at Presenter 7, then she turns to the other side and hands the microphone to Presenter 8 (line 18) (see Image 9). Through this continuous microphone-passing action, the presenters are repeatedly providing the floor to one another and declining to take it, as well as checking to see if another member has an answer to share. This entire segment was performed silently: through gazes, smiles, and passing the microphone. In line 21, Presenter 6 makes a "go-ahead" gesture, circling her arms and smiling toward Presenter 8, who is currently holding the microphone. Even when holding the microphone, Presenter 8 is not gazing at the class but instead back at Presenter 6 (line 22).

Presenter 8's next action sequence initially seems confusing: he places the microphone down on the podium, which seems to indicate that he, too, is declining to speak (line 23) (see Image 10). However, instead, he utters "uhh" before facing the audience without the microphone, looking over them for two seconds, and beginning to speak (lines 24-25) (see Image 11). His gaze back at the class semiotically signaled the end of the silent negotiation with the other group members, but why did he abandon the microphone if he was willing to speak? This is one interesting, seemingly contradictory occurrence.

Looking more closely at the sequence of this segment, we can see that the members have carried out their silent negotiation almost entirely through the action of passing the microphone from person to person. It is clear that the microphone itself represented the *next speaking turn* (Sacks et al., 1974). For instance, as Presenter 6 gives the object to Presenter 7, she rejects a speaking turn, instead providing it to or forcing it on another member. Presenter 8's action of putting down the microphone on the podium, then, may have been different from a rejection of the next speaking turn. In other words, doing away with the microphone indicated that he was to end the continuous silent turn-taking negotiations. With the opportunity to speak, he may have visibly closed the silent negotiation segment by abandoning the microphone in preparation. The group members' microphone use during their silent segment aligns with Nevil et al.'s claim that "objects are situated within and contribute to developing processes and trajectories of social action" (2014, p.7). We can observe how the presenters manipulated the microphone to negotiate turn-taking among themselves, as "objects may prove instrumental in the structuring of sequences, as well as delineating appropriate kinds of participation" (Jacknick, 2021).



Image 6. P6: "Do you have any questions?"

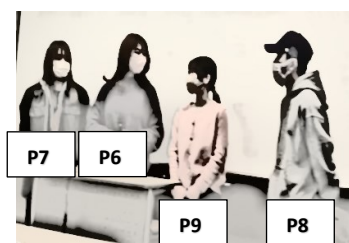


Image 7. Shifting gazes from class onto each other

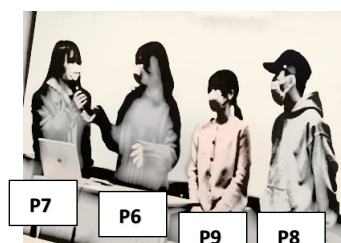


Image 8. P6 hands the mic to P7

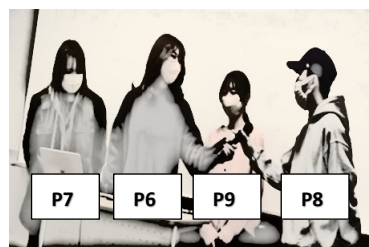


Image 9. P6 hands the mic to P8



Image 10. P8 places the mic on the podium



Image 11. P8 begins speaking to the class

Extracts 1 and 2 illustrate how group presenters' silent negotiations can unfold in front of the entire class. This process resembles the influential sociologist Erving (Goffman, 1956) theatrical frontstage/backstage analogy of people's daily lives. According to Goffman, people always attempt "impression management" by acting in the way they desire to be perceived in front of others. Backstage, however, they return to themselves, relax, and even rehearse how to appear in front again.

This metaphorical behavioral structure can be applied to these extracts: the presentations facing the class are at the frontstage, while the onset of the presenters' silence and their gazes away from the audience marks the stage curtain closing, followed by the presenters' (the actors' and directors') negotiations starting backstage. During the negotiations, the members "tend to be related to one another by bonds of reciprocal dependence and reciprocal familiarity" (Goffman, 1956), which they may have exhibited by gazing, smiling, and passing around the microphone. As soon as a solution is found and a presenter is ready to make an utterance to the audience, the curtain opens on stage, and he/she breaks the silence. The only difference between this study and Goffman's analogy is that the presenters are completely visible to the audience while they are backstage. One could describe the presenters' silence as an *invisible curtain* separating them from the audience. Because of these *public* and *private* circumstances, they do not engage in verbal negotiations; instead, they create a personal, quiet, multimodal negotiation space. This *multimodal silent negotiation* also helps encourage new voices to resume the conversation, as it seems "generative" (Baurain, 2011). In other words, the silences presenters exhibit in this study are in no way merely absences of speech. Instead, through the construction of a multimodal silent space, they engage in a social action of checking members' knowledge, being willing to listen to others, encouraging ideas, and negotiating turn-taking in public, albeit in a private way.

4.2. Teacher's Response to Silence

The prior section revealed how the presenters enacted multimodal silent segments in dealing with audience questions—spaces of significant negotiation that generated new ideas and words. However, these Japanese students' silences appear to be very long; frequently, they exceed 5-10 seconds in length. As previous studies have explored, the duration of a conventional silence can differ significantly among cultures. For instance, finds that about a second of silence is generally unlikely to be tolerated in US business meetings, while in Japan, about five seconds of silence is considered the norm. Likewise, any non-verbal duration of one second to 1.2 seconds is deemed silence in the West (Jefferson, 1984; Sacks et al., 1974), whereas much more frequent, extended silence will likely be tolerated in the Japanese classroom. As silence is "an issue that touches all who teaches" and "plays a key role in educators' daily classroom practices" (King & Harumi, n.d.), teachers should not be troubled by it; instead, they should learn how to utilize it as a beneficial instructional resource. In this section, I illustrate how teachers can use students' silence as an opportunistic space to manipulate the trajectory of the instruction in an effective direction. The teacher can do this by assuming any of these three different roles: (1) as one of the presenters; (2) as one of the audience members; or (3) as the instructor.

- As one of the presenters

The first extract of this section begins when no one from the audience asks a question during the Q&A session after a group presentation ends (topic: "Should a couple cohabitate before marriage?"). This segment demonstrates how the teacher can come in and assume the role of presenter after a long audience silence.

Extract 3: Would you cohabitate?

(Participants: P9=Presenter 9; Ps=Presenters; Ss = Students; T=Teacher)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | P9: | Thank you for listening. ((turns off the PowerPoint)) |
| 2. | Ss: | ((clap their hands)) |
| 3. | P9: | ((looking over class)) Do you have any questions? |
| 4. | Ss: | ((many students look down)) |
| 5. | Ps: | ((keep standing and looking over class)) |
| 6. | | (8.0) |
| 7. | T: | → ((to class)) Okay, I'm just wondering because, |
| 8. | | ((glances at the presenters)) they didn't ask you guys, |
| 9. | | ((turns to class)) uhmmm (.) in your case, would <u>YOU</u> |
| 10. | | cohabitate before marriage. Yourself? |

Presenter 9 completes the presentation on supporting cohabitation before marriage and asks the class, "Do you have any question[s]?" in line 3. No one from the audience responds, and many of the students look down (line 4), displaying unavailability (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Sert, 2015). With the presenters standing at the front and looking over the class, the silence continues for about eight seconds (line 6). Then, the teacher asks the audience a specific question: "In your case, would

YOU cohabit before marriage? Yourself?" Prior to that, she glances at the presenters, mentioning, "because they [the presenters] didn't ask you guys" (lines 7-8), which suggests that the teacher is asking the audience something that the presenters should have asked. Earlier, while preparing to give their presentations, students were specifically instructed to provide an "attention-getting question" or "brainstorming activity" during the introduction to engage the audience in the topic. This group, however, did not include such an activity. After the prolonged silence in line 6, the teacher fills in the "missing piece," asking a question to engage the audience instead of the presenters. In doing so, she used the class's silence as an opportunity to supply something the presentation lacked, assuming the role of the presenter to expand on the topic authentically.

- As one of the audience members

The following extract illustrates how a teacher can ask a question from an audience standpoint, following silence from the class after being asked if there were any questions. This group's presentation topic was "Should Japan implement the basic income system?"

Extract 4: Where does the money come from?

(Participants: P10=Presenter 10; Ps=Presenters; Ss=Students; T=Teacher)

- | | | |
|-----|------|---|
| 1. | P10: | OK, do you have any other questions? |
| 2. | Ss: | ((gaze away from the presenters)) |
| 3. | | (10.0) |
| 4. | T: | → ((toward the presenters)) Yeah, I have a question. |
| 5. | Ps: | ((gaze at the teacher; nods)) |
| 6. | T: | → So if they decide to give basic income |
| 7. | | to (.) every single person in this country, |
| 8. | | WHAT would be the <u>SOURCE</u> of the money? |
| 9. | | Are they gonna raise the <u>taxes</u> on everybody? |
| 10. | | Then what is the point? |
| 11. | | Or are they gonna take more money out of |
| 12. | | RI- (.) wealthy people's income? |
| 13. | | What do you think? What do you think of the <u>source</u> . |
| 14. | | Where would the money come from? |

This segment again shows students failing to respond when asked if they had any questions during the Q&A session. The silence fills the classroom for about 10 seconds (line 3). This time, the teacher utters, "Yeah, I have a question," in line 4, looking towards the presenters. The presenters gaze back at the teacher, nodding to signal, "go ahead" (line 5). In line 6, the teacher asks the presenters where they think the money for the basic income system comes from. Here, the teacher asks a question as an audience member because after 10 seconds of wait time, no one else seems to be speaking up. At this point, she may have felt that the long silence would obstruct the flow of the class if it went for even longer, and she decided to give a helping hand by providing a thought-provoking question to the entire class. We can observe what happens after the teacher's question in the following extract, a continuation of Extract 4.

- As the instructor

This extract below demonstrates the teacher taking the third role as the instructor. In Extract 4 above, after the long silence by the student audience and the teacher takes the role of an audience member asking a question to the presenters, this time the teacher is faced with another long silence by the presenters.

Extract 5: *Soo yuu toki wa*

(Participants: P11=Presenter 11; Ps=Presenters; T=Teacher; S3=Student 3; Ss=Students)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|--|
| 1. | T: | What do you think? What do you think of the <u>source</u> |
| 2. | | where would the money come from? |
| 3. | Ps: | ((turn to each other, gazing at each other, tilting heads)) |
| 4. | | (7.0) |
| 5. | T: | → ((whispering to presenters)) °Soo yuu toki wa, minasan ni° |
| 6. | | ('At a time like this,' to the audience) |
| 7. | | → °'Do <u>YOU</u> have any answers?' <i>the kiku</i> . ° |
| 8. | | (ask back, 'Do you have any answers?') |
| 9. | Ss: | ((laughter)) |
| 10. | T: | → ((laughing)) °'Do you have any ideas' <i>toka</i> . ° |
| 11. | | (or ask, 'Do you have any ideas? etc.') |

- | | | |
|-----|------|---|
| 12. | P11: | ((raises her paper, gazing toward class)) |
| 13. | | Do you have any ideas? |
| 14. | T: | \$YEAH\$ ((laughs)) |
| 15. | S3: | ((raises his hand)) |
| 16. | P11: | ((toward S3, extending her hand)) Yes. |
| 17. | T: | ((turning to S3,)) Ohhhh OKAY. |
| 18. | Ss: | ((Look at S3, laughing)) |
| 19. | S3: | ((gazes at T, then at Ps)) Maybe by cutting out like- |
| 20. | | the defense budget or something? |

Continuing the discussion from Extract 4, the teacher asks a question about "the source of money" for a universal basic income if implemented in Japan. The presenters all turn to other members of the group, gazing at each other and tilting their heads to ponder possible answers (line 3). This is followed by a seven-second silence, after which the teacher code-switches to Japanese (everyone's L1) and whispers instructions to the presenters: "Soo *you toki wa, minasan ni*, 'Do YOU have any answers?' *the kiku*," emphasizing the word "YOU" ("At a time like this, you should ask back [to] the audience, 'Do YOU have any answers?'" (lines 5-8).

This provokes laughter from the entire class (line 9). The teacher then continues these openly secretive instructions, whispering, "Do you have any ideas?" *toka*" (line 10), suggesting another phrase the presenters could use to ask the class. The sequence here is interesting because the teacher whispers as if no one but the presenters were hearing her instructions in Japanese; however, since everyone in the room can, in fact, hear her, they all laugh. Here, the teacher is assuming the role of the instructor once more, providing directions to her students. Again, we can see similarities to (Goffman, 1956) notion of backstage conversations behind the curtain, in which the director gives guidance to the actors. In the classroom reality, the teacher's whispering voice is like an *invisible curtain*, with her switch back to Japanese representing familiar, real-life backstage talk. Thus, when Presenter 11 comes back to "the stage" and asks the class, "Do you have any ideas?" (copying what the teacher told her to say), the teacher approves: "YEAH." She does so in a cheerful voice, then laughs (line 14). In response to the presenter's question, Student 3 immediately raises his hand (line 15), which catches the teacher's and the class's attention and makes them laugh. Student 3 states his opinion in lines 19-20. Although the extract does not include their contributions, a few more students also raised their hands and shared their ideas after Student 3 did. Thus, the teacher's whispered, code-switching instructions to the presenters served to create a visible and comical backstage environment, which relaxed students and helped foster "an inviting classroom" (Waring & Sarah Chepkirui Creider, 2021) where the audience members found it easier to participate. The teacher's strategy here successfully helped navigate the presenters out of their silence.

Another situation where the teacher intervened as "the instructor" is seen in the next extract, which is a continuation of Extract 1. In Extract 1, after receiving a question about what happens when senior citizens must leave in a hurry when there is no car or public transportation, the presenters go through a segment of *multimodal silent negotiation*. Then, Presenter 2 returns to face the audience to answer the question; however, she has trouble continuing her answer.

Extract 6: Taxi service

(Participants: P2=Presenter 2; P4=Presenter 4; S4 = Student 4; T=Teacher)

- | | | |
|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | P2: | ((hand gesture)) It is: very difficult, I've never thought of that |
| 2. | | yeah...uhhh ((looking up at the ceiling)) uhhh |
| 3. | | ((glances at P4)) |
| 4. | | yeah, of course, it is very difficult for (.) old people to rush, |
| 5. | | so (1.0) uhhhh ((turns to P4)) |
| 6. | | (5.0) |
| 7. | T: | → ((to P2)) OK, so, <u>imagine</u> your grandma needs to leave home now |
| 8. | | → and she doesn't drive. |
| 9. | | → but there's NO public transportation available soon, |
| 10. | | → then <u>what transportation</u> would she use? |
| 11. | P2: | ummm (.) maybe taxi? |
| 12. | T: | → but it's expensive, isn't it? |
| 13. | P2: | yeah (.) uhhh but (.) If my grandma is maybe, |
| 14. | | really (.) in a hurry she can use it? I think. |
| 15. | S4: | uhh ((looking at T and showing his cell phone)) |
| 16. | T: | ((nods to S4)) yeah. |
| 17. | S4: | I think, ((looking at his cell phone)) when people are in rush, |

18. they use this service, Choi-soko-service.
 19. ((showing the cell phone screen to students around him))
 20. this is (.) appri- at taxi service, uhhhh
 21. but this service is intended to (.) develop the town,
 22. so I think (.) uhh I think the solution is, develop this service, yea.
 23. ((nodding; showing the phone left and right))
 24. T: for free or expensive?=
 25. S4: =yeah, for free.
 26. T: for free! That's GREAT.

After uttering, "I've never thought of that," Presenter 2's trouble continuing to answer the question is evidenced by the repeated use of 'yeah' and 'uh,' as well as looking up at the ceiling and glancing at Presenter 4 (lines 2-3). Looking up at the ceiling (upper open space) represents pondering (Salvi & Bowden, 2016) and glancing at another member demonstrates seeking help. She utters she agrees that old people have difficulty leaving in a rush without a driver's license (line 4) and returns to using 'so' and 'uh,' placing a one-second pause in between. She turns her face to Presenter 4 again (line 5), followed by a gap (silence) of 5 seconds in line 6. Thus, Presenter 2 appears to try to formulate her answer but stops it and searches for an idea from Presenter 4 to no avail – this traps her in a cycle of her inability to answer with no way out. In line 7, after 5 seconds of silence, the teacher comes to the rescue by inquiring Presenter 2, "OK, so, imagine your grandma needs to leave home now." By asking what Presenter 2 would assume her grandmother would do in that urgent situation (lines 7-10), the teacher elicits her reply, "Ummm, maybe taxi?" (line 11). Taking this response, the teacher extends it to a further inquiry, "But it's expensive, isn't it?" (line 12), to which Presenter 2 replies, "If my grandma is maybe, in a hurry, really she can use it? I think" (lines 13-14). Here, the teacher was able to guide Presenter 2 through to arrive at her conclusion. In relation to this outcome, in line 15, Student 4 the audience self-selects by uttering "uhh" and looking at the teacher while showing his cell phone. The phone's screen has the website of a free taxi service called "Choi-soko-service," about which he begins to explain. Although the service is set up for a city, he hints that it could be a possible solution for seniors without a car in a rural area in line 22.

Analyzing the sequence of this extract, the teacher appears to have accomplished two objectives. One is to (1) create an opportunity for Presenter 2 to depart from her trap of not being able to answer and her subsequent silence (lines 2-6) by providing a personal and authentic conditional question about her own "grandma." After the teacher obtained Presenter 2's first response, "Maybe taxi," the second objective achieved was to (2) navigate her to reach her elaborative response by skillfully utilizing an extended tag question, "But it's expensive, isn't it?" (line 12). In other words, the teacher here successfully led her out of her troubled situation while providing scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1997; Walqui, 2008). This was done by bringing up a realistic perspective about her family member so that Presenter 2 can use it and reach her own answer. In addition, the two key concepts: 'taxi' and 'expensive,' became the new central issues which emerged from the exchange between the teacher and Presenter 2. Thus, Student 4 from the audience joined the exploration – a search for a taxi website and explained about the free taxi service he found while showing his cell phone to the students around him as a potential solution to the issues. This turned into an expanded, active class discussion after what the extract shows.

In this section, I demonstrated some of the ways in which a teacher could utilize student silence to change the pedagogical direction and achieve instructional goals: by assuming the roles of a presenter, an audience member, and the instructor. Extract 3 showed how the teacher could point out what a group's presentation was missing by acting as a presenter. In Extract 4, when acting as an audience member, the teacher contributed a thought-provoking question to the presenters while also helping the Q&A flow more effectively. Finally, in Extracts 5 and 6, the teacher played "the teacher." In Extract 5, instructions were given to the presenters on what to do instead of remaining silent if they did not know the answer, which successfully elicited a few contributions. In Extract 6, the teacher provided a helpful question with a personal perspective, to which the presenter could respond and move out of her silence, and the topic was expanded to a broader class discussion. Sequentially, each teacher intervention came after long silences of about 5 to 10 seconds. This showed that: (1) the teacher fundamentally respected student autonomy, and so she waited as long as possible for someone to contribute. (2) However, if the silence was becoming too long and the class was losing direction, or the student was at a loss, the teacher intervened by playing one of the three roles to correct the class trajectory and achieved the interactional objective.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study demonstrated how silence is constructed during Japanese group presenters' Q&A sessions in university-level EFL classes. By creating spaces of multimodal silence, these presenters utilized a variety of embodied devices, as well as an object (a microphone), to search for answers, attempt to extract ideas, and decide on turn-taking (who will be speaking to the class) entirely silently. Thus, their silence was not a void to be verbally filled; rather, it was packed with numerous non-verbal conveyances and semiotic signals, both to one another within their group and toward the audience. To summarize the types of multimodal silence and their functions observed in the data of this study, they were: (1) silence with gaze-aversion from the teacher to display UTP; (2) silence with smiles to hide an embarrassment for not knowing the answer; (3) silence with a tilting head to show pondering or incomprehension; (4) silence with gaze onto others in search of their ideas or to urge them to speak; (5) silence with passing the microphone to one another to reject taking the next turn and provide it to another; (6) silence with exhausting all from (2) through (6) within a group to generate a conclusive response, thus exercising *multimodal silent negotiations*.

As (Jacknick, 2021) suggests that one element of "the concept of engagement is an embodied phenomenon" (p. 74), these students showed their engagement in pursuing joint social actions by employing embodied resources. The data exhibited how silence can be "generative" (Baurain, 2011; Foster, 2012; Schultz, 2010), producing new voices and ideas observed in the presented extracts. Examining the data from a CA perspective, I identified the structure of these *multimodal silent negotiation* segments, the onset and end of which were precisely marked by the presenters' gazes going "off and on" (from and towards) the audience. This resembled how students signal that they are unavailable or available to participate in the classroom, turning their gazes "off and on" (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Sert, 2015).

All these findings can be attributed to the unique circumstance of this study: the participants' demeanors were evident to the rest of the class throughout their negotiation segments since—as presenters—they were still required to find answers to questions and respond to the audience. Rather than immediately admitting "not knowing the answer," they appear to have misaligned from the audience and have probably hidden their ignorance "behind the wall of silence" (Kurzon, 1995) as they try to negotiate and find a response discreetly. This is likely why they went silent and were entirely engaged in their multimodal resources, as though behind the *invisible curtain* similar to (Goffman, 1956) backstage until they were ready to align with the audience again. Duration-wise, the silences from the Japanese students in this study seem to be long (5 to 10 seconds). The data show that the presenters required sufficient time to create spaces to work sequentially through the segment of *multimodal silent negotiations* in an attempt to generate ideas and solutions. Therefore, this study illuminated the importance of comprehending the "alignment, temporality, and sequentiality of the students' multimodal actions" (Jacknick, 2021), even during their silences.

In terms of concrete, practical study implications, along with the importance of understanding culture-specific norms surrounding the frequency and average length of silence, I strongly emphasize the following three pedagogical points drawn from the findings: (1) teachers might like to truly comprehend what exactly "silence" means and what it does in the classroom by observing students' embodied displays; (2) teachers may like to provide sufficient wait time for responses when they encounter student silence; and, (3) teachers can provide support to students by skillfully directing them out of the silence at the right time. For (1), for instance, one male presenter from Extract 1 (Presenter 5) did not participate in the multimodal negotiation with the members of his group. He just kept standing up straight, holding his hands in front, often continuing to look down with no facial expression (see Images 1-6). Although he had done his part in the presentation prior to this, he did not cooperate with the rest of the group and seemed firmly committed to not being a part of the Q&A session. The student contributed neither verbally nor multimodally during or after the negotiation segment. I must admit that, in reality, there are always a few students who are determined never to respond or participate at all, and teachers frequently need to figure out what to make of them. On the other hand, observing his embodied behavior from a CA point of view, this presenter *is* responding by exhibiting his UTP, or unwillingness to participate (Fasel Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Sert, 2015) he does so by keeping his gaze down as if quietly declaring that he was not and would not be available, which was the clear message he was sending to all of us. This leads us to the bottom line: teachers should learn to perceive the entirety of each student's multimodal silence because everyone is semiotically delivering a different message.

For the second suggestion—that teachers may like to provide sufficient wait time for student responses—it is crucial for instructors to be alert regarding our urge to intervene as soon as we encounter student silence. We should not immediately take away the opportunity for the students to move beyond the quiet in the room just because we feel it is uncomfortable and “awkward” (Takahashi, 2019). According to (Bao, 2014), silence is “a form of engagement” where “the participants are in control of their decisions” (p. 31); thus, while teachers might feel pressured to “cover what should be covered” in class that day, we should respect student agency and learning autonomy by giving them sufficient wait time to generate their solutions.

Finally, in the third suggestion—that teachers can provide support to students by skillfully directing them out of silence at the right time or “the precision timing” (Harumi, 2020) the latter part of this study illustrated how a teacher can effectively steer student silences in a specific direction during classroom discussions when students seem trapped and apparently require help. Here, the teacher did so by contingently assuming the roles of presenter, audience member, and instructor, as shown in Extracts 3 through 6. This implies that teachers should have the balanced skills to both respect student autonomy and provide scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1997; Walqui, 2008), as providing an extremely long wait time may not necessarily elicit a “coherent and relevant answer from the student, nor that a co-construction of learning can be obtained” (Maroni, 2011).

(Mondada, 2018) observes the transformation from co-present persons to co-participants through shared interactional space through their embodied displays. After all, this study's *multimodal silent negotiation* segments are highly similar to this “shared interactional space.” Thus, in (Harumi, 2020) precisely summarized words, silence can have an implicit role as “an interactional resource functioning in various ways as a medium, which acts as a space for learning, thinking, reflecting, and so on,” and teacher engagement with student silence “is possible through varied scaffolded support” accomplishing interactional goals (p. 54). I hope that the implications of the study's findings will benefit both teachers and students, as teachers can develop more knowledge about classroom silence as a means of constructing social action, especially by focusing on ongoing multimodal displays. We can optimize our interpretation of any student's silence and promote overall interaction, social action, and learning in the classroom.

Appendix A

Conversation Analysis Transcription

(.)	untimed perceptible pause within a turn
<u>words</u>	stress
CAPS	very emphatic stress
↑	high pitch on word
↓	low pitch on word
.	sentence-final falling intonation
?	yes/no question rising intonation
,	phrase-final intonation (more to come)
-	a glottal stop or abrupt cutting off of sound
:	lengthened vowel sound (extra colons indicate greater lengthening)
=	latch (direct onset or no space between two units)
→	highlights point of analysis
[]	overlapped talk; in order to reflect the simultaneous beginning and ending of the overlapped talk, sometimes extra spacing is used to spread out the utterance
°soft°	spoken softly/decreased volume
> <	increased speed
()	(empty parentheses) transcription impossible
(words)	uncertain transcription
.hhh	inbreath
hhh.	exhalation
\$words\$	spoken in a smiley voice
(())	comments on background or nonverbal behaviour

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- Conflict of interest** : The author declares no conflict of interest.
- Ethics Declaration** : I as author acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms with the regulations of my university and that I have obtained the permission from the relevant institute when collecting data. I support *Journal of Silence Studies in Education (JSSE)* in maintaining high standards of personal conduct, practicing honesty in all professional practices and endeavors.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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