

Introduction

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This book focuses attention on a relatively neglected component of human communication—silence—in hopes of both presenting current research from a variety of disciplines and also stimulating further research and thought on the topic. Silence is most often an out-of-awareness phenomenon—the ground against which the figure of talk is perceived. By reversing polarities and treating silence as the figure to be examined against the ground of talk (as well as other actions or events), we aim to heighten awareness of this universal aspect of human behavior while at the same time emphasizing its complex nature as a cultural phenomenon and its richness as a research site.

It is neither surprising nor reproving to note that the study of communication has focused on talk to the relative exclusion of silence. As Saville-Troike observes in the opening chapter:

Within linguistics, silence has traditionally been ignored except for its boundary-marking function, delimiting the beginning and ending of utterances. The tradition has been to define it negatively—as merely the absence of speech.

Anthropologists and psychologists, however—less centrally concerned with language per se—have been somewhat less likely to ignore silence. Psychologists have the longer history of interest in the subject, including the seminal lifetime work of Frieda Goldman-Eisler (for example, Goldman-Eisler 1951) investigating the relation of pauses to cognitive activity, Maclay and Osgood's (1959) research on hesitation phenomena in speech, or Cook's (1964) analysis of the role of silence in psychotherapy, to more recent interest in the rhythmic and synchronic patterns of silences in interpersonal interaction (Jaffe and Feldstein 1970). Not sur-

prisingly, most of the psychological research has focused on the English language and American (or other European) culture.

A major concern of anthropology is the identification of cultural similarities and differences, and this has included some pioneering work on silence. Hall's (1959) *The Silent Language* focused on the significance of nonverbal behavior, including silence, and Samarin (1965) called attention to cross-cultural differences in the meaning of silence. Bauman (1970) considered silence in Quaker worship, and Basso (1970), showing its importance among the Apache, called for more cross-cultural documentation of silence behavior.

The present volume, more than a decade later, begins to answer that call. At the same time, it explores theoretical issues related to and occasioned by the study of silence, its nature, its meanings, and its uses, in cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspective.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

The general plan of the book, with the exception of the opening essay which provides an overall orientation to the topic, is to move from the smaller (micro) level to the larger (macro) level, and (with the exception of the concluding section) to move concentrically from the familiar and close at hand (at least to an American audience) to the less familiar and more distinctively different.

Section II presents 'Psychological and Ethnographic Views of Pausing', primarily in English discourse. Section III, 'Some Meanings and Uses of Silence', takes a more explicitly ethnographic approach, looking at silence among particular groups and in particular settings. Section IV focuses on 'Silence in Cross-Cultural Perspective', examining silence in three different societies and treating it at a more general level of analysis. Section V, 'Silence and Nonverbal Communication', considers silence in relation to nonverbal behavior in particular and the scheme of behavior in general. The Appendix provides 'A Sampling of Sources on Silence.' All the chapters share a fundamental concern for the meaning and use of silence in human communication.

OVERVIEW: THE NATURE AND STUDY OF SILENCE

In the first section, Saville-Troike (Chapter 1, 'The Place of Silence in an Integrated Theory of Communication'), presents an overview of the complex nature of silence, including its varied types and functions. She makes a key distinction between the nonverbal and nonvocal in communication, taking into account both sign language and writing, which are nonvocal but verbal. She points out that silence used for structuring

communication is to be distinguished from communicative silence, and that silences which convey meaning but not propositional content are to be distinguished from those which carry illocutionary force. She shows that silence can be used to fulfill the functions of most speech acts, as well as larger discourse functions, such as prayers.

Saville-Troike notes that the symbolic significance of silence makes it inherently ambiguous and thus subject to serious communicative misapprehensions, both interpersonal and intercultural—an observation which is demonstrated by many of the chapters that follow. Finally, she proposes an etic framework for description and analysis which can contribute to further ethnographic research on the topic.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC VIEWS OF PAUSING

Section II examines the meaning of silence at the micro level of hesitations, or pauses, during verbal interaction. Psychological researchers in this area have distinguished Inturn pauses, which occur within the conversational turn of a speaker, from switching pauses, which occur at the boundaries of speaking turns. A further distinction is made between silent and filled pauses.

Scollon (Chapter 2, 'The Machine Stops: Silence in the Metaphor of Malfunction') begins this section with a review of psychological research on pauses, including the work of Feldstein and his colleagues, which is reported and reviewed in the chapter by Crown and Feldstein. Scollon then notes the similarity between findings of this research and that of his own ethnographic research and observations of misunderstandings among Athabaskan Indians in western Canada in communication with non-Indians. In doing so, he reveals as problematic what superficially appeared to be a sociolinguistic universal, and suggests that profound differences in cultural metaphors affect interpretations of silence in interaction, and even our research agendas.

In Chapter 3, Crown and Feldstein ('Psychological Correlates of Silence and Sound in Conversational Interaction') present findings of a large body of psychological research, much of it their own, based on instrumental measurement of chronographic patterning of silence and sound in conversation. They find that silences in English conversations taped in a laboratory setting have a more stable relationship to personality differences as measured on standard psychological instruments (for example, extravert/introvert) than do vocalizations. They find as well that the amount of vocalization by a speaker is determined less by the speaker than by the relative silence of the listener. Their comparisons of patterns among black and white subjects, among the first to be reported, show significant intra- and cross-ethnic differences. In an interesting

cross-cultural study, they report that Chinese bilignals in Canada use more silence when speaking Chinese than when speaking English. Finally, they discuss the possible value of applying a statistical technique used in economics and sociology, time series analysis, to the study of conversation.

Like Crown and Feldstein, Walker (Chapter 4, 'The Two Faces of Silence: The Effect of Witness Hesitancy on Lawyers' Impressions') is interested in the effect of pausing on impression formation. However, whereas they base their study on experimental evidence, Walker bases hers on analysis of transcripts of depositions and attorneys' reactions both at the time of the deposition and in subsequent comments about how they perceived the witnesses. Thus she too draws on and speaks to the psychological literature on pausing, but her own approach is an ethnographically-oriented discourse analysis.

Walker draws attention to the crucial duality—what she aptly calls the Janus-like nature—of silence (in particular, unfilled pauses). Lawyers advise their own witnesses to think before they speak—hence, pause—and yet they tend to distrust opposing witnesses who pause, concluding that if they have to think before they speak they must be making something up.

The final chapter in this section (Chapter 5, 'Some Reasons for Hesitating'), by Chafe, demonstrates the need to take content into account in research on hesitation during speech production. Following in the tradition of research on intun silence as an indication of cognitive activity, he examines hesitations in 'the pear stories', narratives told about what happened in a short film. Chafe shows that hesitations may reflect mental search processes, codability of objects/events, and discourse-organizational considerations in the course of a speaker's attempt to construct a description of an event from memory.

SOME MEANINGS AND USES OF SILENCE

Section III moves to a more global treatment of silence within specific types of situations and events, and among particular subgroups: New York Jewish dinner table conversation; Quaker and Pentecostal worship; and teachers and black students in an inner-city school. This range of contexts and perspectives demonstrates some of the variations—and opportunities for cross-cultural misunderstanding—in the interpretation and evaluation of silence. Moreover, we are reminded by Maltz that noise, like silence, can be ambiguous.

Tannen (Chapter 6, 'Silence: Anything But') continues the treatment of silence at the level of conversational encounter, focusing on features which characterize speakers of New York Jewish background in contrast

with Californians of non-Jewish background. Beginning with a theoretical discussion of potential negative and positive meanings of silence in the framework of universals of politeness phenomena, she then describes the features that make up what she calls New York Jewish conversational style and suggests that features of this style may be understood as motivated by the desire to avoid silence which is seen as evidence of lack of rapport. Tannen concludes that silence in interaction is not definable as an absolute but is perceived when expected talk is absent.

Maltz (Chapter 7, 'Joyful Noise and Reverent Silence: The Significance of Noise in Pentecostal Worship') is concerned with silence as symbol and as purposeful means to an end. Maltz develops some of the points in Saville-Troike's discussion of silence as a mechanism of intensification in religious practices. He discusses attitudes toward silence and noise in worship among Pentecostals and uses this 'as an occasion to investigate the variations possible in the interpretation of noise and silence, and some of the similarities that underlie these variations'.

Maltz demonstrates that the rise of the Pentecostal movement paralleled, in some respects, the rise of Quakerism, which is characterized by strikingly different attitudes toward these phenomena. Both were reactions to the Puritan movement, which the Quakers found too noisy and the Pentecostals found too quiet. The silence of the Quakers and the noisiness of the Pentecostals serve similar religious functions. In both cases, an extreme manifestation is the marked departure from the unmarked norm of speaking, and thus is available for symbolic exploitation.

Gilmore (Chapter 8, 'Silence and Sulking: Emotional Displays in the Classroom') likewise describes the use of silence as a symbol and as a purposeful means to an end, but in a very different setting, an inner-city classroom. Here silence takes on very concrete communicative functions and meanings, which are sometimes misunderstood between teacher and student. Teachers (black and white) employ silence as a tool of classroom control. Students (predominantly black) adopt 'silent sulks'—often dramatically stylized—as a defense against teacher authority and as a display of anger. This use of 'silence displays' is closely related to the use of silence described by Saunders in the next chapter.

SILENCE IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Saunders (Chapter 9, 'Silence and Noise as Emotion Management Styles: An Italian Case') is the first in Section IV to present analyses of silence in specific cultural settings. Saunders begins with an ethnographic sketch of the Italian village Valbella, and a theoretical overview of the study of emotion management in anthropological research, as background to his study of silence as emotion management. He concludes that whereas

Valbellans employ noisy confrontation in expression of emotion in relatively small matters, they prefer the strategy of silence if the emotion-laden issue is serious enough to threaten family solidarity.

Nwoye (Chapter 10, 'Eloquent Silence Among the Igbo of Nigeria') describes the uses of silence in the range of behaviors and levels of interaction among the 'typically extroverted'—that is, talkative—Igbo. Following the schema outlined by Saville-Troike, he considers institutionally-determined silence, as in rituals associated with birth and death; group-determined silence, as in the ostracism of social deviants; and individually-negotiated silence, as in the omission of an expected greeting.

Whereas Tannen (Chapter 6, suggests that New York Jews have been negatively stereotyped in part because of their avoidance of silence, Lehtonen and Sajavaara (Chapter 11, 'The Silent Finn') present research and discussion about a group that have been negatively stereotyped because of their frequent use of silence: the Finns. The authors consider popular maxims and other evidence for the silence-favoring attitude of Finns, as well as silence-related features of Finnish conversation. In a section which relates closely to the papers in Section II, they present findings of experiments measuring pauses and rate of speech in the discourse of Finns, Swedes, and English speakers, as well as of speakers from a part of Finland in which inhabitants are believed by other Finns to be particularly slow speakers. The authors discuss these findings in light of the more general phenomena of individual interactive style, cultural differences, and stereotyping.

SILENCE AND NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

The papers in the final section are concerned with the broader relationship of silence to the range of communicative behaviors, especially nonverbal communication. Philips (Chapter 12, 'Interaction Structured Through Talk and Interaction Structured Through 'Silence') calls attention to the fact that research has focused almost exclusively on interactions structured through talk—where attention is focused on verbal utterances—rather than on interactions structured through silence—where attention is focused on nonverbal physical activity perceived in the visual channel. She proposes these constructs as ends of a continuum along which behavior ranges, and suggests that societies differ in their distribution of these types. Philips reports that Warm Springs Indians engage in proportionately more interaction structured through silence, a finding related to Scollon's that Athakaskan Indians evaluate silence positively. Philips concludes with a call for more research addressed to such interaction.

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In the concluding chapter, Kendon (Chapter 13, 'Some Uses of Gesture') also is concerned with communication perceived in the visual channel: deliberate and deliberately silent utterances in the form of gesture. He presents first an overview of studies of gesture and then the results of observations of use of gesture in face-to-face interaction. Kendon shows that the usefulness of gesture in conversation derives from its silent (as well as visual) nature. Finally, he points out implications of his observations for theories of human communication, thus coming full circle to our starting point in Saville-Troike's chapter.

The range of disciplines and definitions of silence represented in the chapters are reflected as well in the sources annotated in the Appendix compiled by Munoz-Duston and Kaplan.

CONCLUSION: FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF SILENCE

Silence, as discussed in these chapters, takes various forms. The smallest unit of silence, mentioned by Lehtonen and Sajavaara in Chapter 11, is the normally unnoticed cessation of sound in the production of consonants, which creates the pattern of consonants and vowels that makes "speech" of a vocal stream. The next level of silence is the pausing, sometimes perceived as hesitation and sometimes not perceived at all, within the stream of speech making up a speaker's turn, and between speaker turns, as discussed in Section II (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) as well as parts of Chapters 2, 6, and 11.

The next level of silence includes pauses that are perceived in interaction, such as those Goffman (1967) calls 'lulls' in conversation. Longer than this is the complete silence of one party to a conversation, seen in Nwoye's example of a young Igbo woman who indicates her rejection of a marriage proposal by standing her ground yet not speaking. The broadest level of silence discussed is that which provides the structure and background against which talk is marked and meaningful merely by virtue of its occurrence. An example of this is the Igbo ritual described by Nwoye in which a sacrifice is carried through the village. If this silent ritual is interrupted by talk, the entire sacrifice is profaned and, indeed, canceled.

The chapters in this collection demonstrate and discuss a range of functions of silence, on varying levels. At one pole are the functions of pausing in cognitive processes (Chapter 5), impression formation (Chapters 2, 3, and 4), and as part of communicative style partly responsible for cultural stereotyping (Chapters 2, 6, and 11). At the other pole are the functions of silence as the background against which talk has meaning, or as the nonverbal activity which structures interaction (Chapter 12). Furthermore, we see that silence can itself be a communicative device in

interaction (Chapters 1, 6, and 10); either obstructor or facilitator of divine inspiration (Chapter 7); and a means of emotion management (Chapter 9) and display (Chapter 8). A number of chapters call attention to the function of silence as a marker of juncture, or interruption, on all the levels at which it has been described.

In sum, we present a collection of papers written by scholars in different disciplines, combined to present as comprehensive a view as possible of the nature, meaning, and functions of silence across contexts, cultures, and academic disciplines.

M.S.-T.

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