

Enhancing communication through social interaction: Silence as a cinematic communicative device

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Social interaction opportunities in the form of conversation are all around us. It might appear at first glance that there is nothing remarkable about ordinary conversation. However, if we take a closer look at how we co-manage talk through silence, a new world of understanding becomes available to us. How do two people in a social interaction use talk and silence to communicate? This paper uses basic principles of conversation analysis (CA) to examine turn by turn details of excerpts from films, ordinary conversation, and teacher-student talk. It will be demonstrated that silence is not only a naturally occurring feature of talk, but also a potentially useful resource in our efforts to keep the conversation going. The author believes the promotion of a more positive image of silence serves as an important reminder to language teachers that silence is more than the absence of speech.

会話が成立する社会的やりとりの場はどこにでもある。一見取るに足りない普通の会話でも、当事者たちの会話が沈黙の助けを借りている様子をよく見ると、発話と沈黙双方に対する新しい見識が広がる。この論文は、会話分析(CA)の基本原則を使って、映画、日常会話、教師・生徒間のやりとりの抜粋を詳細に検証し、沈黙は自然に生じる発話の特徴であるだけでなく、会話の継続に役立つ潜在力であることを示唆するものである。沈黙を前向きに捉えれば、語学教師には沈黙が発話の欠落以上のものであることが分かると筆者は考えている。

Where there is talk, there is silence.

This study will show how silence during conversation can actually be used by participants to make communication through turn taking go smoothly. Everything that will be mentioned about speaking and not speaking are things we do naturally everyday regardless of the language or the people involved. This study will examine silence in some detail through the organization of turn taking as exemplified primarily in interactions seen in a selected sample of film clips. By taking advantage of the accessible and clear design and structure of cinematic interactions, I hope to stimulate the general reader's thinking and understanding of what it means to interact through talk *and* silence. The possible teaching applications center on the realization of two ideas:

1. Silence can be more than the mere absence of speech (i.e., it potentially carries multiple interpretations).
2. Silence is co-created in the moment.

These ideas should help teachers notice more clearly how their verbal behavior influences what students do and vice versa. While silence is not the only thing going

on during interactions, it can be used as a site for exploration of how participants co-orient and co-manage their talk.

This is something teachers normally do not do, but would benefit by doing so. Teachers are already extremely busy with everyday responsibilities with little or no time for additional work such as collecting data, analyzing it, and writing it up. In addition, teachers often do not have the time for a careful study of theoretically based research methods. Having acknowledged that, this study is intended to provide the general readership with an introductory look at some data and how it can be analyzed. Furthermore, it is hoped interested teachers will treat this paper as one idea of how to start their own research projects.

While there is some precedence for using cinematic scenes and screenplays for analysis (See Tannen, 1989, repetition in *Being There* and *Stardust Memories*, ethnic representation in *Hannah and Her Sisters* and Culpeper, 1998, impoliteness in *Scents of a Woman*.), the use of silence in cinematic interactions as data for analysis here is based on personal and professional experience as both a student and teacher of university classes on film analysis as well as a presenter of film analysis at international conferences and training seminars for secondary school English teachers. Before proceeding to the main discussion of selected film clips in terms of silence, some background into the analytical approach used in this study is given.

Silence as viewed by Conversation Analysis (CA)

Since silence is viewed here as a common feature of talk which is available as a resource to help participants to

communicate, Conversation Analysis (CA) is a suitable choice of analytical method. The data to be examined comes from naturally occurring¹ samples of talk taken primarily from films. CA is an increasingly recognized analytical tool in social sciences as it is able to draw attention to finely timed details of turn taking organization in a wide range of social interactions. (See an important paper by Wagner & Firth, 1997, 2004, along with responses which represents current interest in applied uses of CA.)

What follows is an explanation of how silence is described and interpreted in CA. The landmark work which established CA is Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Here the fundamental model of the turn-taking system and detailed descriptions or accounts of common features of talk as co-managed by participants are introduced. Their paper continues to this day to be the standard core citation for anyone writing anything about talk-in-interaction². Two observations noted by Sacks et al. (1974) give us a way to begin to see silence as more than the absence of speech. By noticing the position and length of silence, it becomes a component of talk which we can study within the turn-taking structure³.

1. Talk is generally continuous with a minimum amount of gaps and overlaps. This implies that at transitionally relevant points, speakers seem to be oriented to each other and know what to do (e.g., change of speaker or the present speaker continues). So in this case, there is smooth turn taking with little or no silence.
2. Talk can also be discontinuous. This can happen both within an utterance as well as at the transitionally relevant points. In other words, what to say or who will

speak next is not clear, at least momentarily. Silence often occurs in such moments.

Sacks *et al.* further elaborate on what they observed from the perspective of turn-taking. When both participants notice an absence of smooth turn taking and respond to it in some way (i.e., mutually orient to it), the silence is noted as being significant to the participants themselves. “Parties’ treatment of silence in conversation is contingent on its placement” (p. 715). They identify three types of silence in terms of where it occurs in the turn-taking sequence: (a) intra-turn silence (i.e., pause), (b) between-turns silence (i.e., gap) at transitionally relevant places, (c) extended silence between-turns (i.e., lapse) at the transitionally relevant places. In order to clarify these rule building descriptions of conversation, a series of three examples illustrating each type of silence is given. Excerpts 1 and 2 are re-analyses of data that appeared in Heath (1992). I use them here as clear illustrations of pauses and gaps. The third excerpt comes from my talk with a student (Nakamura, 2004, p. 83) which is an example of a lapse or an extended period of silence. The following transcript conventions will appear throughout this paper. They were adapted from Ten Have (1999, pp. 213-214)⁴.

- (.) brief, but noticeable pause of less than a second
- () silence in seconds⁵
- (()) background information

The first excerpt illustrates what Sack *et al.* call ‘intra-turn’ silence or pauses (lines 1 and 4) as well as a brief ‘between-turns’ silence or gap (line 3).

Excerpt 1. Inspection at an antique show (Heath, 1992, p. 245)

- 1 Expert: What you’ve got here is the most marvelous (0.7)
- 2 pair (0.5) of mid nineteenth century Russian candlesticks.
- 3 (0.7)
- 4 Expert: The marks which (0.7) can you see that?
- 5 Client: Yes.

Excerpt 2 (lines 2, 4, and 6) displays a series of ‘between-turns’ silence or gaps at transitionally relevant points as the doctor tells the patient his or her diagnosis.

Excerpt 2. Physical examination (Heath, 1992, p. 242)

- 1 Doctor: Yeah.
- 2 (0.3)
- 3 Doctor: That’s shingles.
- 4 (1.2)
- 5 Doctor: That’s what it is.
- 6 (0.6)
- 7 Patient: Shingles.
- 8 Doctor: Yes.

Here the multiple moments of silence are marked by independent turns neither attributed to the doctor or patient. This simple yet subtle choice of transcription allows silence to be represented as being collaboratively shared and also available to either participant as an opportunity to speak next. In these transcribed extracts as well as the others to follow, silence is an integral component of the turn taking

organization and co-management. Silence here appears to provide participants with time and space to get ready for their next turns. The third excerpt reveals an ‘extended silence between-turns’ or lapse in line 2. Despite the relatively long silence, the talk between a native English speaker and a Japanese second language speaker continues.

Excerpt 3. Teacher (T) is talking to a student (M) (Nakamura, 2004, p. 83)

1 T: Oh. And then after that was *Eiken*?

2 (3)

3 T: You had the test before *Eiken*?

4 M: I think before.

One interesting aspect of this exchange is the use of opposite meaning words before and after the gap (line 2). In line 1, the teacher says, “after” and then rewords the question in line 3 and says, “before.” Another point which could merit future study is that Nakamura (2004) has observed moments when the next sequence of turns coming out of silence developed into an extended narrative by the student-participant.

Turn taking as viewed by CA

A second basic principle will also help us to see silence as a potentially helpful communicative device. Within the broad view of treating conversation or social interaction as a sequence of turns being co-managed and accomplished by participants, there is a more specific pattern at work. This type of sequential organization is referred to as adjacency

pairs. (See Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998, pp. 39-43, for details.) One type of adjacency pair is question-answer. Simply put, when there is a question, there is an expectation of some kind of answer. However, the answer does not necessarily have to be a spoken linguistic response nor does the answer have to come immediately after the question. Silence in this sense can serve as the response. The main illustrations of how silence works in this way and others as a communicative device will come from a TV series and films.

Why use films as data?

Some may still wonder why the emphasis of this paper is on discussing examples from films instead of real data from classrooms. Besides the earlier reference to Tannen and Culpeper for doing cinematic discourse analysis, more direct support related to the methodology of this study comes from Herman (1998) who uses CA to study drama. She traces the turn taking organization in John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* as decisions made by characters as to who speaks to whom, how long to speak, and placement of pauses and interruptions. These actions affect the audience’s interpretation of the characters. As for support for the focus of the study on silence, the clearest dramatic example (that I have found thus far) of using silence as a communicative device to enhance communication through social interactions comes from Harold Pinter. Silence which is written in the script simply as *pause* or *silence* between turns is one of his trademark methods to capture attention and build tension. Here in an excerpt from one of his plays. *Secret* lovers meet for the first time since they broke up a few years ago. They are reminiscing.

Jerry: What a memory.
 Pause
 She doesn't know ... about us, does she?

Emma: Of course not. She just remembers you, as an old friend.

Jerry: That's right.
 Pause
 Yes, everyone was there that day, standing around, your husband, my wife, all the kids, I remember.

Emma: What day?

Jerry: When I threw her up. It was in your kitchen.

Emma: It was in your kitchen.
 Silence
 (Harold Pinter, *Betrayal*, 1978, p. 20)

The challenge for the performers not unlike what participants in talk do in daily life is to cooperate with each other in the timing of silence. In hopes of appealing to the general readership, samples from popular culture are used to make the following point: It does not take a careful study of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson in order to notice how silence is working interactively in the following cinematic samples. Anyone can read the moments of silence as I have done. Looking at how actors, directors, and screen writers use silence interactively is a means to an end. The hope is that interested teachers will take these ideas back into their

classrooms and develop their own approaches for dealing with the much more complex and unpredictable silence they might encounter.

Why these clips and not others?

The films used in this study were selected by what was immediately available for repeated viewing, what have been tried out with students and teachers in the past (with some success), and finally, which scenes seem to have potential for this kind of analysis. The following discussion of film clips could provide interested teachers not only with an initial list of films and scenes to begin their own analysis or use in the classroom, but could also offer teacher-researchers an introduction to a basic applied approach to data analysis. CA can be used as an analytical tool for films as well as classroom interactions.

Clip no. 1: "Silence makes me crazy." (*The West Wing*)

In the White House, the Chief of Staff (C) and the National Security Secretary (S) are talking while waiting with armed forces leaders to see if their plan for evacuating U.S. Embassy personnel by helicopter in a country threatened by rebel forces will succeed.

- 1 S: How is the First Lady holding up?
- 2 C: Let's not do that right now.
- 3 (2)
- 4 S: Yeah.
- 5 (17)

- 6 C: Silence makes me crazy.
 7 (16)
 8 C: Come on.
 9 ((Radio announcement: “All personnel are secure.”))
 10 ((Sighs of relief and cheers from the people in the room.))

In this scene from a popular TV series, silence creates a raising sense of tension until it becomes unbearable not only for the Chief of Staff who approved the risky mission, but also for other people in the room including the viewing audience. Here silence carries the burden of uncertainty over the outcome. It appears the chief’s outburst in line 6, “Silence makes me crazy,” breaks up the stretched out period of silence into two parts. So while the silent moments in which we are waiting and not knowing are inevitable, it could be made more manageable by saying something. The implication of this easily recognizable situation and others like it including in the classroom is: Why do people generally feel uncomfortable with silence when it is such a common feature of talk?

In the next two scenes, we will see how silence is an integral part of turn taking. Rather than drive the participants crazy, the silence in film clips no.2 and no.3, allows the speaker to think more and even change his mind. One question consistently emerged in studying these clips: How would these conversations turn out differently if there was no silence?

Clip no. 2: Having a conversation with silence, part I (*Ocean’s Eleven*)

Danny and Rusty are sitting at the counter of a bar. Both of them are looking at boxing on the TV screen behind the bar, not at each other. Rusty with head down on the bar turned away from Danny says nothing as Danny is wondering aloud how many people are needed to break into the casino vault.

- 1 Danny: Saul makes ten. Ten ought to do it, don’t you think?
 2 Rusty: (4)
 3 Danny: You think we need one more?
 4 Rusty: (3)
 5 Danny: You think we need one more.
 6 Rusty: (4)
 7 Danny: All right, we’ll get one more.
 8 Rusty: (3) ((Viewers can see Rusty blink.))

Danny seems to sense how long to wait between utterances. He goes from thinking that 10 people are enough to do the job to deciding 11 would be better. Viewers cannot be sure if Rusty’s silence signifies agreement or disagreement, but they can see that Danny takes it to mean, “You think we need one more.” In CA terms, lines 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and 7 and 8 can be seen as adjacency pairs where the first part of the pair is a question and the second part an answer. So silence here could be a response to each question. The complexity of silence becomes apparent when recipients have to commit to an interpretation and respond.

One implication for teachers is to reflect on our own interpretation and response to students' silence.

Clip no. 3: Having a conversation with silence, part II (*Sweet & Lowdown*)

The next excerpt begins as Emmit, a traveling guitarist, breaks the bad news to the woman who he has been going out with. Hattie has been a mute since she suffered a childhood disease. He says, "I've got to go and there is no way you can go with me."

1 Emmit: So (.) I'm saying goodbye. (.) Okay? (.) Okay?

2 Hattie: (4)

3 Emmit: Look. How many fingers I've got? (.) Ten. Right? 10 (.) 9 8 7 6. (2) There's 11. You see?

4 Hattie: (7)

5 Emmit: Ah alright, look if you come, it's not a free ride. (.) Alright? I'm not a charity organization. Alright, you know, I don't know what I'm doing.

6 Hattie: (2)

7 Emmit: If you come (2) you work.

8 Hattie: (4)

This example as clip no. 2 shows the participants carrying on a conversation despite the other person not saying anything. Again the speaker has to read the silence of the other person. Again as Danny in the previous clip, Emmit also chooses to interpret the silence as disagreement. Emmit does a complete turn around from saying goodbye

to allowing her to come along. The question-answer pair in lines 1 and 2 seems to be the turning point. Once he interprets her silence in line 2 to mean 'no', he is in trouble. In the classroom, teachers tend to view students' silence negatively. What signs are we reading and how does this selection affect our interpretation and shape our responses?

The next clip may seem like an odd choice to include in a study of silence, but it is intended to serve as a contrast to silence. Sometimes when encountering uncertainty or awkwardness in a social situation, participants may talk more than usual possibly in an attempt to avoid silence.

Clip no. 4: When talking does not carry the message. (*Annie Hall*)

Even though Alvy and Annie have just met, there is very little silence as they both seem to have a lot to say. What is unique about the following scene is that what they are saying and what they are thinking have been separately noted.

{ } subtitles that reveal what the person is actually thinking.

1 Alvy: So did you do those photographs in there or what?

2 Annie: Yeah. I sort of dabble around you know.
{I dabble? Listen to me. What a jerk.}

3 Alvy: They're wonderful. They have a quality.
{You're a good-looking girl.}

4 Annie: Well, I would like to take a serious photography course.

- 5 {He probably thinks I'm a yo-yo.}
- Alvy: Photography is interesting you know because it's a new art form. A set of aesthetic criteria have not emerged yet.
- {I wonder what she looks like naked.}
- 6 Annie: You mean whether it's a good photo or not?
- {I'm not smart enough for him. Hang in there.}
- 7 Alvy: The medium enters in as a condition of the art form itself.
- {I don't know what I'm saying. She senses I'm shallow.}

The point here is that communication cannot assume to be taking place successfully just because both people are talking. Here we can see adjacency pairs at work as Alvy takes the lead and Annie follows his lead like a dance (turns 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6). In this example, readers may wonder what would have happened if there were pauses or gaps instead of constant talk. Teachers may also feel the urge to fill up those potentially awkward moments of silences or gaps in the conversation by talking more than necessary. This compensation strategy could be re-examined by simply allowing more silence and see what happens.

Clip no. 5: Pause for effect (*The Client*)

Reggie Love urges Mark, her young client to tell the truth about what he knows before they enter the courtroom. He knows the secret of a murder committed by a gang figure and the U.S. attorney is trying to get him to talk.

- 1 R: But don't you see Mark? If you lie you're going to be just like them.
- 2 M: If I tell the truth he'll kill me.
- 3 R: All right. (3) Look. Have you ever (2) have you ever heard of the witness protection program?

Here the first pause in line 3 seems to be used by Reggie to make a transition from acknowledging what Mark has just said to initiate her question. The second pause appears to allow her to get Mark's attention by repeating her first three words and possibly to display the seriousness of her question. Teachers also need ways to get and keep students' attention. Pause with repetition is one common technique. In the next clip, silence is treated in a different light due to the institutional context, the courtroom.

Clip no. 6: Silence as problematic in court. (*The Client*)

In court, participants must speak out. Silence is assumed to show that the person has something to hide, is not telling the truth or in certain cases, shows guilt. The truth and ultimately justice is pursued through what people say.

- 1 Judge: Put up your right hand Mark. You swear to tell the truth?
- 2 Mark: ((nods))
- 3 Judge: You have to say it.
- 4 Mark: I swear.

Then the attorney tries to get Mark to say what he knows.

- 1 A: Did Clifford mention Barry Muldano or Senator Boyd Boyette?
- 2 M: (6)
- 3 A: You answer the question Mark.
- 4 M: (4)

A few turns later, after further pressuring by the attorney, the judge finally interrupts and says to Mark, “You have to answer the question.” Here we see silence as being ambiguous in a negative sense. In fact, the court proceedings cannot continue if the witness does not speak regardless of the reason. Teachers and students also can find themselves in a similar situation where activities are based on the assumption that there will be overt signs such as speaking to display understanding and participation. It is beyond the focus of this paper to discuss the serious social justice or rather injustice implications in cases where witnesses or the accused do not speak. (See Eades, 2003, for an example of how an aboriginal woman was wrongly accused for this very reason.)

Clip no. 7: Silence allows for confessions (*The Client*)

Mark is at his brother’s bedside in the hospital. Ricky has been in a semi-conscious state without being able to speak since he witnessed a traumatic event. Silence surrounds this scene as Mark confesses his responsible for getting his younger brother involved.

- 1 R: ((silent, thumb in mouth, eyes open gazing ahead with no noticeable focus))

- 2 M: Look at you Ricky. I shouldn’t have made you stay in those woods. It’s my fault.
- 3 R: I’m really sorry. I want to make it up to you. I promise.

One person is incapacitated and cannot speak while the other person speaks much revealing his inner feelings. Since the recipient cannot respond, the speaker may feel freer to say things normally not articulated though they are felt. Silence in this scene is not part of a question-answer pair, but rather serves as encouragement for the speaker to continue talking. On occasions, students want to tell teachers something personal. Instead of constantly correcting each language mistake as they occur, we might serve students better in these times by simply letting them talk while we remain silent.

Clip no. 8: Gaps leading to new understanding (*In America*)

For some time now Matteo has been a close friend of both Johnny’s children and his wife, but not him. The tension between neighbors reaches a boiling over point. Johnny enters Matteo’s apartment and tells him to stay away from his family. Suddenly the conversation takes a surprising turn.

- 1 J: Do you want to be me? Do you want to be in my place?
- 2 M: I wish.
- 3 (5)
- 4 J: Are you in love with her?
- 5 (4)

- 6 J: Are you in love with her?
- 7 M: No. (3) I'm in love with you.
- 8 J: ((Change of facial expression))
- 9 (5)
- 10 M: And I'm in love with your beautiful woman. And I'm in love with your kids. And I'm even in love with your unborn child.
- 11 (5)
- 12 M: I'm even in love with your anger. I'm in love with anything that lives.
- 13 (8)
- 14 J: You're dying.
- 15 (9)
- 16 J: I'm sorry.
- 17 (5)
- 18 ((Then Johnny breaks eye contact and walks out of Matteo's apartment.))

This final example from films shows the potential power of silence to move recipients of talk towards deep understanding without needing to hear elaborate explanations. Silence here demands a lot of the recipient as the delivery of short utterances between timely paced gaps seem to carry the message as much as the actual words spoken. Silence as emotion and reflection allows the recipient, the viewing audience, and even the speaker time to grasp the underlying message. Are teachers conscious of

their use or lack of use of pauses to break up their extended announcements, instructions, and explanations into more understandable chunks for students?

Further thoughts: Silence can say more than words.

Roger Ebert, film critic, points to the silence *after* this highly charged exchange as the moment Johnny suddenly sees Matteo in a different light.

There is a silence, during which Johnny's understanding of the situation changes entirely...The rest of the film will be guided by that moment.... It's not about plot at all. It's about how you look at someone and realize you have never really known them.

(Ebert, 2003)

Ebert recognizes silence here as creating the time and space for the characters and audience to reach a new level of understanding.

Implications for teaching and research

Silence is communication, not an interruption from it. Silence can, like any word, deliver meanings to us... Sometimes it is useful to act differently from what would be the normal communicative pattern to us in order to maintain communication and avoid conflict.

(Gronross, 1997, pp. 4-5)

Gronross (1997), Tannen (1985), Jaworski (1993), and Allwright⁶ among others have rightfully pointed out that

silence is anything but silent. Silence as experienced in life is full of activity. Silence can even be a stimulus for talk when it is treated as part of the interaction. In the following sequence of turns between a teacher and a student, we can observe how the teacher works with the student's silence. The following segment originally appeared in Nakamura (2004, pp. 81-82). The data comes from a video recording of a model lesson conducted by a Japanese teacher.

A high school English lesson about culture

The teacher is asking for one student from each group (in order from group 1 to group 6) to stand up and answer the same question as part of an extension discussion after studying the textbook lesson. (Note: S6 means the student from group 6.)

- 65 T: Have your parents ever told you to learn something Japanese?
- 66 S6: ((stands up)) (3) ((looking down))
- 67 T: Yes or no?
- 68 S6: (2)
- 69 T: Yes or no? In your case.
- 70 S6: Yes.
- 71 T: Yes. Okay. What did they (.) tell you?
- 72 S6: (6) ((looking at friends and talking to them))
- 73 T: If you don't know the vocabulary, Japanese is okay. I will help you.

- 74 S6: (4) ((looks at teacher))
- 75 T: What did your parents tell you to learn?
- 76 S6: (1)
- 77 T: Something Japanese. Not Balinese dance. Something Japanese.
- 78 S6: ((He is repeating in Japanese what his classmate is saying.)) *Ryoshin ga jibun*
- 79 *ni ...*((translation: Your parents (told) you ...))
- 80 T: You have to learn
- 81 S6: *Nihon no bunka de mananda hoga ii ...?* ((translation: ... It is better to learn some part of Japanese culture?))
- 82 some part of Japanese culture?))
- 83 T: Something Japanese
- 84 S6: (10) ((looks and talks to friends)) No.
- 85 T: No. Okay. Your answer is no.

In this extended exchange between the classroom teacher and S6, effort is made by the teacher to give S6 multiple chances to answer. A range of techniques and strategies are displayed by the teacher as she responds to the silence:

1. Ask a Yes/No question in line 67.
2. Repeat the question with a clarifying phrase in line 69 with encouragement.
3. Rephrase the original question (asked in line 65) in line 75.
4. Repeat the last two words of the original question on either side of a possible attempt at humor in line 77. Silence,

one type of student response, to a teacher's question, is often viewed as a failure of communication. No immediate response commonly frustrates teachers especially since we want to help students express themselves in English as much as possible. However, it is inevitable there will be such problems as silence that need to be overcome by both learner and teacher when they interact. The danger is that teacher may prematurely and abruptly bring the interaction to a close because silence has been interpreted to mean nothing more to say.

Discussion: Making connections

Referring back to the original observation by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) that talk is generally continuous with a minimum amount of gaps and overlaps allows for further discussion of how the data in this study fits in. Sacks *et al.* explain silence strictly in terms of location. "Parties' treatment of silence in conversation is contingent on its placement" (p. 715). Their interest in silence is secondary to their main interest in describing rules of conversation as participants try in an orderly manner to get the floor to speak. The examination of silence in film has progressed with the research conducted by Sacks *et al.* who began locating and articulating silence that occurred as pauses and gaps. Thus, participants notice and respond to it accordingly. Thus, participants notice and respond to it accordingly.

It should be mentioned that their interest is sociological and anthropological whereas my interest is in understanding the phenomenon for pedagogical application. One motivation for using cinematic examples is to give the general readers

clear illustrations of how silence is an integral feature of talk without needing to be familiar with many details of CA's particular method of microanalysis and its own special terminology. An equally important reason for using popular films is to demonstrate that even native speakers when talking to each other have moments of silence. Silence should not be viewed by foreign language teachers or students as something unusual or necessarily negative.

The classroom example fits into a growing trend to use in applied forms of CA to study second language communication. Markee and Kasper (2004) talk about CA for SLA (Second Language Acquisition). This branch of CA looks at second language situations including in language classrooms not only when the language is English. As can be seen in the classroom example here as well those in Gardner and Wagner (2004), silence is more complex and unpredictable in second language talk when compared with the neat and tidy dialogues in the film examples and also the 1974 rule based descriptions of how speakers co-manage to gain the floor.

In summary, the film scenes were discussed in hopes of establishing in a simplified and easily recognizable means by which teachers can see how silence is used as a communicative device collaboratively within the organization of turn taking. The focus of the paper then shifted to a real classroom interaction in order to demonstrate that even when silence does not successfully help participants to move to a smooth conclusion (as in the film clips), the moments of silence locate problems of understanding. In other words, sometimes silence helps and even takes on a central role in co-accomplishing talk

successfully, particularly in film clips 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8. At other times as in the classroom interaction, the teacher's responses to the silence were not enough to help the student say more. What silence in the classroom example highlights is the teacher's admirable effort (e.g., a range of techniques to address silence) to try to communicate to the student. Regardless of the context discussed in this paper, a classroom, a courtroom, a bar, a seaside resort, at a friend's apartment, or at the White House, participants are shown to be co-managing talk through turn taking. Silence is the feature of talk chosen to highlight this process.

As for specific practical application, Rowe (1974) cited in Jaworski (1993, p. 10) designed a teacher-training program based on the idea of increasing wait-time (i.e., the time a teacher waits for a student to respond before intervening). She reported promising results such as an increased number of student-initiated questions, unsolicited responses, and length of responses. A simple change of attitude and action seems to be related to new awareness of the power of silence to encourage communication. Another possible application is for teachers to experiment with taking the opposite tact. Instead of adjusting to silence, attempts could be made to minimize classroom silence through more preparation by both teachers and students before undertaking oral communicative activities. Part of this preparation including rehearsal could involve careful teacher attention and guidance during student-student pair work not only to deal with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, but also to explicit instructions, modeling, and practice in how to take turns and what to do when they do not know what to say or do not understand.

A final idea for practical application is to experientially bring controlled moments of silence into the classroom. Students could act out carefully selected short scripts from films and plays. A combination of experiencing the turn taking rhythm both in terms of knowing when to talk, when to listen, and when to respond could create a new interest in students for learning the language through usage and practice.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to work for understanding before taking action. One objective of this paper is to generate insights into how silence is an integral part of communication through social interaction. Even though silence could be the most ambiguous forms of linguistic communication (Jaworski, 1993), on occasions, it can enhance communication. When silence does not enhance communication, it still has the power to reveal how participants are trying to communicate. As for methodology, this applied form of CA has allowed me to build descriptive accounts for interpretative discussion of the sequential organization and structure of turn taking as exemplified in cinematic *and* classroom interactions. This hybrid approach is not found in the literature and is thus in an exploratory stage of development.

Silence is more than a physical description of the absence of speech. It has real consequences to participants in interaction as silence carries meaning, intention, and expectation. The ongoing challenge for us both as co-participants in talk-in-interaction as well as teachers-researchers analyzing the discourse is to recognize this and use this knowledge to enhance communication through social interaction inside and outside of the classroom.

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Notes

1. By ‘naturally occurring’ I simply mean talk that did not occur for the expressed purpose of gathering data for this research.
2. ‘Talk-in-interaction’, a term commonly used in CA, is credited to Schegloff (1987). It “reminds us that talking with one another is social interaction” (Zimmerman & Boden, 1991, p. 8).
3. Some may argue that the organization of language use depends on the particular language and culture involved. For example, Japanese language and culture have different conventions from the American ones. According to Lebra (1987), talk in Japanese uses silence as a culturally sensitive resource to help participants get along with each other. It promotes social acceptance and connection through both expressing and concealing one’s feelings. In addition, Watanabe (1993) mentions two characteristics of Japanese communication:

1. Non-reciprocity of language use (i.e, variety of honorifics).
2. Non-confrontational communication (e.g., group consensus).

While there are admittedly numerous factors present, which could come into play at any time in an interaction, this study takes up the current thinking in CA that despite these

differences, participants seem to organize talk around turn taking. Mori (2004) finds that interactions in Japanese are also situated, influenced, and resolved through participants’ attention to the sequential development of talk. CA has been applied as a methodology not just to English, but also other languages such as German, French, Japanese, Finnish, and Danish (Gardner & Wagner, 2004).

4. Jefferson (1989) is credited with developing the CA transcription conventions still in use today with minor usually simplified variations (Ten Have, 1999, p. 213).
5. Originally, Jefferson timed silence to tenths of seconds with a stop watch. Later, she resorted to count off in seconds.
6. His comment recalled from a discussion on silence in 2004.

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