

**SILENCE IN JAPANESE-AUSTRALIAN
CLASSROOM INTERACTION:
PERCEPTIONS AND PERFORMANCE**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Sydney

January 2003

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose of the research	2
1.2 Background to the research	4
1.3 Overall structure of the thesis	7
Chapter 2 Review of literature on silence in communication	10
2.1 Overview	10
2.2 Silence in communication – forms, functions and meanings	10
2.2.1 Forms of silence	10
2.2.2 Functions of silence	13
2.2.3 Meanings of silence	19
2.3 Ethnographic approaches to silence	22
2.4 Silence in intercultural communication	23
2.4.1 Cross-cultural differences in silence	23
2.4.2 Silence in intercultural communication	27
2.4.3 Silence in Japanese communication	31
2.5 Silence in classroom contexts	39
2.5.1 Silence in classroom communication	39
2.5.2 Silence in multicultural classroom settings	42
2.5.3 Silence of overseas students from Asia in Anglo-mainstream classroom	45
2.5.4 Summary: Silence in classroom contexts	49
2.6 Summary of the chapter	49
Chapter 3 Research method and design	51
3.1 Research questions	51
3.1.1 Exploratory stage	51
3.1.2 Qualitative research paradigm	51
3.1.3 Emergent focus of the research	55
3.2 Methods and data collection	57
3.2.1 Data sources	57
3.2.2 Performance and perception data	74
3.3. Methods of data analysis	76
3.3.1 Content analysis	77
3.3.2 Coding	78
3.3.3 Conversation analysis	81

Chapter 4 Perceptions: ‘Silent’ Japanese students	85
4.1 Self-perceptions of Japanese students	85
4.1.1 ‘Silent’ self-image in the classroom context	85
4.1.2 Participant structures and pressure to speak	86
4.1.3 Explanations of Japanese students’ silence from their own perspectives	92
4.1.4 Summary	108
4.2 Perceptions of Japanese students from lecturers’ perspectives	113
4.2.1 Silent image of Japanese students	114
4.2.2 Lecturers’ explanations of the silence of Japanese students	116
4.2.3 Summary	125
4.3 Educational practices in Japan	126
4.3.1 ‘Culture of learning’ in Japan	127
4.3.2 Characteristics of communication in Japanese classrooms	134
4.3.3 Summary: Japanese classroom culture and silence	161
4.4 Summary of the chapter	163
Chapter 5 Silence: An empirical view - Case study 1	167
5.1 Overview of Chapters 5, 6 and 7	167
5.2 Background to Case Study 1: Tadashi	168
5.3 Quantity of participation	169
5.4 Quality of participation (1) Turn-taking and sequence organisation	173
5.4.1 Overall patterns of turn-taking and sequence organisation	174
5.4.2 Interactional roles of students and teacher	179
5.4.3 Shifts in organisation of classroom interaction	185
5.4.4 Management of timing and pause	191
5.5 Quality of participation (2) Formality of language	197
5.5.1 Lexis and overlaps	197
5.5.2 Orientations to politeness in classroom communication	200
5.5.3 Summary: Silence and formality in language use	206
5.6 Quality of participation (3) Topical preference	207
5.6.1 Recounting personal experiences	207
5.6.2 Application of classroom subject matters to personal life	208
5.6.3 Emphasis on administrative matters	210
5.6.4 Summary: Topical preference and silence	212
5.7 Summary of the chapter	214
Chapter 6 Silence: An empirical view - Case study 2	216
6.1 Background to Case Study 2: Miki	216
6.2 Quantity of participation	217
6.3 Quality of participation (1) Turn-taking and sequence organisation	219
6.3.1 Overall patterns of turn-taking and sequence organisation	220
6.3.2 Interactional roles in opening and closing discussion	221
6.3.3 Interactional roles in questioning	227
6.3.4 Participation in 'open floor' situations	228
6.3.5 Being in control through expansion	229
6.3.6 Being out of control: silent presenter	231
6.3.7 Management of turn-taking: in and out of control	235

6.4 Quality of participation (2) Formality of language	248
6.4.1 Lexis and overlaps	248
6.4.2 Face and politeness in negotiation of meaning	250
6.4.3 Orientation to politeness in classroom communication	253
6.5 Quality of participation (3) Topical preference	257
6.6 Summary of the chapter	258
Chapter 7 Silence: An empirical view – Case Study 3	260
7.1 Background to Case Study 3: Aya	260
7.2 Quantity of participation	261
7.3 Quality of participation (1) Turn-taking and sequence organisation	262
7.3.1 Overall patterns of turn-taking and sequence organisation	262
7.3.2 Interactional roles in presentation	265
7.3.3 Controlling shifts and boundary in discussion: pause and discourse markers	272
7.4 Quality of participation (2) Formality of Language	281
7.4.1 Lexis and overlaps	281
7.4.2 Orientation to politeness in classroom communication	282
7.4.3 Silence and politeness in different contexts	289
7.5 Quality of participation (3) Topical preference	291
7.5.1 Difficulty of topics and familiarity with topics	291
7.5.2 Application of personal life and experiences to classroom subject matters	297
7.6 Summary of the chapter	300
Chapter 8 Conclusion	302
8.1 Overview	302
8.2 Reality of silence	303
8.3 Various aspects of silence in the classroom	304
8.3.1 Silence and participant structures	304
8.3.2 Silence and interactional mode	305
8.3.3 Silence and control in classroom discourse	307
8.3.4 Silence and politeness	313
8.3.5 Silence and schema	315
8.3.6 Silence and language proficiency	318
8.4 Model of silence revisited	320
8.5 What is silence?	326
8.6 Implications	328
8.6.1 Implications for teaching of and learning by Japanese students in Australian universities	328
8.6.2 Implications for research in silence in intercultural communication	332
Bibliography	334
Appendices	348
Appendix 1. Questions for semi-structured interviews with Japanese students (translated from Japanese)	348
Appendix 2. Biographical information of Japanese participants in the interview	349
Appendix 3. Lecturer Questionnaire	351
Appendix 4. Video coding sheets	352
Appendix 5. International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR) levels	355
Appendix 6. Transcription conventions	356

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Ingrid Piller for her guidance, encouragement and patience. Whenever I struggled with writing, her support, with genuine interest in this research, kept me going. I have learned a great deal from her professional attitude to research and scholarship. I am also indebted to all the students and teachers in Australia and in Japan who kindly participated in this research. My special thanks goes to the students and teachers in the case studies who allowed me to observe their classes, and shared their precious time for interviews with me. Their voices are the most valuable in this thesis. My heartfelt thanks also goes to Dr. Rod Gardner for his guidance in Conversation Analysis, and for reading the draft, making valuable comments and sharing discussions. I have learned so much from his insights into talk-in-interaction. I would also like to express my special thanks to Dr. Jane Simpson for reading the final draft and making valuable comments and suggestions. My thanks also goes to Dr. Barbara Mullock for her guidance in early stages of this research, particularly in applying ethnographic approaches to classroom research. I am also indebted to Dr. Nerida Jarkey for her kind support in finding participants for this research, and for her genuine interest and enthusiasm in this research. I would also like to express my thanks to Yoko Matsuda from Kobe University of Commerce, for her valuable comments and numerous discussions we had on the issue of silence among Japanese students in Japan and in Australia. My special thanks also goes to Constance Ellwood for proofreading the draft. I also owe a great deal to friends and colleagues: Wakako Asano, Emi Otsuji, Nick Marshall, Ursula Ibaraki, Nicoletta Romeo and Shinji Ido for giving me emotional support and friendship, as well as exchanging ideas and resources in sharing our interests. Finally, my special thanks to my parents, my sister and my husband for the unconditional mental and emotional support they gave me all through the time I devoted myself to this thesis.

Abstract

This thesis examines silence as attributed to and performed by Japanese students in Australian university classrooms. It aims to elucidate processes in which silence can be used and created in intercultural communication in the classroom. The phenomenon of silence is approached from multiple perspectives. The data include interviews, a questionnaire and survey data, classroom observation and video-recorded classroom interactions. The data was collected in Australia and Japan. The Japanese data was included as part of sociocultural contexts where the Japanese students studying in Australia bring with them. The analysis draws on the frameworks of the ethnography of communication and conversation analysis. Micro- and macro- perspectives are combined to investigate how perceptions and performances interact to construct silence in the cross-cultural encounters in these classrooms.

The thesis consists of four parts. The first part, Chapters 1-3, sets the theoretical background to the research. Chapter 1 describes how the research was conceived, and states the aims of the research. Chapter 2 reviews literature on silence, with specific attention to silence in Japanese communication and in classroom contexts. In Chapter 3 the methodological framework and design of this research is described.

The second part, Chapter 4, examines how Japanese students' silence is perceived, both by themselves and their Australian teachers. The chapter is based on interviews with Japanese students in Australia, as well as findings from a questionnaire distributed to their lecturers. Japanese classroom practices as an aspect of the sociocultural background of Japanese students are also described.

Finally, the third part, Chapters 5, 6, 7, compares actual silence and performance in the classroom with perceived silence. There are three case studies which make up a substantial part of the thesis and provide detailed analyses of classroom interactions, based on video-recordings, observations, and follow-up interviews with key participants.

Chapter 8 synthesises the findings discussed in Chapters 4-7, and concludes with implications for teaching and learning in the multicultural university classroom.

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Top 10 student numbers for source countries of overseas students in Australia in 1999.....	5
Table 1.2	Number of students from East Asia in higher education in Australia.....	6
Table 3.1	Description of the Japanese participants in the interviews (male).....	59
Table 3.2	Description of the Japanese participants in the interviews (female).....	60
Table 3.3	Participants in focus group interviews.....	61
Table 3.4	Japanese participants in classroom case studies.....	64
Table 3.5	Participants in the observed classes in the case studies.....	67
Table 3.6	Classes observed at JPR High School.....	73
Table 3.7	Classes observed at JPC High School.....	73
Table 4.1	Preference for asking questions after lectures to asking questions during lectures.....	90
Table 4.2	Number of Students who spend a lot of time with their Anglo-Australian friends.....	95
Table 4.3	Number of Students who have more friends of own nationality than Australian friends.....	95
Table 4.4	Staff impressions of international students' socialising behaviour.....	95
Table 4.5	Staff perceptions of international students during lecture or tutorial time.....	114
Table 4.6	Staff impressions of the level of English of students from AP region.....	117
Table 4.7	Teaching staff perceptions of international students' politeness.....	121
Table 4.8	Student desires to develop critical thinking skills whilst reading.....	123
Table 4.9	Student attitudes toward developing own ideas as opposing to reciting.....	123
Table 4.10	International student learning styles differ from that of Anglo-Australian students.....	124
Table 4.11	International students should modify their methods of learning.....	124
Table 4.12	Types of activity in Japanese/Australian classrooms.....	135
Table 5.1	Japanese participants in classroom case studies.....	167
Table 5.2	Number and length of turns in Teaching as a Profession (Total).....	170
Table 5.3	Number and length of turns in Curriculum and Examinations (Total).....	172
Table 5.4	Number and length of self-selected turns in Teaching as a Profession.....	175
Table 5.5	Number and length of other-selected turns in Teaching as a Profession.....	175
Table 5.6	Number and length of self-selected turns in Curriculum and Examinations.....	176
Table 5.7	Number and length of turns through bidding in Curriculum and Examinations.....	176
Table 5.8	Number and length of turns in open floor situations in Curriculum and Examinations.....	176
Table 5.9	Number and length of turns through individual nomination in Curriculum and Examinations.....	176
Table 5.10	Formal vs. informal language.....	197

Table 6.1	Number and length of turns in Intercultural Communication (Regular Discussion: Total).....	217
Table 6.2	Number and total lengths of turns in Intercultural Communication (Presentation Discussion:Total).....	218
Table 6.3	Number and length of self-selected turns in Intercultural Communication (Regular Discussion).....	220
Table 6.4	Number and length of other-selected turns in Intercultural Communication (Regular Discussion).....	220
Table 6.5	Ratio of participants' self-selected turns in total turns in Intercultural Communication (Regular Discussion).....	220
Table 6.6	Number and length of turns in open floor situations in Intercultural Communication (Regular Discussion).....	229
Table 7.1	Number and length of turns in History of Secondary Education (Regular Discussion: Total).....	261
Table 7.2	Number and length of turns through bidding in History of Secondary Education (Regular Discussion).....	262
Table 7.3	Number and length of self-selected turns in History of Secondary Education (Presentation Discussion).....	262
Table 7.4	Number and length of turns in open floor situations in History of Secondary Education (Regular Discussion).....	263
Table 7.5	Number and length of other-selected turns in History of Secondary Education (Regular Discussion).....	265
Table 8.1	Overall distribution of turn types in the case studies.....	304
Table 8.2	Japanese students' distribution of turn types in the case studies.....	304

List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Strategies for doing FTAs.....	17
Figure 3.1	Distribution of data in two dimensional model.....	76
Figure 4.1	Model of silence in the classroom derived from Japanese students' comments.....	110
Figure 6.1	Configuration of the Intercultural Communication class.....	238
Figure 8.1	Model of Silence in Japanese-Australian classroom interaction.....	321