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Silence as an Interactional Practice in Multicultural Group Work

Lyu Zhang

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abbreviations

CA   conversation analysis

FPP   first-pair parts

HE   Higher Education

MGW   multicultural group work

NS   native speaker(s)

NNS   non-native speaker(s)

SCT   sequence closing third

SPP   second-pair parts

TCU   turn constructional units

TIE   topic initial elicitor

TRP   transition relevance place

WTC   willingness to communicate

Acknowledgement

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

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Abstract

Silence among students has been widely observed and frequently highlighted as a challenge in multicultural group work (MGW) and in educational contexts more generally. Moreover, the students' silences in classrooms are often stereotypically associated with a negative attitude, a lack of initiative and unwillingness to participate. To date, research that explores silence in classrooms tends to focus on students' experience of and attitudes to silence by examining self-reports rather than the practice of silence itself. Apart from looking at 'why' they are silent, there is also a need to examine the nature of silence in interaction in order to understand 'how' silences work and how they are managed in the conversation. Although cultural and linguistic factors have been concluded as two predominant explanations for students' silence, what seems to be overlooked by research is that silences can be different and need to be interpreted in a more localised and sophisticated way. Therefore, it is important to look at silence at a micro-level of the interaction between students. To investigate both students' practices of and perspectives on silence in multicultural group work, the study collected recordings of student interaction in online groups and had the participants reflect upon the recorded interaction in stimulated-recall style interviews. Following a conversation analytic approach, the thesis presents turn-by-turn analysis of instances of interaction where silences occur, focusing on silences at different sequential contexts including silences after first-pair parts (FPPs) and second-pair parts (SPPs). In addition, the thesis also discusses three themes related to silence emerging from the students' perspectives in interviews. Findings of the study show that silence in multicultural group work is related to local events in interaction rather than a generic manifestation of non-participation. A range of contextual factors related to the local organisation of turn-taking and sequences may be at play on top of culture and language. Furthermore, the students were capable of enacting agency in performing and withholding action through the practice of silence. The thesis sheds some new light on the practices around silence in classroom interaction and it concludes with theoretical and methodological contributions of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This qualitative study is primarily concerned with the organisation of silence at the micro-level in talk-in-interaction. Silence exists ubiquitously in almost every aspect of human interaction. However, silence is not something easy to define and its definition seems to be endless. In the Oxford Dictionary of English, silence is defined as "a) complete absence of sound; b) the fact or state of abstaining from speech; c) the avoidance of mentioning or discussing something; and d) a short appointed period of time during which people stand still and do not speak as a sign of respect [...]" (Stevenson, 2010). The notion of silence was initially viewed as mere absence: absence of speech, meaning and intention when it was first introduced to linguistics (Ephratt, 2008). In recent decades research has come to recognise the meaningfulness of silence beyond the conceptualization of linguistic 'zero' and nothingness (Enninger, 1991). As Corbin (2018, p. 7) states, "silence is not simply the absence of noise; we have almost forgotten what it is", there is a need for ongoing research into the practice of silence in interaction. The silence that I discuss in this thesis refers to a period of time when no verbal sound is going on. This introductory chapter begins with the rationale of the study, followed by the aims and research questions. I then share my personal motivation for undertaking the present study and describe the organisation of the thesis.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

A main issue that this project aims to tackle is a stereotypical idea of the 'silent (or shy) Asian[1] students' in many English-speaking educational contexts (Nakane, 2007; Dervin, 2011), which constitutes a starting point of the study. This stereotypical view is twofold. The first predominant assumption related to this issue is that the students' silence is automatically a sign of non-participation and a lack of initiative in learning (Kim et al., 2016). Here, this kind of interpretation of silence in classrooms links to an ethnocentric view of participation, which values overt communicative behaviours represented by the act of speaking as a normative way of engagement (Murray & McConachy, 2018). Moreover, it is ambiguous to what extent a less outspoken student would be regarded as a silent participant, and whether the 'silent' label applies to the students who are completely quiet (i.e. not a single word is uttered) or relatively quieter than the others. In fact, when a teacher perceives some students in the class as 'silent',

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[1] This specifically refers to students from East Asian countries including China, Japan and Korea.

it often means the students are not as outspoken as the teacher or the educational norm expects them to (Bao, 2014).

The other aspect of the stereotypical idea involves an over-generalisation of culture as the determinant factor for the students' silence. Specifically, it is often assumed that that being silent is part of some students' innate attributes determined by their cultural beliefs, such as those found in Confucian philosophy. Within this cultural ideology, individuals are believed to attach greater importance to the idea of 'face' and humility than the other cultures. This, however, seems to be a simplistic explanation to the issue as not everyone from the same culture performs and perceives silence in the same way nor do their cultural beliefs necessarily have a direct impact on their actions in moment-by-moment interaction. Although both views have received wide criticism and much effort has been made into investigating the reasons for the students' silence (e.g. Bao, 2014; Cheng, 2000; Choi, 2015), often the focus is on students' self-reported experience and perceptions rather than their practices of silence. More empirical evidence is needed to look at the use of silence in actual interaction and whether these stereotypical views are reflected in their practices.

The issue of silence has also been frequently captured in research on multicultural group work (e.g. Elliott & Reynolds, 2014; Popov et al., 2012). With the growing internationalisation of Higher Education (HE) institutions in the UK, the student body in many universities is becoming more and more culturally diverse (HESA, 2023). Group work, as a key component of teaching practices in HE classrooms, is undergoing a shift to a multicultural mode. It is acknowledged that group work plays a crucial role in facilitating interpersonal skills and promoting intercultural learning in many ways (e.g. Reid & Garson, 2017; Zhao et al., 2021). However, working in multicultural groups can be challenging and there has been concern over the amount of interaction between students that MGW can actually generate (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017). There has been evidence showing a lack of spontaneous interaction between culturally diverse peers (Cruickshank et al., 2012), and silence is reported as one of the major challenges for students working in multicultural groups (e.g. Turner, 2009). Despite the concern about silence, MGW research so far has rarely focused on students' experience of silence in particular, and the nature of silence in group interaction has been little explored. Moreover, research exploring silence among students more broadly in multicultural classrooms mostly rely on self-reported narratives about why they are silent and rarely look at the process by which silences emerge and where they occur in the talk. The question that remains is how

we can systematically and empirically identify and analyse instances of silence in turn-by-turn talk in group work.

Although silence is no longer a neglected topic in the field of communication and discourse studies (Nakane, 2007), there is yet to be abundant empirical research focusing on silence in actual instances of interaction. Plentiful discussion has been contributed to the conceptualisation of silence, illustrating a variety of typologies, forms and functions of silence (e.g. Bruneau, 1973; Jensen, 1973; Kurzon, 2007; Kurzon, 2013). The various forms of silence indicate that silence is multifaceted and fluid in nature with its meaning closely tied to the context. It is important to be aware that not all silences are the same, which highlights a need to study silence in the local interactional environment. As Kurzon (2013, p.1) argues, "in order to interpret silence, we always need a context". Only a handful of studies have examined silence in broader contexts of social interaction using Conversation Analysis (CA) (e.g. Pietikainen, 2018; Hoey, 2020a), but very few of them focus on silence in classroom contexts. CA with its commitment to micro-analysis of naturally occurring interaction has proven its robustness and suitability for examining micro-level conversational actions such as silence in their natural habitats. Although there are a few CA studies exploring various aspects of classroom interaction, such as turn allocation (e.g. Kääntä, 2012; Lauzon & Berger, 2015), and clarification sequences (Atar & Seedhouse, 2018), the focus has primarily been on teacher-student (T-S) interaction. To date, there has not been substantial CA research looking at how silence works in interaction between students, and in what ways each case of silence is handled by the participants in terms of turn-taking and sequence organisation.

Among the studies exploring classroom interaction, fewer of them focus on online contexts than face-to-face teaching. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21, most teaching activities in HE underwent an emergency shift to an online mode. Research on interaction in online classes highlights silence as one of the obstacles for online teaching and learning (e.g. Seynhaeve et al., 2022; Saraç & Doğan, 2022), as instructors report a tendency among students to mute themselves during online lessons. Given the increasing popularisation of online teaching platforms in the digital and post-pandemic age, it is important that more research into the interaction in online classrooms is conducted so that the nature of silence in online institutional talk can be better understood.

1.2 Aims and RQs

The main aim of this study is to investigate the actions around silence in naturally occurring interaction between students in multicultural group work in online classes. In addition, the study also aims to understand the participants' perceptions of the instances of silence in the recorded interaction as well as about silence in group work more generally. Therefore, the study will answer the following two research questions.

1) What are the nature and organisation of silence in the talk-in-interaction between the students in multicultural group work?
   a. How do the silences work in a sequential context?
   b. How are the silences managed and repaired by the speakers at talk?
2) How do the participants interpret and perceive the silences in the recorded interaction and in MGW generally?

1.3 Motivation for Undertaking the Research

My motivation for conducting this project links back to my own experience as an international student and an ESL teacher, which I explain below.

I used to be one of the silent students in my class throughout high school and undergraduate study. Growing up in a competitive environment where exams and grades are highly valued, I was taught that the best way to impress the teacher and prove my ability is to put up my hand and speak up. But I struggled to do that, even when I had an answer in my mind and even though I once achieved the highest score in some of the modules at the end of the term. A level of guilt and pressure grew in me when it came to the moments when I felt that I should say something, but I did not. This kind of feeling had never been more intense than at the start of my MA study in the UK, as an international student speaking English as a second language. Along with a strong desire to contribute to the discussion in my group there were also a sense of uncertainty and diffidence. I was not sure what exactly was holding me back, but I did know that I was fully engaged in the class. After having completed my MA, I began work as an English Language teacher to young Chinese students in Shanghai, China. I encountered silence among my students too, but this time I tried to understand silence from a different angle, a teacher's perspective. While their silence sometimes frustrated me, it reminded me of my

experience with silence as a student, and I started to wonder what brought them to being silent and what they may be communicating through silence. Therefore, I designed this research with the hope not only to answer my own questions about silence but also to deepen our understanding of the practice of silence in classrooms and to provide some empirical insights into this phenomenon.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant research on silence in communication (2.1) and silence in multicultural classroom including in MGW (2.2). It then discusses how silence is understood and researched from a conversation analytic perspective (2.3). At the end of this chapter, I summarise the chapter and present a gap in current research (2.4).

Chapter 3 details the methodology of this study. This chapter begins with the research design (3.2), including the theoretical position underlying this research and a description of the methodological approaches adopted in this study. I then illustrate the process of planning data collection (3.3), including details about the context and the participants. This is followed by a section on data collection (3.4) where I explain how the two data sets, video-recordings of group work and interviews were collected. The next two sections in this chapter describe the analytic approaches (3.5) and ethical considerations (3.6) involved in this project.

The next three chapters are data analysis chapters that illustrate the analysis and findings of this study. Chapter 4 focuses on the organisation of silence after first-pair parts (FPPs) and Chapter 5 discusses silence after second-pair parts (SPPs) and their resolutions. These two chapters present primarily the CA analysis of the recorded interaction, although interview data are occasionally drawn on in support of the analysis. Chapter 6 discusses the participants' perspectives of silence in MGW. In this chapter, the findings are mainly drawn from the interview data and I discuss three themes emerging from the data: group dynamics, the nature of the task, and the language barrier along with the linguistic identities.

Finally, in the Conclusion chapter, I first summarise the findings by answering each research questions, and then I provide synthesised discussion on two key findings of the study. I outline

the limitations of the study before proposing recommendations for future research at the end
the thesis.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the main theoretical underpinnings of the nature of silence in communication (2.1). In this section, I start with some basic assumptions of the relationship between silence and speech before I move to the forms and functions of silence. This is followed by another sub-section on the positive and negative evaluation of silence, and finally, silence and miscommunication. The second section focuses on silence in multicultural classrooms (2.2), including a review of research on multicultural group work (2.2.1) and silent participants in multicultural classrooms (2.2.2). In 2.2.3, I continue to discuss the main factors reported by research that influence students' in-class silence, and 2.2.4 provides an overview of studies on interaction in online teaching contexts. The third section (2.3) elaborates on how Conversation Analysis (CA) understands silence and classroom interaction by discussing respectively silence in turn-taking (2.3.1) and some empirical research findings on turn-taking and turn allocation in classrooms (2.3.2). Finally, this chapter is concluded and research gaps are stated in 2.4.

2.1 The Nature of Silence in Communication

Since the 1970s, an increasing number of researchers have set out to investigate silence as an interdisciplinary phenomenon as well as its role in conveying meaning in various domains (Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985). Psychologists are interested in silence in relation to personality traits and see hesitation as a reflection of cognitive processes (Crown & Feldstein, 1985; Walker, 1985). Within linguistics, the concept of silence was originally limited to its function of marking the boundaries of utterances, which neglected the role of silence as a generic component of communication (Kurzon, 2013; Ephratt, 2008; Saville-Troike, 1985). In order to better make sense of human communication, we need to understand silence as well as talk and the relationship between them. This section elaborates on the nature of silence by discussing its relationship with speech forms and functions, the positive and negative valuation of silence and its relation to miscommunication.

2.1.1 Silence and speech: some basic assumptions

The study of silence stems from the discussions of its relationship with speech. Some scholars in the field of communication used to separate silence from speech, treating them as 'polar opposites' that are mutually exclusive (Acheson, 2008, p. 536). Within this dichotomy, speech

is given superiority over silence, while silence is often portrayed negatively as a lack, void, background and frame of speech (Acheson, 2008). Similarly, when the notion of silence was first introduced to linguistics, it was initially associated with passivity and absence of speech, meaning and intention (Ephratt, 2008; Bruneu, 1973). One of the initial and basic assumptions associates silence with a notion of 'behavioral zero', describing silences as 'meaningless and insignificant nothings before, between, and after interactive periods' (Enninger, 1991, p.4). This reveals that the study of human communication has originally centred on talk while silence is merely examined against the background of talk (Savile-Troike, 1985). A potential outcome of this binary conceptualisation of silence and speech is that a lot of meanings and uses of silence as an independent communicative practice could be largely ignored.

As scholars in the study of communication started to recognise the role of silence in conveying meanings in communication, a more contemporary conception of silence views silence as a meaningful and marked absence of linguistic signs (Acheson, 2008). For instance, Jaworski (1993, p.80) argues that although speech and silence are contrasting phenomena in linguistics, they are 'relative categories' and 'not in simple opposition'. He considers silence as meaningful and interpretable when talk is expected by the hearer or withheld by the speaker. Glenn (2004) explicitly opposes the idea of 'silence-as-nothingness'. She claims that silence, as an absence with a rhetorical function, is as important and powerful as speech. Treating silence as intentional omissions of speech and tactical strategies, she examines silences as actions performed with an intention which can be associated with meaning. The recognition of silence as a symbolic activity certainly has taken a crucial step forward from the traditional view. However, scholars such as Acheson (2008) believe that this kind of conception remains insufficient because it fails to recognise that silence can serve semantic functions in its own right.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's (1962) conceptualisation of speech as a gesture, Acheson (2008) argues that silence, too, can be considered as gesture, a communicative practice as embodied and situated as speech. She argues that silence often co-occurs with nonverbal communicative resources including facial expressions (e.g. smiles and frowns) and vocalisation such as sighs. In that case, silence can be reinforced or contrasted by the nonverbal signs in the meaning it conveys just as the speech- nonverbal combination can be. That is, the interaction of silence and nonverbal actions can be as significant and meaningful as that of speech. This suggests that silence and speech are essentially interdependent and that either of them would exist

without the other (Bao, 2020; Lehmann Oliveros, 2016). Therefore, she proposes that the binary thinking of speech and silence is a misconception. The nature of silence and its relationship with speech deserves more sophisticated consideration.

2.1.2 Forms and functions of silence

Silence takes many forms and conveys various meanings. Researchers have attempted to summarise its forms from different perspectives. Bruneau (1973) approaches silence from the perspective of time and identifies three forms of silence: psychological, interactive and sociocultural. Psychological silence is usually very short and related to mental processes. Typical examples are hesitations in conversations, including self-corrections and stuttering. Interactive silence is a longer pause associated with interpersonal relationships between speakers. Sociocultural silence refers to the condition where members of a society refrain from verbal exchange. However, as Bruneau (1973) admitted, there seems to be overlap between this classification of silence, e.g., it may be difficult to differentiate interactive silence from psychological silence. Drawing on Bruneau's typology of silence, Lehmann Olivero (2016) proposes three categories of silence-phenomena (p.3):

a) Silence is a solitary, mystical, and unconscious/ involuntary experience (e.g., aesthetic experiences and poetic instants).
b) Silences are social, secular, and conscious instances (e.g., turn taking in conversations or signs asking for silence in waiting rooms at hospitals).
c) Silencing corresponds to the rhetorical strategies of manifesting power by means of restricting someone else's expression (e.g., victims of human rights violations who feel unable to accuse the perpetrator).

She therefore defines the notion of silence-phenomena as a collection of all the experiences above that 'are interdependent upon language and speech' (p.3), indicating a close relationship between silence and speech.

Kurzon (2007) categorises silence into four types— conversational, textual, thematic and situational, according to the contexts where silence takes place. Conversational silence refers to silence in spoken interactions, covering silent answers and non-participation, while textual silence occurs in the situation where one has to read or recite a particular text in silence. Thematic silence concerns a specific subject, described as a speaker's omission of an expected

topic while speaking. Situational silence is the silence of a group of people due to situational constraints, unlike textual silence, there is no prearranged text in situational silence. It is worth noting here that Kurzon (2013, p. 5) removed "thematic silence" from his typology and instead described this phenomenon as "to be silent about" in his later publication. He suggests that in the case of thematic silence, speakers continue to speak despite the omission of a particular topic, so no silence actually takes place here. Therefore, it is problematic for thematic silence to stand alongside the other three forms.

Others have enumerated the forms of silence from micro- to macro-levels. From a conversation analytic perspective, silence at a micro-level is defined by Sacks et al. (1974, p. 715) as a 'pause' and 'gap', referring respectively to silence which occurs within a single turn and at a transition relevance place (TRP). Some alternative terms are 'inturn pause' versus 'switching pause' (Scollon, 1985, p. 23) or 'intra-turn silence' versus 'inter-turn silence' (Liddicoat, 2022, p. 115). When a gap is extended and no next-speaker takes the floor at a TRP, then the extended silence is described as a 'lapse' (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 715) or a 'lull' (Goffman, 1967, p. 36). The next level of silence constitutes a complete turn and carries illocutionary force, described as a 'silent response' (Nakane, 2007, p. 6). This type of silence usually performs some speech act, for example, to accept, deny, question or threaten (Saville-Troike, 1985). Below is an example of a silent response from Saville-Troike (1985, p. 8):

Extract 2.1

A: Please marry me.
B: [Silence; head and eyes lowered] (Acceptance)

Extract 2.1 is an exchange between two Japanese speakers. In Japanese culture, it is inappropriate for the girl (B) to give a verbal response in this case (William, 1979, as cited in Saville-Troike, 1985). This suggests that in Japan, silence is the expected response to a proposal, while speech is considered as deviance in this specific situation.

One of the forms of silence at a macro-level is total withdrawal from a conversation, which is often related to speakers' unwillingness or refusal to communicate. In classroom settings, silence of this kind can be identified among silent students in classrooms who resist oral participation for entire duration of a task or a session (Gilmore, 1985; King, 2016). In broader

social contexts, there is also silence of a group or community due to certain cultural and ritual orders; for example, in social events such as memorial days and ritual events (Kurzon, 2007).

We have seen above that silence presents itself in different forms and also performs a variety of functions. Jensen (1973) has presented a taxonomy on five functions of silence: linkage, affecting, revelational, judgmental and activating. With the linkage function, silence binds people together by creating a bond between them, but it can also isolate one from others. For example, people are bound together as they stop for moments of silence in memory of their past generations, in contrast, people can also use silence as a protection from unwanted social interaction. By performing the affecting function, silence affects people by communicating positive or negative emotions, such as respect or hostility. The revelational function refers to the capability of silence to reveal or conceal the truth and silence acts as an indication of assent or dissent, favour or disfavour with its judgmental function. Lastly, silence fulfils the activating function when it reflects a person's active thinking before speaking. Acheson (2008) proposes that silence functions symbolically; that is, it can carry varied meanings depending on cultural contexts. For example, a silent response to a marriage proposal in Japan is typically interpreted as consent (see extract 2.1 this chapter), while the same response means refusal in the Igbo culture. In the same vein, silence may be used to express respect and joy in some contexts, whereas in others it may represent anger and fear. In this sense, she concludes that silence and speech are essentially alike.

Silence is also found to perform functions in spoken interactions and in educational settings. Conversation analysts such as Liddicoat (2022) suggest that prolonged silences (of 2 or more seconds) after first pair parts in conversations may signal problems at an interactional level or dispreferred responses. This function of silence also applies to teacher-student interactions in classrooms, as research on classroom interaction has shown that a teacher's silence after a student's response may indicate that the response is dispreferred or problematic (Macbeth, 2004). Artar et al. (2020) support this suggestion and further argue that teachers' silence, accompanied by nonverbal cues such as leaning forward, can be employed to engender repair from the student. In addition, teachers' silence can also function as a teaching strategy called 'wait time' to provide extra time for the students to think before responding (Maroni, 2011). Furthermore, silence can also play a part in constituting the communicative style of people from a particular community (Bao, 2014), while this correlation can be a possible source of cultural stereotyping. This is further discussed in section 2.1.3.

2.1.3 Positive and negative evaluation of silence

 "Silence has many faces" (Jaworski, 1993, p. 24), indicating that silence is ambivalent and attributed with both positive and negative values. This section attempts to provide a summary of some communicative instances where silence carries either positive or negative connotations in various contexts. A typical bias against silence in many Western cultures treats speech as the norm and silence as deviance (Jaworski, 1993). Yet, silence is not always viewed negatively and scholars have suggested various positive interpretations of silence. Tannen (1985) has found that silence represents good communication when ideal rapport is established between speakers; for example, when two intimates or family members are enjoying each other's company with long silences in a leisurely conversation, there seems to be no need for verbal exchange. In the same vein, Jaworski (1993, p. 4) illustrates that silence can signal an economical and efficient exchange with the example below:

Extract 2.2

Wife:　　Przeszkadzam ci? ("Am I disturbing you?")
Husband: [silence]
Wife:　　[silence, walks out]

Extract 2.2 takes place in a bathroom when the husband is shaving and the wife enters. In this case, the wife perceives her husband's silence as a yes, so she leaves to avoid interruption. Therefore, Jaworski (1993) argues that the silence here is used appropriately as a result of mutual understanding, so that no speech is required to achieve the expected meaning-making.

Studies show that silence might also be a way to facilitate communication in some institutional contexts. According to Hill et al. (2019), silence of the patient is found to be helpful in psychotherapy as it creates space for the client to reflect while speaking and for the therapist to establish emotional connection. In educational settings, Ingram and Elliott (2014) conducted research on 'wait time', a specific type of silence in classroom interaction which refers to the pause between a teacher's question and the teacher's next turn after the question. They have found that extending wait time can increase the likelihood of students' responding and extended answers because students are given more time to reflect on and organise their ideas.

Silence is typically viewed as negative when it is associated with concealing the truth in legal contexts (Kurzon, 1995). For example, when a suspect is questioned by a police officer and an accused is confronted with the lawyer, a failure to provide an answer can be interpreted as an attempt to avoid social penalty because an answer is expected as the norm in these situations. Silence may be considered as a display of resistance and negative emotion such as anger (Gilmore, 1985). A sulking student in classroom, confronted with a teacher's question, could express his or her frustration through silence as a strategy to save face and resist the teacher's power, and it often leads to disruption of class procedure.

Silence is associated with powerlessness and resistance to authority. Gardezi's et al. (2009) study on silence in the operating room reveals that some nurses withhold information and questions that may expose a lack of knowledge from the surgeons, resulting in inefficient communication. Their silence here is potentially caused by pressure from the superior. However, they also note that "silence is not a straightforward reflection of powerlessness, nor is speech a straightforward reflection of power" (p. 1391). Neither silence or speech is absolutely positive or negative and the valuation varies with the contexts. The mixed interpretations of silence give rise to the ambivalent feature of silence, which may lead to miscommunication in cross- cultural contexts and I will discuss this next.

Having discussed a range of varying evaluation of silence, this section highlights the importance of context in understanding the nature of silence. As Bao (2014) argues, silence may be treated as either positive or negative depending its place in the value system of the context. In the same vein, Glenn (2004, p. xi) states that "silence can deploy power; it can defer to power. It all depends." The interactional context seems to be key in uncovering the complexity of silence.

2.1.4 Silence and miscommunication

A linguistic approach to silence highlights an important role of culture in interpreting and defining silence (Hao, 2010). People tend to interpret the meaning of silence based on assumptions developed from the communication norms in their culture. When speakers share the same habits and perceptions, an exchange can even be completed successfully without speech (see Extract 2.2). However, not all communication works perfectly, and miscommunication may arise if the speakers have different expectations in the interaction (Tannen, 1985). Saville-Troike (1985, p. 14) further maintains that "stereotyping and

misunderstanding occur when the patterned use of sounds and silence by members of one speech community are interpreted according to the norms and rules held by members of another." Many researchers interested in silence in intercultural communication attribute miscommunication to different level of tolerance to pauses and conversational conventions between cultures. For example, Jaworski (1993) argues that speakers who are used to long pauses may find it difficult to claim the floor in a conversation with those who tolerate shorter pauses, while the other party may feel awkward and consider their interlocutors as reluctant to speak. Such differences in perception of pauses breed misinterpretation on one's use of silence.

A variety of studies focus on the normative lengths of pauses accepted by different speech communities (e.g. Jaworski, 1993; Jefferson, 1989; Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985; Mushin & Gardner, 2009; Scollon, 1985; Tannen, 1985). Scollon (1985) argues that the Anglo-Americans describe Athabaskan Indian people as "passive, sullen and hostile" (p. 24) because of their use of longer switching pauses in interaction. He further concludes that this stereotype of Athabaskans is due to a negative evaluation of conversational silence in Anglo-American society. In contrast, Tannen (1985) compared New York Jewish people with the Californians and the results show that they view silence differently. From her point of view, the Californians as the mainstream Americans evaluate slower-paced speech and longer switching pauses positively. The New Yorkers are found to dominate the conversation, while the Californians find themselves cornered by their New Yorker counterparts' machine-gun questions and can hardly get the floor. Tannen suggests that even between speakers of the same language, mismatched tolerance of silence can cause conflicts—— the New Yorkers show lower tolerance for pauses than their Californian interlocutors.

Similarly, Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) also note that long silences employed by the Finns contribute to a stereotypical image of 'the silent Finn', as speakers of other cultures may misinterpret their silence as lack of interest in interaction. What worth noting here is that the length of silence discussed above is only a relative concept and whether a pause is 'short' or 'long' needs to be understood with reference to individual's expectation. Compared to tolerance of silence, fewer researchers have touched on empirical measurement of its length. One exception is Jefferson's (1989) research on a possible metric of silence, in which she has proposed a 'standard maximum' tolerance for silence of approximately one second among American English and Dutch speakers. Following Jefferson (1989), an empirical study conducted by Mushin and Gardner (2009) has shown that Garrwa speakers from an Australian

Aboriginal community can tolerate up to 1.5 seconds in inter-turn pauses, in contrast to Jefferson's one-second silence in American English conversations. One reason for the Aboriginal people's tolerance of longer silence is there being less pressure to keep the conversation going or to secure a floor than for members of Anglo cultures.

Scollon and Scollon (1981) have discussed the lengths of silence among the Athabaskans and Anglo-Americans and found that the Athabaskans can allow 1.5 s compared to 1s in American English. Using this metric of silence, the Anglo- Americans usually take a turn before the Athabaskans are ready, leading to a dominance of conversation and pressure on the Athabaskans. It can be seen that different perceptions of pausing metrics in interaction are likely to cause misjudgement in the use of silence across cultures, but limited empirical research has been done on this to date. Nakane (2012) suggests that other contextual factors also play a part in individual's interpretations of silence. For example, different status and obligation of the parties in a conversation (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2005). Therefore, the valuation of silence needs to be considered with reference to specific contexts.

2.2 Silence in Multicultural Classrooms

Nowadays many universities in the U.K. seek to internationalise to cope with demands from employers for global graduates with an ability to work collaboratively with people from diverse cultures, and intercultural learning has been highlighted as an academic outcome (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017). Meanwhile, group work is emphasised as an approach to facilitate learning in higher education. Although some advocate that working with cultural diversity can have positive effects on students' development, scholars are concerned that a cultural mix of students cannot necessarily guarantee positive student interactions, as a number of studies have shown that students are faced with considerable challenges in multicultural group work (Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019; Popov et al., 2012; Reid & Garson, 2017; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017; Turner, 2009). One of the top challenges of working in multicultural groups faced by students in Turner's (2009) study is silence and quietness. This section will review studies on silence in multicultural learning contexts and particularly in multicultural group work.

2.2.1 Collaborative group work in multicultural classrooms

"One of the pillars of today's higher education system is group work" (Popov et al., 2012, pp. 302-303). Many universities provide guidelines for group working as an important aspect of students' university study on their websites. For example, the University of Edinburgh describes that most of the courses provided by the university involve group working and "many require students to work in a group on a project that will be assessed" (Group working, 2021). Studying at campuses that are culturally diverse, students are often assigned to work with peers from different cultures. The transition from group work to multicultural group work is marked by diversity in the group members' cultural background. As Popov et al. (2012, p. 303) define, MGW is "a collaboration of two or more individuals from different cultural backgrounds, who have been assigned interdependent tasks and are jointly responsible for the final results". To understand the multicultural feature of MGW in contrast with group work, it is important to consider the notion of culture and the relationship between culture and nation.

A solid/culturalist approach to understand culture has been widely criticised for perceiving culture as a set of static norms and inherent qualities of a social group or a nation because it overlooks the range of cultural variabilities that exist within a society (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Instead, in the view of culture as practices, culture is created through individuals' actions based on a series of selections from possibilities. Culture, in this sense, is not an established system of norms that people are expected to follow, but rather the toolkits and resources that people "draw on to construct sustained courses of action" (p. 21). Therefore, culture is not considered as rooted in one's nationality but fluid and context-sensitive, developed through the actions that individuals perform by engaging in interactions with a certain cultural group.

To date, research on MGW has mainly focused on two aspects: 1) students' perceptions of working in multicultural groups (e.g. Benediktsson & Ragnarsdottir, 2019; Elliott & Reynolds, 2014; Kimmel & Volet, 2012); and 2) outcome of MGW in relation to intercultural learning competence (e.g. Reid & Garson, 2017; Sweeney et al., 2008; Volet & Ang, 2012; Zhao et al., 2021). Literature has shown mixed attitudes towards multicultural (or mixed-national) group work. On one hand, studying in a culturally diverse group is found to be beneficial for students. By reviewing Montgomery (2009) and Sweeney, Weaven, and Herington's (2008) studies on students' experience of MGW, Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2017) summarises the benefits of MGW from five aspects: self-awareness, new ideas and learning practices, attitudes, interaction

skills, and friendships. Firstly, in terms of self- awareness, Sweeney et al. (2008) report that students learn more about themselves by identifying their own strengths and weakness though MGW. Secondly, MGW provides students with opportunities to consider other perspectives by engaging with different mind-sets and develop better learning practices, such as time management and critical thinking. Next, both Montgomery (2009) and Sweeney et al. (2008) record changes in students' attitudes towards peers of different nationalities and results show that they are developing an appreciation and openness for cultural diversity. Lastly, MGW facilitates interpersonal interaction skills as students express that they have grew in confidence and learnt to compromise, which help them establish friendship. Some participants in Benediktsson and Ragnarsdottir's (2019) study reported that working with students from different countries was a positive and beneficial experience for them.

On the other hand, successful MGW is not always easy to achieve and there are some challenging signs. One of the main issues deals with interaction between students, and specifically, a lack of spontaneous interaction between domestic and international students (Cruickshank et al., 2012). For example, in their study on students' verbal interactions at an Australian university, Wright and Lander (2003) found little evidence that working in a multicultural group can facilitate intercultural communication. They recorded and compared the frequency of verbal interactions produced by Australian and South East Asian students under two conditions —mono-ethnic and bi-ethnic groups (both in English). The results show that both student groups produced fewer verbal interactions in bi-ethnic groups than in mono-ethnic groups, and the verbal output of Asian students dropped sharply to almost a half of frequency in mono- ethnic groups. They thus conclude that South East Asian students might be significantly inhibited from producing verbal output by the presence of Australian students, indicating that the ethnicity of group members has a direct impact on the number of turns taken by students in group work. Reid and Garson (2017) support the finding above as they found that some international students such as Chinese students had difficulties joining the domestic students' groups because of pre-existing networks among the local students. They thus argue that despite MGW generally being considered as positive for student development, some students have limited opportunities to have meaningful interactions with culturally diverse peers. Furthermore, Volet and Ang's (1998; 2012) conducted a series of studies on students' experience of mixed cultural group work at Australian universities and results show that many students prefer to stay in monocultural groups, while remaining reluctant to work with culturally diverse peers even after some successful experience in mixed groups. Similar

evidence in the UK shows that many home British students tend to avoid interacting with international students due to a range of perceived risks associated with working interculturally (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Turner, 2009). The evidence above highlights that simply working in MGW may not necessarily result in substantial intercultural interaction (Reid & Garson, 2017).

Silence is another major challenge for the students' interaction in MGW. Turner (2009) found that silence ranked second in a list of top challenges affecting group work. Silence became pathologised as most students perceived silence in group work as problematic and 'an indicator of deviance' (p. 251). Similar comments are noted in Popov et al.'s (2012) study where home students stated that some of their international peers are 'too silent' and their lack of verbal engagement was a problem. On the other hand, one of the Chinese participants, who is perceived as silent in a study conducted by Elliott and Reynold (2014), reported that she was left feeling vulnerable to her peers' dissatisfaction with her silence. She noted in her journal that she experienced stress and fear of upsetting the other group members by not speaking much, while in fact she participated quietly in other ways, such as preparing and drawing posters.

Apart from silence, both studies above have reported insufficient English language skills as one of the top-three challenges, while the others include free-riding and improper communication between students. Spencer-Oatey and Dauber's (2017) findings are in line with some of those above, as they argue that high level of English proficiency and motivation to work are critical for positive intercultural interaction in MGW. Many students in their study report difficulty in communicating and getting ideas across with those with low English proficiency. Their study shows that students' perceptions of mixed national group work are affected by the quality of group work, and students view MGW as less challenging when it is handled successfully. However, in terms of free riding and quietness, they argue that these challenges should not be attributed to cultural differences, because they are not exclusively related to cultural issues, as free riding and quietness can happen among students from any cultural groups.

The above findings about students' experience in MGW reveal clashes of opinions and a mixture of benefits and challenges. Indeed, the implement of successful group work is demanding and requires appropriate skills and awareness from both the student and teacher. Although many scholars have sought to investigate the causal factors for students' reluctance

to speak (e.g. Dunne, 2009; Kimmel & Volet, 2012) and experiment with different pedagogical strategies to promote interaction in MGW (Cruickshank et al., 2012), very few of them have examined naturally occurring interactions in MGW.

2.2.2 Silence and classroom participation: the case of East Asian students

Beyond group work, silence is also widely observed in multicultural classroom. Research has shown that some students hold stereotypes against the silent participants, who are typically identified as international students with Asian backgrounds. For example, Montgomery (2009) and Turner's (2009) studies reveal that many local students generally view international students negatively in terms of their participation in groups, with those negative comments centralised on the silence and quietness of East Asian students including Chinese students.

Meanwhile, students' silence in classroom is often associated with non-participation and negative attitudes. In their investigations into lecturers' perception of student' classroom participation in a Hong Kong University, Flowerdew and Miller (1995) and Flowerdew et al. (2000) report some lecturers' comments on Chinese students' reluctance to ask and answer questions. They also attribute this "negative attitude to participation" (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995, p, 358) to a passive learning style acquired from secondary education and Confucian culture. Jin and Cortazzi (1993) interviewed 15 western teachers working in Chinese universities. The teachers voiced their disappointment in the students' inactiveness, as they were unwilling to work in groups or talk to their peers. Moreover, East Asian students who are considered to speak less than they should in the contexts where speech and verbal expression are valued, such as the U.S., are typically viewed as passive and incapable of independent thinking (Kim et al., 2016). Petress (2001) even criticises the silent students for being unethical to others in the class, and specifically for depriving the other students from the ideas and knowledge that should have been shared. This kind of absolute view clearly has ignored the fact that people's perception and understanding of silence vary with cultural contexts. The findings above show that East Asian students' silence in many English-speaking classrooms have generally been problematised, treated as not only 'passivity' but also inability in language and learning.

However, does East Asian students' quietness in classroom always indicate a passive attitude to participation and learning? Evidence shows that it is not entirely true. While lecturers report reticence among Asian students, the students' attitudes toward participation conflict with the

idea of passive learner. Littlewood and Liu (1996) conducted two large-scale surveys at a university in Hong Kong. They asked the students to list their preferred activities in English classes and "group discussion" ranked first in order of preference. The findings indicate that Hong Kong students welcome opportunities for active participation and they adopt a positive attitude toward participation rather than a passive one. Kim et al. (2016) examined how Japanese university students perceive the role of silence in classroom participation, and they found that about half of the participants are comfortable with silence because they feel a need to allow wait time for thinking before responding, indicating that silence among students does not always mean non-participation. They further suggest that verbal contribution is not necessarily the only form of engagement and 'silence can be used in addition to verbal participation as a form of engaged learning and active participation' (p. 432).

A case study conducted by Remedios et al. (2008) reveals that silence is not necessarily an indicator of passive attitudes or failure to learn. They interviewed four silent participants in a small group learning context at an Australian university. One participant from South Korea expressed that despite his lack of verbal output, he viewed classroom participation positively. Though he made great efforts to improve it by working very hard after class and preparing for the sessions, he did not enter into the discussion. He reported that difficulties in communicating in English and building rapport with other group members constrained his participation. The results also show that silent participation is not exclusive to Asian students, as among the 21 silent participants Remedios et al. (2008) have identified, 8 are local Australians. It suggests that silent participation is not solely due to passive learning nor is it a characteristic of Asian students.

Murray and McConachy (2018) provide a plausible explanation that the conflicting voices about silent participants may be related to different interpretations of the notion "participation". In many Western classrooms, it has been taken for granted that students should participate verbally in the classroom and participation is supposed to be manifested in communicative behaviours such as raising comments or questions and engagement in discussion (see also Hao, 2010; 2011). In other words, verbal participation becomes a cultural norm in those sorts of classroom. Within such an interaction-centred view of participation, students who take more turns in discussion or answer more questions are more likely to be seen as competent and active than those who speak less. Consequently, students who are less outspoken are assumed to be passive learners or have difficulties in language or general competency. It is, however,

important to recognise that participation can be construed in different ways in different learning contexts and by different individuals. As Remedios et al. (2008) observe, silent participants can be engaged actively in the class content but by performing in a less verbal way. Thus, judging students' participation and academic performance from only the amount of their verbal expression seems to be inadequate (Bao, 2014).

In the same vein, Bao (2014) also highlights the importance of context and social norms in understanding and evaluating classroom silence. He argues that the positive or disruptive nature of silence depends on how it is positioned in the value system of the context, for example, in contexts where being verbally expressive is considered as the norm, silence may be viewed as a distant and subordinate behaviour. He further proposes that silence is not necessarily a representation of "absence of talk but can be a way of talking and learning" (p.5). Thus, the role that silence plays in pedagogy needs repositioning, and a sensible approach to understand silence would be to "locate it within its socio-cultural, educational and historical context, and in relation to the people who exercise it" (p.2). In line with Bao's argument, other scholars exploring silence identify silence as a politeness strategy and sign of respect (Tatar, 2005; Nakane, 2006), recognising that silence can be performed as an active choice and a form of engaged participation under certain circumstances (Kim et al., 2016; Hao, 2010).

Several scholars call for a recognition of a distinction between silence and reticence. Bao (2014) identifies three distinctions between silence and reticence. The first distinction lies in the motives behind the occurrence of silence and reticence, as he argues, while silence may accompany speech to achieve various linguistic functions, reticence often indicates undesirable emotions that obstruct communication. Bao perceives that silence and reticence also differ in their pedagogical significance. For instance, silence can be positive and productive when it is employed by teachers as wait time; however, reticence tends to be much less helpful for pedagogy and is often considered as a result of incapability and resistance. The third distinction relates to impact on language development. Silence may present as a specific period in the process of language learning when the learners acquire language points while remaining active mentally, but reticence does not perform this function. On the contrary, reticence is commonly treated as a constraint for language learning. In support of Bao's ideas above, Wang et al., (2022) note that in-class silence can include intentional silence as an active choice and learning strategy, in contrast to unintentional silence imposed by peers in negotiating a feeling of inferiority. They argue that silence needs to be de-problematised as it can be an expression of

active choice and agency to negotiate membership and power in classrooms. Although the two concepts may overlap to a certain extent (Bao, 2014), it is reasonable to consider silence as an umbrella term that comprises reticence. Specifically, reticence could be one element of silence that leans toward the negative side. It is, however, important to recognise that while some silences may represent or derive from reticence, some silences do not. The 'silence' that this project focuses on refers to the more encompassing concept in communication rather than the phenomenon of reticence.

2.2.3 Perceived causes of students' in-class silence

Discussion in the previous section suggests an underlying inconsistency between the silent students' own attitudes to participation and the lecturers' impression on them. A possible explanation is that some students may not be able to actually do as they expected due to various constrains (Cheng, 2000). One of the common constrains reported in literature is cultural inheritance (e.g. Confucian traditions) (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Liu, 2005). For example, it is often assumed that in Asian countries such as China, students are reticent out of respect and even fear for the teacher, and they are expected to obey and listen to the teacher. However, it is possible that the influence of Confucian culture has been distorted and overemphasised (Cheng, 2000). Although Confucius advocates respect for knowledgeable ones, which has nothing wrong with it, the term 'respect' here is not necessarily equal to compliance. As a saying of Confucius' goes, "师不必贤于弟子，弟子不 必不如师", which means "the teacher does not always have to be more knowledgeable than the student, and the student is not necessarily less learned than the teacher" (Cheng, 2000, p. 440). Moreover, the Confucian times were a long time ago and China has seen revolutionary pedagogical reforms since the 1980s. The educational reform implemented in 2001 has a clear aim to shift from 'exam-oriented' to 'quality-oriented' education, which emphasises active participation and independent inquiry (Tan, 2017, pp. 240-241). Therefore, culture is certainly a key aspect to consider in understanding silence, but a common pitfall of this perspective is to resort to an umbrella of Confucian culture as a convenient explanation (Bao, 2014).

Another frequently addressed factor that may hold students back from participating verbally is linguistic competence. According to studies on the causes of university students' silence, many students expressed a lack of confidence in their English proficiency and anxiety about speaking English in public (e.g. Jackson, 2002; Hanh, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). In addition to language

and cultural factors, a number of researchers highlight the importance of context in understanding in-class silence as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, suggesting that a variety of interrelated factors at different levels may be at play, including both learner internal factors (relating to identity and characteristics) and external contextual factors (e.g. class atmosphere, topics, etc. at institutional level) (Yashima et al., 2016; Smith & King, 2020). This resonates with the recent findings of Yan and He (2020), as they propose a range of factors related to both the teacher and student. Teacher-related factors include particular personal and teaching styles that are distant to students and nature of the academic content (e.g. over-theoretical topics). Student-related factors mainly involves lack of content knowledge, shyness (Yan & He, 2020), lack of rapport between students and low motivation (Zhou et al., 2005). Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) conducted in-depth analysis of three international students' reflective account of silence and found that their silence may be a result of multiple contextual factors relating to conflicting expectations of classroom participation with their peers and tutors and negotiation of membership. Furthermore, Choi (2015) points out that differences in classroom environment and manners may also be relevant to Korean students' silence in U.S. classroom, as in traditional Korean classrooms, students are encouraged to talk to lectures after class. Therefore, it is more sensible to consider in-class silence as situation-specific rather than simply a cultural product. In spite of their importance, language and cultural factors may not be the all-round explanation to all sorts of silence under all circumstances.

There is some evidence that native speakers' (NS) power in interactions might be related to silence in conversations. To understand the asymmetry of power in interactions between NS and non-native speakers (NNS), Liddicoat (2016) has examined instances of online interaction from blogs and forums, etc. His study illustrates that NNS may view NS as legitimate speakers of the language who hold potential power to evaluate the linguistic performance of the NNS, which could be a source of anxiety that makes NNS less willing to speak. This finding indicates that the presence of NS may contribute to L2 speakers' silence in group discussions. Moreover, a study conducted by Nematizadeh and Wood (2019) has shown that pause phenomena, as one of the variables of speech fluency, is correlated with the level of willingness to communicate (WTC). In their study on the relationship between L2 learners' WTC and speech fluency, they found that when WTC was low, the speakers were inclined to produce shorter stretches of speech with frequent and long pauses, while fewer pauses were found in the utterances where WTC was high. This indicates that low WTC due to various reasons, such as unfamiliar topics, can result in L2 speakers' silence.

To sum up, studies exploring on the factors influencing students' silence in classrooms is common; however, conversation analytical studies focusing on the nature of silence that occurs in spontaneous interactions in MGW is rare. Although considerable efforts have been made in seeking for the causes of student silence, research seems to overlook how silences actually work in classroom interactions.

2.2.4 Interaction in the online classroom

The outbreak of Covid-19 drastically changed the teaching practices in many education systems globally and led to a rapid shift to online teaching modes, which is referred to as emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Prahbu et al., 2021). Although there has been empirical evidence highlighting the benefits of computer-mediated communication (CMC) for learning (e.g. Sater & Ozdenar, 2008; Zheng & Warschauer, 2015), teaching and learning online are perceived as more challenging due to an increased pedagogical distance between instructor/teacher and learner and between learners (Rautela et al., 2022) compared with the traditional face-to-face (F2F) teaching. One aspect of the challenges lies in a lack of spontaneous interaction between learners. Online learner-learner interaction as one form of classroom interaction plays a vital role in effective learning and students' achievement (Kurucay & Inan, 2017). However, several studies have highlighted that learner-leaner interaction is largely missing in online synchronous learning environment (e.g. Rautela et al., 2022; Seynhaeve et al., 2022; Cheung, 2023). For instance, in their study exploring migrant students' experiences of online interaction during ERT, Seynhaeve et al. (2022) found that most participants reported a lack of opportunities for learner-learner interaction in online classes due to technological difficulties and the tutor's lesson design. The participants also reported that teacher-learner interaction was limited because of a drop in the students' willingness to interact. Cheung's (2023) study shows very similar results in terms of reduced T-S interaction and minimum student-initiated interaction in EFL lessons conducted on Zoom, a video conferencing platform.

Several studies examining the teachers and students' perspectives resonate with the findings above. For instance, many teachers in Saraç & Doğan's (2022) study viewed the overall online teaching practices negatively and pointed out that the opportunity for interaction is scarce in online classes. Some instructors expressed concern over a lack of engagement and interaction among the students, emphasising that the students' insistence on 'keeping silent' and 'muting themselves' (p. 104-105) is a major obstacle faced by the teachers. Their findings are supported

by Harsch et al. (2021). They explored students and teachers' perceptions of the challenges in online courses, and both groups of participants indicated that the quality and amount of interaction online are lower than that in F2F settings. The participants commented that interacting online was more difficult and likely to create misunderstanding due to various contextual factors, including limitations on nonverbal cues (e.g. body language and facial expression) and a lack of netiquette relevant to the platform being used. In Yarmand et al.'s (2021) study on university students and instructors' perceptions of online classes run on Zoom, the instructors shared that most students were reluctant to turn on their cameras or microphones, as the students had a low sense of security about broadcasting their faces online, and were unaware of the importance of this to the instructor.

The limited student involvement can be related to the technological affordances of the video-conferencing platform on which the interaction takes place. Hutchby (2001) first introduced the notion of affordance in analysing online interaction and argues that the features of technology can create both convenience for and constraints on the interaction. More recently, Cheung (2021) analysed synchronous student-centred interaction on Zoom using CA, and the findings show that while some affordances of Zoom including the gesture button and chat box can facilitate student participation by allowing nonverbal input and are especially helpful for the introverted learners, student verbal responses can be largely restricted by problems resulting from the use of technology including internet issues and malfunction of the microphone and computer. This is in line with Li et al.'s (2019) finding that excessive technology use affects classroom interaction negatively, leading to restricted speech acts employed by the teacher and limited responses from the students. However, the latter study examined F2F interaction in classrooms that incorporate multi-media technology instead of purely video-mediated online interaction.

Another aspect of the technological affordance that often results in interactional problems and especially silence, is latency. Latency is a 'transmission delay' caused by the technology between the point when a speaker produces an action and when the recipient receives the action (Sauen et al., 2021). In their study, Sauren and his colleagues analysed video-mediated interaction between clinicians and patients by comparing the talk recorded at both the clinician and patient's end, and the analysis shows that latency can create problems in turn-taking, including mismatches in the speaker and interlocutor's perceptions of silence and overlaps. Specially, latency can affect how a participant perceive another's behaviour, as a speaker may

receive the recipient's response a lot later than when it is produced, creating entirely different realities for the participants. Although this study focuses on interaction in a health care context (instead of the classroom), it shows that some silences in online interaction may be influenced by the technology.

Although research has pointed out that interaction is often negatively affected and diminished by the online teaching environments, particularly during ERT, insufficient work has explored exactly how interaction works in the online classroom. Studies that explore the interaction patterns in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) have mainly targeted text-based interaction such as on chat forums (e.g. Lee, 2012), while the studies targeting video-based SCMC are concerned with various other topics such as measures to increase student engagement (Knapp, 2018) and how to use technologies to enhance learning (Li, 2017), rather than the interaction itself. A few studies that compare SCMC with F2F interaction have revealed mixed results. For instance, Loewen and Wolff (2016) examined peer interaction in both F2F and synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC) contexts and compared F2F interaction with two types of SCMC interaction: oral and written. Results show clear difference between the F2F interaction and written SCMC interaction in terms of interactional patterns, e.g. more confirmation checks in F2F interaction. However, as for F2F and oral SCMC interaction, no significant difference was found between them in the study, which indicates that the interactional features in online conversations may not differ greatly from that in F2F contexts. Ziegler (2016) conducted meta-analysis on 14 studies that compare SCMC interaction with F2F interaction in EFL contexts. The findings indicate no significant difference between the effectiveness of interaction in SCMC and F2F settings, although F2F interaction has more advantages for developing receptive language skills including listening and reading and SCMC interaction can be more beneficial for productive skills such as writing. However, this study focused more on the impact of SCMC and F2F on L2 development rather than on the nature of interaction in these two contexts.

Although there is indeed considerable research that has addressed the topic of SCMC and the differences in the interactional patterns between F2F and SCMC interaction, few studies have conducted microanalysis to understand the structure of talk from a conversation analytic perspective[2]. The field of CA research on online classroom interaction seems to lay a heavy

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[2] Some SCMC studies focus on basic CA themes such as turn-taking, but the analytic approaches are not CA (e.g. Nurjamin et al., 2023).

emphasis on text-based communication (i.e. asynchronous and quasi-synchronous interaction), such as chat forums and programmes (e.g. Qodriani & Wijana, 2021; Schönfeldt & Golato, 2003), instead of synchronous technology-mediated spoken interaction that this study is interested in. A few CA studies examining computer-mediated spoken interaction focus on talk in other non-educational institutional settings (e.g. Sauren et al., 2021, as discussed above; and Brandt & Jenks, 2013). Two prominent 'state-of-the-art' articles reviewing CA research on online interaction (Meredith, 2019; Paulus et al., 2016) explicitly note that they mostly discuss the CA studies that examine text-based online interaction. There has been a particular lack of CA research exploring synchronous video-mediated spoken interaction in the classroom.

To sum up, although a lack of interaction has been identified as an outstanding challenge for online teaching, few studies have focused particularly on the interactional troubles in the online classroom, including the seemingly prominent online silence. Although there is a bulk of CA research examining text-based asynchronous communication, there is a lack of studies that use CA to understand synchronous spoken interaction and particularly synchronous student interaction in online learning contexts. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how interaction works in the online classroom from a perspective of CA.

2.3 A Conversation Analytic Approach to Silence and Classroom Interaction

According to the discussion in 2.2.2, a great body of research has focused on the non-participation of Asian students in English-speaking classrooms and reasons for their silence have been widely studied. Most of the studies on silent participation view silence as a homogenous phenomenon, that is, simply a state of non-talk. However, silence in interactions does not occur in a vacuum (Lee, 2017). The studies neglect that silence occurs within its interactive environment and, more importantly, not all silences are the same. From a CA point of view, silence can be interpreted and managed differently based on the particular interactive context. It is important to understand how silence occurs in specific contexts and what underlying influence it has on the interaction. Furthermore, since group work takes place in a classroom environment, a brief review of recent CA research on classroom interaction would be helpful to understand silence in group work.

2.3.1 Silence in turn-taking

One of the most fundamental practices for talk-in-interaction is turn-taking. As Sacks et al. (1974) have observed, in most cases, only one speaker talks at a time in conversation, while speakers change from time to time. The participants rely on the organization of turn-taking so that transitions from one speaker to another are coordinated finely with minimized gaps and overlap. This is, however, the normative and default setting of conversation and breaks actually occur in natural interactions. Silences work differently in different contexts of talk and they are by no means problematic at all times but are given interactional significance by participants (Liddicoat, 2022). Thus, it is important that we interpret silences within the contexts that they occur.

Understanding what turns are is crucial to interpret silence in talk-in-interaction. The basic components that constitute a turn are turn-constructional units (TCU) (Sacks et al., 1974). At the possible completion of a TCU, that is, at a transition-relevant place (TRP), speaker change becomes possibly relevant (Schegloff, 2007). Turns usually cluster together as a coherent system, which forms the organization of sequences. A basic unit in sequence organisation is what Schegloff (2007) calls an adjacency pair, which consists of two coherent turns, namely, first-pair parts (FPP) and second-pair parts (SPP). FPP and SPP together accomplish a course of action, such as greeting- greeting and question-answer. These aspects of turns are relevant to the appearance of silence at talk. Silences appearing in different places in a turn and sequence will be discussed in the following.

Pauses, gaps and lapses

Silences take place closely around the organization of turn-taking and sequences. When silence occurs before a TCU comes to possible completion, the intra-turn silence is regarded as a pause (Sacks et al., 1974). In this case, a pause is treated as owned by the current speaker and no speaker change is legitimate to occur at this point because the current turn is incomplete. Silence can also appear at a possible completion point. Though the system of turn-taking expects fluid transition between speakers, in fact, the next speaker may not always pick up the floor immediately after the prior speaker's turn. The silence that occurs at a TRP before a next speaker's turn is regarded as inter- turn silence or a gap. Silences are also transformable (Sacks et al., 1974). If no next speaker is selected after a TRP and the prior speaker continues, the inter-turn silence transforms into an intra-turn silence, as in extract 2.3.

Extract 2.3 (Liddicoat, 2022, p. 99)

```
Sasha:    reminds me of this guy I used to go out with (when
          I was in school)

  →       (2.2)
Sasha:    he was real nut case [as well.
```

Here, no next speaker takes the turn at the silence after Sasha's first possible completion and Sasha resumes her talk. The silence is initially unowned by any participant because Sasha has come to a possible completion, but by extending her talk after silence, Sasha claims the silence as her own. The silence transforms from inter-turn to intra-turn as Sasha speaks again, so that the potential gap between turns is minimized. When silence occurs at the possible completion of a TCU, but neither a next speaker nor the prior speaker continues, then, the potential gap is extended, resulting in a lapse.

Extract 2.4 (Sacks et al., 1974, p.715)

```
C:   Yehhh=
J:   =(ok) (2.0) I haven't not done anything the whole weekend
C:   (okay)
  →  (14.0)
```

For example, in the excerpt above, the talk comes to a lapse that lasts 14 seconds until a next participant speaks up. In both of the examples above, the silence is considered as unproblematic as the current speaker has not selected a next speaker at the possible completion of an action. However, some silences between turns indicate problems at talk which require further actions to be done by the speakers. Silence, in this case, is an accountable action, which needs an explanation (Liddicoat, 2022).

Silence between FPP and SPP

Silence that occurs between FPP and SPP is usually interpreted by the speakers as problematic that may result in the first speaker producing additional utterances.

Extract 2.5 (Liddicoat, 2022, p.114)

```
  Harry: Didjih speak tuh Mary today
```

```
→           (0.2)
  Harry: Did yih speak tuh Mary?
  Joy:    Oh, yea:h I saw her at lunch.
```

In extract 2.5, after Harry's FPP of a Q-A pair, the recipient, Joy, does not provide an SPP as required in time. The silence is interpreted as a potential trouble of hearing, which results in Harry repeating his question. The 0.2- second silence, therefore, is owned by Joy because an expected next action is relevant. Silence that is interpreted as problems with understanding may result in the first speaker rephrasing or adding increment to the original FPP.

Extract 2.6 (Berger, 2011, p. 300)

```
Paula:     You're still the dinner (0.6) cooker aren't you
→           (1.1)
Paula:     (I mean) at your house?
→           (2.1)
Paula:     Maybe not on (0.5) on uh (0.2) >Thursday nights
→           (0.9)
Leif:On Monday and Thursday nights there seems to be
      a reproachment
```

In extract 2.6, Paula treats the silence after her FPP as difficulties in understanding her question, so she keeps adding details to the question at the second and third turn until the recipient is able to give an answer. By doing so, Paula repositions the inter-turn silence to pauses within her turn and the potential problem in the interaction is fixed.

Silence between FPP and SPP might indicate that a potential dispreferred response is forthcoming. FPP initiates an action and usually expects a preferred response in the SPP, but sometimes the response is dispreferred. A preferred response is unmarked, that is, the normative form of a SPP, and it typically comes immediately after the FPP (Liddicoat, 2022; Sacks, 1987). However, a dispreferred response is typically delayed, which leads to silence after the FPP, as in extract 2.7.

Extract 2.7 (Sacks, 1987, p.64)

```
A: Can you walk?
→    (0.4)
A: Ud be too hard for yuh?
B: Oh::: darling I don't know. Uh it's bleeding a little,
   e'jis took the bandage off yes'day.
```

Here, A's question 'can you walk' projects a 'yes' response because of the preference for agreement in Q-A pair. However, the SPP is delayed which results in silence after the FPP. The 0.4-second silence is treated as a foreshadow of a dispreferred response. For this reason, A revises the question to allow an agreement and then B responds to the updated question immediately. The silence signals an upcoming dispreferred SPP which helps the first speaker to reformulate the question so that the gap is minimized and talk resumes. Understanding how silence works at different positions in turn-taking will shed light on the study of particular instances of silence in group discussions.

From the examples above, it can be seen that silences between turns are not simply spaces where a prior speaker has finished but have important effect on the interaction, and how the speakers interpret and react to the silence matters greatly to the continuity of talk. Similarly, silence in group work also has significant consequences and it is important to look at how silence works in group work from a CA perspective.

2.3.2 Conversation Analytic research on classroom interaction

This section now moves on from how CA conceptualises silence from a theoretical perspective to how Conversation Analytic research has addressed classroom interaction. CA is recognised as a robust tool for studying classroom interaction and considerable CA work has been done in a classroom-based context (e.g. Sert, 2015; Kunitz et al., 2021). A review of Conversation Analytic studies on classroom interaction will provide a starting point for the investigation of silence in student interaction in group work. Before looking at how CA is applied to the classroom interaction research, it is necessary to clarify the definition of the term 'classroom interaction' used in this thesis. As one type of institutional talk, classroom interaction discussed here refers to the oral communication that takes place in the classroom, in contrast with a textual form of communication. The term interaction involves both linguistic and paralinguistic (e.g. gestures and gaze) elements (Tsui, 2008).

As Gardner (2019) summarises, studies that use CA to examine classroom interaction can be categorised into two broad areas. The first area is how classroom interaction is organised and how it is conducted differently from social interaction, and research has explored this in several key CA aspects including turn-taking, sequence organisation and repair, etc. The second stream of research focuses on how CA addresses issues of second language learning, i.e. CA-for-SLA. In the following paragraphs, I illustrate these two lines of research in turn.

Early research on classroom interaction, mainly focusing on whole-class interaction in formal teacher-centred classrooms, has described the basic structures of turn-taking and sequence organisation by drawing on the seminal work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974). Two most influential models are the "Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF)" structure identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and the "Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE)" sequence proposed by Mehan (1979). In these contexts, McHoul (1978) argues that the teacher has control over turn allocation in talk and students have limited access to speaker selection. Although the IRF/IRE framework provides a foundation for later CA classroom interaction research, there have been questions over whether these structures can represent the interactional practices in other learning contexts, and empirical evidence has also shown that students' turns do not necessarily occur in the R position and they often break the IRE routine (Waring 2009, 2011; Garton, 2012). Moreover, as Seedhouse (2004a) argues, how turn-taking is organised in classrooms varies with the pedagogical focus, and in communicative language classrooms such as task-based learning (TBL) contexts, talk can be a lot less rigid and more complex than these structures.

Recent CA research on the organisation of classroom interaction focuses heavily on the teacher's conducts and much attention has been paid to how teachers construct turns to facilitate student participation in classroom interaction. For example, how teachers make use of scaffolding (providing linguistic support to bridge language breakdowns) and content feedback to elicit longer turns from the students (Cancino, 2015); and how teachers provide extended pauses as 'wait time' to help increase the likelihood of a response (Ingram & Elliott, 2014; Maroni, 2011). In contrast with the last example above, Hosoda (2014) explored the missing response from primary school students after teacher's questions in Q-A pairs and suggest that the absence of response is related to inadequate wait time provided by the teacher and an overwhelming assumption among the teachers that attributes the students' silence to an inability to produce answers. Furthermore, a number of CA studies have examined how the

teacher and students negotiate turn allocation and speaker selection using embodied resources (Käänta, 2012; Lauzon & Berger, 2015; Mortensen, 2008; Waring, 2013), as well as repair initiation (Atar et al., 2020) and clarification sequences (Atar & Seedhouse, 2018). Yet, these studies tend to lay more emphasis on the practices of the teachers and teacher-led interactions than peer (i.e. student-student) interactions.

In addition to the organisation of talk in the classroom, an emerging area in CA research, firstly named by Markee and Kasper (2004) as 'CA-for-SLA', is concerned with how language learning is achieved in action. A number of researchers in this field use CA to examine what learners do to display that they are engaged in learning by looking at classroom interaction. For example, Majlesi (2018) demonstrates how learning is a co-constructed through corrective feedback sequences and metalinguistic explanation in a grammar lesson; Sert (2015) explore the epistemic and multimodal resources employed by both the teacher and students to co-construct understanding; and Eskildsen and Wagner (2015) show how gestures are integrated in L2 learning. These studies contribute to a social understanding of language learning and bring us to a central theme that L2 learning can be approached as a 'temporal and sequential social accomplishment, situated in and contingent upon social interactivities' (Eskildsen & Majlesi, 2018, p.6). However, As Sert (2015) argues, although CA-for-SLA is primarily concerned with bringing empirical evidence for the understanding of L2 learning, the interactional problems occurring in classrooms (e.g. silences after a teacher's question) seem to remain underexplored. Moreover, most of the studies in this field focus on EFL classroom in compulsory school contexts, and more research looking into classroom interaction in content-based learning and HE contexts is needed.

While more attention has been paid to teacher-led interactions than student interactions, a small number of CA studies have paid attention to peer interactions in groups (Cheung, 2021), and among them, some researchers focus on the embodied conduct of non-speaking students in peer interaction. One example is Lee's (2017) study on students' nonverbal actions in turn allocation. Focusing on non-talking participants in peer discussions in an ESL context, Lee found that though some students are verbally mute, they are simultaneously oriented to some multimodal resources, such as eye gaze and gestures, which play an important role in arranging turns at talk. Her study shows that despite the seemingly 'non-participatory silence', the participants are actively monitoring each other's actions and negotiating the allocation of turns through embodied conducts. Similarly, in their study on L2 students' use of multimodal

resources to self-select, Evnitskaya and Berger (2017) found that students attempted to enter the interactional space by physically leaning towards and gazing at the recipient. In this way, they were able to draw attention from the recipient and claim a speakership. Both of these studies show that students are actively engaged in turn allocation in the classroom and absence of talk could be preparation for the next action. The findings suggest that students' silence has important interactional implications in the classroom and silence cannot be simply equated to non-participation. Bezemer (2008) echoes this idea and indicates that silent students can display active engagement through various embodied conducts such as gaze movement and change of body postures, although the analysis conducted in this study is not strictly conversation analytic.

Other CA studies on peer interaction have explored a range of topics including managing facework and relationship (Evnitskaya, 2021), the use of epistemic search sequences to resolve knowledge gaps (Jakone & Morton, 2015), and how peers negotiate and collaboratively overcome communicative problems (i.e. peer scaffolding) in physical education (PE) classes (Devos, 2015). However, most of the studies mentioned above were conducted in compulsory school contexts with the participants being children, and there has not been a large body of research looking at peer interaction in HE contexts, with a few exceptions (Lee, 2017; Fujimoto, 2010; Mori, 2002). Both Fujimoto and Mori focus on EFL contexts and investigate the sequential structure of talk in a range of situations, e.g. how students express opinions, agreement and disagreement, and respond to the task instruction in pre-task discussion, and they have not addressed how participants deal with interactional troubles such as silence.

To sum up, although there has been sizable CA research that investigates classroom interaction, this thesis identifies gaps in the current literature in three aspects. Firstly, although the organisation of interaction in terms of turn-taking and sequence organisation in teacher-led interactions has been well investigated, we have less sense of how the interaction works in student-student interactions and how it may contrast with that in formal teacher-fronted interaction. Second, a growing body of research has explored how learning is constructed in classroom interaction through a CA-lens, and informed by the CA tradition, there has been now a developed understanding of language learning as a social accomplishment in CA-for-SLA, but some of the common interactional problems that take place in the classroom, including silence after the teacher's initiation of sequences and students' claim of insufficient knowledge (Sert, 2015) are rarely addressed. Lastly, there has been a strong tradition among the CA

research on classroom interaction to focus on school children, and some of the well-known journals on HE such as *Studies in Higher Education* rarely touch on classroom interaction (Heron & Dippold, 2021); thus, more research is needed to look at how classroom interaction works in HE .

2.3.3 CA and task-based interaction

This study focuses on interaction that takes place in group work and the nature of the interaction is identified as task-based (or task-oriented). That is, the participants in this study are not engaged in free conversations on any topic but in conversations which aim to complete certain tasks. Seedhouse and Almutairi (2009, p.312) introduced a working definition that describes task-based interaction as 'L2 interaction in which participants display an orientation to the completion of a task', but this definition has a strong focus on L2 use in SLA contexts, which contrasts with the aim and setting of this study. The task-based interaction I discuss in this thesis refers more broadly to any interaction produced during group work where the students are allocated a task to complete. The 'task' I use here focuses more on a goal-oriented feature of the interaction as a type of institutional talk and the idea that tasks can influence the interaction (Heritage, 2004).

A number of researchers have discussed task-based interaction as a variety of classroom interaction through a CA-lens (Seedhouse, 1999, 2004; Seedhouse & Almutaiti, 2009; Jenks, 2007, 2009). Seedhouse (1999; 2004) suggests that the nature of task can influence the organisation of interaction, such as turn-taking, in several aspects. He argues that participants in task-based interaction tend to use minimalised and indexical linguistics forms, and certain tasks (e.g. information gap) can shape and constrain the types of turns that the speakers take. Seedhouse and Almutairi (2009) further note that participants' physical conduct during periods of silence is closely related to the nature of task. Specifically, one participant's silence is filled by the action of moving pieces of text on the computer screen in doing a jumbled text task. This shows that participants who appear to be silent can be contributing to the task nonverbally, and that some silences in task-based interaction may be afforded by certain features of the task.

Jenks (2007) found that even/uneven distribution of information determined by the task can affect how floor is managed between interlocutors. In doing tasks that create one-way participatory structure, where one speaker obtains more information than the other, the

participants produce a two-part sequence structure in which the keeper of more information does the telling of information while the other receiving/acknowledging. As a result, the keeper of more information tends to control the floor and determine the direction of talk. Whereas in two-way interaction where both speakers share the same information, the way in which the floor is managed can be more flexible. Both studies reviewed above indicate a reflexive relationship between the nature of task and interactional pattern, although the emphasis has been on language learning tasks.

Other conversation analysts in non-SLA contexts have also indicated that the activities that speakers are involved in have consequences on their actions in conversation. Goodwin (2003) describes the embodied conduct deployed in a conversation between two archaeologists (one senior and one graduate student). The senior archaeologist is instructing the student to outline a pattern in the soil using a trowel, while moving her index finger in the air above the soil to indicate where the area should be. The finger movement is done in silence but it obviously has great significance to the interaction, and this particular silence is clearly part of the action of giving instruction. Furthermore, Richardson and Stokoe (2014) discuss an example in which a bar staff interacts with the till computer while making an order for a customer. In order to place an order, the staff needs to complete a series of actions on the computer, including logging in and selecting certain buttons, which result in some periods of silence while the staff is doing that. These examples show that the real-world task that the participants engage in has influence on their actions including silence and can constitute a part of the interaction.

2.4 Conclusion and Research Gap

The previous sections have reviewed studies on the silent participant in multicultural educational settings. The silence of East Asian students in English-speaking classrooms has drawn attention of many researchers. Studies illustrate a stereotypical view that depicts silent students as passive learners, suggesting that they are unwilling to participate in whole-class and group discussions (e.g. Flowerdew et al., 2000; Turner, 2009). In contrast, a number of researchers found that the silent students are in fact willing to participate through in-depth interviews (Elliott & Reynolds, 2014; Wang et al., 2022), but their verbal participation may be constrained by a range of contextual factors. A cultural assumption about classroom participation that prioritises 'voice' and 'speech' over silence seem to play a significant role here (Murray & McConachy, 2018), and many researchers call for recognition of silence as an

alternative form of participation and an active choice (Bao, 2014; Bao, 2020; Kim et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022).

Among the search for causes of students' in-class silence, a predominant explanation is cultural beliefs and specifically the influence of Confucian cultural heritage. Many authors ascribe Chinese students' silence to the tradition which emphasizes respect for authority and a Chinese way of learning that prioritizes listening over speaking (e.g. Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Liu, 2005). However, more recent findings reveal that the silent students' verbal participation is constrained by a range of internal and external factors which are context-specific (Cheng, 2020; Simth & Kim, 2020; Yan & He, 2020). As 2.3.1 has discussed, from a CA perspective, silence is meaningful and may be subject to different interpretations in different contexts of interactions. It is dangerous to over-generalize the cultural elements but overlook that silence can be understood and managed differently in conversation.

To sum up, many studies have conducted interviews, case studies and quantitative surveys to explore causal factors for students' silence and how the silence is perceived by the students and teachers (e.g. Choi, 2015; King, 2016; Yan & He, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). However, conversation analytic studies examining the nature of silence in spontaneous interaction in MGW remain scarce. As Smith & King (2020, p. 86) argue, "silence and other forms of non-verbal communication are necessarily more dependent on context for interpretation than speech", silence needs to be understood as a contextualized action instead of a static phenomenon. Yet, fewer researchers have looked at the role that silence plays in spontaneous interactions by examining instances of interaction as how CA does. Although considerable CA studies have investigated various aspects of classroom interaction, including turn-taking and turn allocation, more attention has been paid to the teacher's practice in whole-class teacher-led interaction than peer interaction. To take a step further towards the issue of silence among students in classrooms, it is important to examine the silence in a contextualized way. This project is significant because it will attempt to shed light on this issue by considering not only the interview data but also the contextualization of silence using CA.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This project conducted a qualitative study to investigate silence in multicultural group work. The qualitative study involves two main data sets: interactional data (i.e. video-recordings of group work) and interview data. In this chapter, I begin with the research questions (3.1) and research resign for this project (3.2), discussing the theoretical positions of this study and the methodological approaches. I then move to introduce the planning stage of data collection (3.3), including the context where the study was conducted, who the participants are and their membership in groups. The next section details the procedures of data collection and the methodological considerations that I took into account throughout the process (3.4). This is followed by a section on the analytic approaches, where I present how the analysis was conducted (3.5). Finally, this chapter ends with the discussion of ethical considerations involved in this project (3.6)

3.1 Research Questions

In order to address the research gap presented earlier in chapter 2, this study aims to explore both the participants' practices around silence in the recorded interaction and their perspectives of silence in multicultural group work. To address the aims, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the nature and organisation of silence in the talk-in-interaction between the students in multicultural group work?
    a. How do the silences work in a sequential context?
    b. How are the silences managed and repaired by the speakers at talk?
2) How do the participants interpret and perceive the silences in the recorded interaction and in MGW generally?

3.2 Research Design

This project adopts a qualitative approach to answer the research questions above. Qualitative research allows me to study silence "in [its] natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" through an interpretative and naturalistic approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). The study does not intend to measure

silence in terms of the frequency or distribution through large-scale statistical analysis, but to gain an in-depth understanding of the patterns underlying people's behaviours. A qualitative design is selected because it accommodates the needs of this project to gain a detailed and sophisticated understanding of silence and to explore silence as a social phenomenon situated in natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, the aim of this project is to understand silence by exploring both the interactional practices around silence and assumptions that the participants hold about it. It is the underlying meaning that the participants attach to each instance of silence that this project attempts to make sense of. Qualitative techniques provide access to unquantifiable knowledge about people, that is, about how they structure and give meaning to their lives (Lune & Berg, 2017). A qualitative design is suitable for this project because it allows an in-depth exploration of people's actions in instances of silence and why they act in that way by working with a small group of participants.

This qualitative project works with a CA tradition as the main methodology, while incorporating interview as a secondary data collection method. The inclusion of these two methodologies inevitably involves differences in their theoretical perspectives to some extent, but it should be acknowledged that interviews are commonly used in conjunction with other research methods. For instance, Duff (2002) combines interview data with discourse analysis of classroom interaction in an ethnographic study. In terms of the literature on classroom silence, the majority of research has been looking for explanations from the student' perspective and fewer studies have been done using conversation analysis, focusing on silence in actual instances of talk. The following section will explain why the combination of methodologies is compatible and appropriate for this project, and I will start by discussing the historical background and theoretical perspective of CA.

3.2.1 Theoretical positions

Founded by Harvey Sacks and his colleagues in 1960s-70s, CA has its roots in Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, which is a tradition in sociology that studies how social orders are produced and interpreted by members of a society. One of the fundamental beliefs of CA is that social interaction is in nature orderly, and that the orderliness is produced by the speakers through the practices they perform in the conversation (Sacks, 1992). Therefore, the goal of conversation analytic studies is to sketch out and describe the patterns of practices and procedures through which orderly interaction is constructed (Heritage, 1984). To put it simply,

CA is interested in "how social acts are organised in interaction" (Seedhouse, 2004b). But this does not mean that CA analyses are simply descriptions of what people do in talk; instead, they shed light on the mechanism of how meanings are made through everyday conversation. Another key idea is contextualization, which is linked closely to the concept of sequence. As Heritage (1984, p. 242) notes, "a speaker's action is context-shaped in that its contribution to an on-going sequence of actions cannot adequately be understood except by reference to the context", suggesting that every segment of talk is produced in response to its prior turn and forms the context for the next. These core principles of CA motivate micro-analysis on a turn-by-turn basis, with regard to what precedes and follows each turn.

CA takes a naturalistic stance in terms of data collection, driven by a commitment to working with naturally occurring interaction. This inherent interest in details of natural talk is consistent with a "specimen perspective" proposed by Alasuutari (1995, p.63), in contrast with what he calls a "factist perspective". From a factist perspective, data are considered as statements about reality—— the truthfulness is yet to be confirmed. In contrast, a specimen is part of the reality and its truthfulness does not need further confirmation. CA's favour for details and naturalistic data means that it usually takes a large set of recordings and 'unmotivated looking', that is, a search not for any specific and predetermined instances, to form a collection of samples from which researchers are able to draw patterns inductively (ten Have, 2007).

The theoretical stance of CA contrasts with that of interviews, which are conventionally treated as a technique for gathering information (Baker, 2002), and as "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984, p.102) driven by topics and designed with specific motivations. The purposeful feature of interviews helps improve the efficiency in collecting the target information for the research topic, but it is questioned by some conversation analysts for the credibility because it is their reflection on reality that interviewers draw from the participants, rather than their actual practices. The divergence here lies in the different perspectives from which they examine social issues and the types of information they look for. While the specimen approach is interested in how people act in talk, the factist approach aims to explain why people act as they do (ten Have, 2007).

However, instead of treating the information gathered by interviews as absolute representative of the participants' thinking, this project considers the nature of qualitative interviews as co-constructed, that is, the reality is jointly constructed by both the interviewee and interviewer

(Mann, 2016). As Baker (2002, p.779) suggests, "any interview is by definition an instance of conversational interaction, and this is deeply consequential for what interviewers and interviewees might say and hear". From this perspective, interviews are reflexive accounts mutually shaped and interactionally accomplished by both the researcher and the researched (Mann, 2016). This means the participants' accounts can be influenced and shaped by the interviewer's questions and positionality. This study is also interested in the identity work invoked in the interviews, that is, how the participants identify themselves and their interlocutors, and how this may relate to their practices in interaction such as silence. Interviews including this kind of information can add an extra layer to CA analysis of silence. In this project, the combination of two methodologies is designed to address the aims of this project to understand both the organisation of silence in interaction and the participants' interpretation in pursuit of a holistic understanding.

3.2.2 Methodological approaches

Based on the theoretical perspectives, this project gathered two data sets: interactional data collected in group work and interview data, using different data collection techniques. Among them, recordings of group interactions between students constitute the primary data set. I will discuss the rationale of each data set in the following.

Firstly, motivated by CA's naturalistic stance, this project collected video recordings of naturally occurring interaction in online group work as the primary database (Mondada, 2013). The naturalistic data contrast with experimental or contrived data used in other some social science studies, where data are drawn from experiments or researcher-provoked activities. On the one hand, naturalistic data can provide the first-hand sense of what actually goes on and rich empirical details that are never based on imagination (Richards, 2003). Conversation analysts believe that simple, mechanical recordings of non-experimental action are less manipulative and researcher-dominated than the other forms of data such as field notes (ten Have, 2007). Indeed, the interactional data are consistent with the ethos of CA, aiming to provide empirical evidence and solid representation of reality, but they tend to focus on how the interaction is performed rather than interlocutors' thinking. Understanding human behaviours requires not only analyses of situated practices and including the participants' account and extra-communicative knowledge adds valuable resources to the interpretive process (Gumperz, 2015).

In conjunction with the naturalistic data, I collected interview data as a secondary data set. The interviews in this project aim to collect the participants' reflective commentary on the recorded interactional events facilitated by the interviewer, and this kind of data cannot be captured by recordings of natural behaviours. Interview data provide insights into the participants' lived experience at depth by probing beneath the surface of their behaviours (Richards, 2009), and they complement CA's focus on the sequential organisation of interaction. The inclusion of additional data sets in CA research is not uncommon (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984), and sometimes the analysis requires having a sense of the context when external aspects are demonstrated as relevant to the participants and pursuit of certain goals (Schegloff, 1997). Furthermore, recent work on applied CA has argued that information about ethnographic background, gathered from interviews and documents, etc. can be beneficial and even necessary to the understanding of some institutional talk, including group work (Antaki, 2011).

This method of incorporating participants' own understanding of certain events into the inference of meaning is adopted in interactional sociolinguistics as "playback" (Schiffrin, 1994, p.322). Sociolinguists (e.g. Gumperz, 2015) sometimes check the participants interpretation of actions with them while studying verbal communication. This does not suggest a departure from the focus on context but provides useful insights for understanding contextual assumptions. For the study of silence in classroom interaction, combining recorded utterances with the participants' own explanation of their action in particular contexts helps produce a more comprehensive understanding of the interactional functions of silence and of how silence is understood. The combination of data sets aims to form a data triangulation to contribute a holistic understanding of silence.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the aid of stimulated recall techniques to examine how specific instances of silence are interpreted by the participants. In the semi-structured interviews, I referred to a pre-prepared interview guide while leaving room for emergent topics mentioned by the interviewees which are of interest to the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I decided to design the interviews as semi-structured because it was necessary for me to follow a prepared guide to keep the interviews on track. Meanwhile, given the research design, I also had the need to adjust the direction of the interview and follow up on the interviewees' responses from time to time. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to cover the topics I

intended to explore while being flexible and spontaneous in keeping the flow as conversation-like as possible (Mann, 2016).

Stimulated recall is a technique used to elicit the participants' thinking processes employed in a prior task or event by asking them to reflect on their practices with the aid of some stimuli, such as video or audio recordings (Gass & Mackey, 2017; Sanchez & Gimshaw, 2019). This technique allowed me to probe the participants' interpretation of specific episodes of talk recorded in group work by playing back some video clips. Stimulated recall can be used to elicit two types of interviewee thoughts. The first type is recalled thoughts that 'occurred during actual event', while the second is a 'hindsight report' dealing with the 'here and now' thinking in the interview (Henderson & Tallman, 2006, p. 77). Since this project employed a delayed recall (Gass & Mackey, 2017), which means that there was a period of time (about a week) between the event and the interview, the stimulated recall sessions in this study focused more on the interviewees' concurrent thoughts than the thoughts that occurred during the event. I will explain more about the structure and design of the interviews in 3.3.2.

3.3 Planning Data Collection

This section presents how I planned for my data collection by looking at the context where the study was conducted, how the participants were recruited, who they are and their membership in groups.

3.3.1 The context

The context of this study is a department in social sciences at the University of Warwick. Since the study aims to work with students in multicultural groups, a student population with rich cultural diversity is crucial to data collection. The target university is an internationalised one in the U.K. with worldwide reputation. As one of the world's most international universities in the Times Higher Education (2023) rankings, the University of Warwick is home to non-UK students from approximately 150 countries (International profile, 2022). The student population at the university allowed me to recruitment participants from a variety of cultures. Moreover, my previous experience of studying in one of the master's programmes at the department offered me a basic idea of the teaching style in this department, and group work is a common technique employed by many lecturers in teaching. This is suitable for my project because the aims of the study require me to record the students as they work in small groups,

and it is ideal that the group work is part of their normal day-to-day classes rather than designed particularly for this study which will take extra time from the students. Taking convenience and availability into consideration, the university is also where I worked on my PhD study, so I could easily access the departmental administrators and lecturers, which largely facilitated the progress of data collection.

I originally planned to record face-to-face group work, however, the outbreak of Covid-19 led to suspension and disruption of in-person teaching in most universities in the U.K, and the University of Warwick is one of them. Most of the teaching activities were moved to online settings, which is known as emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Prahbu et al., 2021). Given the circumstances, I had to switch my data collection site from a face-to-face setting to an online one. The spoken data in this project were collected on Microsoft Teams, which was the authorised platform for teaching activities at the university during the lockdown period. The change of plan did not invalidate or undermine the overall research design, as online data are valid and sufficient for addressing the aims. In fact, emergent design is one of the characteristics of qualitative research as noted by Creswell and Poth (2018). On this they argue that

> The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data. [...] The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from the participants and engage in the best practices to obtain that information. (p. 44)

There are actually a few advantages of collecting spoken data online for this study. For example, Microsoft Teams has a built-in function to record meetings, which allowed me to record student interaction in a discreet and almost unnoticed way. This is less intrusive for the participants compared with setting up multiple cameras in face-to-face settings. As discussed previously, CA works with conversation which occurs naturally, collecting data on Teams certainly allowed me to record interaction in the speakers' natural state. To sum up, switching to an online setting was a reasonable decision and the best practice at the time for supporting the progress of the study. However, it is worth acknowledging that that certain findings derived from the study may reflect mainly online interactions rather than F2F interactions.

3.3.2 Recruiting the participants

The research population were the students studying postgraduate taught (PGT) and undergraduate (UG) programmes in the department. I recruited from both the PGT and UG cohorts because this increased the cultural diversity among the participants and allowed me to study silence in different classroom contexts. The participants were 11 students enrolled on the BA and MSc programmes. In this CA-based qualitative study, the goal of sampling is neither representativeness nor generalization (Miyahara, 2019), but to gain in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon by working with a small group of participants. Considering the analysis would involve transcribing verbatim considerable spoken data, it did not seem practical or manageable to collect and analyse a large scale of data. Therefore, this is a reasonable sample size that allows micro-analysis of the data within the given time.

The recruitment process began with contacting the departmental administrators, and with their help, I sent out an invitation email along with a participant leaflet detailing the aims and procedures of the project to all students in both cohorts. Potential participants were firstly identified according to their willingness to participate in the research. Students who were interested in taking part and would like to opt in were asked to fill out a registration form on Microsoft Forms. In the form, they were asked to fill in some personal information, including their names, contact details, courses, year of study, and ethnicity, which was needed for sampling and setting up the groups. Given the aims of the study to work with students in multicultural groups, the sampling strategy I adopted in this project is mainly purposive and criteria-based (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). A multicultural group in this project refers to a group of three or more members who come from different cultures. This means the participants needed to meet several criteria in order to be selected. Firstly, each group would consist of at least three students enrolled in a shared course so that they could be recorded together in class. Secondly, to ensure a multicultural setting, the participants in each group needed to come from at least two different cultures or ethnicities. In other words, three students with the same cultural background would not constitute a multicultural group in this project.

After the first round of recruitment, 13 students registered their interests. I then conducted a second round of recruitment in which I adopted snowball sampling, a strategy to identify more participants with relevant characteristics by referrals of the current participants (Lune & Berg, 2017). Specifically, I contacted a few of the participants recruited in the first round to introduce and recommend the study to their peers on the same programme. Finally, 2 more students

signed up for the study, making up 15 participants in total, among whom 4 were not selected for the study due to a lack of culturally diverse participants in their course to form a group with them. Thus, 11 participants were recruited for the study and they were allocated into 4 groups. The next section continues to present who the participants are and their memberships in groups.

3.3.3 The participants

The participants were 5 first-year UG students and 6 PGT students, working in 4 groups of 3 to 4. The groups were generated naturally based on the module or seminar groups that the participants have in common. That is, I assigned the participants who already share a module to the same groups, so that they can work together in the classes[3]. Table 3.1 below provides the participants' pseudonyms, ethnicity and group memberships.

Module A		Module B				Module C	
Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4	
Name	*Ethnicity*	*Name*	*Ethnicity*	*Name*	*Ethnicity*	*Name*	*Ethnicity*
Anna	Polish	Jenny	Chinese	Kat	British	Laura	British
Ellen	British	Sandra	British	Lucy	Chinese	Lina	Chinese
Lina	Chinese	Yang	Chinese	Nina	Chinese	May	Chinese
May	Chinese						

Table 3.1 The participants and group membership

As the table shows, the participants are allocated into 4 groups in 3 different modules. The participants in group 2 and group 3 are PGT students taking module B as a shared core module. Group 1 and Group 4 consist of UG students enrolled on module A and C respectively. It should be noted that Lina and May took part in both groups 1 and 4. Having them taking part in two different groups brought additional benefit to the study and allowed me to compare their practices and perspectives of silence in different classroom contexts. The data generated from their participation were shown to be particularly valuable in the analysis, on which I will elaborate in chapter 6.

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[3] Although groups 2 and 3 were both enrolled on module B, they worked in two independent seminar groups and attended classes separately.

Among the participants, Kat, Sandra, Ellen and Laura are native speakers (NS) and the rest of the participants speak English as a second or foreign language. Almost all the participants in this study were female, with Yang being the only male. This was related to the nature of student body in the target courses where female students significantly outnumbered male students. Gender could potentially have an impact on interactions in mixed gender groups as it has been shown that females tend to be marginalised in classrooms while males are shown to dominate, in which case silence could be associated with male privilege (Julé, 2004). However, gender did not seem to have been an influential factor in this study as the male participant did not appear to be dominant in the conversation. Additionally, the discussion of gender cannot be separated from ethnicity (Julé, 2004) and the male participant's NNS identity is also relevant for understanding his participation. The interaction of gender, ethnicity and NS/NNS status may be a promising direction for future studies.

3.4 Data Collection

As previously outlined, this project involves two types of spoken data— naturalistic interactional data (i.e. recordings of group work) and interview data. The process of data collection started after all the participants and the tutors signed and returned the consent forms. I will unpack more about the procedures of gathering data and the ethical considerations that come with it in the following sections.

3.4.1 Recordings of group work

Having identified the participants and allocated them into groups, I emailed the participants to inform them of the allocation and asked for their consent to work together during the data collection period. After this, I approached the lecturers of the three modules (A, B and C) to negotiate access to their classes and to discuss their availability for data collection. I planned to record each group repeatedly in three successive sessions. However, module B was co-taught by several tutors and only one of them agreed to be observed, so groups 2 and 3 were only recorded in one session, while groups 1 and 4 were recorded for three times in three consecutive classes. The module tutors were informed of the data collection procedures and gave consent to my participation and observation in their classes. An ethical issue arose at the point was that although I only intended to record the students when they were assigned to breakout rooms, the tutor might still pop in to check on the students, so the tutors' face and voice may be captured in the recordings. Moreover, in order to record their group work, I needed to join the

session some time before the group work so that I could be sent to breakout rooms with the participants. This means that I would inevitably observe some of the tutor's teaching activities. Given these considerations, I explained everything that data collection would require from the tutor in the emails and consent forms, making sure that the tutors are clear about what to expect. I also let the tutors know that the groups need to work together in this period of time. After negotiating with the module tutors, we agreed on the dates and time of the sessions when I could collect data, and the tutors invited me to the module groups on Teams ahead of time so that I could join the session.

I collected video-recordings in 8 seminar sessions (see table 3.2). I decided to collect video-recordings of the group work rather than audio-recordings for the following reasons. Firstly, video-recordings can capture non-verbal elements of communication, e.g. body language and facial expression, which is left out in audios but is important and useful for the micro-analysis of silence in this project. Again, as CA values naturalistic data that represent the reality (i.e. what actually happens) as much as possible, video-recordings are rich in the details about the interaction which can facilitate the analysis. Secondly, as indicated, Teams has a build-in video recorder which can automatically record all the audio and visual activities on the screen without being too intrusive or obvious for the participants. It was not an option to record audio only on Teams at the moment, unless the speakers manually switch off the camera. Considering that some participants might be uncomfortable being video-recorded, I included an option in the consent form for audio-recording only to ensure that the participants have freedom to opt out for video-recording. It turned out that all the participants gave consent to video-recording.

Before collecting the recordings, I joined the seminar at the time I agreed with the tutors prior to the group work and I kept my micro-phone and camera off to avoid distracting the class. The tutor sent me and the participants together to a breakout room when it came to the group work stage, which is when I started to record. In consideration of the need to manage rapport with the participants, after we all joined the room, I briefly greeted and thanked the participants before I asked for their permission to start recording. Verbal consent was given by the participants for recording. I also explained that they were free to opt out from the study now but once the recording was collected they would not be able to withdraw the data. I then turned off my camera and microphone as I started the recording. Recordings were collected through non-participatory observation, which means I would not intervene in their discussion as the research design and CA's principles require the data recorded to be as natural as possible. Yet,

it needs to be acknowledged that given the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972), the fact that participants were aware of their conversation being recorded is likely to have had an impact on the data. Nonetheless, I managed to keep my presence as a researcher as unobtrusive as possible, and thanks to the technology of Teams, I was able to stay almost invisible to the participants. This is because Teams automatically focused on the active speakers and kept the member who was muted in the bottom corner or even hidden from the screen. As a result, I had the impression that the participants barely noticed me while they were talking and might have even forgotten about my presence as the conversation went on. Recordings were made on the researcher's Teams and potential impact of internet latency on the recordings is discussed in Limitations (see p.198).

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the amount of data I collected in each session.

Table 3.2 Total amount of interactional data recorded in groups

Group number	Session number	Video recording length
Group 1	Session 1	10 mins
	Session 2	17 mins
	Session 3	15 mins
Group 2	Session 1	18 mins
Group 3	Session 1	19 mins
Group 4	Session 1	9 mins
	Session 2	20 mins
	Session 3	20 mins
Total	8 sessions	2 hours 8 mins

In addition, in each group work session the participants were asked to complete certain task, so the nature of interaction recorded in this project is identified as task-based (see also section 2.3.3). The tasks were determined and designed by the module tutor prior to this study and the task types vary from opinion-sharing to problem-solving. Appendix E provides a detailed description of the tasks being undertaken in each recorded session.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 10 participants as a follow-up to the recordings of group work. I sent invitation emails to all the 11 participants and only one participant (Anna) did not respond

to the invitation. The interviews were all conducted virtually on Teams and I interviewed the participants individually. The interviews were conducted in the first language of each participant, which was either English or Chinese. Prior to the interviews, I sent the participants the links to the recordings via email. I suggested that it would be helpful to watch the recordings but they did not have to. The interviews were divided into two main stages. The first stage focuses on the participants' general experience of and feelings about working in multicultural groups. To build rapport with the participants, I started the interviews with a few minutes of small talk before I explained the purpose and outline of the interview. My questions in stage 1 followed a guide which is presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Interview guide for stage 1

Moves/ topics	Interview questions in English	Interview questions in Chinese
Opening	How often do you take part in group work in this module? Could you tell me something about your last experience of group work? / When was the last time you worked in a group?	平常课上多久会有小组讨论的环节？ 上一次的小组活动是什么时候？/你对于上一次小组活动有什么印象？
Feelings about group work experience in general	How do you find your experience of group work? How do you feel about doing group work online?	总体来说，你对小组讨论的经历有什么看法？ 你对线上小组活动的感受是怎样的？
Working with culturally diverse peers	You have been working with students from different cultures, how do you feel about that?	那么你也有和来自不同文化的同学交流，你觉得和他们在小组中合作是怎样的经历？

Experience of working in this particular group (recorded)	Now let's focus on this group...., what would be your immediate impression on the interaction recorded?
	 How would you describe your experience working in this group?
	    a. Did you encounter any issues in the discussion?
	    b. How did you resolve the issues?
		现在我们来关注一下你这次参与研究的小组，你对于你们之间的互动有什么样的印象和看法？
		 - 是否有遇到什么沟通上的问题？可以详细描述一下吗？
		 - 你们是如何解决这个问题的？

Overall impressions on the group members	How do you feel about the other members in the group? Can you tell me something about the roles that each of you may have played in the group? a. Was everyone participating equally? b. Who participated the most/ the least?	你对你的组员有什么样的总体看法？ 你如何看待你们分别参与讨论的程度？是平均的吗？ 谁参与的更多/更少？ 你觉得在小组中你们是否有扮演不同的角色？是什么样的角色？

Table 3.3 above provides an overview of the questions I covered in the first stage. The first a couple of questions about the frequency and previous experience of group work were designed as ice breakers to set the scene while putting the participants at ease (Rolland et al., 2019). The rest of the questions deal with topics about general experiences of and impressions on working in a multicultural group, focusing on the interactional level. I consciously chose not to reveal the focus on silence beginning the interviews and before the participants raised it, to avoid biasing the interview, because it may not be prominent for some participants. Instead, I started with general questions and zoomed in to the specific issues they raised about group work. In most cases, the participants came to the topic of silence while talking about the interactional issues and as soon as they mentioned it, I would follow up and dig deeper into it. It is worth noting here that although the first stage was mostly agenda-led, I did not stick to the exact wording in this guide as a script. I employed various types of interactional moves including paraphrasing and repetition, asking check-reflect questions (you don't...?), and requesting elaboration (e.g. can you tell me more about...?) (Mann, 2016). The interactional moves I used in Chinese include a paraphrase of the interviewees' answer starting with '所以...[so]' or '你说...[you said]', which is also how I often manage silence in the interview interaction. If simply paraphrasing did not receive more elaborated talk, I also typically followed it up with probing questions such as '有什么具体的事例吗？ [do you have a specific example of this situation?]' or '可以详细说一下...吗？ [can you describe... in more detail?]'. The first stage took around 15 to 20 minutes and I tried to keep the flow as relaxed and casual as possible.

The second stage consisted of a stimulated recall session, in which I showed the participants 3 to 4 video clips taken from the recordings. The clips were selected by me and they consist of

periods of prolonged and noticeable silence which occurred in the group work. The clips I played at this stage were tailored to each group, which means that the participants from a same group were shown the same clips, so that I could compare and contrast their comments on the same extracts in the analysis. I played the videos by sharing the screen, so that the participants could both see and hear the segments as I did. In case some participants felt uncomfortable watching themselves in the videos, I offered an option to discuss the extracts without watching the videos and instead, I could describe it for them. Only one of the participants, Lucy, opted for this option. After showing each segment, I typically started with a general and open question such as "what did you notice here?" and "what do you think is going on". I also tried to elicit their comments on details by the use of prompts, for example, "I noticed that you..., why did you do that?" and "How do you feel about what she did when...?" (Gass and Mackey, 2017, p. 50). Again, follow-up questions and prompts I used here were tailored to each participant based on the comments they made. It is worth clarifying that the purpose of stimulated recalls in this project is not to request the participants report their actual thinking process in the recorded conversation considering the time lapse. Instead, I encouraged the participants to share their concurrent feelings and thoughts watching the playback.

The interviews were recorded in the form of either audio or video depending on the participants' preference. I explained the options before the interviews and they were free to keep their camera off throughout the interview. Two out of the ten participants felt more comfortable having their camera off, so the interviews with them were recorded as audios and the rest of the interviews were video-recorded. It is important to keep a reflexive account as an interviewer (Mann, 2016). In the interviews, although I tried to remain as neutral and non-judgmental (Braun & Clarke, 2013) as possible, there were cases where showing empathy was considered as appropriate and necessary for maintaining rapport. For example, one participant, Yang, repeatedly made negative evaluations of his own language production in the recording, using descriptions such as "my English is so poor... they couldn't even understand me" and "I did terrible", which were clearly exaggerated and deviant from my observation. In this case, I realised that this was going awry and may affect the participants emotional state, so I paused the questioning and encouraged him by sharing positive comments on his participation. After this, I noticed that he visibly became more open and relaxed. Moreover, as part of the interviewer's reflexivity, it is important to understand the impact of social and cultural identities on the dynamics in interviews (Mann, 2016). In this project, my identity as a Chinese may have an impact on the way in which the participants frame their response. Particularly,

certain negative perceptions about the Chinese cohort, if held, may be concealed by the British interviewees for politeness and rapport. To minimise this impact, I tried to keep the interaction focused on the interviewees and avoid disclosing my personal attitudes and stories throughout the interviews. No exchange about the interviewer's identity was found in the interview data.

3.5 Analytic Approaches

This project adopted two approaches to analyse naturalistic interactional data and interview data respectively. Interactional data collected in group work were transcribed and analysed following the tradition of CA, while interview transcripts were coded and patterns were identified inductively from the transcripts. The approaches aim to extract different types of information from the data in order to address different aspects of the research aims. This, however, does not mean that the two approaches were separated from each other. Rather, the two data sets underwent cross-reference and were used in combination in the analysis. I will now move to describe the analytic process in detail.

3.5.1 Transcription

As mentioned above, interactional data and interview data were analysed through different approaches, and thus different transcription conventions were applied. In terms of transcribing video-recorded group work, the transcription conventions I adopted for verbal element was adapted from Jefferson (2004) and Liddicoat (2022) (see Appendix A). Jefferson's transcription system is a commonly used tool in CA research because of its robustness and suitability for microanalysis of talk (Liddicoat, 2022). This system was used in conjunction with Mondada's (2019) multimodal transcription system for the non-verbal and visual information. Specifically, I added descriptions of non-verbal conducts in a separate line below the verbal line, in which way it provides precise annotation of ongoing embodied actions while being relatively easy to access for readers. Screenshots were added to the transcription in the cases where the participants' embodied conduct is particularly relevant to the analysis; however, given the informed consent obtained in this study, all the screenshots included in this thesis have been processed using photo editing software and turned into sketches, and the participants' faces have also been blurred so that they are not personally identifiable.

Transcription in this project was conducted manually. I used the software 'ELAN' to facilitate the transcribing and calculating of the length of silences. Specifically, ELAN allowed me to

identify all the periods of silence through an audio graph (see the figure 3.4). I was also able to see precisely when each instance of silence started and ended counting in milliseconds (circled in red).

Figure 3.4 Screen shot of user interface of ELAN
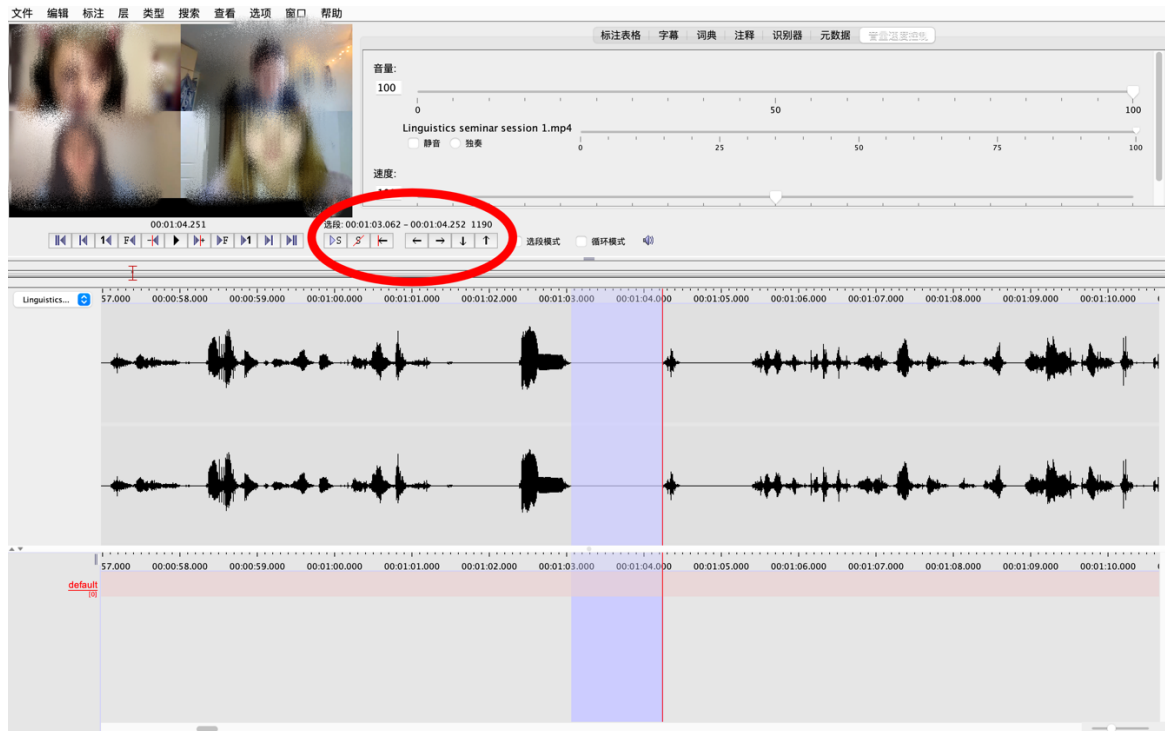
I started transcribing as soon as each group work session was recorded. Since I needed to sort out a few extracts for the stimulated recall in follow-up interviews, the first thing I did was watching the videos repeatedly and noted down some prominent periods of silence. The purpose was to identify any cases of silence considered as significant and worth exploring in the interviews. In transcribing the videos, I firstly transcribed the audio components and then added visual information to the transcripts. The initial transcripts were constantly edited and updated as I repeatedly reviewed the recordings, as transcription is an open-ended process in CA (Liddicoat, 2022).

Transcription of interview data was verbatim, but I did not employ a full-scale CA system for transcribing the interviews, because the focus of analysis here was not on the interactive elements but patterns and themes in the content. Thus, I used the basic punctuations for interview transcripts, while drawing on some symbols from the CA conventions when needed, e.g. "-" for indicating cut-off and underlined texts for stress. The interviews conducted in

Chinese were firstly transcribed in Chinese characters and the excerpts reported in the analysis were translated in English. Transcribing and analysing interview data were not two clear-cut phases but they were interwoven and circular. The transcription of the interview data was conducted in two rounds. In the first round I focused on the stimulated recall stage in the interviews, and after listening to the recordings several times, I transcribed some segments of the interview which were relevant to the CA analysis of certain interactional items. This allowed me to carry out an initial analysis to identify the relevant data for cross-referencing with the CA analysis in chapter 4. In the second round I completed the transcription of all the interviews.

3.5.2 Analysing the interactional data

Conversation analysis was used to analyse the naturally occurring interaction in group work. CA ultimately analyses people's detailed ways of doing things together, which means that it captures the structures of actions produced by the speakers (Maynard, 2013). One central goal of CA is to identify the actions that participants in interaction do and to describe the techniques they use to accomplish them (Sidnell, 2013). In this study, CA was employed to address the first research aim that deals with the nature and organisation of silence in turn-taking and sequence organisation. The analysis was primarily inductive, involving searching among the data for patterns in a bottom-up way and explicating the logic behind practices around silence (ten Have, 2007). CA takes an emic perspective in analysing spoken data, which means it 'seeks to remain faithful to the participants' perspectives' (Psathas, 1995, p.49). The purpose of CA analysis is thus to explain how the participants construct their actions in the interaction rather than imposing the analysts' understanding to the data.

Given that CA research is built on specimens of conversation (Liddicoat, 2022), my initial stage of CA analysis focused on identifying and establishing collections of interaction extracts where silences occur. This stage of analysis began with observation. Sacks (1984) emphasises the importance of using observation as the starting point of analysis because it helps the analysts remain open to what is possible while focusing on what actually happened. I repeatedly read through the transcripts while watching the recordings simultaneously, and I marked all the instances of silence that are noticeably prolonged, or those that may indicate interactional problems or interrupt the fluency of talk. After I highlighted a number of noteworthy cases of silence in the transcript, what stood out to me was that these silences were

different depending on their location in the sequential context. For example, one recurring aspect of the data was that many noteworthy silences in the data occurred after first pair parts (FPP); on the contrary, intra-turn silences which occurred inside a speaker's turn were less common in the data and usually unmarked (i.e., unproblematic). Given this assumption, I started with a single-case analysis of one instance of silence after an FPP. A single-case analysis is a first step in setting up a collection, as it allowed me to determine the nature of the actions and which sort of phenomenon it represents (Psathas, 1995). Having analysed the first instance, I then went through all the transcripts systematically to identify more similar cases and kept adding new instances to the list until a collection was assembled. This first collection I developed was one of 'silences after FPPs', which formed the data corpus of chapter 4. As I was assembling the first collection, I also noticed some cases which contrasted to the instances of silences after FPPs. The new cases went through similar analysis process and I assembled a second collection of 'silences after second pair parts (SPP)'.

The next stage of analysis was about working with each set of collection, examining each extract to identify patterns, and writing up analysis for the extracts in a logical order. I started by analysing 1 to 2 extracts in a collection and the analysis mainly dealt with articulating the participants' practices around silences and explicating the orderliness underlying their actions. A few key points that the analysis attempted to make sense of includes the place of silence in the sequence organisation, who owns the silence, who resolves the silence and what may result in the silence at an interactional level. I then compared the analysed extracts with the other extracts in the collection to identify similar actions that occurred in other contexts or other deviant cases that varied from the initial instances. The overall analytic process is inductive, and the analysis was expanded as more extracts were added to the account. When similar actions were repeatedly noticed in different extracts, the initial analysis was confirmed and validated, while the other data that contrasted with the initial instances were used to adjust and supplement the initial analysis (Liddicoat, 2022). Thus, regularities about the organisation of silence were developed and concluded through a circular process of analysing single cases of interaction and testing the analysis against various new cases.

3.5.3 Analysing the interview data

The overall approach to interview data is inductive. Two different analytic strategies were applied to analysing the interview data for generating different outcomes in order to answer the

two research questions. Firstly, as I discussed in 3.2, interview data were used as a secondary source to supplement the CA understanding of the nature and organisation of silence (RQ1). In answering this question, I conducted a first round of analysis to the interview data after the first collection of data for CA analysis was assembled (as discussed above) by working from the naturalistic data to the interview data. I first read through the interview transcripts and highlighted the excerpts containing information relevant to the interactional instances in the CA collection. In the stimulated recall stage, each group of participants had been invited to comment on a shared set of segments of recording. As a result, the interview transcripts were expected to contain each member's perspective of certain extracts of talk. Moreover, in the first stage of interviews dealing with more general perceptions of group work, some participants also brought up specific episodes in the recorded group work. So, the main aim of my analysis in this stage was to search for any bit of interview data related to the interaction extracts in the CA collection and match them to the extracts. However, this is not to say that the interviews necessarily covered data about every extract used in the CA analysis, because I conducted the interviews before the collections were developed, so not every example discussed in the interviews ended up in the collections for analysis. After I identified the relevant quotes from the interview transcripts, I matched each participant's comment on the interaction to the corresponding extract, for example, as shown in Table 3.5. The purpose of this step is to cross-reference the interview data with the CA analysis of recorded interaction. This process of looking across the interview transcripts in search of relevant quotes continued in a spiral until I checked all the extracts in the collection. It should be noted here that the focus of this stage had less to do with coding because the focus was on analysing the interaction.

Table 3.5 Example of cross-referencing data sets

Extract of recorded interaction	Speaker 1's comment	Speaker 2's comment	Speaker 3's comment
(The speakers are Sandra, Yang and Jenny) San: Yea? okay I'll send it to you now. U:m (0.7) Jason just sent a message	Sandra: *"So this is from months and months of experience. First of all, not preparing a designated speaker and also as a result of not*	Yang: "我们要最后确定一个人要去发言，然后 Sandra 说完之后大家都沉默了，因为 Sandra 她自己的话发言太多次了。[...]" *We were going to*	Jenny: "反正我是觉得她是比较想把机会给我们吧，因为平时上课的时候基本上，老师有说过外国同学发言的次数太多了。所以我觉得她可能也是想把

saying we need to go back. >Doz anybody< <£speak£? (3.2) San: coz I know he will ask. (2.5) Yan: Um mm maybe:(.) me? hhh. San: Heh yeah? Okay	*choosing a designated speaker, there's an underlying assumption that I will do it. Because I hate silence. [...]"*	*nominate a spokesperson at last, and after Sandra asked that, everyone was silent, because she had spoken for so many times [...]"*	机会让给我们，让我们多说一点吧。" *I think she wants to pass on the opportunity to us, because our lecturer said that foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates have presented so many times in the class. So I think she probably wants to pass the opportunity to us and let us speak more.*

The second round of analysis was mainly a process of coding, which was primarily adopted to answer RQ2 (the participants' interpretation of silence) and for writing up chapter 6. In contrast with the technique described above, the analysis in this stage was mainly a process of working from the interview data to naturalistic data. The interviews constituted the primary data source for answering RQ2 and the naturalistic data were used for cross-referencing and providing evidence from the interaction. I started with scanning through all the interview transcripts to have a sense of the interviewees' overall perspectives. As Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest, this helped me to approach the text "in a new light" while being open to all the possibilities in the data (p. 188). While I was reading, I wrote notes and memos of some text segments in the margin for identifying initial codes. Memos are, as Miles et al. (2014) describe, "not just descriptive summaries of data but attempts to synthesise them into higher level analytic meanings" (p.95). Initial codes were generated through repeated reading of the transcripts and moving back and forth between the data and memos. Table 3.6 below provides an example of an interview extract and the code assigned for the text.

Table 3.6 Example of selected extracts from the interviews

Extract	Code
We are usually put with students that require us so that we encourage more speaking, but what I tend to notice what happened is that I take over because otherwise we just sit in silence. [...] I still think that I take a leader role. But it comes from a place of like (2.0) just pre- being prepared to have no response.	reasons for being the leader

After I developed a short list of initial codes, I applied them to the coding of new data, and in this process, some initial codes were combined and new codes emerged. Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to this approach as 'lean coding', which begins with a small number of codes and 'expands as review and re-review of the database continues' (p.190). This coding process repeated until all the interview transcripts were coded. Next, I began to organise and classify the codes into several themes and subthemes, which are shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Themes, subthemes and codes derived from the interview data

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Group dynamics	Features of the team	• individual's persona • degree of rapport • members' identity and atmosphere in the group
	A role of leader/facilitator	• behaviours as a leader/facilitator • reasons for being the leader • keeping the dominance constructive • facilitating as a strategy
	Attitudes to the other members	• recognition and appreciation of the leader • willingness to speak in relation to the leader's behaviours • reliance on the NS • positive feelings about working with an active team • disappointment about disengaged members

Topics of group work	Knowledge about the topic	• a lack of content knowledge • access to knowledge in relation to the task • unfamiliar and difficult concepts
	Verbal participation in relation to the topic/task	• feeling comfortable and confident with open topics • difficulties in discussing unfamiliar topics • amount of verbal input in relation to the type of topic • legitimacy to speak
Language barrier and identities as NS or NNS	Difficulties in communication related to English language proficiency	• struggling to understand the native speaker's talk • a lack of confidence and self-deprecation of speaking skills • miscommunication and misunderstanding • unable to get a turn
	Anxiety about speaking English as a second language	• shyness and fear of speaking on the spot • a tendency to stay inside the comfort zone • psychological safety

After the themes were developed, I began writing up the analysis for answering RQ2 (see chapter 6), and the themes then informed the development of sub-sections in that chapter. In the process of interpreting the interview excerpts, I frequently went back to the naturalistic data to search for evidence in the interaction to support my discussion. For example, in writing the discussion of group dynamics in 6.1, I incorporated the data from recorded group work to provide examples of the leader's practices in the interaction, in which way the analysis was developed by working from the interview data to the naturalistic data. Overall, through both analytic approaches, the two data sets were examined in an integrative way with each being cross-referenced with the other. This process of combining different data sources in looking at a single phenomenon allowed data triangulation to promote the validity of the finding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In Chapter 6 and 6.2 in particular, I adopted some of the key terminology used in Membership Category Analysis to analyse the identity work invoked in the interview data when it comes across as relevant to the topic being discussed.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In the previous sections, I have briefly discussed the ethical issues I came across in the process of planning and conducting data collection. This section provides a systematic overview of the ethical considerations that were adhered to in this project.

The ethical conduct of the research ethics was achieved in this project following the core principles of 1) respect for persons, 2) yielding optimal benefits while minimizing harm and 3) justice (Da Costa, 2015). Firstly, approval to conduct this research was obtained from the University's ethics committee before commencing the study. An invitation email along with a participant leaflet (see Appendix B and C) explaining the nature and aims of the study was sent to potential participants, which ensured that each participant was informed of what taking part in this study requires before signing up for participation. Participation in this project was completely voluntary and the students who were interested in taking part were asked to fill in a registration form. In the form, the participants were asked to provide personal information, and only the information which was necessary for further contact and sampling was collected (see 3.3.2). However, none of these was mandatory and the participants were free to skip any of the questions. The participants selected for the study received a consent form to sign. The consent form included an option to opt for audio-recordings only (see Appendix D). I also checked consent verbally with the participants before each recording. The module tutors received and signed a copy of consent form after agreeing to be involved in the collection of classroom data. Access to the class was negotiated with the module leaders and notice was given before entering the classroom.

Moreover, efforts were made to ensure confidentiality (Da Costa, 2015). Each participant was given a pseudonym upon the collection of personal data and the modules they took part in were pseudonymised too. Personal data were deleted and destroyed as soon as the sampling procedure was completed. All screenshots of the recordings included in the thesis have been edited, with the participants' faces blurred, to protect the participants from being identified. The audio and video-recorded files were stored on the university's server and were primarily used for this PhD project. Finally, the study did not pose any risks to the participants and the participants' psychological needs were respected and taken into consideration. I interfered in the group work as little as possible while collecting recordings of group discussions to preserve the natural state of interaction. The time and form of interviews (audio or video recording) were tailored to the participants' preference and the participants were free to switch off their

cameras or withdraw participation at any point. In reciprocation, the participants gained an opportunity to work in a team for a period of time and then to reflect on teamworking and intercultural communication.

3.7 Summary

The chapter has described the research design, theoretical perspectives, procedures of data collection and data analysis, along with the ethical considerations taken in the process. In the following chapter, I will present the analysis and illustrate the details mentioned in the chapter in practice.

Chapter 4 Silence after FPPs

When a first pair part (FPP) reaches a possible completion, an action of a particular type is projected in the next turn, i.e. as a second pair part (SPP). An absence of response at this position is seen as accountable— that is, noticeable and explainable (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

In analysing the interactional data collected in group work, I noticed that many instances of silences occur after the FPPs of adjacency pairs. In this chapter I focus particularly on the environments where silences occur after FPPs and discuss the organisation of these silences, including how they arise in the talk-in-interaction and how they are treated by the participants. Drawing on both the interactional and interview data, this chapter will describe two types of circumstances where silences occur after FPPs: 1) silences in dealing with interactional problems and 2) silences treated as a form of response. In the cases where the occurrence of silence is relevant to a problem in the interaction, repair work oriented to the silence is typically initiated by the speakers to manage the silence. The data show that a common problem related to the silence at this position is an issue of speaker selection, which will be illustrated in section 4.1.1. Section 4.1.2 examines some episodes of talk where the silences relate to withheld responses resulting from some contextual issues. In other cases, however, silences after FPPs are not treated as a problem but a form of response (4.2). Then, the current speaker continues with the current topic or move to a sequence closure. In this section I will also discuss how silence is employed as a strategic move in passing on the speakership.

4.1 Silences in Handling Interactional Problems

When the conversation reaches a silence, the meaning of the silence is determined by what comes before and next (Hoey, 2020a). One way the participants deal with the silences after FPPs is initiating a repair, and the initiation of repair shows that the silence may result from some problems in relation to the prior talk. For example, in extract 4.1, the silence is accounted for by a next speaker initiating an insert sequence. In this extract, Sandra, Jenny and Yang are discussing the materials they need for the assignment at the beginning of a group work session.

Extract 4.1

```
19 San:   >abou' twenty minutes< (0.4)Uhm alright we        FPP base
20        need to do two things, (1.2) uh:: go back to
21        theory an'then come up with issues and
22        reflections. (0.5) Uh di'ju know where
```

```
23          to find thee: (0.6) u:m the- the the data?
24          (1.2)
25 Jen:     Mm do you mean the data we upload (.)        FPP insert
26          yesterday?=
27 San:     =Yeah (0.5) yeah                             SPP insert
28 Jen:     Yes                                                        SPP base
```

By initiating a question about accessibility to the data in the base FPP (lines 22-23), Sandra makes an answer from either of the recipients, Jenny and Yang, relevant as the next action. At line 24, a SPP is due but a silence occurs. In line 25, Jenny produces a question addressing an issue with the clarity of Sandra's question. Jenny's turn initiates an insert sequence which is designed to repair a problem relevant to the form of the base FPP. The design of the repair shows that there is an understanding problem and that a clarification of the word 'data' is needed to produce the SPP, thus the base SPP is put on hold. The silence may serve as a part of the action to repair the interactional problem, or, as a prelude and indicator of the repair (Schegloff, 2007). Next, Sandra produces an affirmative answer in response to June's insert FPP (line 27) and the problem is repaired. Sandra's insert SPP completes the insert sequence, by which point a base SPP becomes relevant again (Sacks, 1992). After Jenny produces a base SPP, i.e. an answer to Sandra's incipient question, the sequence reaches a possible completion.

This example demonstrates that a silence after an FPP may be relevant to a problem arising in the prior talk, and the problem is resolved by a repair sequence initiated by a next speaker. Although the FPP projects a particular next action to be done, it does not restrict the identity of the next speaker to a specific person (Hoey, 2020a). That is, Sandra's FPP creates a situation where a SPP is required from multiple potential respondents. Thus, the silence does not belong to either of Jenny or Yang alone but is shared by both. This shows that what may also be relevant to the silence is a problem in speaker selection, which will be discussed in the following.
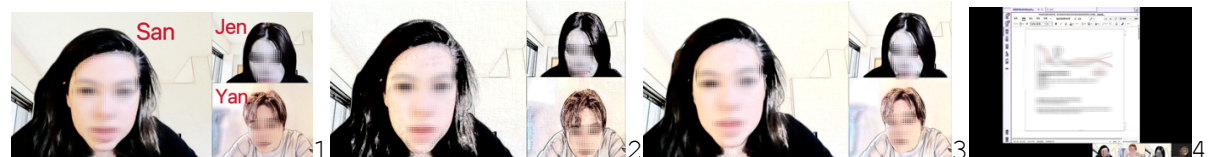
4.1.1 Silence and speaker selection

In dyadic interaction, an FPP naturally selects the other party in the talk as the legitimate next speaker and there is no ambiguity around speakership. However, in multi-party interaction, if a speaker produces an FPP without designating a specific recipient, an ambiguity in speaker selection may arise. And at this position, silence may occur because of an issue of speakership,

as shown in extract 4.2. In this segment, the same speakers discuss the logistics of doing an assignment following the exchange in extract 4.1.

Extract 4.2

```
1  San:    Yea .hh I think it'd be easier though, if we just
2          one person opens it an' shares screen.
3          △(3.6)
4  San:    △moves gaze towards left and down-->
5  San:    sss ((clicking sounds))
6  San:    [°(mm see this)°
7  Yan:    [°uh really long names° △
8  San:                        --->△
9          (3.4)
10 Jen:    Who will share the screen?
11 San:    I don't- I don't mind=
12 Yan:    =share the screen?
13        #*     (3.8)     #* (1.3)        #*     (1.2)    *#
14 Yan:    *head leans forward* head returns,,,*screen appears*
15        #fig.1          #fig.2          #fig.3          #fig.4
```



```
16 Yan:    Can you guys see that?
17 San:    Yeah
```

The sequence begins with Sandra's request that someone should share the screen, which is followed by a 3.6-second silence. Her first turn is designed as an FPP which implicates a next action of sharing the screen to be done in the SPP. But neither does Sandra select a specific next speaker nor articulate the request in an explicit way, which creates difficulties for the other speakers to identify who should speak next and what should be done. More importantly, by suggesting *'one person'* in the group share the screen, Sandra includes herself as one of the potential next speakers, so it is everyone in the group who has the possibility to speak rather than just the other non-native speaker (NNS) students. According to turn-taking rule 1(a) (Sacks et al., 1974), if the FPP is designed to select a next speaker, then the party selected is obliged to speak. However, Sandra's turn creates a situation where multiple respondents are responsible for a required action. By not self-selecting, Sandra forgoes the opportunity to speak

and leave the floor open, so the silence in line 3 is shared and co-created by all parties.

Next, Sandra and Yang speak simultaneously in a lowered voice (lines 6 and 7). The overlapping talk seems to be verbalisation of their inner state, and none of the turns from line 5 to 7 is relevant to the FPP. Since an FPP expects a SPP with the appropriate type of action to follow (Schegloff, 2007), the sequence is left unfinished because no one has yet produced a relevant action. The talk breaks down as another silence of 3.4 seconds occurs at line 9. In line 10, Jenny self-selects and asks a question, *who will share the screen*. This question initiates an insert repair sequence and is designed to repair the problem in speaker selection. More importantly, the way Jenny responds to the silence shows that she attends to the silence as an interactional problem rather than a technical issue. Specifically, the design of Jenny's turn shows that she is dealing with a problem in turn-taking, which may result from an ambiguity in speaker selection: an FPP requires someone to speak but does not designate a specific party, and no one self-selects.

Sandra, then, produces a response but does not repair the problem because a clear speaker-selection is still absent. By this point, the inserted repair sequence is complete and an SPP to Sandra's first FPP is relevant again, and then Yang self-selects to share the screen. It is Yang who finally completes the action that the FPP projects and brings the sequence to a possible completion. Moreover, his embodied conduct during the silence in line 13 shows that he is attending to the action of sharing the screen (see fig.1-3) . Specifically, as the screen shots show, Yang first moves his head closer to his computer before he returns to his initial posture and his screen appears, indicating that Yang is sorting out the technological functionality of sharing screen during the silence. This indicate that the silence in this extract may also be a result of the constrains provided by the technical affordances of Teams (Meredith, 2019), as interacting on Teams creates a need for negotiation in relation to sharing the screen and for navigating through the functionality of screen-sharing. Moreover, it is the task that requires the participants to read through the text on the screen, so some silences in this extract (e.g. line 3) may also be related to the nature of task. However, how the speakers attend to the silences in the subsequent turns shows that an interactional problem relating to misfired speaker-selection seems to be the most salient reason here.

 The sequence structure of this extract is demonstrated below.

San:	FPP base
	(silence)
	(unconnected talk)
	(silence)
Jen:	FPP insert
San:	SPP insert
Yan:	SPP base

As Hayashi (2013) notes, the technique of current-speaker-selects-next requires a combination of two basic practices: an FPP and some form of addressing. This extract shows that producing an FPP without addressing it to a specific speaker in multi-party interaction may create a problem. This is in line with the evidence in Nakane's (2006) study that students may not speak unless they are appointed as a next speaker. The silence may be a way of coping with this situation where no explicit cue is provided for who should speak and what to say (Nakane, 2005). Therefore, it would be reasonable to interpret the silences in extracts 4.2 as events locally constructed in the interaction rather than predetermined by broad sociological categories (e.g. cultural factors), which are commonly viewed as the causes of silence in multicultural classrooms in relevant literature (e.g. Choi, 2015). Moreover, in the case where a silence occurs after an FPP, it is not to be taken for granted that the silence is automatically attributable to the recipients. Specifically, the silences in extract 4.2 are not owned by the NNS students, because everyone in the group is selected as a possible next speaker and the NS is not speaking either. Thus, it is more reasonable to view the silence here as co-created by all parties in the group work.

The interview data shows that the native speaker, Sandra, interpreted that language barrier and personality may be factors for the NNS participants' silence in extract 4.2:

> Ah this I didn't even think about, because it's so typical. Like it- it happens pretty much all the time now. I don't know whether it's a language buffer or like a shyness? or a combination of both. But this is a classic example of what typically happens in most of my group work. I'll say something like guys why don't we talk about this, and then there'll be a bit of silence and then the brave one will speak up, or nobody will speak up.

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The two possible reasons that she proposed, *language buffer and shyness*, are centered on the NNS in this group. By referring to a language buffer, she perceived that the NNS participants need extra time to process what she said and work out what they should say because they are not native in English. She assumed that silence is attributed to limitations in the NNS participants' language abilities and personality. However, Jenny's practices in extract 4.2, i.e. attempting to sort out who should share the screen, suggests that the problem they are dealing with is more likely to be about turn allocation than language proficiency. In the extract below, Sandra continued to explain her silence in 4.2 is an intentional act to deal with the situation:

> Uh like I know from teaching, the (.) you shouldn't say somebody to do something and then immediately follow up. You have to give them response time. So usually whenever I – if I take the leader role or I kind of manage the group, if I ever I ask or do something, I try (.) and leave a couple of seconds between a question and response. I don't always do it, but I try to.

This statement suggests that she intentionally refrains from self-selecting to create an entry space for the other participants. In his study on lapses in conversation, Hoey (2020b) argues that speakers may conduct a variety of practices for self-deselection, as an alternative to self-selection, to remove themselves from the pool of possible next speakers and leave the floor to the other speakers. The data add to this finding and reveal that silence can function as a resource for self-deselection to cope with problems in speaker selection in multiparty interaction. Here, in remaining silent after her FPP, Sandra excludes herself from the range of possible next speakers and passes the floor to the remaining participants. This shows that silence in MGW can be a strategic resource that speakers resort to at points where speaker selection is ambiguous (Zhang, 2023).

The extract above suggests that Sandra uses the silence as a resource to wait for the other speakers to respond, and similarly, the Chinese students may be silent for the same purpose. In response to the researcher's question about the silence in extract 4.2, Yang reports below.

> 我可能，在等吧。在等谁想分享屏幕，因为我在打开文件，就……可能，我打开了文件也是在那里盯着，然后发现她们都在问，也没有人去分享屏幕，最后才点了分享屏幕。可能还是，还是比较被动，就是她说完之后我不能，我没有直接说我来，或者怎么样的。
> I was probably just waiting. Waiting for someone to share the screen, because I was

opening the file, and like... maybe I was just staring at the it after I opened it, and I found they were both asking and still no one would share the screen. So, I shared it at last. Maybe (I was) still a bit passive, because after what she said I didn't immediately say that I'd like to do it or something like this.

R= researcher   Y= Yang

R: 你觉得还有什么沟通交流上的问题吗？

 Is there any other problem with the interaction, in your opinion?

Y: 可能就是像我们中国学生的语言水平，我听了我的录像回放，我感觉自己说的好慢，自己就听不下去自己说的东西。就感觉会很奇怪，我也不知道外国同学是怎么忍受的。

Perhaps the English proficiency of us Chinese students. I listened to the recording, I felt that I talked so slow and I can't even stand listening to myself. It sounds very strange and I don't know how the foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates can even bear with it.

Yang's report about waiting for someone to share the screen supports the CA analysis that he was dealing with the ambiguity in speaker-selection. However, he then attributed the silence to his lack of initiative in responding, even though he was the one who actually shared the screen. He apparently overlooked the fact that Jenny was also a potential next speaker as he claimed the silence to his own. In the quote, Yang made a negative self-evaluation on his English-speaking as he described it as "*slow*" and "*strange*", while generalizing Chinese students' English proficiency as a problem in group work. He was concerned that his English may be viewed negatively by his native-speaking interlocutor; however, in the interview Sandra gave positive comments on Yang's participation. This reveals that Yang views himself as a vulnerable L2 speaker compared to the standard native English and he tends to associate problems in group work with his identity as an NNS. Similar evidence is documented in Liddicoat's (2016) study where the presence of NSs becomes a source of anxiety for NNSs. The examples show that the power of NSs is present in group work and an awareness of this inequality may have consequences on the NNSs' participation.

Extract 4.3 is taken from the same conversation involving the same participants. In this extract the participants are ending the conversation before they go back to the main seminar group.

Extract 4.3

```
1 San:    Yea? okay I'll send it to you now. U:m (0.7) Jason
2         just sent a message saying we need to go back. >Doz
```

```
3          anybody< wanna £speak£ ?
4          △(3.2) △
5 San:     △smiles△
6 San:     △coz I know he will ask.△
7 San:     △gazes down------------△
8          (2.5)
9 Yan:     Um mm maybe: (.) me? hhh.
10San:     Heh yeah? Okay
```

Sandra initiates an FPP which asks a question in line 2: *does anyone want to speak?* By asking this question, Sandra aims to arrange a representative speaker for an upcoming presentation in the seminar. Her FPP expects a response from Yang and Jenny but does not select anyone in particular. Then, there is a 3-second silence, and then Sandra continues and adds an increment to the FPP (Schegloff, 2016). The increment (line 6) provides a warrant for her FPP by suggesting that her action to designate a speaker is legitimate and designed for a reason (i.e. that their tutor will ask). This shows that she treats the absent of talk in line 4 as problematic and she attempts to repair it. In doing so, Sandra turns the silence to an intra-turn silence and relaunches the turn to create a new TRP in pursuit of a response (Pomerantz, 1984). The repair work shows that she perceives the problem as something about the form of her FPP, but it does not repair the problem in speaker-selection and silence continues for another 2.5 seconds. Next, Yang self-selects and produces a SPP which proposes himself as the speaker. Yang's SPP is made up of devices commonly used to delay a response: *um* tokens, a hedge *(maybe),* and a short pause (Davidson, 1984), before producing a meaningful TCU, *me,* yet with a rising intonation. All these above indicate a level of hesitation and uncertainty around producing the SPP. Then Sandra produces a SCT that accepts Yang's proposal and ends the sequence.

Although Sandra attends to the silence in 4.3 as a problem in her prior turn, a problem with the design of speaker-selection may also play a part here. Not allocating a particular speaker in a multi-party interaction can create difficulty for the recipients to identify who should speak next. And additionally, the online environment can add to the difficulty, as the speakers lack the proximity with each other and nonverbal resources that can be deployed to designate a next speaker in face-to-face contexts, such as eye gaze and gestures.

The interview extract below provides Sandra's explanation for her actions in extract 4.3.

So this is from months and months of experience. First of all, not preparing a designated speaker and also as a result of not choosing a designated speaker, there's an underlying assumption that I will do it. Because I hate silence. Um so before it, it was unwritten that it used to be like, okay group four who wants to say something. Silence. Silence. Silence. Okay Sandra says something. Um it repeated enough time so people just assume that I'll do it. And I got to this point where I was like I'm sick of it.

This extract illustrates a backstory behind what happens in 4.3. It was based on Sandra's observation that silence routinely occurs when the lecturer asks someone to present on behalf of the group, and she always ended up with speaking up if the silence persists. Sandra's behaviours project herself as a competent speaker, which along with her status as a native-speaker, have given rise to an assumption among other students that she is the default speaker for presentation. This reflects a stereotype in intercultural group work and a "standard native English mentality" (Zhao et al., 2021, p. 14) that NSs are more competent and legitimate speakers and are supposed to fill in silence. In this case, Sandra has anticipated the situation and designating someone else in advance is her way to cope with the imposed expectation to be the presenter. Although Sandra expressed strong dissatisfaction about the silence and being expected to speak up because of her status as a NS, she voiced in the following extract that it is reasonable and understandable for the NNS participants in the group to display hesitation and reluctance towards being selected as the presenter.

It's the whole idea of being a non-native speaker, if you're agreeing to be put on the spot, you don't wanna be like 'YEAH RIGHT THEN', you'd be like 'well ok I guess I will do it'. And it gives you like the three seconds of extra thinking time, about the decision you're about to make and the commitment you just made because obviously, there's action to say ok I'll do it. You've got to now do it. [...] Especially in a non-native language, to make something up on the spot, I totally get that.

This statement shows that Sandra recognised the silence in 4.3 as a result of anxiety that the NNS participants experienced in speaking a second language. This also reveals a sense of empathy and understanding that Sandra held towards her NNS peers, as she viewed their silence as acceptable because it can be challenging for the NNSs to speak up in a second language. In the next extract, Sandra further explained her motivation for her FPP that intends to allocate a speaker.

But as you saw, it wasn't "I'LL DO IT", it was "I guess I can do it then". So there's reluctance to it. I'm happy to do it, but I'm sick of like- I don't want to say 'I'll do it!', but I also don't want to not ask, because otherwise, nobody does it. And I don't want to say, guys can I speak? because then it makes it look like I want the attention. So, it's kind of like a <u>middle ground</u>↑, because normally somebody will end up saying it.

Here, Sandra voiced that she understands the reluctance that other participants may hold about speaking in class, yet she was also fed up with being assumed to be the speaker whenever there is silence. Therefore, the way in which Sandra designs her FPP in 4.3 is understood by her as a 'middle ground' to cope with the anticipated silence as well as the expectation imposed on her. By initiating a sequence to allocate a speaker for a future event, she resists the speakership and passes it to someone else. In other words, she speaks here in order to speak less later on. This shows how Sandra strategically deals with a stereotypical view about turn allocation by negotiating speakership with the other members, and this negotiation is also built on understanding and respect for the NNS members' feelings and struggles.

The following extracts are taken from the interview with the two NNS speakers in the group, Jenny and Yang. They recognized Sandra's intention to give the opportunity to them while expressing a lack of confidence in speaking.

反正我是觉得她是比较想把机会给我们吧，因为平时上课的时候基本上，老师有说过外国同学发言的次数太多了。所以我觉得她可能也是想把机会让给我们，让我们多说一点吧。

I think she wants to pass on the opportunity to us, because our lecturer has said that foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates have presented so many times in the class. So I think she probably wants to pass the opportunity to us and let us speak more. (Jenny)

Y= Yang R= researcher
Y: 我们要最后确定一个人要去发言，然后 Sandra 说完之后大家都沉默了，因为 Sandra 她自己的话发言太多次了。[...]然后我们两个中国学生的话，就更不倾向去发言，因为我会觉得很尴尬而且会害怕自己做不好，最后发现实在没办法了我就说，我来发言。

We were going to nominate a spokesperson at last, and after Sandra asked that everyone was silent, because she had spoken for so many times ... and for the two of us as Chinses students, we don't tend to speak, because I feel awkward and I'm

scared that I will not do well. If I don't have any choice then I'll say, I'll do it.

R: 其实你做的还是很好的，最后发现还是很好的，上次的时候。

 Actually you did pretty well, it turned out to be good last time.

Y: 但是听自己的英语表达觉得 Sandra 都不一定能听懂哈哈

 But when I listened to my own English I'm not even sure if Sandra can understand that haha.

These statements show that they both perceived Sandra's silence in extract 4.3 as legitimate on account of her participation in previous session, and thus it is reasonable for her to pass up the opportunity to speak. Yang also identified his apprehension about speaking English as what held him back from self-selecting in the first place. This matches with his hesitance in producing the response (line 9 in extract 4.3) and shows his anxiety about speaking plays a part in his silence (see 6.3 in chapter 6). He continued to elaborate on this idea in the following extract.

就...中国学生可能就比较被动没有人想回答。

我心里就会想谁来跳出来，尤其是英语特别好的，然后学习特别好的那种，他们会不会跳出来去做这个事情？然后心里也会考虑，如果最后都没有人跳出来，那是不是我就得出来说这个东西。

It seems that Chinese students are a bit passive and no one wants to answer.

I was thinking who will volunteer to speak, especially those who are very good at English and studying, will they volunteer to speak? I was also thinking if no one volunteers, should I step up and speak. (Yang)

Here, Yang generalised the lack of proactivity in participation to the entire Chinese cohort, which again reveals a tendency of self-deprecation and a stereotypical view of his own in-group. He further stated that he tended to wait for the more competent students to volunteer *(those who are very good at English and studying)* before considering himself. This is related to the standard native English mindset (Zhao et al., 2021) as he believed that students with better or native English proficiency have more legitimacy and power in terms of speaking up in class. It can be seen that the silence in 4.3 is related to a concern over a future event involving speaking up in the class. And this sort of concern stems from a NNS's self-positioning as an L2 speaker who has less legitimacy in using the language compared to the more capable or native-speaking counterparts.

4.1.2 Silence and withheld responses

The extracts so far demonstrate that one of the issues that the speakers deal with during silences after FPPs is a problem in speaker selection. In the following extracts, silences at the same position are related to responses being withheld due to some more complex issues. In extract 4.4, the participants are Kat, Lucy and Nina, although Nina is uninvolved in this segment of talk. They are working on an assignment about doing online interviews, and the sequence begins with Lucy sharing her ideas.

Extract 4.4
```
1 Luc:   An- and from my um: communication with my interviewee,
2        I- I I noticed that when I first ask a question that was
3        no (.) was not biased, and the interviewee's answer was
4        obviously toward the more negative part of her online
5        class experience. When I ask directly if there were any
6        good moment, mm the interviewee began to say about
7        something relevant something good. So: ↓yeah(h) huh huh
8        that's what I noticed.
9        (3.5)
10 Kat:  That's really interesting. (.) So that's about- I just
11       wanna make sure I understand it sorry, heh heh heh .hhh,
12       sorry (>I did(h)n't mean(h) th(h)at I ju(h)st wanna<)
13       So you're saying about the question the type of question
14       tha' you asked? so when you ask them more open question,
15       eh it gave us a certain type of answer? and when it was
16       slightly- you felt it was slightly more biased, they then
17       gave a different- style of answer?
```

Lucy initiates a telling FPP where she describes what she observes in the interviews (line 1-8). The stretched 'so', falling pitch and laughter tokens by the end of her turn indicate that she is approaching a possible completion and a speaker change is relevant. Yet, the talk falls into silence at line 9 when no one responds. The silence indicates there may be some problems in the talk so that the required action is delayed from being performed. Next, Kat produces a SPP starting with an assessment of Lucy's turn in the first TCU: *that's really interesting*. The assessment aligns with the trajectory of Lucy's FPP, showing that the 3.5-second silence is not a foreshadow of a dispreferred response but some other problems. One possibility is a problem in speaker selection, that is, no one is obliged to speak at this position because no one is selected. The absence of talk occurs here because neither 'current selects next' or 'self-selection' is

exercised at a TRP (Sacks et al., 1978).

Next, Kat reformulates her turn and provides a warrant for the prior silence (*I just wanna make sure I understand)*, which indicates that the silence is also relevant to a problem with understanding. The warrant is then followed by a question which consists of a candidate understanding of Lucy's turn. In doing so, Kat initiates a repair sequence in order to solve the problem of understanding, and the repair is done by inviting Lucy to confirm her candidate understanding. The sequence structure from line 1 to line 17 is presented below.

Luc: FPP (telling)

    (silence)

Kat: SPP (acceptance) + warrant for silence + FPP (repair)

It is worth noting that in stating the problem, Kat first provides a warrant with multiple apologies (*sorry*) and laughter tokens *(heh heh heh)* (line 11), before she reproduces her talk along with laughter. The series of laughter recasts her previous TCU *(I just want to make sure I understand)* as humorous. However, there is little notably laughable related to her turn and she is actually introducing a trouble in the talk. In troubles talk, a laughing trouble-teller is exhibiting what Jefferson (1984) calls 'trouble-resistance', which means that the speaker intends to manage the situation by exhibiting a good spirit that the trouble is not taken seriously. Here, Kat employs laughter to mitigate the potential tension that may result from her action of stating a misunderstanding. It is also important to note that her statement about problems in understanding is done by providing a candidate answer for checking, instead of asking for a repeat directly. A possible explanation is that Kat perceives it as potentially problematic and face-threatening to raise this to Lucy, because the problem may be linked to an implied criticism on Lucy's language ability as a L2 speaker.

Furthermore, the design of Kat's SPP is also relevant to her identity as the only NS in the group. The apologies and laughter suggest an underlying concern that revealing the understanding problem may imply criticism on Lucy's English proficiency. This sort of concern is expressed by Kat in the extract below.

> I didn't understand what she was really talking about, so I was desperately trying to work out what I could say. I remember very specifically thinking, oh gosh, I don't really

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know what you're trying to say with this, but I don't feel like- that's not something I would say. I would never say that to Lucy because I was trying to like- you can see her face that she is smiling and she's engaged and I really want it to be how she is talking in the group.

This extract confirms that Kat was having a problem with understanding but she hesitated to bring this up. She pointed out that she would never reveal the issue *(I don't really know what you're trying to say)* explicitly to Lucy because she was worried that it could affect Lucy negatively. This shows an awareness of a potential asymmetry of power in interaction between NS and NNS. Liddicoat (2016) notes that the native speakers hold a power over and a legitimacy in language use. The power of NS can be manifested through evaluation of the NNSs' linguistic production, and an awareness of NSs' power may affect how NNSs participate in interaction (e.g. knowing that they may be evaluated by NSs may impede the NNSs' willingness to speak). Here, Kat is aware of her potential power over the interaction and the impact that this power may have on Lucy. As a result, her language use is shaped by an awareness of the power difference. Specifically, she employs apologies and laughter as a mitigation to counteract her potential power.

In the next extract, Kat further commented on how the concern about power differences shape her actions in the conversation.

I think, with our other member, it was slightly more difficult. Her English wasn't as good. And so it was slightly harder for us to understand. But this is where I think, I didn't want to be patronizing, but also I wanted to make sure, so this is where I feel like in the, what I would call <u>flex</u> my style compared to what I'm used to.

Here, Kat associated her understanding problem with Lucy's lack of English proficiency. However, she decided to reveal this issue implicitly by "*flexing her style*" because otherwise she may sound patronizing and could jeopardize the rapport in the group. This shows that she was not only aware of power difference between her and her NNS counterparts but also intended to avoid a face-threatening event and maintain the harmony in group, which then results in the use of euphemism and hedges in her language. Therefore, the silence in extract 4.4 indicates not only a problem with understanding, but also a delayed response in dealing with a social concern over the power inequalities between NS and NNS.

Extract 4.5 shows how the talk develops after extract 4.4. The same participants continue with their discussion of doing interviews, and just before 4.5, Kat asks Lucy a question about what Lucy just said (see line 17 in extract 4.4).

Extract 4.5
```
18 Luc:    Yea and I think for this interviewee, the negative a-
19         aspect of he- of her online uh: class experience, is-
20         are more obvious.
21         △(1.0)  △
22 Kat:    △nodding△
23 Luc:    Can you understand yea(h)? or- or maybe she is more
24         willing to talk about this negative part
25         △(1.8)           △+ (2.0)
26 Kat:    △scratches nose△
27 Luc:    Hhh. huh
28 Kat:    [Did you-
29 Nin:    [Do you mean the wa:y(.) we ask question might lead
30         the interviewee to a specific direction that may
31         undermine their own opinions?
```

In response to Kat's question, Lucy produces a reformulation of her initial statement (line 18-20). A silence occurs in line 21, and Kat displays attentiveness in listening by nodding during the silence, but no verbal response is given. Next, Lucy self-selects and initiates a question to check understanding. The question shows that the prior turn is designed to require a response and she treats the absence of response as accountable. By producing another reformulation of her turn after the question as a repair, she treats the silence in line 21 as resulting from a problem of understanding, recasting the issue Kat brings up in extract 4.4. However, no one responds and the talk lapses into silence in line 25. The silence along with Kat's nonverbal action shows that there may be an underlying difficulty in producing the response.

Next, Lucy produces two laughter particles to fill in the silence but does no substantive talk to repair it. By laughing, Lucy displays recognition of the state of talk (Schegloff, 1982), while taking the absence of response in a light-hearted way (Jefferson, 1984). As Jefferson et al. (1977) point out, "laughter is an indexical phenomenon" (p.12); that is, it routinely refers to something else as the referent, or the laughable. Specifically, when laughter is heard as referring

to some preceding talk, it usually immediately follows the referent (Schenkein, 1972). In extract 4.5, however, there is no recognisable laughable in Lucy's preceding turn and the laughter is done only after the silence, showing that the referent of laughter is the silence rather than her utterance. This suggests that the silence is heard by Lucy as meaningful and somewhat laughable. Moreover, the laughter may also serve to mitigate the potential embarrassment of no one responding (Adelswärd, 1989), while relaunching the TRP to signal that speaker change is relevant.

In the next turn, the laughter is not ratified by the other speakers through shared laughter; instead, the other speakers decline to laugh by responding to Lucy's prior turn in a serious way (Glenn, 2003). Kat and Nina start simultaneously but Kat gets cut off by Nina. The onset of Kat's TCU (*Did you)* and Nina's turn reveal that both of them intend to initiate similar action; that is, a question checking their understanding of Lucy's prior talk. This suggests that the silence in line 25 is related to a problem of understanding and projects a forthcoming 'no' answer. There is no overt response to Lucy's FPP but both Nina and Kat's actions indicate that the answer should have been negative. The actual no response has been withheld, as Nina reported below.

> *((Researcher plays the recording of extract 4.5))*
>
> R: 刚才这一段，不知道你是否有注意到，在 Lucy 说完之后有一段小小的沉默，那我想问一下在这个时候发生了什么？
>
> In this extract, don't know if you have noticed, there is a bit of silence after Lucy's talk. So may I ask what is going on here?
>
> N: [...] 我当时应该是在想如何挽救这个对话，因为你不知道对方在说什么之后，你没法给予回应。然后我觉得中国人的 context 就是那种，如果你说你没有听懂对方的话，那可能因为这是一个英语环境嘛，就会直接地指向这个人的英语表达能力不好，是个 offensive 的东西，然后我可能就不会直接说我没有听懂你讲什么。
>
> I was thinking how I can fix this conversation, because if you don't know what she is talking about, you can't give a response. And I think in a context where we were both Chinese, if you say you don't understand what she is talking about in an English-speaking context, it will be directly pointing out that her English communicative skills aren't good. And this can be offensive, so I won't say directly that I don't understand what you say.

According to Nina, a 'no' response that suggests inability to understand may be taken as a

negative judgement on Lucy's English proficiency, so her silence can be an indirect way of saying 'I don't understand' to avoid the offensiveness that may result from the verbal response. As Shegloff (2007) notes, sometimes dispreferred responses may not be done vocally because the parties may work together to avoid a sequence with a dispreferred response. The silence in line 25 is co-created by both Kat and Nina to withhold a dispreferred SPP that may create a face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Resonating with Spencer-Oatey & Kadar's (2021) finding that silence can be a form of proactive politeness strategy in maintaining smooth relations and managing rapport interculturally, this extract indicates that silence may play a role in maintaining harmony in MGW. In this case, the silence can be a strategic move in withholding a direct 'no' response and mitigating the negative effect it may have on interaction.

4.2 Silence Treated as a Form of Response

As previously analysed, extract 4.3 and 4.5 demonstrate how the first speakers pursue a response when silence occurs after the FPP, and in doing so they orient to the silence as accountable and problematic. In other cases, however, the speakers may not continue speaking in pursuit of a response, and instead they treat the silence as unproblematic and let the response remain unarticulated (Pomerantz, 1984). In extract 4.6, Ellen appears to be the only one speaking but there are three other interlocuters: Anna, May and Lina. The participants are working on a list of tasks in a linguistics class. Just prior to the following exchange, Ellen has produced a candidate answer to one of the tasks.

Extract 4.6
```
1 Ell:     Yea, that seems right to me. >Doz anyone have< any
2          thoughts? ((typing))
3          (5.4)
4 Ell:     Okay, perfect. °Uh:°
5          (4.0)
6 Ell:     °(we) go°, it's bit of a tricky one that I think mm
```

In the first TCU, Ellen produces an assessment on her just prior turn *(that seems right)*, which signals that her talk on this subject is possibly complete and she is ready to close the sequence. Next, she initiates a question *(does anyone have any thoughts)*. This question works as a topic initial elicitor (TIE) (Button& Casey, 1984), which is a device used to generate new topics

while also orienting to a closing. In response to the TIE, the next speaker may either introduce new talk or pass up the opportunity to speak. Here, using this question, Ellen checks if other members have something more to talk about while also orienting to a closing. But no one responds and there is a silence of over 5 seconds. By not speaking, the other speakers self-deselect from becoming a next speaker, which is heard as passing up the opportunity to speak (Hoey, 2020b). Next, Ellen produces a sequence closing third (SCT) *(Okay perfect)* as a receipt and it shows that Ellen interprets the silence as a rejection to her TIE, so a closing of the attempt to elicit further mentionables is relevant. The 5.4-second silence at 3 is not treated by Ellen as problematic but as a meaningful "no" response, which does the job of a verbal SPP. The sequence structure of this extract is presented below.

Ell: FPP

          (silence) SPP

Ell: SCT

Extract 4.6 shows that silence after an FPP can be treated as a form of SPP on its own, which suggests that the silence could be a meaningful signpost in some contexts. The topic eliciting FPP seems to be a key element of context, as the silence is not treated as problematic when the speaker is closing down a sequence. The silence may be co-created by the recipients for many reasons, but most importantly, the NS, Ellen is not speaking here either, and the silence is extended to a rather long one which is not repaired by Ellen or any of the speakers. In the interview, Ellen commented on this instance as below.

> *((Researcher plays the recording of extract 4.6))*
> R: What would be your immediate impression on what is happening here?
> E: [...] I asked a question, no one has anything to add. I didn't push it, because pushing it to me didn't feel necessary. It was one of the things where I want to give people the choice to go on the floor. [...] So, I'm glad that in that case I sort of said, does anyone have anything to add, no, okay, fine by me. Just went on with it. Gave them chance, didn't move on immediately, and then move on. [...] It doesn't bother me at <u>all</u> if people are like that, because sometimes we just don't have anything to say and that's okay.

This quote shows a recognition of silence as a response of "no" from the other participants in the group, which supports the analysis above. She held a positive attitude towards it as she accepted it as something that could happen to anyone *(sometimes people don't have anything*

to say) rather than ascribing it to individual attributes or competence. Moreover, she chose to allow the silence to be extended because she tried to "*give them chance and not move on immediately*", which indicates that the silence was allowed by her, more or less intentionally, to create some response time for the other speakers to join in the conversation. Therefore, silence does not only convey meanings in group work but can also be allowed consciously to create entry space and wait for responses in some contexts.

While Ellen perceived the silence as meaningful response for no, the NNS participants, Lina and May, provided a different explanation:

> 我觉得我们现在这个表情有两种可能性，一种是我们真的觉得就是那个答案了，另一种是我们还不知道她到底在说什么，然后沉默只是表示我们在想她在说什么，然后她以为，嗯大家认可了。但是大家还是很懵的状态，因为我也看不出来我们是不是认可，但是我觉得如果大家没有很明显的点头的话，可能是我们还是思考这件事情。
> I think there might be two possible explanations for our expressions here. One is that we did agree on her answer, and the other one is we didn't know what she was talking about, and the silence is just because we were thinking about what she was trying to say. And she believed that, ok they agree, but we were actually quite confused, because I can't tell whether we agreed or not. But I think if we didn't nod, obviously, maybe we were still thinking about what she said earlier. (Lina)

> 其实是我给个人没有给出回应的原因是我并没有听懂她在说什么。因为 Ellen 她个人说过她非常喜欢语言学，有的时候她在小组讨论中提出的概念对我们来说是有一些超前的。我们可能还没有接触过的概念，所以当她有的时候提出解释的时候，我们可能根本没有明白她在说什么，所以从我这边是我还在尝试理解她所描述的内容，所以我会没有办法及时给到她答复，因为我没有很明白她说的东西。
> Actually, I didn't respond because I didn't understand what she was talking about. Because Ellen has said she personally likes linguistics very much, and sometimes she brings up some concepts that are very advanced to us and we don't know of. So, sometimes when she gave an explanation, we didn't really understand her. From my perspective, I was trying to process what she just described, so I couldn't provide a prompt response because I didn't quite understand what she said. (May)

In the extracts above, both Lina and May expressed that they were silent because of difficulties in understanding what Ellen was talking about. May further explained that the difficulty is

relevant to a gap between their background knowledge in this module and Ellen's, and therefore, they could not catch up on some of the unfamiliar concepts involved in her talk. This indicates a mismatch between their explanation and Ellen's interpretation earlier, while Ellen believes that they are silent because they agree and have nothing more to add, Lina and May reveal that the real issue could be a problem with understanding. The problem, however, was not brought up in the conversation by either of them and the silence was taken by Ellen as a sort of decline to initiate a new topic in the sequence. But the silence is actually related to the content before Ellen's TIE. This further reveals the difficulty for speakers to interpret others' silence on the spot and they are likely to hold different understanding of each other's practices in group work.

The following extracts 4.7 and 4.8 demonstrate more explicitly how silence is strategically used by the same speaker in 4.6 to create opportunities for the other speakers to speak.

Extract 4.7

```
3 Ell:    we all here. ↓So let's get started. (.) uh so
4         let- >we're lookin at< set two, and we gotta
5         describe it in the- the style of the metapho:r
6         in set two describes blank in terms of blank. So,
7         do we have any thoughts immediately lookin a'
8         that one?
9         +(2.0)#*(2.5)                *(1.5)      #*(1.0)    *
10 Lin:        *very subtle head-shakes*              *curls lips*
11 Ann:   +gazes at screen, hand touches one ear------------>>
```

#fig.1   #fig.2

```
12 Ell:   I think it's definitely in terms of movement,+ an
13 Ann:                                      ------------>+
14        specifically picking things up'n putting things
15        down, I'm not sure what type of movement that
16        would be called?   [Uh:m
17 Ann:                      [Yeah °(exactly)°
```

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In this extract, the speakers are working on a task that asks them to discuss the use of metaphor in a list of sentences. The first speaker, Ellen, summarises the question and then initiates a question FPP to ask the others speakers in the group whether they have any ideas. The use of *we* selects everyone in the group as possible next-speakers. Her question *(do we have any thoughts)*, again, works as sort of a TIE which opens up an opportunity for everyone in the group to mention something on this subject. However, different from a conventional TIE that is used after there has been considerable on-topic talk and one has nothing else to mention, Ellen uses the TIE at the very start of the sequence, even before stating her idea. This indicates an inclination and priority to let the other members speaker first. Next, no one responds in the next 7 seconds until Ellen self-selects in line 10. During the silence, Lina shakes her head almost imperceptibly and then curls her lips downwards (see fig.2). Ann is gazing at screen with one hand on her ear and seems to be pondering over something. Their embodied conducts indicate a 'no' response to Ellen's TIE, and their silence is treated by Ellen as no one having anything to mention, so she moves on to provide her answer in line 12.

Here, both the recipients' nonverbal conducts during the silence and initiator's response to the silence show that they attend to the silence not as any problem dealing with the technology or interaction, but as an alternative form of verbal response. The silence in this extract also relates to the nature of task being undertaken, as the participants need to read the examples or ponder on the question silently at some point to complete the task.

In the interview, Ellen expressed clearly that she designed the turn with an aim to hand out an opportunity to the other speakers:

> I think quite clearly, I had something to say, but my priority was seeing if anyone else wanted to add anything first. When that didn't happen, when no one was like, oh me me I've got something to say, I decided to then, the way I think about it is sort of the way a teacher guides a conversation. (...) I opened the floor, and when no one could think of anything, no one had anything to say, I then said my piece and got the conversation going.

Ellen's statement demonstrates a willingness to pass on the speakership even though she has had something to say. It shows her self-awareness of an unequal level of participation between her and the other members and a recognition of the silence as a sign of the other speakers not

being given enough chance to speak. Driven by this awareness, she initiated the question to encourage the other speakers to speak and even allowed extended silence to wait for a response. This illustrates how Ellen attempted to reduce her control over the conversation by extending the transition relevance place. Moreover, she described the way in which she guided the conversation (e.g. restating the question and eliciting responses) as teacher-like, which can be seen as an employment of a teacher's voice. Sometimes in conversation, speakers may adopt different voices to achieve certain communicative aims in given situation (Madsen, 2014). As Bailey (2007) argues that "to speak is to position oneself in the social world", by producing her FPP in 4.7, Ellen positions herself as a teacher-like role in the group in order to encourage the other participants to speak. Silence in this context, therefore, could be provided by a dominant speaker in the group as a way to divert his/her control and pass up opportunities to speak (see 6.1 in chapter 6 for further discussion on group dynamics).

In extract 4.8, the same speaker, Ellen, allows silence to continue in a more overt way.

Extract 4.8

```
20 Ell:    Uh:m (.) What d' we think it describes h'we got
21         any ideas?
22         (1.6)
23 Ell:    think I migh've got one I just don't want to
24         dominate the conversation so, if someone has any
25         idea, please go ahead.
26         △(5.7)                     △+(4.5)
27 Ell:    △lifts bottle and drinks△,,,,,,
28 Ell:    No ideas? No uh no ideas *at all? +That's fine.
29 Lin:                             *shakes head--------->
30 Ann:                                      +chuckles--->
31 Ell:    (.) u:m*+ (.) so ( ) I dunno. Uh:m my my thought
32 Lin:       -->*
33 Ann:        -->+
```

Extract 4.8 is taken from the same group work session in the linguistics class and the participants are working on another task. Ellen initiates another TIE-like question to the group in the first turn to see if anyone has any ideas to contribute and, again, selects everyone as a possible next speaker. Her first FPP expects a "yes" response but no one speaks and a 2-second

silence occurs. In line 23, Ellen produces an increment to her FPP where she explicitly passes up an opportunity to speak to the other speakers *(if someone has any idea, please go ahead)*. She also provides a warrant for the silence that happens prior to this turn and silence that may occur after it *(I just don't want to dominate the conversation)*. This means she deliberately allows the silence to continue in order to wait for a response from other speakers despite that she has something to say.

Ellen's second turn in line 23 marks a change in her epistemic stance. Epistemic stance is the way in which epistemic status, that is, access to knowledge, is constructed in the talk (Heritage, 2013b). The design of the initial question constructs the epistemic stance of everyone in interaction as equally disputable, that is, anyone may or may not have an idea. But as she produces the second turn in line 23*(I might have got an idea),* she claims a more knowing stance about the question. Stivers and Rossano (2010) argue that one of the turn-design resources to mobilise responses is recipient-tilted epistemic asymmetry, which means the recipient knows something that the speaker does not. However, here Ellen creates a speaker-tilted epistemic asymmetry as she acknowledges that she has an answer in the next TCU, so it seems to be interactionally problematic to require a response because Ellen positions herself as more knowing.

Then, Ellen takes up another activity of drinking when she temporarily disengages from the talk. At this point, no other speakers self-selects and the silence lasts for more than 10 seconds. Ellen's nonverbal action fills in the silence and warrants her absence of speech. As Hoey (2020a) notes, the act of drinking can serve as 'a visible display of current or pending non-speakership (p. 104). Ellen's action of drinking here is a sort of auto-involvement that directs herself as a non-next speaker and pass up the opportunity to speak. In line 28, Ellen initiates two further question *(no ideas? no ideas at all?)*. The design of the questions shows that she understands the silence as a "no" and thus she reformulates the form to allow an agreement. The questions modified the preference organization in the original FPP and now project a "no" answer (Davidson, 1984). Immediately following this, Lina and Anna both produce some nonverbal actions (head-shake and chuckle) in response to Ellen's question, suggesting a "no" response. Their embodied actions can be seen as an SPP to Ellen's FPP and they come early because they are agreeing to her reformulated questions. Then, Ellen produces an acceptance token *(that's fine)* to the nonverbal response and moves on to present her ideas. This exchange demonstrates more explicitly how Ellen allows silence to extend as a strategic move to pass on opportunities

to speak and to draw a verbal response from the other speakers. It also shows that silence can be co-constructed as a meaningful response, i.e. an alternative form of SPP.

From the perspective of Ellen, she explained that the action in 4.8 was associated with a concern about her social positioning in the group and a fear of being perceived as dominant.

> Again, it's that fear of dominating. I think by this point especially I started to notice that I did it quite a lot. And it's that big sort of social concern about it. I'm terrified of that. I don't want to do that at all. I want people to, as I said, I want people to be part of the conversation. I don't think my opinion is any more valuable that anyone else's.

This quote reveals a recognition of her potential dominant position in the conversation. In the meantime, she also displayed strong concern over its consequence and an intention to resist this tendency. By eliciting and waiting for responses, she intends to reduce her potential control over the interaction and to maintain equal participation. The extended silence after her FPP can be considered as a device to wait for responses and pass on opportunities to speak, and in passing on the speakership Ellen attempts to shift her power to the other parties. Nevertheless, her action inevitably acknowledges an advantage in answering and positions herself as a more knowledgeable speaker in the group, which results in asymmetries in the power relation between her and the other participants in terms of legitimacy to speak. As one of the NNS participants, Lina commented that

> 像 Ellen 这种就属于比较 leader 的那种感觉，就是跟她交流我就更倾向于是那个倾听者的角色。... 如果我和她在一个小组，我说完一个观点之后，我会有一种感受就是我会想去寻求她的肯定认可。就是我觉得她特别厉害，如果她觉得我的想法是对的就会挺给人自信的。I feel that Ellen is like a leader to us. When I'm talking to her I would tend to be a listener... If I'm put in a group with her, after I present my idea, I feel like I'd like to seek an approval and confirmation from her. I think she is so good at this, and if she thinks I'm right it will give me confidence.

This extract shows that Lina perceives Ellen as not only a more knowledgeable peer but also someone with more power in the conversation. As she expressed that she is prone to be a listener interacting with Ellen, the silence may be a sign of respect that she holds for the authority (Tatar, 2005). This shows that silence in group work may be relevant to students'

social positioning of themselves and other members as well as the group dynamics. The next extract, taken from the interview with another NNS participant, May, reveals that the presence of a more competent and articulate NS student may have impact on her willingness to speak.

> 我们可能会默认觉得 Ellen 她会处在一个说话比较多的位置，所以我们会默认觉得她应该先说一点什么。就是会觉得她对这个问题的观点应该比较多，就会去等着她而不是我们主动地说一些我们的观点。... 特别是在我们都知道 Ellen 比较擅长这门课的时候，我们都希望她能够说出答案，这样我们就不用参与很多。
>
> We tend to assume that Ellen plays a role as someone who speaks a lot, so we consider it as the default setting that she should have something to say first. (We) thought she may have lots of ideas on this question, so we'd rather wait for her to speak than present our own ideas... Especially as we know that Ellen is good at this module, we all hope that she could tell us the answer and we don't have participate a lot.

Similarly, May also perceives Ellen as someone who is more knowledgeable and powerful in the group. As a result, she tends to rely on Ellen to speak first instead of presenting her own thoughts. The presence of a more powerful individual may have diminished her willingness to participate. Moreover, she also expressed a sense of incapability in the module and a lack of initiative, which may have also resulted in her silence. The previous extracts reveal that the NNS participants, Lina and May, tend to refrain from speaking due to the presence of a more knowledgeable NS speaker (see Chapter 6.1 for extended discussion).

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed how instances of silence arise after FPPs in multi-party interaction and how they get interpreted and managed by the participants. The findings reveal that silences in multicultural group work are not necessarily problematic but can be meaningful and a strategic resource to facilitate the progress of interaction and an equal participation among speakers in some interactional environments (Zhang, 2023). The nature of silence in educational contexts has been widely devalued and simplified. Although existing research calls for respect for silence and suggests a range of reasons behind it, including cultural and contextual constraints and politeness strategies (Chanock, 2010; Remedios et al., 2008; Nakane, 2007; Wang et al., 2022), the positive sides of silence in moment-by-moment talk are largely overlooked and underestimated.

The chapter argues from a conversation analytic perspective that silence is adaptable and multifaceted in its nature and serves indespensible functions for the ongoing interaction in group work. Firstly, silence can signal interactional problems which call for repair work to be provided by interlocutors to sustain the continuity of interaction. Examples from the interactional data illustrate that silence may result from a variety of situated problems with the turn-taking system. Particularly, FPPs that fail to allocate speakership to a precise speaker in group interaction can typically give rise to silence at this very sequential location. This can be inevitably related to a lack of nonverbal resources in the online environment, and the affordances of the virtual platform and the task being undertake may also generate silence to some extent. Consistent with what Ha and Li (2014) suggest, silence is fluid with multilayered meanings, the finding shows that silence requires tailored interpretations with regards to the contexts and it is by no means attributable to a fixed group of students or a universal explanation.

Secondly, it is found in the data that speakers are believed to have unequal access to the language (e.g. NS is preceived to have greater legitimacy over the NNS), and silence can be used by the NS as a strategic resource to promote equal access to floors in group work. This was demonstrated in extracts 4.2 and 4.3, where Sandra passes up the chance to speak; and in extracts 4.7 and 4.8, where Ellen resists an opportunity to self-select but passes it to the other members by extending silences after topic initial elicitors. Simialar evidence is found in Taylor's (2020) study, where a teacher willingly extends interactional silence as a humanising practice to hold space for her student. The nature of silence in this case is supportive rather than obstructive to the interaction, which indicates the speaker's intention to maintain equal participation and relationship beween members by reducing control over the floor. Hence, silence in group work can reflect students' active choice and agency to negotiate their partipation (Wang et al., 2022), and therefore it needs to be recognised as a valid component of communication equal to speech.

The interview data suggest that participants tend to hold different interpretations of each other's practices in relation to silence, and that mismatches of perspectives exist in multicultual group work, but they are not necessarily conflicting. Instead, the participants are developing awareness and multual respect for differences between their culture and identities while they work together to maintain rapport in group work. For example, Kat (in extract 4.4) described how she flexed her style in order to avoid pointing out an issue related to a non-native member's

English proficiency; similarly, Sandra (extract 4.3) expressed understanding of the NNS members' silence and actively coped with the issue by establishing a "middle ground". This finding contrasts with previous studies that document conflicts between local and international students due to cultural differences and stereotypical views (Du & Hansen, 2005; Turner, 2009) and suggests that differences in perceptions and styles can facilitate self-reflection and improve intercultural communicative skills (Poort et al., 2019).

Furthermore, evidence shows that participants' actions in group work are relavant to how they perceive their identities as NS/NNS and the power difference between them. Although the NSs seem to have more control over the management of interaction, they may display resistance to their dominance and attempt to reduce control by engaging the NNS members in conversation (e.g. extracts 4.7 and 4.8). In line with the finding in Zhao et al. (2021) that a "proactive director" and a native English mentality may impede participation in group work, the data also show that the presence of a competent NS member in the group may lead to a false assumption and self-devaluation among the NNS participants that they are the less legitimate speakers in the group, and as a result, they may refrain from self-selecting. Overall, the findings in this chapter are against the view that divides and differentiates students' practices and perceptions in MGW based on their cultural backgrounds, for example, collectivism vs. individualism culture, and instead indicate that participants can employ available linguistic resources, including silence, to negotiate participation and manage relationship in intercultural encounters.

Chapter 5 Silences after SPPs and Their Resolutions

The preceding chapter has discussed how silences after FPPs are treated and managed by speakers in MGW. Different from the silences between adjacency pairs, silences after SPPs are often unaccountable if the current action initiated by the FPP is completed and no next speaker is selected at the TRP (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In fact, silences regularly occur at the end of an action or a sequence of actions in talk-in-interaction (Hoey, 2020a). However, in institutional contexts (e.g. classroom interaction), talk is often goal-oriented and interlocutors are constrained in terms of what to contribute and when to depart from the conversation (Heritage, 2005). For example, speakers in group work are generally expected to maintain a state of talk until the discussion is terminated by the tutor. In this case, lengthened silences at the end of an SPP or a completed action can become interactionally awkward when the speakers are not permitted to exit the conversation, and they may seek to avoid discontinuity and lapses in talk by minimising the silences. This chapter[4] focuses on the ways in which speakers manage to resume the continuity of talk after silences at SPPs and the resources for dealing with them. Specifically, I will examine two linguistic tokens typically used at turn-initial positions (Heritage, 2013c) for exiting silences: 'okay so (5.1) and 'and' (5.2). I also discuss five other strategies in 5.3, including topic announcement, announcing no-more-mentionable, action recycling, back referencing, and checking for new task items.

5.1 Turn-initial 'okay so'

In analysing the conversation in group work, a pattern has been identified that many instances of silences after SPPs are resolved by a next turn beginning with the initial token 'okay so'. Here, 'okay so' together may function as a discourse marker but it does something more than the standalone 'okay' and 'so'. Discourse markers refer to linguistic items, often placed at the beginning of utterances, that indicate the connection between an utterance and the discourse context (Schiffrin, 2001). The interactional data indicate that participants can use 'okay so' to preface a range of TCUs in a turn after silences to implement various actions. It is observed that turn-initial 'okay so' in the data is typically used to initiate three main types of actions in the following TCU(s), including launching an incipient agenda, setting up new topics and

---

[4] It should be noted that the analysis in this chapter does not draw on any data from the interviews because the interviews were conducted before the analysis, and the interviews did not involve topics in relation to the findings discussed in this chapter.

introducing upshots of preceding talk (Bolden, 2009; Raymond, 2004). These functions of 'okay so' will be illustrated respectively in the following sections.

5.1.1 'Okay so' and incipient agendas

It can be seen in the data that 'okay so', as a turn-initial marker after silences, is often followed by a series of TCUs to achieve some sorts of actions. That is, 'okay so' should not be understood as a standalone turn or unit of talk, and it is what comes after it that may shape its function in managing silence. One typical type of utterance that may follow 'okay so' is one about the 'task' on which the interaction in group work is built. For example, in extract 5.1[5], the task for the group work is articulated verbatim by one of the members right at the beginning of conversation.

Extract 5.1

```
           ((at 16 seconds into the conversation))
1   San:    >( ) about twenty minutes<. Uhm alright we need to
2           do two things,(0.8)uh:: go back to theory an then
3           come up with issues and reflections.
```

Extract 5.1 is taken from a group interaction between Sandra, Jenny and Yang on a research methods seminar. The participants are expected to accomplish a task through their discussion and it can be seen from Sandra's turn that the task for this group consists of two elements: one about theory and another dealing with issues and reflections (lines 2-3). To complete the task, the participants are also required to read and analyse several excerpts of an interview transcript. Since the task requirement is restated by Sandra at the beginning of the conversation, it establishes shared knowledge among the members about what the task is and that the task is considered as a central goal for the group work. Thus, topics of the task can be regarded as a 'core activity' of the conversation (Bolden, 2008, p. 304). Bolden (2009) refers to this kind of topic as an incipient interaction agenda, which is an action/project that has been raised previously in the talk or recognised as on agenda for some time. After extract 5.1, the conversation in this group develops as follows.

Extract 5.2

---

[5] See extract 4.2 in chapter 4 for a fuller transcript of extract 5.1.

((Yang is sharing his screen and transcript of 'interview excerpt 1' appears on the screen))

```
1    Yan:    Oka::y let's move to the first (0.8) first one?
2            (2.0)
3    San:    Yeah.
4            (4.2)
5    Yan:    △Hmm.#
6    San:    △moves gaze down to her notes-->
                 #fig.1
```


#fig.1

```
7            (1.7)△           (1.0)           #△
8    San:    ---->△...returns gaze to screen△
                               #fig.2
```


#fig.2
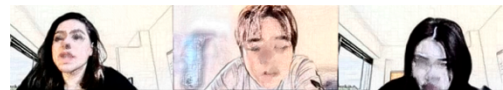
```
9    San:    >Okay so< the first bit we wanna do is com'back to
10           theory >so be an analyst<, so tryin- like (1.6)
11           quickly read through them and see if ther's anything
12           that comes up in common?
13   Jen:    Yes.
```

As the group proceeds with the task, one of the speakers, Yang, shares his screen which displays the document with the interview transcript they are working on. Yang's FPP in line 1 initiates a proposal sequence which makes talking about the first excerpt sequentially relevant. Here, the proposal is designed with hesitation markers (e.g., repetition and pause) (see, e.g. Gilquin, 2008) and a rising intonation contour, indicating some uncertainty about the proposed action. The design of this FPP shows that it not only expects an acceptance of the proposal to be produced immediately, but it also entails a future action, that is, topical talk about the first excerpt, to happen after the acceptance (Asmu & Oshima, 2012). After a 2-second silence, Sandra provides an acceptance which displays willingness to comply with the proposal (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1987), and topical talk of the excerpt is due as a next action. However, no one self-selects to implement the action and a 4.2-second silence occurs in line 4. The silence suggests a delay in completing the action that the proposal requires. Next, Yang produces a *hmm* token which acknowledges Sandra's acceptance, it fills the silence but does

no substantial action and selects no next speaker. The *hmm* token is "a minimal something when something is due", that is, it does no more than showing "nominal engagement" in the ongoing activity (Hoey, 2020a, p.72). In this way, Yang passes on the opportunity to self-select to the other parties. As no one self-selects, the silence extends.

In lines 6 to 8, Sandra is engaged in note-checking during the first 1.7 second and then returns her gaze back to the screen slightly before producing a next turn (see fig.1-2). By gazing back at the screen, she makes mutual gaze with her interlocutors possible and at this point talk becomes interactionally relevant (Rossano, 2013). Her silence in line 7 may represent a process of moving out of the last activity (i.e. note-checking). Following the retraction of eye gaze, Sandra starts a turn with 'okay so' and then produces a partial repeat of the task question in the next TCU (*the first bit we wanna do is com' back to theory so be an analyst*). The 'okay' signals a closure of the immediately prior action (i.e., note-checking) and a movement to the next (Beach, 1993), and 'so' initiates a next action of getting back on task. Here, 'okay so' serves a dual-character in linking both backwards and forwards in talk (see Beach, 1993). The restatement of the task prefaced by 'okay so' is not contingent on the prior talk and is analysable as an incipient interactional agenda, or the "conversation's first matter" that has been pending (Bolden, 2008, p. 343; Bolden, 2009). By launching the agenda, 'okay so' marks a shift from the closure of a prior activity to the core activity.

Next, later in line 11, a second TCU (*so tryin-...*) in her turn initiates a proposal of a new course of action. This 'so' here may indicate an inferential connection between the utterance before and after it (Blackmore, 2002). In other words, the incipient agenda about the task is used by the speaker as a warrant for proposing the next action. This TCU relaunches Yang's initial proposal in line 1 but in a more precise way. In doing so, she initiates a new sequence by referring to the incipient agenda. This extract illustrates that when silence occurs at an SPP within an unfinished sequence, 'okay so' can be used as a resource to relaunch the action that the initial FPP initiates by linking back to the incipient agenda. In extract 5.3, however, the silence emerges not within a sequence but at a possible completion of a sequence, and 'okay so' is employed to start a turn with a similar design.

Extract 5.3
(('interview excerpt 2' is displayed on the shared screen))
1   Yan: An:d (.) meet people (.)[Min mentioned that (1.0)she

```
2   San:                          [Yea.
3   Yan:    only met Jen(h)ny heh £and Meilin in [per(h)son£
4   Jen:                                    △[°Huh hhh.°
5   San:                                    △smiles--->
6           (3.0)△(1.2)△
7   San:      -->△,,,,,△
8   San:    Ng okay so back to theory be the analyst come up
9           with problems issues and reflections (1.4) ughhh.
10          (2.2) let's DO let's do one more and then we'll do:
11          some (0.8) °some(thing)°
12          (0.6)
13  Yan:    Maybe this one?
14          (1.2)
15  San:    Yea, °did you experience any interesting° ((reading
16          out the text on computer))
```

The participants are reading and talking about an interview excerpt (2) just before this extract. In line 1, Yang produces an FPP stating a finding about the excerpt. His FPP receives a response from Sandra at the first TRP, and Yang continues to speak. In line 3, Yang frames the current status of talk as humorous by inviting shared laughter *(only met Jen(h)ny heh and Meilin)* (Glenn, 2003). Specifically, by laughing while speaking, Yang can 'cue recipients even before the utterance reaches completion that it is laughable' (Glenn, 2003, p. 55). Consequently, Jenny joins the laughter slightly before the TRP, ratifying Yang's laugh invitation (Sacks, 1978), and then Sandra responds by smiling silently. Here, the current action being undertaken is completed before a silence results and lasts for 4.2 seconds (line 6). During the silence, Sandra keeps smiling for the first 3 seconds and gradually withdraws the smile in the last 1.2 second, right before she produces a next turn. By withdrawing her smile (see line 7), Sandra displays a change in her current state, which resembles a procedure of moving out of the former action and returning to the routine posture for conversation. This suggests that she is not doing nothing in the silence but doing some transitional work from a completed action to an upcoming one. Moreover, the silence in line 6 is a point where any speaker can bring up any unmentioned mentionables about the prior action, and by not speaking the speakers orients to a state of no-new-mentionables at hand so a closing is relevant (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The silence is, therefore, co-constructed as part of the action in acknowledging the closing. Next, in line 8, she uses 'okay' to ratifies the closure before initiating a return to the task with 'so'.

Similar to extract 5.2, 'okay' stops the silence from being extended by marking it as closed before 'so' initiating a return to the task. After some intra-turn silences, a new action regarding moving to the next excerpt is initiated. Unlike the case in extract 5.2 where she relaunches Yang's FPP, this turn marks a shift from the prior sequence to a next one and signals a progress in the core activity: the completion of a former topic about excerpt (2) makes the move to another excerpt relevant.

In both extracts 5.2 and 5.3, the 'okay so'-prefaced turn consists of two main elements: a) the TCU(s) relevant to the core activity, i.e., the task; and b) a follow-up sequence-initiating action (e.g., proposals) (Bolden, 2009). Sandra's quote of the task in extract 5.1 establishes a consensus among speakers that the task constitutes the core activity of the conversation, which can be organised into a series of sub-activities to be completed in the process. These sub-activities are ordered in that one needs to be completed before movement to the next becomes relevant (Button & Casey, 1988). 'Okay so' not only marks a shift from the side issues, e.g. discussions about a specific excerpt, to the main business, but also initiates movement to a next item on the list to facilitate the progress of group work. This shows that 'okay so' is not simply a transition marker between sequences, but may also signal the 'overall structural organization of the conversation' (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973, p.292) by making an interactional move towards addressing the core activity (i.e. the task) (Bolden, 2008). In extracts 5.2 and 5.3, the initial sequences about specific excerpts represent subordinate steps towards accomplishing the core activity. When these sequences come to a possible completion and silences occur, Sandra routinely uses 'okay so' to initiate new sequences that address the task directly. In doing so, she links the just prior sequence (before the silence) to a more encompassing unit of organisation (Raymond, 2004), and thereby moves the conversation forward to the completion of the task.

The extracts so far have shown how one speaker in a group routinely uses 'okay so' to launch a turn when silences occur after SPPs, and the 'okay so' is typically followed by TCU(s) that deals with an incipient agenda of the conversation. Thus, the turn structure of 'okay so + restatement of task' can be a device particularly geared toward silences after SPPs in task-oriented group work. This kind of turn design is not exclusively used by Sandra and is also identified in another group, as in extract 5.4. In this extract, the participants coordinate a more explicit move to a closing of sequence before the silence occurs at the SPP.

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Extract 5.4

```
1  Lin:      It's just because we- we're lack of one person, so:
2            *definitely we'll* end faster than they do.
3            *raises eyebrows *
4             (0.7)
5  Lau:      △Yeah
6            △moves gaze down-->
7             (1.5)△
8  Lau:         -->△
9  Lau:      hhh.(0.5) I don't have much to say(h)huh=
10 Lin:      =*Yeah (0.3) me either
11 Lin:       *moves gaze down--->
12            #△(4.8)  *   (1.2)
13 Lin:             -->*
14 Lau:        △directs gaze to the right side of the screen-->
              #Fig.1
```



```
15 Lau:      Okay so (.) being a native-speaker is not △£our
16 Lau:                                       --->△
17           goal#, what is our goal(.) in our(.) languages£
                #Fig.2
```
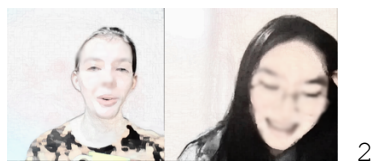


```
18           (1.4)
19 Lin:      Uhmmm (.) I'll say just (.) to communicate properly?
```

The participants in this segment are Lina and Laura, and they are required to discuss several questions provided by the lecturer in this group work. Before this extract, the speakers have talked about three of the questions and Lina leaves the chat room to check whether they need to go back to the main seminar room. She then finds out that they seem to have finished earlier than expected, so in line 1, she produces an assessment of the current state by providing an

upshot, that is, their discussion finishes early because they have fewer members than the other groups. This turn orients to a closing of the preceding talk and initiates a sequence-closing sequence (Schegloff, 2007). By producing an agreement in line 5, Laura collaborates with Lina's initiation of closing down the sequence, and after a 1.5-second silence, Laura produces an increment which further ratifies the move to closing by saying 'I don't have much to say'. This turn gives a go-ahead to the sequence-closing sequence, and immediately following this, Lina produces a sequence-closing third that acknowledges Laura's alignment with the closing proposal (Schegloff, 2007). Generally, the speaker of the third turn may then produce an initiation of new sequence after the closure, however, Lina passes up the opportunity to initiate a new action and there is a 6-second silence. During the silence, Laura moves her gaze to a different direction of the screen (see fig.1), which may indicate an action of searching for a next topic, possibly from some notes or materials displayed on the computer, and the silence is part of her action of searching.

In line 15, Laura initiates a turn beginning with 'okay so', which is followed by a question that is on the list prescribed by the tutor but not discussed yet in the conversation. The question initiates a topic relevant to one of the incipient agendas that is expected to be addressed but delayed by a digression from topic (i.e. the sequential talk on finishing early). Here, 'okay' can be a signal that her prior action of searching is completed, and 'so', again, initiates a shift to an incipient topic. In doing so, the silence is resolved as the question nominates Lina as a next speaker, and Lina then produces a response. This extract shows that when silence occurs after an explicitly constructed sequence-closing sequence, a speaker manages to revive the conversation using an 'okay so'-prefaced turn to initiate an action/topic that emerges from incipiency (Bolden, 2009). In line with the preceding extracts, 'okay so' as a resource in managing unowned silences in group work can be coupled with a restatement of an interactional agenda relevant to the task, and therefore it marks a return to a focus on the task after completion of a side discussion (Bryon & Heeman, 1997).

The extracts so far have shown that 'okay so' can signal the transition from one sequence to another, and from a subordinate activity to the core activity. Bangerter and Clark (2003) argue that participants navigate joint activities in conversation by dividing them into a hierarchy of projects and sub-projects, and 'okay' is identified as a *project marker* that marks vertical transitions between sub-projects and the main project, or in other words, entry into or exit from sub-projects. When silence occurs after a sub-project, or as what Jefferson (1972, p.294) calls,

a 'side sequence', reaches a possible completion, it typically enacts as a topic closing action showing that there are no further mentionables about the current sub-project. And 'okay so' is employed to initiate utterances that move out of the current sub-project and link to a next action relevant to the main project. Thus, the silences after SPPs indicate that a sequential boundary has been reached, and 'okay so' is used not only to manage the silences but also to acknowledge the boundary between each interactional unit as the participants navigate through a joint project.

The preceding discussion illustrates that when silence occurs at SPPs and/or sequence closings, one way to manage the silence is returning to an incipient agenda about the task. Specifically, in extracts 5.2- 5.4, the utterances following 'okay so' are designed as partial repetitions or reproductions of the task. This can be one way in which a return to the agenda is achieved. In other circumstances where 'okay so' is used after periods of silence, it may also be followed by TCUs that are not a reproduction of the agenda but one component of the task on agenda. For example, in extract 5.5, in order to address an agenda which involves talking about the five examples in a list, Laura initiates topic talk about 'example 4' (one of the five examples in the task) after some silences at a sequence completion.

Extract 5.5

```
1   Lin:      So (.) we should like give a conclusion (0.5)
2             from all this (0.7) five examples? or like (0.7)
3             use them separately
4             (2.3)
5   Lau:      uh:m I think j'st (.) find out the differences
6             between them (1.0) to then find out like when:
7             certain ones get used or not. (0.5) I think.
8   Lin:      °Yeah°
9             (2.1)
10  Lin:      °hhh.°
11            (0.8)
12  Lau:      >I'm jus< having difficulties with the zooming °for
13            this thing°, so (actually redial) huhh.
14            (0.8)
15  Lin:      £Yeah£
16            (33.0) ((Everyone leans forward, gazing at screen))
17  Lau:      **Okay so** example four.
18            (2.2)
19  Lau:      Is she in- (0.6) Michael introduces himself with all
```

```
20            three names. (0.6) but the:n (.) Anna in response
21            only uses the first two?
22            *(2.2)*
23  Lin:      *nods *
24  May:      °Yeah°
25            (2.2)
26  May:      I think the- they all just use the two part of
27            their name.
28  Lau:      Yeah °lik-°
```

The segment above is drawn from the beginning of a conversation between Lina, Laura and May. From line 1 to line 8, there is a sequence initiated by Lina to check her understanding of the instruction. Lina first produces an FPP designed as a question with candidate answers, and after a 2.3-second silence, Laura responds by restating the task and then Lina accepts the response and closes the sequence. The FPP does not simply initiate a question about the task but also moves the conversation to business by entailing a future action concerning the task (Bolden, 2008). Consequently, this sequence establishes an agenda for the following conversation, so that topics about any of the five examples are 'scheduled' for later talk (Button & Casey, 1988, p. 67).

After a silence, and a soft outbreath produced by Lina, Laura initiates a new FPP stating her current state regarding some technical difficulties, which warrants her preceding silence. However, this turn (line 12) also starts a digression from topic talk on the task to issues about Laura's own technical problems. Once Lina produces a receipt (line 15) in response to Laura's FPP, the digression from task is closed and the talk about the agenda is relevant again. There is a lengthy 33-second silence in line 16, but the silence is interpretable as filled because all the participants are engaged in actions of reading on their computers. Since the turns in lines 1 to line 8 indicate that the task requires them to read the five examples provided by the lecturer, reading silently can be interpreted as legitimate for accomplishing the task. This silence, again, is prompted by the nature of the task to some extent, as they need to read through the examples in order to complete the task.

Next, in line 17, Laura uses 'okay so' to set up a new topic by announcing one of the examples on the list: *example four*. The TCU is designed as a unilateral nomination of topic which does not expect a confirmation from the recipients (Schegloff, 2007). Here, 'okay' marks a closure

of the previous off-topic actions and the silence, and 'so' functions as 'topic developer' (Johnson, 2002) to initiate a new topic for the upcoming talk. Additionally, since talk concerning 'example four' is not located in the just preceding turn, 'okay so' is also a transition marker that accounts for a topic shift that does not flow from the prior talk (Button & Casey, 1988). After a 2.2-second silence, Laura continues to develop the proposed topic into a further question, and in doing so, she repairs the silence because the question makes a response from the recipients relevant. This extract shows that when silence occurs after a digression from the main activity, the speaker can employ 'okay so' to get the talk back on topic by setting up a new sub-topic relevant to the task. Additionally, the function of 'okay so' as a transitional marker can be bilateral in marking both transitions from subtopics to the task and from the task to subtopics (Bangerter and Clark, 2003).

Extract 5.5 illustrates that using 'okay so' to preface a unilateral topic nomination is one way to initiate a new topic after a silence at a sequence completion. Another way in which 'okay so' launches a new topic is to initiate a proposal that solicits confirmation from the recipients. For examples, in extract 5.6 below, a speaker uses 'okay so' to initiate a question after a silence. This extract is taken from a same session of group work as in extract 5.4, and before line 1, the lecturer enters the chat room and joins the conversation between the participants. After the lecturer leaves the chat room, the conversation develops as follows:

Extract 5.6
```
            ((lecturer leaves the chat room))
1  Lin:    [I think, just like what we discussed [before-
2  Lau:    [Le-
3  May:                                          [Yeah
4  Lau:    hh. Ye(h)s
5  Lin:    (should be) nickname or like kinda your na:me but
6          if it's a formal or: eh: not that familiar (.)
7          situation then they'll just use a:+ kind of full
8  May:                                       +leans forward--->
9           name buh, instead of thee *last one?
10 Lin:                               *leans forward--->
11 Lau:    [Yeah
12 Lin:    [Y-  yeah* instead of the last name.
13               --->*
14 Lau:    ((nodding))
```

```
15        (2.6)
16 May:   Okay so:: +should we continue to task two?
17               -->+leans slightly back--------->
18 Lau:   Yep
19 Lin:   Uh: +yeah
20 May:    -->+nods and returns gaze to screen-->>
21 Lau:   >↑in a< ↓couple minutes heh hh.
```

In line 1, Lina initiates an FPP that resumes the last topic before the lecturer joins in by formulating a summary of the current state. This sequence comes to a possible completion at line 14 after both recipients have registered a receipt of Lina's FPP, and a 2.6-second silence occurs at line 15. Here, the sequence could be moved out of the closing if either of them continues to speak on the current topic. By not speaking, the speakers orient to the current state as no-further-mentionables, so the silence is part of their topic closing action to acknowledge a closure. Next, May produces a question with a 'okay so' prefacing to propose a movement to task two. This question initiates a topic proffering sequence which expects a confirmation from the recipients before launching talk on this topic (Schegloff, 2007). After both recipients have accepted the topic proffer in lines 18 and 19, May acknowledges their acceptance with nodding and topic talk about task two is relevant as a next action.

In this extract, again, 'okay so' serves a dual-function in marking a closure of an orientation to closing and a transition to a next topic. The discussion in the preceding sections has revealed that 'okay so' can be used to shift from a closure to both a restatement of agenda and one subordinate element of the agenda. It can be noted that, in the extracts so far, the TCU following 'okay so' in the same turn is not contingent upon the just preceding talk before silence. That is to say, 'okay so' can connect a complete sequence to a next topic that does not flow out of the preceding in the standard way. Although the routine organisation of step-by-step topic flow can provide appropriate places for speakers to initiate relevant topics, in some cases it may lack the resources for speakers to do so if they can only rely on the prior talk (Button & Casey, 1988). In the circumstances where the default organisation does not work so well, 'okay so' then provides the resource as a tying device for linking one sequence/ topic to another that is not closely relevant to it (Sacks, 1992), and particularly when the transition is interrupted by silence.

5.1.2 Introducing an upshot

The discussion above suggests that 'okay so' prefacing often constructs the following topic/sequence as not contingently prompted by the preceding one. In addition to prefacing incipient agendas or new subtopics driven by the task, 'okay so' may be used to indicate inferential connections between the preceding turns and the upcoming one. One occasion where 'okay so' can operate in this way is when an episode of talk or a sequence comes to a possible completion, and speakers can use 'okay so' to mark a formal closure by introducing an upshot of the prior talk (Raymond, 2004). One example of this function of 'okay so' can be found in Extract 5.7 taken from a same conversation between Sandra, Jenny and Yang in Extracts 5.1 and 5.2. The sequence begins with a question initiated by Sandra concerning one part of the task and undergoes subsequent discussions on this topic.

Extract 5.7
```
1   San:    We have to come up with (2.1) um some theory, wha-
2           wha' theories have you (0.6) derived from these three
3           interviews
4           ((discussing the theories; 40 lines omitted))
5   San:    I think (0.8) um (1.6) one thing >that I've noticed
6           from the three< is proximity, so the closer you
7           are, (.) physically,(.) the easier is.(0.6) So because
8           we're online, meeting each other and getting to know
9           each other is more△difficult.
10                              △moves gaze down and takes notes->
11          (1.5)
12  Jen:    +Yesss#
13          +looks down and takes notes--------------->
                #fig.1
```



```
14          (0.5)
15  Yan:    °Yeah°
16          #*          (13.1)      *
17  Yan:    *leans forward to screen and scrolls down the text*
            #fig.2
```

```
18  San:    Mmkay. So we have two (.) theories,△so pre-recordings
19                                      -->△
20         (0.6) have actually helped. +(1.2) or- or are positive
21  Jen:                          --->+
22         tha' it seems for all students,△ and being closer and
23         being able to meet in person, so offline (2.7) offline
24         lectures (2.2) mean tha- that there will be better
25         rapport. (0.8) Um, problems issues reflections. (2.1)
26         I'm confused that's the same thing.
27  Jen:    Hhh. heh
           ((continued in Extract 5.8))
```

Sandra's question regarding theories in line 1 results in a series of discussions between speakers (omitted for space considerations). Having both the recipients, Yang and Jenny, provided responses to the question, Sandra produces a telling FPP proposing a possible sequence closing. The recipients provide responses to her telling, aligning with the proposal of closing (lines 12 and 15). Note that the 'yeah' in line 15 is produced in a decreased volume, which indicates an evident orientation to sequence closing (Schegloff, 2007). Then, there is a 13.1-second silence after Yang's SPP. The embodied conducts of speakers show that both Sandra and June are engaged in note-taking during the silence. Yang is gazing closely at the screen and scrolling down the text displayed on the screen, which indicates that he is reading the excerpts (see fig.2). Thus, the silence in line 16 is not treated by speakers as problematic because they are evidently occupied with matters that are legitimate for accomplishing the task. Again, the silence here appears to be related to the nature of the task.

Next, in line 18 Sandra produces a composite 'mmkay' which is composed of two elements: 'mm' plus 'okay'. The first element 'mm' is a third move in the sequence-closing sequence which ratifies the recipients' alignment (Schegloff, 2007). The second element 'kay' is a reduced form of 'okay' which ratifies a closure of her former action during silence. Then, 'so' initiates a TCU that provides an upshot of the preceding discussion and formulates a summative statement to the question initiated at line 1. Following this TCU, there are two more so-prefaced TCUs in this turn which articulate specifically what the two theories are. By this point, the

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question that prompted the sequence has been addressed, so the sequence concerning 'theories' is closed at the 0.8-second silence in line 25.

After the brief pause, Sandra produces a further TCU containing a partial repeat of the second part of the task *(problems issues reflections)*, followed by an assessment of the question's wording. The last two TCUs in this turn signal that a next topic/sequence is expected to be about part 2 of the task (see extract 5.8). In extract 5.7, 'kay' responds backwards, ratifying a closure of the preceding talk, and 'so' links forward as it initiates a series of TCUs that successively formulate an upshot of prior turns and an initiation of new actions. In line with what was found in extracts 5.1-5.5, 'okay so' marks a shift from the completion of a prior sequence to a next topic. But instead of closing the sequence by starting new courses of actions, in this segment, 'okay so' can also project the upcoming TCU(s) as the outcome of the preceding talk. In this way, 'okay so' reinforces the connection between the preceding discussion and the topic of task by introducing a summative statement of the preceding discussions.

A similar use of 'okay so' can be identified in extract 5.8 and it immediately follows the talk in extract 5.7. In this segment, when discussion of the task comes to a possible completion, 'okay so' is used to move the talk out of closing by prefacing an upshot and an initiation of a post-expanding sequence.

Extract 5.8

```
1  Yan:    And maybe: the negative thing is the- (0.5) the eye
2          tee problems. The eye tee problem always coming, and
3          we can- sometimes we can't solve that. That will (0.8)
4          waste all of our time.
5          ((9 lines omitted)) ((Yang continues in his turn))
6          (0.5)
7  San:    Mm (2.0) Yeah.
8          (1.1)
9  San:    △Okay so we have a few things,△ do you want me
10         △ gazes down to notes-------->△ gazes to right and
11         to send you a photo of what I wrote? (0.5) It's
12         down--------------------------------------->>
13         very messy.
14 Jen:    Huh huh yes, it's fi(h)ne heh
```

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```
15  San:    Yeah?△ Okay I'll send it to you now.
              ((7 lines omitted before conversation terminates))
```

In response to the topic that Sandra initiated in extract 5.7, which is concerned with part 2 of the task *(issues and reflections)*, Yang produces an FPP stating a candidate answer. Sandra produces an acknowledgement to Yang's FPP in lines 7 and the current sequence comes to a possible completion, and then there is a 1.1-second silence. The silence, again, can be seen as part of action orienting to a topic closing. To relaunch the talk, Sandra again produces a turn beginning with 'okay so'. The first TCU in this turn formulates the current state in completing the task, that is, they now have all the answers that the task requires. Here, 'okay' ratifies a closure of the prior sequence regarding part 2 of the task, while 'so' initiates an upshot of preceding talk which is also an outcome of the sequence dealing with the task. This TCU signals that a closure of not just the sequence but the conversation is sequentially relevant. However, then, instead of moving straight to a closing, Sandra initiates a post-expansion offering to share her notes, which temporarily moves the current talk out of the closing. The second TCU deals with an arrangement orienting to a follow-up event to the discussions about the task, that is, preparation for reporting their answers. The arrangement orients to something other than the completion of task and proposes that the current topic-talk the about task can be concluded (Button, 1987). Although the arrangement sequence may move out closings, as Jenny responds with an acceptance in line 14, it does not cancel out the sequential relevance of closings (Button, 1987). After Sandra's SCT ratifying Jenny's response, the closing is relevant again and the group work soon terminates 7 lines later. Thus, Sandra's turn does the work of ending the current sequence by starting a new one that deals with an arrangement of future event (Schegloff, 2007). 'Okay so', in this case, is used consistently with which in previous extracts to signal a closure while starting a next action in the task at hand. The 'okay so'-prefaced turn in extract 5.8 marks completion of the last sub-project in completing the task, that is, discussion about task part 2, which consequently projects a closure of the overall conversation.

In the extracts discussed so far, 'okay so' is recurrently used as a turn initial token after silences to close a prior action/ sequence by initiating a next action relevant to the task at hand. In doing so, it links sequences to each other and shows that the speakers treat the silence as a sign of having no further mentionables about the current topic, so moving to a next action in the task is relevant. Consequently, in addition to having a sequential function of marking boundaries

between sequences, 'okay so' may serve as a project marker that divides the overall structure of conversation into several units, or sub-projects; for example, discussion of a specific example (extract 5.2) and discussion of one element of the task (extract 5.6). The sub-projects are organised in a coherent order relevant to the task, and 'okay so' plays an instrumental role in coordinating the transitions between the sub-projects (Bangerter et al., 2004). This shows that in navigating a joint project in conversation, the participants tend to coordinate it in a series of steps (Bangerter et al., 2004), for example, deciding on an interview excerpt to discuss, moving to a next one, and starting a discussion about one component of the task, etc. Each time one of the sub-projects reaches a possible completion, or comes to a digression, 'okay so' is typically used to get the talk back on topic and shift to a next sub-project.

5.2 Turn-initial '*and*'

In the previous section, it has been discussed that when silences emerge after a SPP, one of the linguistic devices that the speakers may employ to resume the talk is starting a next utterance with 'okay so'. A key feature of 'okay so' used in managing the silences in the preceding extracts is that it not only ratifies a closure of topic closing actions but also reinforces it by initiating a new action relevant to the agenda of the conversation. This is one way in which conversation may develop when silences emerge at an SPP, i.e. a possible completion of a sequence. Apart from closing the prior sequence/action, another way to manage the silences at this place may be initiating an expansion of the current action by building a next turn or sequence on the preceding talk. It has been observed that many instances of turns in this place are articulated with a turn-initial *and*. This section describes two different ways in which 'and' is used by speakers as a connecting device to preface utterances after silence: firstly, it may be followed by turns that continue from the prior talk; and secondly, it can also preface an initiation of a sequence which links not to the immediately preceding turn but to the overall trajectory of the activity (Heritage, 2013c).

5.2.1 Continuing from the prior talk

When an SPP is completed, there is a possibility that the sequence can end at this point because the action that the FPP initiates is accomplished (Schegloff, 2007). That is, an SPP may be treated as a legitimate end of a sequence on its own, and sometimes the closing of the current action or sequence can be done more explicitly by a recognisable SCT, e.g. 'okay', as a minimal post expansion. In other contexts, however, speaker may design non-minimal post-expansions

of the current sequence by building on the just prior turn, which temporarily stops the sequence from moving to a close. One way in which this kind of non-minimal post expansion can be designed is on the basis of the immediate prior talk

Extract 5.9 [MSc1- 14:42]
```
1  San:    wha' theories have you (0.6) derived from these three
2          interviews
           ((23 lines omitted; see Extract 5.7))
26 Yan:    Yeah we can- uh the online session, ca:n save man time.
27         (2.2)
28 San:    △So there'r- #there are benefits to online learning,
29         △looks down, body in writing posture ------------->
                    #fig.1
```



```
30         (0.3)
31 Yan:    Yeah,
32         (1.1)
33 Yan:    An:-
34 San:    >Pre recorded< online benefit, °<pre-recorded> pre
35         recordings° (2.6) °benefits° △ OKAY uh:m
36                                 --->△
37         (2.8)
38 Jen:    And it seems that du:h- (.) the (.) positive aspect
39         of online learning is all about pre: (.) cor: radio
40         lecture? precord lecture?
41 San:    Yeah, yeah. B'cuz otherwise like(.) uh I've noticed in
42         my interview,>in ↑my interview<? an uh interview number
           ((continued in Extract 5.6))
```

In Extract 5.9, Sandra, Yang and Jenny are discussing three excerpts of interview transcript. The base FPP of the sequence is launched by Sandra at line 1 which initiates topical talk about extracting theories from the transcript. Yang provides a SPP, a telling about the benefits of online classes, in response to the FPP, which comes to a possible completion at line 26. At this point, the sequence initiated by Sandra's FPP is possibly complete. After a 2.2-second silence, Sandra produces a 'so'-prefaced turn which formulates a summary of the Yang's preceding

talk and proposes a closing of the sequence (line 28). This turn constitutes the initial turn in a sequence-closing sequence, which takes a form of a summative formulation of the outcome of the sequence (Schegloff, 2007), that is, a theory derived from the interview. The initiation of closing is followed by Yang's acknowledgment (line 31), which collaborates with the orientation to closing.

At line 32, a final closing move is sequentially relevant where a 1.1 second silence occurs. Next, interestingly, Yang attempts to move out the closing by continuing speaking with the turn initial 'An:', but then gets cut off by Sandra. However, she does not produce a closing token straight away and something else seems to get in the way. In this turn, Sandra redoes her first turn in the sequence closing sequence by adding new elements (e.g. pre- recorded), which is followed by recycling of the first TCU in a reduced volume. Since these TCUs are accompanied with lowered gaze and note-taking, they may be a form of 'think aloud', that is, verbalisation of Sandra's thought processes as she writes them down (Charters, 2003). They also serve as a warrant for her silence in line 32, showing that the final closing token is delayed because of her engagement in note-taking. Once Sandra completes the action (see lines 35-36), she produces the final closing 'okay'. The 'okay' marks both a completion of note-taking and a final move of the sequence-closing sequence. Here, the initiator of closing may add to the closure completion by initiating a new action, but the third-position closing token is followed by a 2.8 second silence, and the silence provides a possibility for others to shape the following talk (Schegloff, 2007).

In line 38, Jenny produces a turn beginning with 'and' which is noticeably relevant to Sandra's preceding turn in line 34. The *and*-prefaced turn reformulates the prior talk into an upgraded form by emphasising that the benefits are '*all about*' pre-recorded lecture. It is not designed to start a new topic but as a continuation and expansion of the preceding sequence before silence, but the connection is somehow disrupted by the third-move ratification of closing (okay). As Turk (2004) notes, *and* can serve as a 'cohesion-restoring device' when there are discontinuities in talk, in this case, 'and' is a resource for making explicit the connection between the current turn and the talk before the closing token, framing the current turn as affiliated to the preceding sequence. Additionally, the *and*-prefaced turn suspends a closing of the base sequence and postpones it until a further turn beyond the current turn is completed. It is worth noting that this turn contains a self-initiated self-repair of the word 'pre-recorded', produced with a rising intonation at the end (line 40). The rising intonation shows that a

response is expected, making some further talk about 'pre-recorded lectures' as a relevant next action. As Sandra continues to produce a SPP in response to Jenny's post FPP, a closing of the base sequence is postponed until the next possible completion (see lines 18-25 in extract 5.7 for the actual closure of the base sequence). Thus, *and*-prefacing serves as a device for moving out of closing in a way that extends the preceding sequence by re-establishing the link to prior talk when a closure is relevant.

Extract 5.9 shows that one way to resolve silence after SPPs is continuing speaking on the basis of the last turn before silence, in which case the turn initial *and* can serve as a resource for making the link explicit. Under other circumstances, *and*-prefacing may not only be designed to continue from the just prior turn but even earlier turns before the immediately preceding one. For example, in extract 5.10, the *and*-prefaced turn is not designed as a continuation of the last speaker's turn but a last-but-one speaker's turn.

Extract 5.10 [BA-FL3 10:41]

```
1   Lau:    I think (my focus) (0.6) on the communication
2           side of () YES I WU'D LIKE to pass the EXAMS coz I'd
3           very much need t' pass them (1.3) buh I don't °ca::re°
4           much about (.) THAT? huh huh [I (prefer) being able
5   Lin:                                 [Yea
6   Lau:    to talk to a person. I think that's (.) the problem
7           (.) at the moment eh huhh.
8   May:    [Mmhm
9   Lin:    [°right°
10          (0.7)
11  Lin:    and ↑talking to some person like to- ih 'ts kind of
12          motivation as well, like they can push you to study
13          hh. har:d like(0.5) you can(0.5)y- you'll have that
14          eager to (.) I want to really (.)have a good talk
15          ((Lin continues for 3 more lines))
16          so: someone pushing is really important?
17  Lau:    [((nodding))
18  May:    [((nodding))
19          (4.3)
```

In extract 5.10, the participants, Laura, Lina and May are talking about their experience of learning a foreign language in a course. Prior to line 1, May talks about her experience of communicating with her native-Japanese-speaking friends. Here, Laura initiates an FPP of a

new sequence telling that her focus of learning a language is less on the exams but more on being able to talk to a person. Both the recipients simultaneously provide a SPP for her FPP, registering a receipt of her telling, and the sequence is possibly complete at this point (line 9). After a 0.7 second silence following the SPP, Lina produces an *and*-prefaced turn which is relevant to the topic of 'talking to a person' brought up in Laura's previous turn. This turn continues from the preceding sequence and builds a turn incrementally on another speaker's FPP (Local, 2004). The *and* here ties the current turn to Laura's preceding FPP, skipping over the SPPs produced by the recipients (Sacks, 1992). In doing so, the and-prefaced turn extends the preceding sequence and delays the closing to a later point. By the end of Lina's turn, a possibility of closure arises again and after the recipients register a receipt with non-verbal nodding, the talk relapses into a silence in line 19. These two extracts show that and-prefaced turns can be used to deal with silence after SPPs in a way that connects or skip-connects (Sacks, 1992) to the preceding talk so that an impending closure of the sequence is deferred to after the current turn. 'And', therefore, can be a device to move the current sequence out of closing by presenting a new turn as a coherent element or an expansion of the last sequence.

5.2.2 (Re)starting an action

The preceding discussion reveals that one way in which *and*-preceding can be employed to manage silence after SPPs is extending the prior sequence by presenting a new turn as affiliated to the preceding sequence. In that case, the *and*-prefaced turns are commonly designed as contingent on the immediate prior turn or the last-but-one turn before silences. However, the analysis shows that *and* may also present the current turn as not directly emerging from the preceding talk. Instead, this sort of *and*-prefaced turn can initiate a new sequence that appears as disjunct from the previous turns. One example can be found in extract 5.11. The talk in this segment follows extract 5.4 in the previous section.

Extract 5.11 [BA-FL3 01:44]

```
17  Lau:   Okay so example four. (2.2) Is she in- (0.6)
18         Michael introduces himself with all three names.
19         (0.6) but the:n (.) Anna in response only uses the
20         first two?
           ((lines 21-27 omitted; see extract 5.5))
28         (7.2)
29  Lau:   >Except for in like< a close relationship when they
30         only use one.
```

```
31  Lin:    +Yeah. an- and+ it's kind of like when mom told-
32  May:    +nods---------+
33  Lin:    like talk to their child they just use their nickname?
34          △or, something△like that. (2.8) also in firs'talking?
35  Lau:    △nods---------△
36          (2.0)+△(0.8)△ + (2.0)
37  Lau:         △nods-△
38  Lau:    I guess it's like fo:rmal informals I think? (0.6)
39          [so, like +formal you use the+ two names.
40  Lin:    [mm
41  May:              +nods-------------+
42  Lin:    ((nods))
43          (8.3)
44  May:    An'I- if you look at the example four (.) and one,
45          uh: (0.7) I don't know it's she or he, buh when they
46          gave(.)uh their name to someone fir- the very first
47          time they say three of their name buh, they ask can
```

This segment is drawn from a conversation between Laura, Lina and May in a linguistics class. As an agenda for the group work, they are asked to discuss a series of examples to work out patterns in the use of names in Russian. In line 17, Laura produces an FPP which projects topical talk about one of the examples they are working on. In doing so, Laura makes it the first item to be discussed in the agenda. Following her FPP, the sequence dealing with 'example four' continues from line 21 to 39. In line 39 Laura produces a summary of their preceding talk by formulating a so-prefaced upshot of the sequence about 'example four', which proposes a closure of the current sequence. Responses to Laura's turn are provided by both the recipients non-verbally (i.e. by nodding), and then there is an 8.3 second silence (line 43). By not speaking, the recipients withhold collaboration of the closure and leave it open for the prior speaker to continue (Schegloff, 2007).

At this point, there is possibility for both continuation of the current sequence and a closure, but since Laura is not speaking either, she passes up the opportunity to continue the sequence. Next, May produces a turn beginning with 'an', followed by a self-repair as she reformulates her turn into an if-clause. The next TCU beginning with *if* directs the next action to talking about both example four and one, and she goes on her telling about these two examples. Since the topic talk on one of the things in agenda ("example 4") is possibly complete, talking about

another example becomes relevant as next. It is notable that this turn is not designed as a continuation of the preceding turn but it rather initiates a new sequence which moves the talk forward to a next relevant action in the agenda. Here, *and* presents the new turn as not something contingent on Laura's preceding turn but a forward movement in the trajectory of agenda-based activities (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994). By using *and* at turn initial position, May links the upcoming action to what is implemented in the preceding sequence and displays an orientation to the two sequences as a coherent series of actions in the process of completing the agenda. Therefore, another way in which *and*-prefacing may be used in resolving silence is linking from a series of sequence to another, while marking both as coherent actions.

A similar example can be seen in extract 5.12, where *and* is used to link to an even earlier action across long stretches of talk.

Extract 5.12 [BA-FL3 01:07]

```
1   Lin:  → I-I j'st wanna sa:y like+ from the: umm like almost two
2            terms of language study? I feel like it was not that easy
3            as I thought [before, it wa- hhh. ((laughing))
4   May:                 [Yea ((nodding)), yea totally agree=
5   Lin:  =har(h)der(h) than I thou(h)ght before(h).hhh an:(.) I
6            j'st cannot remember all the things and even I have
7            remember it by myself, buh when someone (.) like native
8            speakers or other students they talk in that language
9            I still feel like (.) wha, &wha're they talkin abou(h)t.
10  May:                              &nods--------------------->
11         (1.0)
12  May:  Yeah&
13         (0.9)
14         Yeah like when I as- before the study, I think
15         -->&
16         ((8 lines omitted))
17         jus found that it's more difficult to- for me to
18         distinguish the difference between *two languages, I
19  Lin:                                      *nods ------------>
20         mean.* Yeah, since (.) is really hard for me.
21  Lin:    -->*
22         (0.6)
23  Lau:  Yeah. (1.3) I think there's a lot of challenge as well
24         of, well I'm hitting is the fact we're doing it through
```

```
25              like this? to uh laptops, (.) because I do think (.) uhm
26              ((5 lines omitted))
27              learning with people, and I really missed doing that.
28              Huhh.
29              (0.8)
30  Lin:        Yeah. An:d it seems like that my reading skill like (.)
31              im-improve much faster than the other like listening, as
32              well as speaking, I'm quite confident when I do some
33              writing task, buh when it comes to speaking task, I wu'
34              j'st like (.) no: way I won(h)'t &I don(h)'t like to do
35  May:                                      &nods-------------->
36              it. I'm not& willing to do hhh.
37  May:            -->&
38              (2.2)
39  May:→  [Yeah.]
40  Lau:   [hhh. ]
41              (1.0)
42  May:   △an:d I also△ think that teachers are:
43  Lau:   △opens mouth△
44  May:   more: nervous (.) when they teaching online. I mean,
45              ((4 lines omitted))
46              make us more nervous than before hh.
47  Lau:   °Yeah° (1.7) I feel tha' it's defin'ly(.) they trying to:
48              ((5 lines omitted))
49              really like (.) everything about it j'st becomes so much
50              more: uncomfortab(h)le hhh.
51  May:   [Yeah
52  Lin:   [°Right°
53              (1.6)
54  Lin:→  An:d I suppose another like problem I face when I
55              learning language this year, I-I suppose it's t- typical
56              because we're not (.)like learn a new language by our f-
57              mother tongue, buh instead we're learn that by English,
```

Extract 5.12 is taken from a group work session where the participants are asked to talk about their experience of learning a foreign language. The prescribed topic of 'experience' may account for the long stretch of turns in this segment. In line 1, Lina initiates a first FPP which launches a telling sequence about difficulties and challenges that she has encountered in the study, and this turn comes to a possible completion at line 9. After a 1.0 second silence, May

produces a minimal acknowledgment token 'yeah' as an SPP to Lina's telling, bringing the sequence to a close. This is followed by another telling FPP (lines 14-20), which launches a new telling sequence, but May's telling diverts the talk to her own side of story rather than continuing from Lina's telling. Although May's FPP is not contingent on what Lina states in her preceding turn but is still relevant to the topic that Lina launches at first, that is 'challenges in learning'. After May's FPP, in line 23, Laura does almost the same thing as May: she first produces an agreement token 'yeah' as an SPP to May's telling before initiating another telling FPP, and in this turn, Laura directs the talk to herself, stating that a challenge for her is having lessons online instead of in-person. By providing a minimal agreement token as an SPP to the prior speaker's telling, both May and Lina orients to a closure of the sequence initiated by the last speaker before launching a new telling sequence. It is notable that each of the sequences they initiate is inter-related and it is the mutual topic, 'challenges in learning', that ties them together as a successive sequence of sequences (Schegloff, 2007).

If we look at the turns from line 1 to line 28, there is pattern that it is the same speaker who produces the SPP that continues to launch the next sequence. That is to say, each sequence in this series of sequences is launched by the same speaker who closes the prior sequence, and the closure is recurrently proposed by 'yeah'. Similarly, the telling sequence launched by Laura is brought to a close once Lina produces a 'yeah' SPP (line 30). At this point, it can be observed that the three parties have been speaking in an order of "Lina→May→Laura→Lina". Next, Lina launches a new telling FPP using an *and*-prefacing, and this and-prefaced telling, however, is not linked to Laura's preceding sequence but to Lina's own last telling FPP (lines 1-9). That is, Lina continues from her FPP in the initial sequence and uses *and* to present the following talk as a part of the telling agenda (Schegloff, 2007). So, the *and*-prefacing goes over multiple sequences and links the two turns of hers as coherent 'parts' of her telling. A same structure can be seen in May's turn in line 42. After a completion of the last sequence, there is a one second silence and May starts by producing an *and*-prefaced telling. This telling is clearly disjunct from the prior sequence as she diverts the topic to one about 'teachers', and it is designed as a continuation of her last telling in lines 12-18. By using the and-prefacing, both Lina and May link a new telling to a last of their own, displaying a movement to a "next item on the telling agenda" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 215).

One example of *and*-prefacing used for managing silence can be seen in Lina's turn in line 54. After a 1.6 second silence following a completion of the prior sequence, Lina starts to launch

a new sequence by starting with 'An:d I suppose another problem I face...'. The 'another' here shows that she is adding a new item to a list of telling produced before, while *and* serves to make the link between each of her telling explicit. It is not hard to see, at this point, that Lina's three FPPs (starting respectively in lines 1, 30 and 54) constitute three connected parts in a course of action, which is referred to as 'multi-part telling' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 215). Moreover, although the turns in this segment all spans over long stretches of talk, the sequence structure is rather simple as each individual sequence in the series is composed of a minimal telling adjacency pair. Specifically, a long stretch of telling SPP followed by a minimal SPP, mostly in the form of 'yeah'. After an SPP is produced (i.e. at a completion of each sequence), silence can commonly occur at this place (e.g. in lines 41 and 53). In this case, *and*-prefacing can be used as a device to start a sequence which is not related to the prior sequence but to the speaker's own last turn, skipping over multiple sequences in between. Therefore, turn-initial *and* used after silences can highlight connections not only between contiguous turns and sequences but also between one speaker's talk across multiple sequences.

In the following segment, this sort of *and*-prefaced turn is also employed by Yang repeatedly after periods of silence, whereas no clear link can be identified between Yang's own *and*-prefaced turns.

Extract 5.13 [MSc1]

```
              ((Speaker are working on an interview excerpt and starts talking about
               the questioning techniques in this interview))
1    San:   um sometimes if you ask somebody a very specific
2           question, they will over think it, whereas if you
3           give them a big open question, then they will just
4           start talking, and then their true feelings will
5           come out?
6           (1.6)
7    Jen:   It's like building relationships with [(.) the
8    San:                                         [Yeah
9    Jen:   interviewees.
10          #(10.5) ((all gaze towards their screens and remain still))
11          #fig.1
```



```
12   San:   △Replay the videos,# (0.8) again
```

```
13        △.....lowers head down, takes notes--------->
14                          #fig.2
```



```
15        (4.8) △#+ △(2.3)
16 San:   ,,,,,->△
17                #fig.3
```



```
18  Yan:  And the interviewee in this conversation give many
19        example and specific uh module (0.4) to explain the
20        (1.1) experience, I think
21        (1.5)
22 San:   Yeah
23        (14.4)
24 San:   △Lack of #(0.3) participation,#
25        △.....lowers head and takes notes----->
26            #fig.4                  #fig.5
```



```
27        (8.0)
28 Yan:   And meet people.△ (.)[Min mentioned that £she only met
29 San:       ,,,,,,,--->△
30 San                      [Yea
31 Yan:   Jen(h)ny huh and Meilin [in person£
32 Jen:                           [Huh hh.
```

The participants, Sandra, Yang and Jenny are working on a task which requires them to identify themes and theories through analysing a list of interview transcripts (see extract 5.1 for details of the task). Just prior to line 1, they start to work on a second excerpt, but the activity-in-progress which deals with the task is set aside as one of the speakers initiates a subsidiary discussion about whether one of the interview questions in the excerpt is appropriate. After

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Jenny produces an SPP which agrees with the trajectory of Sandra's telling (line 7), the sequence about questioning techniques comes to a possible completion and an action of getting back to the task is relevant as next. Then, there is a 10.5-second silence when all the speakers lean forward to read the excerpts displayed on the screen. Since the task of the group work involves reading through a list of transcripts, the silence in line 10 may have a lot to do with an action of reading. The silence can be interpreted as a form of involvement in preparing for a resumption of the main activity.

In line 11, Sandra produces a telling as she quotes a phrase from the transcript *(replay the video*), which is accompanied by a simultaneous shift in her posture as she lowers her head down and starts to take notes (line 12). This turn, however, is not designed to initiate the actual action of replaying a video, but as a verbalisation of Sandra's note-taking, by doing so, Sandra adds this to a 'list' of candidate answers to the task. There is no response to Sandra's telling and a 7-second silence occurs in line 13. By not responding, the recipients pass up an opportunity to repair her action and allow her to continue speaking. Thus, the silence may be treated by Sandra as an implied alignment to her telling because she does not continue to pursue a response. Shortly after Sandra finishes note-taking and returns to her normal posture, Yang produces an *and*-prefaced turn telling another candidate answer. Yang's turn here, however, is heard as not directly contingent on the prior turn produced by Sandra but as an initiation of a new telling sequence. *And* displays an orientation less to the just prior turn and more to the agenda of listing themes from the transcript. That is, the *and*-prefacing invokes a connection between the current turn and the agenda-based activity (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994), i.e. listing candidate answers to complete the task. Moreover, *and* also presents the new action that Yang initiates as parallel to what Sandra does previously, while marking both of their actions as cohesive parts of a larger course of action to accomplish the task.

Following Yang's telling and a brief silence, Sandra produces a 'yeah' as an SPP to Yang's telling before the talk reverts to a further silence of over 14 seconds. After that, Sandra does something similar to what is in line 21 as she quotes from the excerpt again and simultaneously engages in note-taking. It reveals a pattern that what Sandra does in lines 11 and 21 is continually adding items to a list in her notes, while verbally informing the other speakers of what the items are. After an 8-second silence in line 23, Yang produces a second *and*-prefaced turn, stating another candidate answer. If we look at Sandra and Yang's turn in lines 11, 15, 21 and 24, the actions that they perform in these turns are in parallel as they are both adding

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candidate answers to the list but each of their turns is not directly related to each other in terms of the content. And silence typically occurs between each of their turns. In this case, turn-initial *and* is used by Yang to present an action as not a continuation of the earlier talk but one parallel to the action that comes before. By doing so, the *and*-prefaced turns facilitate a sense of coherence across lengthened silence and sequence boundaries (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994), orienting to each of the parallel adding-to-the-list actions as part of the activity in pursuit of the agenda.

5.3 Other Forms of Resolution of Silences

In addition to turn initial '*okay so*' as well as '*and*', the interactional data show that there can be other ways in which silences after SPPs get resolved. The following section will elaborate on these strategies, including topic announcement, recycling of the prior turn, announcing no-more-mentionables, back referencing and checking for new task items. It should be noted that these forms of silence resolution are found to be used less frequently in group work than turn initial 'okay so' and 'and'.

5.3.1 Topic announcement

One way to restart turn-by-turn talk after silences at SPPs is announcing a new topic, or the next task on the agenda, which does not flow directly from the talk prior to silences. The announcement of topic can be designed in a form of question which solicits an answer from the recipients, as in extract 5.14.

Extract 5.14 [BA-L1 05:46]

```
1   Ell:    I think that one is a bit cut and dry, coz you can
2           very quickly see (0.5) its two different sentences
3           if you split up, (0.8) so (0.4) yi- the cock- the
4           clocks go back the evenings get darker, could be two
5           different sentences. (0.8) Uhmm:
6           △((typing sounds))△ °okay°
7   Ell:    △mumbles----------△
8           *&(5.3)        &
9   Lin:    *puts one hand on chin-->>
10  May:    &touches lips&
11  Ann:    +Mmhm+*
```

```
12  Ann:      +nods+
13  Lin:         -->*
14            (3.0)+ △(2.6)         △
15  Ell:            △touches lips△
16  Ell:→    I think number eight is a har- is a pretty difficult
17           one? lookin at it?
18  Ann:     Yea I wrote it that it's a compliment clause but
19           I'm (1.0) °not sure(h)°
```

In this segment, the participants (Anna, Ellen, Lina and May) are working on a linguistics task which requires them to identify the types of clauses from a list of sentences. In line 1, Ellen produces a telling FPP which provides analysis of one of the sentences that deals with 'clocks go back and evenings get darker'. The FPP comes to a possible completion in line 5 but no response is produced, and Ellen begins typing and then finishes with a soft 'okay'. The 'okay' not only marks a closure of her typing action but also relaunches the TRP, which makes explicit that speaker change is relevant next. However, no one speaks in the 5.3 second silence and a delayed SPP is produced by Anna in line 11. At this point, the sequence about the sentence that Ellen analyses in her FPP is possibly complete. By not speaking in the 5.6 second silence after the SPP, the participants pass up an opportunity to continue talking about the current topic. That is to say, through the silence, they are delivering a message to each other that none of them has any new mentionables about this sentence, which contributes to a mutual orientation to closing the sequence. The silence here, then, 'occasions a sequential environment which is relevant for initiating a closing track' (Button & Casey, 1985, p. 4) and suggests nothing but a position where the current sequence is approaching a boundary.

Next, Ellen initiates new topical talk that deals with an item 'number eight' on the list. Similar to the previous topic, this item is also on the agenda of the task, and by announcing it as a new topic, Ellen utilizes the task as a resource to resolve the silence. Specifically, she designs this FPP with a level of uncertainty as it contains a self-initiated self-repair (*har-*) and a rising intonation, suggesting that a response to the FPP is expected as the immediate action. In doing so, Ellen not only provides an evaluation of the item but also proposes this item to be a new mentionable or relevance of this item in the upcoming turn (Button & Casey, 1985). The form of this announcement is similar to what Button and Casey (1985) refer to as an 'itemised news enquiry' because it proposes that a specific item is newsworthy or mentionable. However,

instead of directly enquiring into the specific item, Ellen proposes "number eight" as worth mentioning by constructing a tentative assessment of it. The occurrence of this turn provides for the conditional relevance of this topic in the upcoming turn (Schegloff, 1982); that is, the next turn is expected to be conditionally relevant on the task 'number eight'. Once the FPP is followed up by a response which aligns with the proposal of topic, the response would be hearable as a 'go-ahead' for further elaboration of the new topic. It is also worth noting that although Ellen's FPP is mainly designed as an assessment of the task, it does not simply solicit response to the assessment itself, and the underlying purpose is to provide an opportunity to elaborate on the new topic. As we can see, in line 18, Anna firstly produces an agreement token 'yeah' and the rest of her turn deals with her answer to the task 'number eight', which is an elaboration of the topic which Ellen's FPP projects. This extract shows that in task-oriented conversation, announcing the next item on the agenda is one way to resolve silence after SPPs, and the announcement can be constructed as an assessment of the item to be announced. This further suggests that the group's task can be employed as a resource in managing silences that occur where the current sequence has reached a boundary. In the following extract, the announcement is designed more explicitly as an enquiry into the new topic.

Extract 5.15

```
1    Lau:    .hhh oh I'm I'm (checking) my notes t' see if we have
2            something else to go(h) OVER(h) .hhh
3            (0.5)
4    Lin:    Heh
5    Lau:    Uhm (1.4) hhh. ((signs))
6            △& #(5.5)                                    △ &
7    Lau:    △gazes at screen with mouth half open△
8    May:      &puts hand on mouth and looks to the side&
                #fig.1
```



```
9    Lau:    >What do we think about like the native speaker (.)
10           kind of thing. Coz (1.4) obviously as a native speaker
11           of only  one language hh. uh I don't (1.2) have tha
12           kind of (.) pressure of trying to eh match up with'ih
13           ((6 lines omitted))
```

```
14          do you compare you:rs your English (.) to native
15          English as well as comparing your Japanese to other
16          people's Japanese? (1.5) Hehhh.
```

In extract 5.15, the group members are discussing their experience of learning a foreign language. The current topic comes to a possible completion before line 1 and Laura produces a formulation of her current state in talk. This suggests that she is dealing with an issue that there is a lack of mentionables to talk about while the conversation is not scheduled to finish since the group work is timed by the tutor. To deal with this situation, she verbalizes her intention to check her notes to identify new mentionables. In doing so, she makes herself a possible next speaker by offering to introduce a new mentionable. Meanwhile, it is also possible that a new mentionable will not occur because Laura may end up not finding anything available. This turn seems to function as a pre-announcement offer, as it sets up an expectation among the participants that Laura will possibly introduce a next topic, which not only creates the relevance of a response to the offer but also projects an upcoming announcement of topic in the next-next turn (Terasaki, 2004). By responding with a laughter token (line 4), Lina ratifies Laura's offer and passes the speakership back to Laura. There is a 5.5 second silence in line 6 and the silence can be accounted for by Laura's action of note-checking (see fig.1). The other two speakers' silence in the 5.5 seconds displays that they have no new mentionables to contribute.

A new sequence is launched by Laura in line 9, and the announcement of topic is delivered in the form of a news enquiry, which projects the sequential relevance of *'native speaker kind of thing'* for the next turn through a question (Button & Casey, 1985). By producing the question, Laura not only proposes that the item *'native speaker kind of thing'* as newsworthy but also proposes that the recipients have certain knowledge of the item (Button & Casey, 1985), and consequently it solicits responses from the recipients. In the same turn, Laura continues to produce more TCUs which elaborate on her own interpretation of the question, and this is followed by a more specific question about the topic in the final TCU. This form of topic announcement constructs the current situation as recipient-related, providing an opportunity for the recipients to fill in more on the proposed topic (Button & Casey, 1985), which can be an effective way to resolve silence after SPPs as it aims to secure a response from the recipients. Moreover, since the item about 'native speaker' is a question on the task agenda, similar to what Ellen does in extract 5.14, Laura here also resorts to the group work task as a resource to

deal with silence. In other words, the task plays a part in providing resources for management of silence in MGW.

In the previous two instances, new topics are announced in forms of assessment and enquiry, while a new topic can also be initiated after silences through a telling FPP, as in extract 5.16.

Extract 5.16
```
1  Lau:    So the motivations for you kind of [change (.)
2  May:                                        [Yea(h)h
3  Lau:    *slightly.* ↑That ↓sucks.
4  Lin:    *nods-----*
5          (1.5)
6  Lau:    °mm°
7          (7.0)
8  Lin:    The- (.) one- one thing I (really) like about the online
9          (.) lecture, is abou' like, I can see it whenever I want,
10         ((continues to talk about online lectures))
```

Before extract 5.16, Laura, Lina and May have been talking about their motivation for learning Japanese as part of their responses to the overall task (experience of learning a foreign language). In line 1, Laura initiates a sequence-closing sequence by formulating a summary of their talk so far. This is followed by an assessment (*that sucks*) in the second TCU. The proposal of closing is ratified by both the recipients, May and Lina, through verbal and non-verbal agreement (lines 2 and 4). The sequence-closing sequence is brought to a completion at line 6 as Laura produces a third move. The 'mm' token only recompletes the sequence but projects no next action, and in doing so, Laura posits herself as a non-next-speaker (Hoey, 2020a).

Here, the conversation reaches a point where the interlocutors can either introduce a new topic or end the talk, while the speakers are still passing up opportunities to do either of them. The silence lasts for 7 further seconds until Lina self-selects and announces new a topic about online lectures. This topic appears to be disjunct from the prior talk, but in fact, 'online teaching' has been addressed by Laura earlier in the conversation as part of their responses to the overall task. So, it is likely that Lina deals with the silence by picking up where Laura left off, and it is the relevance to the task that makes this topic a legitimate mentionable.

In contrast with the topic enquiry in extracts 5.15, Lina initiates the topic announcement by directly reporting on the new topic which she proposes, i.e. as a news announcement (Button & Casey, 1985). In doing so, she formulates the current activity as speaker-related, rather than recipient-related. That is, the topic announcer, Lina, proposes the report as known to herself while orienting to the next speaker as a recipient for hearing the report. The extracts in this section so far show that topic announcement can be used as a resource for resolving silences after SPPs and it can be delivered in different forms, including topic assessment (Extract 5.14), topic enquiry (Extract 5.15) and topic report (Extract 5.16). More important, it is the task for the group work that provides resources for the speakers to generate new topics. Specifically, the speakers recognise the topics as new mentionables because they are on the agenda, i.e. as part of the group's task. Since announcing a next topic automatically marks a closure of the previous topic, the silences in all the three extracts are not treated as accountable and they suggest nothing but places where the participants figure out their stage in the conversation and processes of coming up with next things to say.

5.3.2 Recycling of the prior action

The analysis shows that another method for managing silences is recycling the prior action, that is, rephrasing the preceding turn without any substantial change in the content. This resonates with what Hoey (2020a) calls 'action redoing' as a strategy for moving out of lapses. An example of this type of resolution can be seen in extract 5.17. In this segment, Laura, Lina and May are discussing their experience of learning a foreign language.

Extract 5.17 [BA-FL3 06:44]
```
11 Lin:    An: also, like (.) when I began to: learn Japanese,
12         I feel like (.) I cannot (.) like(.) when I watch two
13         Japanese TV shows, I cannot really concentrate, like
14         fully concentrate on the real content of the show, buh
15         instead I w'z (.) just try to distinguish oh whao, does
16         this- does this person say something I know, or I should
17         know I have heard it before, buh wha does it really mean
18         (0.7) ih- ih- it feels really ba:d bec'z you canno(h)t
19         (.)have some like (0.9) leisure time when yi- it's mean
20         to be a leisure time buh instead it'll can j'st like push
21         you hard work. (1.0) Justuh (0.8) make you feel bad for
22         your: language skill sometimes.
23         △&(1.7)△&
```

```
24 Lau:      △nods  △
25 May:       &nods    &
26 Lau:      Hmm °that's fair° hhh.
27 May:      Yeah like the passion about the language is lower and
28           lower, yeah.
29           △(0.8) △
30 Lau:      △smiles△
31 Lin:      Heh .hih .hih ((laughter with inbreathing))
32           (4.0)
33 Lin:→     Jus like the interest is (.) like grad- gradually fade
34           ou(h)t [hhh. Kind of thing.
35 Lau:            [°oh°
36 May:      Yeah (0.6) Yeah like I used to think my passionate and
37           interest in: Jap- Japanese is definitely (.) infinite
38           but now *it's juss &.hh △(1.5) like no:  there're no
39 May:                      &shakes head-------------------->
40 Lin:              *laughs-------------------------------->
41 Lau:                       △laughs-------------------->
42 May:   interest& in there .hh *△
43          ------>&
44 Lin:                    -->*
45 Lau:                    -->△
46           (1.6)
          ((continued in extract 5.16))
```

Lina launches a telling sequence as she produces an FPP (lines 11-22), describing how her study of Japanese language interferes with her experience of watching Japanese TV programmes. Specifically, she expresses that her self-awareness of language competence may have negative impact on her level of motivation for learning the language. In response to her FPP, Laura registers a receipt (hmm) and produces an agreement with positive assessment (*that's fair*) (Heritage, 1985). The sequence is possibly complete after Laura's SPP. Next, May produces a SPP, 'yeah', in response to Lina and a new element beginning with 'like', which is designed as a reformulation of Lina's turn in line 11-22. Here, the discourse marker 'like' highlights a connection to Lina's previous telling by referring to the current turn as a loose reformulation or interpretation of Lina's turn (Hellermann & Vergun, 2007). Since the reformulation simply identifies and summarises the main idea of Lina's telling but it does not bring the current topic forward, May actually orients to a closing of the topic (Button, 1987).

After both recipients respond to May through smiling and laughter, there is a 4 second silence in line 32. Their responses ratify May's formulation and comply with the orientation to topic closing.

At this point, the topical talk on declined passion is possibly complete and by not speaking, the speakers all pass up an opportunity to introduce new mentionables to the current talk. To resolve the silence, Lina self-selects and produces an FPP that starts with 'just like', which marks a link to May's formulation in line 27. However, this turn is basically recycling May's prior turn (in line 27-28), rather than advancing the topical talk by bringing something new to the topic. In doing so, Lina displays an orientation to having no more new mentionables about the current topic, that is, all the mentionables about this topic are exhausted so she has nothing more to add. By this point, the idea of 'declined passion' has been introduced by May and ratified (lines 27-31), and then reintroduced by Lina and re-ratified by the recipients (lines 33-36).

The recycled action creates a context where closing of the sequence can be projected, i.e. a closing relevant environment, by providing a place where new mentionables can be introduced (Bolden, 2017). Here, the recipients are expected to either align with the initiation of closing or introduce a new mentionable. Should no new mentionable be introduced, a closure of the sequence would be relevant. However, May produces an SPP which includes topical talk of a new telling (lines 36-42). The telling provides some of her personal account of the same idea (declined passion) but contains almost no progression from this topic. After the telling receives shared laughter from both recipients as ratification, no one continues to speak and there is another 1.6 second silence in line 46. Here, by not speaking again, all the speakers orient to a state where there are no further mentionables, so a new closing environment is relevant. In this extract, the speakers seem to keep recycling the same idea in dealing with silences, so the talk has made little forward progress since the end of Lina's telling (line 22).

The analysis shows that silences after SPPs are part of a set of actions designed to set up a closing relevant context, and specifically, by not speaking, the speakers co-construct the state of talk as having no more to say about the current topic. By passing up an opportunity to speak, the participants orient to the state of talk as a boundary being reached. That is to say, the actions or topics for completing the task are bounded. The silences at topic boundaries are not merely periods of non-talk but also a signal to the other speakers that no new mentionable (or business)

is at hand (Button, 1988), so closing of the sequence is sequentially relevant. This suggests that silences after SPP has sequential implications for the interlocutors, which goes beyond a boundary-marking function that simply delimits the start and end of utterances (Saville-Troike, 1985). Having received the signal of closing, one of the speakers may propose a closing by initiating a closing implicative action, as what Laura does in lines 26. In extract 5.17, it takes two rounds of possible pre-closing moves (formulation-ratification-reformulation-reratification) for the sequence to officially close because the first proposal is cancelled by May (lines 27), and the action of moving towards closing spans from line 26 to line 46. The silence, therefore, is a first step in establishing the shared understanding of having nothing more to say, before the speakers construct a further closing implicative action to determine whether all the mentionables about the current topic have been talked about and whether closing is considered as relevant.

5.3.3 Announcing no-more-mentionables

The previous extract exemplifies that one way to set up a closing relevant environment after silence is recycling the prior speaker's turn. This is how possible closings can be initiated tacitly (Bolden, 2017). In other cases, closing implicative actions can be constructed in a more explicit way, as what Lina does in extract 5.18.

Extract 5.18 [BA-FL3 12:28]

```
              ((Lina and May are discussing their experience of learning Japanese))
15  Lau:    Mm.°that's fair°(1.1) okay so people are both blessing
16          and cursing in THI(h)S CA(h)SE &[hhh. .hhh &
17  Lin:                                   *[Huh huh*
18  Lin:                                   *nods----*
19  May:                                   &smiles-----&
20          (12.4) &*(1.0)△        (2.8)           △(1.7)&(8.5)*(1.0)
21  May:           &curls lips, looks to the side--------&
22  Lau:                 △moves lips,gazes at screen△
23  Lin:           *curls lips and gazes at screen-------------* puts
24  Lin:→   I think that's it,* (0.5) *I don't have* any[more(h)
25          one hand on chin *          *shakes head *
26  Lau:                                              [Yea (h)
27  Lau:    .hhh oh I'm I'm (checking) my notes t' see if we have
28          something else to go(h) OVER(h) .hhh
```

29   ((continued in extract 5.15))

Before line 1, Lina and May are sharing their experience of learning Japanese in their second language (i.e. English). Laura produces an SPP to the last speaker's telling in line 1, which also proposes a closure of the sequence by formulating a summary of the ongoing topical talk. This initiation of closing is ratified by the recipients through shared laughter and nonverbal actions including nodding and smile (lines 18-19). A closure of the sequence is relevant here and a lengthy silence of 27.4 second occurs at line 20. Next, in line 24, Lina explicitly proposes to close the sequence by announcing '*that's it*' and that she has no more to say. This turn confirms that her silence in line 20 results from having no further mentionables, so she is passing up the opportunity to speak to the other participants. It also demonstrates her understanding of the other members' silence as a signal of having no more mentionables to talk about as well. By proposing a closure, she provides space where new mentionables can be introduced, and conversely, the current topic will terminate if the recipients align with Lina's proposal of closure. Thus, this turn is constructed to determine whether a closing should be the next action.

After producing an agreement token to Lina's proposal (line 26), however, Laura then reformulates the trajectory of her turn and resists the action of closing by telling that she is checking her notes to look for new topics. This turn provides a warrant for Laura's silence in the 27.4 second silence and it shows that she is not simply passing up speakership but also actively searching for new mentionables through note-checking (see embodied actions in line 22). Moreover, in doing so, Laura provides a possibility that the silence may get extended as she continues checking notes and offers to be the next speaker to launch a new topic.

This extract provides a stronger example of silence being part of the actions in constructing a closing of topic/sequence. By announcing a completion of the current talk and stating no new mentionable is available, Lina orients to the lengthened silence at a topic boundary as a shared understanding of closure being relevant. In addition, the silence at this position may not only be co-constructed to pass up opportunities to speak, but may also be filled by topic-searching actions (e.g. checking notes, gazing to a different direction) in order to identify new mentionables. In both cases, the silences do not represent a state of non-participation or disengagement from the conversation but indicate that the speakers are in the process of resolving local discontinuity at topic boundaries. Furthermore, the silences also make explicit

a boundary between topics, as the speakers are together orienting to a state where all the mentionables about the current topic have been talked about.

5.3.4 Back referencing

The previous analysis shows that silence at topic boundaries can be treated as a collaboratively constructed orientation to no-further-mentionables, and therefore, one possible practice for managing the silence is initiating sequence closure, either by tacit or explicit initiation (Bolden, 2017). Instead of constructing closing relevant actions, a different strategy to resolve silences at topic boundaries is referring to some mentionables that have been brought up in the preceding conversation. One example can be seen in extract 5.19.

Extract 5.19 [MSc1- 10:42]
```
1   San:    Ng okay so back to theory be the analyst come up with
2           problems issues and reflections. Ughhh. (2.2) Let's
3           DO let's do one more and then we'll do some (0.8)
4           °some(thing)°
5           (0.6)
6   Yan:    Maybe this one?
7           (1.2)
8   San:    Yeah, °did you experience any interesting° ((reading out
9           text on computer))
10          (18.5)#((all speakers gaze closely at screen))
11              #fig.1
```



```
12  San:    △AHH: the question is too- >to make friends and
13          △#puts both hands on head---------------------->
14           #fig.2
```



```
15          connections is quite difficult with online and remote
16          learning how did you make friends<, uh you- urghaa:h
```

```
17  Jen:    Hah hhh. and I think△ ih she interprets this
18  San:                    -->△
19          situation in a quite positive way.(0.8) Like which is
20          very different from the other two, I think?=
21  Yan:    =I think maybe the interviewer le- lead the
22          interviewee to answer the question that [interviewer
23  San:                                            [Yeah.
24  Yan:    really want
25  San:    It's interviewer's bias.
26          (0.9)
27  Jen:    °Yeah~°
28  Yan:    °mm°
29          (7.2) ((no obvious movement, all gaze at screen))
30  Yan:→   The question is-
31  San:→   >YEAH YOU'RE RIGHT.< she does. She answers very
32          positively, even though the question is pushing her
33          towards the negative answer huh huhhh. [.hhh
34  Yan:                                           [°Yeah°
35          (2.5)
36  San:    Yeah so a better question would've probably been how
37          ((5 lines omitted; talking about the same interview))
38  San:    °closed°
39          (13.00) ((Sandra lowers her head to take notes))
```

This segment shows how the conversation between Sandra, Jenny and Yang develops after extract 5.3. In line 1, Sandra launches an action to talk about one of the interview transcripts that they are analysing. After Yang proposes a specific excerpt to focus on, the proposal is accepted by Sandra and all three participants start reading the transcript in the 18.5 second silence (line 10). Next, Sandra self-selects and initiates a telling FPP (line 11), which begins with an assessment of the interviewer's question. This FPP launches a topic that deals with the form of the interviewer's question in this excerpt. Interestingly, however, the actual evaluation is withheld and the assessment is cut off at 'too', where she redesigns the turn shape by reading out the specific question that she is referring to with an accelerated speed (lines 11-14). After this, she restarts the telling but cuts off again at 'you' and produces 'urghaa:h', mimicking the sound of vomiting. This design of her turn, together with her embodied action (putting both hands on head), indicate strong discontent and provides a negative evaluation of the form of the interview question.

In response to Sandra, Jenny produces some laughter and directs the topic from the interviewer to how the interviewee responds to the question. Her turn is designed to project a response from the recipients (*I think?*) but no one does. Following this, Yang immediately latches on her turn and responds to Sandra's FPP, aligning with her negative assessment of the interviewer's question. Sandra produces a 'yeah' with an early entry to show strong agreement to Yang's telling, and then she initiates a closing by formulating a summative statement of the preceding talk (*it's interviewer's bias*) in line 23. The initiation of closing is ratified by both recipients, and there is a 7.2 second silence when the sequence is possibly complete. Here, the speakers may either move to a closure or introduce an alternative mentionable. However, in line 28, Yang resumes the topic that they have talked about, that is, the interviewer's question. Before he comes to a possible completion, Sandra cuts off his turn with a strong agreement TCU, which is produced with increased volume and speed. Here, Sandra is not responding to Yang, nor does she initiate a new topic, but she refers back to Jenny's telling about interviewee's response in lines 15 to 18. Here, both Yang and Sandra orient to not moving to a closing by re-topicalising mentionables drawn from the preceding talk (Liddicoat, 2022). This also indicates that all the new mentionables about this topic have been used up, so the talk is still dealing with items already brought up. As a result, the current sequence soon terminates when all the mentionables about this interview have been discussed (line 36).

This extract illustrates a slightly different way to deal with silence at a sequence's possible completion from moving towards a closure, and that is resisting a closure by resuming a previous topic. However, it should be noted that although re-introducing a previously mentioned mentionable may move the talk out of closing temporarily, back-referencing can still be closing implicative in nature as it indicates that no new mentionable is at hand (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Button & Casey, 1988). Thus, during the lengthened silence at line 27, the speakers are still passing up opportunities to initiate further mentionables because neither of them has one. By not speaking, each speaker is acknowledging the fact that the current topic or action is over while waiting for the others to introduce one. Having noticed other member's silence, they are together able to construct a shared understanding of a closing relevant state.

5.3.5 Checking for new task items

The following extract illustrates that when a long stretch of silence occurs at a sequence completion, another possible way to restart the talk can be initiating an action which has something to do with logistics of the group work. At the end of extract 5.19, the current topic on an interview question has come to a possible completion and a 13 second silence occurs. The conversation then develops as follows.

Extract 5.20

```
33 San:    That's interesting she found that it was easier to
34         make friends.
35 Jen:    Huhh.
36         (2.0)
37 San:    °closed°
40         #(13.00) ((Sandra lowers head and in note-taking posture))
41         #fig.1
```



```
42  San:   Can you go down a little bit please?
43         (1.2)
44  Yan:   No only this=
45  San:   =oh only that? Okay.
46         (1.2)
```

Here, the 13 second silence in line 38 can be considered as filled because Sandra's embodied action clearly shows her engagement in another activity, which is likely to be note-taking. In line 39, Sandra produces a request for scrolling down the screen. The request nominates Yang as the next speaker as Yang is sharing his screen and has control over the shared document that they are working on. Next, Yang rejects the request because they have reached the end of the document, which is then accepted by Sandra. In this extract, what Sandra does to deal with the silence is closely relevant to the action of completing the task. Specifically, since the previous topic on one of the interview excerpts has been closed, the next relevant action would be either initiating a next item or ending the conversation. By asking Yang to scroll down, Sandra is checking if there is anything else to talk about on the same topic; in other words, she is making sure that all the items have been discussed before moving to the next action. This, again, shows that the silences after SPPs (lines 36 and 38 in this extract) can signal a topic boundary to the

speakers, and it is also another example of how speakers may enable group's task as a resource in reactivating the conversation in group work at a sequence boundary.

5.4 Chapter Summary

The analysis in this chapter illustrates that silences after SPPs play a key role in signposting the boundaries in group work conversation. By not speaking after SPPs or a possible completion of a sequence, the speakers are passing up an opportunity to introduce new mentionables, which indicates that they have nothing more to say on this, so the current topic/sequence is possibly over. Consequently, noticing the other member's silence helps the speakers recognise that a boundary has been reached, and then someone self-selects to resolve the silence in various ways. The analysis suggests that there can be a range of strategies to manage silences at this position and they are employed in different contexts to achieve different needs. A turn-initial token, 'okay so', can be used to initiate talk after silences when a particular task or sub-project is completed. Specifically, 'okay' acknowledges that a boundary is reached and 'so' moves from the boundary to the next item in the agenda. Moreover, when the speakers are constructing a series of successive actions (e.g. multi-party telling) in completing the task, 'and' is typically used to tie one turn to another, skipping over silence and other turns in between. Here, turn-initial *and* plays a role of indexing continuity across silences (Heritage, 2013c). In other cases where closing is relevant but not determined, speakers may initiate closing implicative actions to decide whether all the mentionables have been discussed. They may also directly announce a new topic or a next task on the agenda which is not contingent on the talk prior to silences. None of the silences in these contexts suggests interactional problems, and they are nothing but places where speakers pass up speakership and signal to each other that they have no more to say. That is to say, silences after SPPs are not necessarily problematic in group work, and the silences can have sequential implications for the speakers because they may be delivering a message of "having no more to say' to each other.

Furthermore, silences after SPPs can be places where speakers establish shared understanding of the stage where they are, that is, their progress in completing group work. Since most of the talk in the data is task-oriented, there are usually multiple steps in completing the main project or core activity. By passing up speakership at a possible completion of an action, the participants together orient to the current state of talk as something has been accomplished so far, and now it is relevant to move to the next one or a closure. In this case, the silences do not

indicate interactional problems or lack of participation. Instead, they indicate a period when the interlocutors are working out where they are and what they are up to in the progress of a task. Therefore, through the silences, the speakers are forming a shared understanding, or a common ground that one step/sub-project towards the main business has been completed. Having established this sort of shared understanding, one speaker may move to propose a closure or announce a new topic, and the silences are part of the process of recognising a relevant closure and dealing with the local needs of conversation. In addition, the analysis indicates that the group work task is closely relevant to the management of silences after SPPs as it provides the speakers with a resource for generating topics in dealing with silences. For example, in extracts 5.14 to 5.16, all the new topics announced by speakers after periods of silence are on the initial agenda or originated from the task.

Chapter 6 The Participants' Perspectives of Silence in MGW

The previous two chapters have examined respectively how silences work and get resolved after FPPs and after SPPs with a focus mainly on the interactional data. Although interview data have been occasionally drawn on in chapter 4 to aid the CA interpretation, the analysis so far has taken mainly a CA approach to understand how silence works in MGW at an interactional level. This chapter aims to explicate the factors that may contribute to the students' silence by focusing on the interview data. While the CA analysis emphasises on the actions conducted by participants around silence, it is also important to consider the participants' perspective in understanding what is going on beyond the interactional level that may motivate their silence. In this sense, interview data in this project provide rich information about the participants' interpretation of silence which is useful for uncovering *why* the silences may occur, in addition to *how* they work as discussed in the previous chapters. Through analysing the interview data, I identify three main themes invoked by the participants: group dynamics (6.1), the nature of the topics (6.2), and the language barrier and NS/NNS identities (6.3), and I will describe them respectively in this chapter. In addition to the discussion of the interview data, this chapter also draws the interactional data derived from group work to cross-reference with the participants' perspectives and provide evidence from the interaction.

6.1 Group Dynamics

In analysing the interview data, group dynamics has emerged as a salient theme in the participants' perceptions of silence in MWG. The term 'dynamics' I refer to here is related to the persona and style of the group members. Specifically, whether there is someone who enacts a leader or even teacher-like role has impact on the interactional patterns in the group including their practices around silences. Chai et al. (2019) have proposed two different patterns of group dynamic. They are 1) centralised groups in which one member facilitates the interaction and 2) de-centralised groups in which members take relatively fair share of turns. In this project, groups 1 and 2 (see table 3.1 below) fall into the category of centralised groups, as the native speakers (NS) (i.e. Ellen and Sandra) in both groups are identified by themselves and the other group members as a leader-like or teacher-like character. In contrast with groups 1 and 2, the participants in groups 3 and 4 do not perceive that they are led by a particular member in the conversation. Thus, groups 3 and 4 are categorised as less centralised (or non-centralised) groups in this project.

Centralised groups		Non-centralised groups	
Group 1	**Group 2**	**Group 3**	**Group 4**
Anna (NNS)	Jenny (NNS)	Kat (NS)	Laura (NS)
Ellen (NS)	Sandra (NS)	Lucy (NNS)	Lina (NNS)
Lina (NNS)	Yang (NNS)	Nina (NNS)	May (NNS)
May (NNS)			

Table 6.1 Group types and memberships

This section will focus on how silences work in groups of different dynamics by looking at two sub-themes. Firstly, I will explore how the leaders' dominance is exercised and mitigated at the same time to cope with silence. This is followed by a section on how the presence of a leader in the group may influence the other members' willingness to communicate when it comes to managing silences in the group. This section also discusses how the participants perceive their interactional behaviours may vary with different interlocuters in the group, e.g. NS or NNS.

6.1.1 Constructive 'dominance' in coping with silence

As chapter 4 shows, many instances of silence in the data occur after FPPs. The analysis also shows that many of the silences after FPPs occur in groups with a leader, and particularly after questions produced by the leaders, who are also the NS, in groups 1 and 2. Furthermore, the interview data have revealed that the leaders' perceived 'dominance' over the conversation may be relevant to dealing with silences and specifically, it may have been employed as a resource and a coping mechanism for managing silence in group work. Both the interactional data in group and interview data show that their dominance can be reflected in two main aspects in the conversation, and they are eliciting responses and managing topic shift.

Eliciting responses

By examining the interaction between participants in groups 1 and 2, I have noted that one pattern in the leaders' action is that they frequently elicit responses from the rest of the group. More importantly, the action of eliciting responses is conducted by no one but the leaders in both groups. Specifically, in group 1, one resource that Ellen routinely employs to facilitate the interaction between participants is asking topic eliciting questions, for example, in extract 6.1.

Extract 6.1

```
1  Ell:   Mm ((typing)) the- uhh: (1.6) ah so it's on the sheet
2         is called a compliment clause. We'll follow the sheets.
3         ((typing)) Ahh: wrote there, (0.7) uhm: (0.9)
4         Any ideas? What are we (thinking)?
5         (5.0)
6  Lin:   It's just like I felt sick, [perhaps?
7  Ell:                               [mhm mhm
```

The participants are working on a list of linguistics questions in a shared document. In lines 1-3, Ellen produces some telling about what is written on the sheet. After some brief pauses, in line 4, she initiates two questions *(any ideas? what are we thinking?)*. The questions are designed to generate responses from the rest of the group, demonstrating how she enacts a leader role to organise the conversation by explicitly offering an opportunity to speak. Then, Lina produces a response and resolves the 5-second silence in line 5. This extract gives an example of how Ellen's technique works in drawing a response from the recipients. However, this is not always the case and sometimes her elicitation might not succeed in getting a response, as in extracts 2 and 3. These examples show how Ellen, as a leader, deals with the situation where no one responds and silences result after her questions. Both extracts below have been analysed in chapter 4 (as extracts 4.6 and 4.8).

Extract 6.2
```
1  Ell:   I think because the general consensus's that i'
2         includes some auxiliaries? um I will say that it's
3         probably gonna be um: (0.3) that linguistics is fun
4         is the (.) com- uh relative clause in this case.
5         (1.8)
6  Ell:   Yeah, that seems right to me. >Does anyone have< any
7         thoughts? ((typing sounds))
8  →      (5.4)
9  Ell:   Okay, perfect. Uh:
```

Extract 6.3
```
1  Ell:   Uh:m (.) What d' we think it describes, h'we  got any
2         ideas
3         (1.6)
4  Ell:   think I migh've got one I just don't want to dominate
5         the conversation so, if someone has any idea, please
6         go ahead.
```

```
7          △(5.7)                    △+(4.5)
8  Ell:    △lifts bottle and drinks△,,,,,,
9  Ell:    No ideas? No uh no ideas *at all? +That's fine.
```

In extract 6.2, the participants are working on a linguistics task which requires them to identify the types of clauses from a list of sentences. In lines 1 to 4, Ellen provides a candidate answer to the task. She continues to produce a self-assessment of her answer and this is followed by a topic eliciting question (*does anyone have any thoughts*). As previously analysed (see extract 4.7), the question is designed to elicit new mentionables from the group before moving to a closing. However, no response is given in this case and there is a 5.4-second silence in line 8. What happens next shows how Ellen in her leader role deals with the silences: she allows the silence after her question to get extended in order to wait for a response. When no one does, she treats the silence as a decline to introduce new mentionables and then accepts it with 'okay perfect' as she moves to a closing. It is Ellen who identifies the meaning of the silence as a form of 'no' and determines when to call an end to a sequence (or an action), and these actions of hers demonstrates her leader role.

This strategy of managing silence can be seen more explicitly in extract 6.3. Here, the participants have just entered the group work and familiarised themselves with the task. In line 1 Ellen initiates another topic eliciting question, and silence occurs again. But what she does differently here is adding a telling increment to further pass the floor to the other members while acknowledging that she has something to say (lines 4-6). This is followed by a longer silence, which shows that she waits for others to speak first even in the case where she has a mentionable. This also shows that she attempts to construct her role more as a 'facilitator' who encourages interaction than a controller who dominates. The extracts so far demonstrate Ellen's leader role in organising the conversation, including creating opportunities for others to speak by asking topic eliciting question, allowing silences to be extended to wait for responses and resolving silences by treating them as meaningful.

In response to the researcher's question about Ellen's utterances in extract 6.2, May commented below on the influence of Ellen's actions on her beliefs and participation.

> Researcher: 那你怎样看待她说的这些话呢，或者你有什么想法?
> How do you see what she says here, or do you have any thoughts on this?

<blockquote>
May: 我觉得肯定是她希望每个人都可以表达一下自己的观点，但是我们可能默认觉得 Ellen 她会处在一个说话比较多的位置，所以我们会默认觉得应该先说一点什么。就是会觉得她对这个问题的观点应该比较多，就会等着她而不是我们主动地说一些我们的观点。我觉得她可能也有意识到这一点，所以希望大家都能去多表达自己的观点，而不是她自己一个人像进行一场演讲一样，就是她希望和我们有多一点的交流。

I think she definitely hopes that everyone can share our thoughts, but we may have tacitly agreed that Ellen is at a position where she speaks more, so we thought it was unwritten that she was supposed to say something first. (I) just felt that she could have more ideas about this question, so I tend to wait for her instead of taking the initiative to share my ideas. I think she may have realised this too, so she wants us to contribute more, rather than her doing this all alone like giving a speech, like she hopes to communicate more with us.
</blockquote>

May's statement above suggests that there is an established recognition of Ellen's status as a more outspoken and more competent member compared to the rest of the group, which may have resulted in a plausible inference that Ellen has more legitimacy to provide answers than the others. What May expressed about wanting to 'wait for her instead of taking the initiative' is consistent with the CA analysis in previous chapters that their silence is a way to pass up the speakership. The interview data add to the analysis by showing that the speakership which she passes up in the silence may not be just passed to anyone, but specifically to Ellen, who is perceived as a leader. Therefore, knowing that there is a more competent member in the group may give rise to a belief that the perceived leader has greater legitimacy in the conversation, which may in turn leads to a tendency to silence. By collaborating with rather than resisting Ellen's leadership, the group reinforces Ellen's status as a leader.

Having looked at how Ellen enacts a teacher-like role in the conversation and how her actions are perceived by the NNS members, I will now turn to the perspectives of Ellen. The following extract shows how Ellen view her own actions and the other member's silence. When she was asked about her impression on the interaction in group 1, Ellen recognised her dominance over the conversation, while she also explained how she attempted to mitigate the dominance:

<blockquote>
Researcher: So now let's focus a bit more on this particular group. I mean, you with Anna, Lina and May. So what will be your first impression on the interactions between the four of you in the recording?

Ellen: I think, again, the dominance thing is definitely there. But I think in that case, from what I was- what I sort of guessed how they were like, they always they very much seem to fall into that category of they want to be there. Definitely, they want to be there. But it's just they don't really want to do group work, or they're a bit apprehensive about group work. And I think or at least I hope that through the way I interact and everything, I hope I
</blockquote>

managed to help them out of their shells a little bit. And I hope I managed to give them a platform to speak and everything like like, at least a few times, *I remember sort of giving the floor completely to someone else.* And sort of asking what their experience was, I would sort of say, this is my experience. What's your experience with this? Or what's your thoughts on this?

The extract above shows Ellen's awareness of her dominant position as well as a disparity in the share of turn taken in the interaction. She perceived the other members being less outspoken as somewhat related to reluctance or resistance to group work. Having had this kind of impression, she described that she attempted to mitigate her 'dominance' through questions and elicitation to encourage the others to speak, and as she stated, "to help them out of their shells". What she explained here is consistent with her actions in extracts 6.1 to 6.3, and particularly in extract 6.2 where she passes on the floor even when she has something to say. This shows that her behaviours as a leader can be a way in which she deals with silence in pursuit of a more balanced contribution in conversation.

In contrast with Ellen's interpretation above, Lina and May shared a different point of view regarding their silence in extract 6.2.

(Researcher has played recording of extract 6.2)

Researcher: 关于这里你有什么想说的吗？
Do you have any comments on this one?

Lina： 就是大家真的很无奈，就我们真的也不知道。好像那道题，我记得我根本没有看懂它到底要干嘛，因为好像是关于 metaphor 类似的吧那种非常英语的， 然后我和 Anna 因为英语都不是我们的母语，所以我们真的不知道说什么。
There was nothing we could do, because we truly didn't know. It seemed that for that question, I remember that I didn't even understand what it wanted us to do, because it was something about metaphor which is a very English kind of thing, and for me and May, English is not our mother tongue, so we really didn't know what to say.

Researcher: Ellen 在这里重复了一下你们的 task 然后问了你们一个问题。你对于她说的这段话有什么看法？
Here, Ellen repeated the task and asked you a question. How do you feel about what she said here?

May: [...]一方面是英语的一些比喻对我和 Lina 来说可能不是很熟悉，我们可能需要更多的时间去进行一个转换啊或者一些思考。
To me and Lina, we are not that familiar with some metaphors in English, and we may need to more time to translate, and to think.

The statements above suggest that during the silence after Ellen's question, the Chinese participants may be dealing with some contextual difficulties in relation to the content knowledge about the specific assignment and language barrier (see 6.2 and 6.3 for extended discussion). This also shows the British and Chinese participants seem to interpret silence in the group differently: while Ellen perceives it as reluctance to speak, Lina and May, as explained above, see their silence as an inability to contribute due to a lack of background knowledge.

When Ellen was asked how she felt about the participants who were quieter, Ellen responded to the question and then shifted to her own style and highlighted her role as a leader more strongly in the extract below.

> Researcher: Yes. So how do you feel about them being a little bit like less engaged? Or
> how do you feel about them speaking less than you do in the interaction?
>
> ((16 lines omitted))
>
> Ellen: I'm quite a dominating person, I'm quite an instigator, as we call it in the, in that sort of sphere. I sort of push the group forward and what we're going to do and everything, but I also try and say I'll turn to another character. And I'll ask them a question, or I'll involve them more, or see what they want to say. [....]
> I think that can be shown although I'm a dominant person, if someone does speak up, I always let them speak first. I always try and let them speak up first, [...] I want to let them have the the the conversation. [...] And that's all I've ever wanted to see them also speak up to, to see my constructive dominance being constructive.

Ellen's narrative above reveals that her leader-related actions including eliciting responses stems from an intention to neutralise and counteract her perceived dominance over the conversation. By 'sphere', she was referring to the scenario in a board game 'Dungeons and Dragons', where an 'instigator' does a similar job to her leader role in group work. By asking questions, she attempts to generate more talk from the others and to consequently resolve the silence among them. Thus, her dominating behaviours seem to be in parallel with an intent to facilitate the interaction and manage silence in group work.

Sandra, who is identified as the leader in group 2, expressed similar ideas about constructing her leadership and dominance as a strategy to deal with silence. The description below is part of her response to the researcher's question about how often she was invited to participate in group work.

> For breakout rooms, it's been quite frustrating, I don't know whether it's language barrier. I try not to just assume that it's language barrier, but often it'll be me having to ask questions and elicit responses before people feel comfortable discussing things. Um rather than just open discussion.
> [...]
> We are usually put with students that require us so that we encourage more speaking, but what I tend to notice what happened is that *I take over because otherwise we just sit in silence*. I still think that I take a leader role. But it comes from a place of like (2.0) just pre- being prepared to have no response.

Here, Sandra identified herself as a leader in the group but she saw her leadership as less of an inherent behaviour of her own but more of a coping mechanism or precaution for the anticipated silence in the group. As she stated, 'I take over because otherwise we just sit in silence', she perceived that her actions of taking control as something she had to do in order to avoid silences and make the conversation work.

To sum up, eliciting responses is a typical action employed by the leaders in centralised groups to resolve silences. The analysis shows that this particular action regularly appears in the talk-in-interaction in groups 1 and 2, which may be relevant to the frequent occurrence of silences after FPPs in these two groups. That is to say, while the leaders work to manage silence by asking topic eliciting questions, what they do may create more silences occurring at this position. This may be potentially relevant to an ambiguity in speaker selection in the form of their questions, the recipients' lack of content knowledge of the specific task, and a belief among the other members that treats the leader as a legitimate speaker. The last point will be elaborated on in section 6.1.2.

Managing topic shift

In addition to the silence after FPPs, another group of silence that frequently occur in the data is the silence after SPPs, including silences at sequence boundaries. Different from silences after FPPs, the latter group widely appears across all the four groups. That is, while silences after FPPs are found more saliently in the centralised groups, silences after SPPs commonly occur in all groups. However, there seem to be different patterns in how these silences are resolved and who resolve the silences in the two types of group dynamics. In centralised groups (groups 1 and 2), when silence occurs after a SPP or at sequence boundaries, it is typically the leader who initiates a new topic to resolve the silence, as shown in extracts 6.4 to 6.6 below.

Extract 6.4

```
20  Ann:       +Mmhm+*
21  Ann:       +nods+
22  Lin:          -->*
23             (3.0)+ △(2.6)        △
24  Ell:             △touches lips△
25  Ell:→   I think number eight is a har- is a pretty difficult
26          one? lookin at it?
```

Extract 6.5

```
1   Ell:    Any other thoughts on set three or we all good to move
2           on to problem three.
3           *(2.0)      *+ (1.0)
4   Lin:    *shakes head*
5   Ell:    Cool. Um problem three then, let's °have a look°.
```

Extracts 6.4 and 6.5 above show how silences after SPPs typically get resolved in group 1. In extract 6.4, a silence occurs after Anna's SPP and the sequence comes to a possible completion. Ellen in line 6 resolves the silence by announcing the next question on agenda, which directs the other members to focus on this topic. Similarly, in extract 6.5, Ellen produces a topic initial elicitor in line 1 before closing the current sequence. Having received a nonverbal response from Lina as the SPP, after a 1-second silence, Ellen closes the last sequence and initiates a new one on 'problem three'. Both extracts illustrate Ellen's actions as a leader in managing silences at topic boundaries. Same kind of actions are conducted by Sandra (i.e. the leader) in group 2, as in extract 6.6.

Extract 6.6

```
1  San:    =oh only that? Ok.(1.2) And then this is you huh huh
2          (0.7)
3  Jen:    Huhh.
4  Yan:    Yeah
5          (1.7)
6  San:    Okay so. (0.5) u:m (1.8) ques- part one is theory, we
7          have to come up with (2.1) um some theory, wha- wha
8          theories have you (0.6) derived from these three
9          interviews?
```

The interactional data in group 2 show that Sandra routinely uses 'okay so' at turn initials as a resource for managing silences at sequence boundaries (more examples see analysis in chapter 5). Interestingly, the analysis of interactional data in group 2 shows that 'okay so' is used exclusively by Sandra to manage silence and topic shift. However, in analysing the data in non-centralised groups, e.g. group 4, the discourse marker 'okay so' is used by different members and is also used by an NNS member in the group to achieve a similar goal, as in extract 6.7.

Extract 6.7 (taken from extract 5.6 in chapter 5)
```
11 Lau:     [Yeah
12 Lin:     [Y-  yeah* instead of the last name.
13               --->*
14 Lau:     ((nodding))
15         (2.6)
16 May:     Okay so:: +should we continue to task two?
17                 -->+leans slightly back--------->
18 Lau:     Yep
```

In extract 6.7, when the first sequence comes to a possible completion and silence occurs at line 15, May, who is also one of the NNS members in group 1, initiates an action of moving to the next task, which is similar to what Ellen does in extracts 6.4 and 6.5. This shows that in group 4 'okay so' is not exclusively used by the NS. Thus, the action of managing silences after SPPs by initiating topic shift may be relevant to group dynamics, i.e. whether there is an active leader. Furthermore, the use of 'okay so' as a resource for managing topic shift may have something to do with power and control over the conversation. When there is an identified leader, who is perceived to have more power and legitimacy over the talk, the other members tend to refrain from doing the work of managing silences at possible completion of actions. However, this may be less of the case in groups without a distinguishable leader, as both Lina and May stated below regarding their different perceptions of the interactional behaviours in group 1 and group 4.

(Lina talking about the interaction in group 4)
Researcher：那这个情况下，通常会是谁发起一个话题来化解这个沉默？
            Under this circumstance, normally who will initiate a topic to resolve the silence?
Lina: 我们三个都会说，就是谁想到什么就说什么。
            We all do. Like whoever has thought of something will go.

Researcher：在小组中和不同国家的同学交流中有什么样的感受？

How do you feel about interacting with students from other countries, such as UK, in your groups?

Lina: 分人吧。像 Ellen 这种就属于比较 leader 的那种感觉，就是跟她交流我就更倾向于是我是一个倾听者的角色。然后和其他的比如 Laura 就相当于我说一点她说一点。

Depends on who I work with. For example, for those like Ellen, I feel she's like a leader, so when I talk to her, I tend to be a listener. And for the others like Laura, it will be me saying a bit and then she says a bit.

((Before this May was talking about Laura in group 4))

May: 我是觉得 Ellen 她的话，是处于一个引领大家的位置，她和 Laura 很大的区别就是，很多时候在小组中第一个讲话的我都觉得是 Ellen。就是她经常是第一个讲话并且第一个去问大家有没有打开文件啊，或者问大家有没有准备好，可以的话我们就开始讨论这样的。然后她也会经常去关心其他的同学比如说我，就是当他们全部都发表完观点的时候，她会问我你有没有其他想法， 甚至让我觉得她有一种助教的感觉，非常的细致。然后 Laura 的话她也是一个非常好的（组员），她在和我们交流的时候可能没有像 Ellen 一样处于一个引领的位置，但也在非常认真听我们的对话，包括在和我们进行交流，她不是主动的去引领对话，但是我们之间还是交流地很多，就是你问她什么她也会去说，然后她也会说一些自己的观念。但是她可能不会去点你说你有什么想法呀，或者去给我一些老师的感觉。因为 Ellen 真的给我一种助教的感觉，一种可以教我们的状态。

I think in terms of Ellen, she is *at a position to lead us.* A big difference between her and Laura is that I think most of the time she is the first person to speak. So she is often the first person to speak and ask if we all have the file or if we are ready, if yes we will start discussion. And she often cares about others like me, so when they all have shared some ideas, she would ask me if I have any thoughts. She even makes me feel like she is a TA. She is very considerate. And for Laura, she is also a very nice (team mate). When we are talking, *she may not take the lead like what Ellen does*, but she listens to us very attentively too. *She wouldn't lead the conversation, but we can still talk quite a lot. I*f I ask her something she will answer and she will share some of her perspectives as well. But she may not pick on me and ask what I think or sound like a teacher. Because Ellen really *makes me feel that she sounds like a TA*, like she's ready to teach us.

The statements above highlight the difference between the NNS participants' perception of interaction in centralised and non-centralised groups. Specifically, having a member playing a leader role may have impact on their interactional behaviours. As Lina expresses, she tends to pass up speakership and become a 'listener' in the presence of Ellen, while taking an equal share of turns with Laura in the other group. She also pointed out that silences in group 4 can be resolved by all of them rather equally, in contrast with Ellen doing most of the work in managing silences after SPPs in group 1. In addition, May identified Ellen's status in the group as teacher-like, which suggests an asymmetric power dynamics between Ellen and the other

members in group 1. Her description also indicates a salient difference in the interactional patterns between group 1 and 4 due to the presence of a teacher-like figure.

In the interview with Ellen, she also addressed the topic of managing topic shift and she perceived this as another way to keep her dominance constructive. The following extract is part of Ellen's narrative in response to the interviewer's questions about her dominant role, given that Ellen has brought up the idea of dominance in her previous answer.

> Researcher: And so when did you start to come to realise that you might be as dominant in the conversation, is it after you've watched the recording or recently in the conversation with anyone else?
> Ellen: ((7 lines omitted))
> Although I was always leading conversation or almost always leading conversation, I would always be the sort of almost like the *question master*, if that makes sense. So like, if we had a bunch of questions, I'd be like, okay, let's look on to the next question or something. I'd be the *time keeper,* and things like that. And I think that's, it's something I noticed quite early on during lectures and everything. And I tried to make it as constructive as possible. So I'd be like, before I moved on to a new question, I'd always ask everyone, if they had something to say, *if they had nothing new to say, I'd be like, okay, new question*. Let's, let's move on. Yeah, I, what I'm trying to say is that being dominant, in this case, I hope isn't a bad thing.

What Ellen stated above is consistent with both Lina and May's description in terms of how she takes control of the transition from one topic to another, as what she referred to as being a 'question master' and 'time keeper'. She compared her role in the group to this sort of institutional role in games (e.g. quizzes) which does similar things, including asking questions and keeping track of the time. This shows that self-awareness of her leader role is consistent with her interactional actions in the group. According to her, asking topic eliciting questions before moving to a new topic, as shown earlier in extract 6.2, is to mitigate the sort of dominance and leading position.

In addition to eliciting responses and managing topic shift, another aspect in which the leader's role in centralised groups can be manifested is conversation openings. A pattern identified in the interactional data of group 1 and 2 is that it is always the leaders (Ellen and Sandra) who start the conversation in the group, as in extracts 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10.

Extract 6.8

```
1  Ell:    Right. Uhh:: okay so we are on problem four
2          subordination? I think it was? So, let's have a °look°.
```

```
3              (15.0)
4  Ell:    R:ri:ght then (.) Have w'all had a rea:d? >h'v
5          everyone had< a look. All good?
6          *(1.5)*
7  Lin:    *nods *
8  Lin:    [Yea
```

Extract 6.9
```
1  Ell:    Perfect uh what room we are, we are room one.
2          (8.0)
3  Ell:    °Right° the:n. >°L'ts have a look°<.(1.0) So we all
4          got the- the thing up?
5          *&(1.0)*&
6  Lin:    *nodding
7  Ann:    &nodding&
```

Extract 6.10
```
1  San:    Okay it's one seventeen and we need to go back at
2          one: (0.8) thirty fi::ve.=
3  Yan:    =[Yeah
4  Jen:    =[Yes
```

Extracts 6.8 and 6.9 provide examples of how the conversation is opened in two out of the three sessions recorded with group 1. Extract 6.10 is taken from the beginning of conversation recorded in group 2. It is interesting that in all sessions recorded in groups 1 and 2, it is always the same person (i.e. either Ellen or Sandra) who starts the conversation, whereas in group 4, conversation can be opened by different speakers and by both the NNS members, as in extracts 6.11 and 6.12.

Extract 6.11
```
1  May:    So:: shou' we talk about some (.) yea some experience?
2          of our(.) our s-study?[(.) I mean
3  Lau:                          [((nodding))
4          (1.0)
5  Lau:    Yeah?
```

Extract 6.12
```
1  Lin:    hhh. So maybe we can just like (.) one by one go from
```

```
2        each question?
3 Lau:   °yeah°
```

Extracts 6.11 and 6.12 show how the NNS members, Lina and May, open the conversation in group 4. It is worth noting that both Lina and May have participated in the conversation recorded in group 1, however, neither of them has ever become the first speaker in group 1. This suggests that the presence of a leader-like character may make a difference to the group dynamics and particularly to who opens the conversation. This can be further seen in the interview with Lina.

> (The researcher and Lina talk about the interaction in group 4)
> Researcher: 那你觉得在每次讨论开启话题的时候，关于这个部分，你有什么想说的吗？
> In terms of opening conversation in group work, do you have any comments on this?
> Lina: 我们开启话题其实是挺随意的，基本上谁是第一个进入房间的谁会是第一个开启话题的人。对，其实大家都还挺平均的，就是在不同的情况下，所有人都会有机会成为发起话题的那个人。
> It's actually pretty random, like how we open the conversation. Basically, the first person who enters the room will start the conversation. Yeah, so it's quite fair between us. Under different circumstances, all of us have the opportunity to be the one who initiates the conversation.

In response to the researcher's question about opening conversations, Lina explained that the opportunity is equally distributed to everyone in group 4, so the first person to speak is not fixed in this group. This contrasts with the situation in group 1, where, as May described above, Ellen is identified as the one who opens conversation in most of the time. In the interview with Sandra, the perceived leader in group 2, she perceived that her action of opening conversation is more of something she has to do.

> R: So, okay. Uhm, so for the university courses you've been having so far, how often would you be asked to work in groups or pairs in the online classes?
> S: [...] The breakout rooms I find there're a lot of the times that I have to, less of now because of people feeling a bit more comfortable, but especially at the beginning, I felt that a lot of the times it was me having to be like 'come on guys, let's discuss this'.

According to Sandra, she observed that the other members may have difficulties with starting the conversation at the start of group work, and to deal with this, she had to step in and facilitate the conversation. This again indicates that her dominating behaviours may originates from a need to fix interactional problems relevant to silence.

To sum up, the analysis in this section suggests that the presence of a leader or a 'facilitator' may have impact on the interactional patterns in the group. Specifically, it has impact on where silences occur and how the silences are managed. Interviews with the participants illustrate that on one hand, the leaders' dominating behaviours can be a strategy to deal with silence and can be constructive to the progress of group work; on the other hand, the presence of a leader may create an asymmetry of power in the group, which can have consequences on the rest of the group's actions relevant to silence. The following section will dig deeper into the last point by exploring how the presence of a leader in the group may influence the other members' willingness to communicate.

6.1.2 Impact of leaders on the other members' willingness to communicate

The previous section has discussed different interactional patterns related to silence in groups with and without a leader, and the analysis indicates that the presence of a leader in group can have impact on the other members' actions and beliefs. This section focuses on how the participations perceive their actions in group work being influenced by the presence of a leader, and particularly the influence on their willingness to communicate (WTC; i.e. an intention to speak or remain silent). Kang (2005) has proposed that WTC is a fluid and situational concept which may be subject to changes with various situational variables, including psychological security related to interlocutors. This section will take a step further and explore how leaders as interlocutors may influence the other members' actions and perceptions of silences in MGW.

The interview data show that non-leader members in centralised groups hold mixed attitudes to the leader's behaviours. On the one hand, all the participants perceive the presence of a leader in their group positively, as they stated below.

Researcher:	那你刚刚说到他们会起到一个带头的作用，那你对这种行为有什么想法？你怎么看待他们这样的举动？ You just mentioned that they ((other non-Chinese students)) would take the lead, then how do you feel about this? how do you perceive their behaviours?
Jenny:	我觉得挺好的，我挺愿意被他们带动的 I'm fine with that. I'd like to be led by them. [...]
Jenny:	其实我挺喜欢和 Sandra 在一组讨论，因为她就是挺喜欢相当于一个 leader, 其实我们在开始讨论的时候也不是一下子讨论的起来，但是她就是很容易一步一步带领我们引导我们一起讨论起来，引导我们慢慢的说话之类的，发表自己的观点。

Actually, I enjoy working with Sandra, because she seems to like being a leader. We don't always start off very well with the discussion, but she can easily lead us into the discussion step by step and gradually encouraging us to talk and share our ideas.

Researcher: 那你喜欢有这样的成员在你的小组中吗?
Do you like to have this kind of member in your group?
Lina: 我还是挺喜欢的因为这个就会让时间过的很快，而且我能学到正确的答案。
I kind of like it because this makes time go faster and I get to know the right answers.

The extracts above show that the non-leader members generally expressed appreciation instead of resistance to having a leader in group work. This suggests that the other members' attitudes may play a part in fostering the leader's leadership. Nevertheless, some participants admitted that under some circumstances, the leader's actions may also create challenges for them to speak. For example, Yang explained below in response to a question about external reasons for silence.

Researcher:你刚才说的可能主要是你自身的一些因素，那么还有什么其他外界的因素让

你沉默吗？What you just mentioned are mainly internal factors, is there any

external factors for your silence?

Yang: 确实有个情况，就比如说我们班上的，主要两个外国同学，其他也有，但是我跟他们接触不多。主要是 Kat 和 Sandra, 然后她们两个的话就是在组里很容易成为 leader，然后就贯穿全部，然后有时候她们说话说太快太多你也不好意思打断，然后就在一直保持沉默，即使有的时候你有发现一个新的意见，你有的时候也不会好意思说。
There is something, for example, there are mainly two foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates on the programme. There are a few more but I don't know them very well. So mainly Kat and Sandra and they tend to become the leader in groups and throughout the whole session. Sometimes, when they talk too fast or too much, it'd be awkward to interrupt, so (I) tend to remain silent. Even when I've got a new opinion from time to time, I would be too embarrassed to speak.

Yang's comment reveals that some of the leader's interactional behaviours (e.g. *talking too fast and too much*) may influence his WTC in a way that makes him feel uneasy and even demotivated. As a result, he would remain silent or become reluctant to speak up. This is consistent with Kang's (2005) finding that interlocutors may have impact on students' psychological security in terms of their WTC. This comment further suggests that a NS interlocutor's dominating behaviour may reduce the NNS members' WTC under some circumstances, leading to their silence. The situation that Yang described above can be found in the interactional data in group work, for example, in extract 6.13.

Extract 6.13 (taken from extract 5.19 in chapter 5)

```
47  Yan:      =I think maybe the interviewer le- lead the
48            interviewee to answer the question that [interviewer
49  San:                                              [Yeah.
50  Yan:      really want
51  San:      It's interviewer's bias.
52            (0.9)
53  Jen:      °Yeah~°
54  Yan:      °mm°
55            (7.2) ((no obvious movement, all gazing at front))
56  Yan:→     The question is-
57  San:→     >YEAH YOU'RE RIGHT.< she does. She answers very
58            positively, even though the question is pushing her
59            towards the negative answer huh huhhh. [.hhh
60  Yan:                                             [°Yeah°
61            (2.5)
62  San:      Yeah so a better question would've probably been how
63            ((5 lines omitted; talking about the same interview))
```

As previously suggested in 6.1.1, silences after SPPs and at sequence boundaries in group 1 are mostly resolved by the leader, Sandra. Extract 6.13 provides an example of a deviant instance where a non-leader member (i.e. Yang) attempts to resolve silences at this sequential location. In this extract, the first sequence comes to a possible completion at line 51 after both Jenny and Yang produces a SPP, and a 7.2-second silence occurs at line 52. Yang attempts to repair the silence by initiating a new mentionable at line 53 (*the question is*) but gets cut off by Sandra speaking in an increased volume and speed (line 54) (Schegloff, 2000). Then, it can be seen that Yang forgoes his speakership and passes up an opportunity to speak when another silence emerges at the next TRP in line 58. Yang ends up not picking up what he wanted to say at all. In the interview, Yang explained that he did not perceive the cut-off as problematic as she probably did not hear him talking due to network lag, showing that the online environment may pose obstacles to the quality of communication (Saraç, & Doğan, 2022). He also explained that he did not resume his talk because Sandra (in line 54 and after) had covered what he was going to say. Nevertheless, this extract shows that non-leader Chinese students do attempt to resolve silences in some cases but can be held back by situational factors including the leader's behaviours.

The analysis above indicates that the leader's interactional behaviours may create uneasiness and nervousness about speaking among the other members. And the interview with another Chinese participant, May, further suggests that the leader's behaviours can give rise to a level of psychological reliance and dependence on the leader to run the conversation. The extract below is a follow-up to May's previous comment where she referred to Ellen's image in their group as a 'TA'. When the researcher asked her how she felt about Ellen's TA-like behaviours, she commented:

Researcher:	那你对于她这样的行为，就是你说的'助教'的感觉，是什么样的态度呢？ What would be your attitudes to her (Ellen) behaviours, as you said, like a TA?
May:	我觉得她一方面确实是有帮助到小组中的讨论，但另一方面，并不是她的问题，是我自己的问题，我会觉得有这么一个活跃的同学，她说了很多话，会给我一种之后的答案她肯定会去说（的感觉），就是我会有一种那我是不是可以少说一点这样的感觉。就是这种感觉其实并不是她导致，或者她做错的了什么，而是我自己这边可能会有这种侥幸心理，就是因为有这么一个活跃的同学存在，我会把自己的存在感降低。感觉就是就算我不说什么话，小组也可以继续进行讨论这样的感觉。 I think on one hand this is indeed helpful to the discussion, but on the other hand, not her problem but my own problem, I would think that there is already someone being this active and she talks a lot, which makes me feel that she will certainly answer the rest of the questions. So, I would start thinking perhaps I can speak less. It is not her that causes this feeling or does anything wrong, it's just from my side, I would probably have this feeling that I get to push my luck. Since we have such an active member here, I will keep a low profile. I feel like even if I don't say much, the discussion can carry on quite well.

May's comment above shows that the leader's presence in the group also influences her WTC, but in a different way from how Yang perceived it, as her WTC may be lowered because she has developed a sense of dependence on the leader to run the interaction. As May stated, having an active member may hold her back from contributing because she assumed that the conversation can go well without her speaking much. This suggests that the leaders' dominance over the conversation may discourage the other members from speaking by nourishing potential psychological reliance on the person in control.

The interview with Kat reveals a similar pattern but from the leader's side of story. Kat is a NS member in group 3. Although she is not identified as a distinguishable leader in the conversation recorded with group 3, it can be seen from Yang's previous comment that she

used to be a leader in other groups. In the extract below, Kat described how she perceived her experience being a leader in previous experience of group work:

> I don't know whether it's me being older, but they everybody seems to sort of rely on me to kind of run the group almost and kind of help things along and ask the questions, which is okay, to a point, but can be kind of exhausting after a while, because, you know, you want other people to have that experience as well. And if I don't do it, they just, I've had it where I thought, right, I won't do it this time, and I'll see what happens. And they just everyone sits in silence and just wait for me to talk. And there's only so much I can take after about five minutes. I was like, I can't just do it, because it's frustrating. And we're not going to get anything done.

Kat's comment highlights a close connection between reliance on the leader and silence. This is consistent with May's statement that the non-leader members tend to develop reliance on the leader, which may increase the possibility for silence to occur in group work. As Kat observed, as she suspended her routine behaviours as a leader, the other members would remain silent as a way to wait for her to speak. She also identified age as a potential factor for this kind of reliance because she is a more mature student in the group.

In contrast with Yang and May's perceptions of their experience in centralised groups, the other NNS members reported different interactional dynamics in non-centralised groups. For example, Lina commented:

> Researcher: 关于和 Laura 那个小组你有什么样的想法?
> Do you have any thoughts about the group with Laura?
> Lina: 我觉得就是很平均的一个状态，Laura 就是那种，她说她是那种自己会在脑子里想很多但是真正表达出来其实也不会说很多，所以我们三个人的量其实都是差的不太多。而且大家彼此之间也都是很鼓励的状态，听不懂的时候也都会提出来
> I think it was an equal share (of interaction) between us. Laura is the kind of person who would think a lot in her mind but not so much in what she actually says. So we had a relatively fair share of talk. And there is a very encouraging atmosphere between us in the group. We always bring up what we don't understand.

The extract above indicates a salient difference between the interactional dynamics in centralised and non-centralised groups. As Lina described, the share of talk between her, May and Laura in group 4 is relatively equal, which, in comparison which May's previous comments about the other group, suggests that she and May tend to speak more than they do in the group with Ellen. Lina's report is consistent with the interactional data and the researcher has noted that Lina and May do take more turns in the conversation in group 4 compared with that in group 1. Both the NNS participants (Lina and May) report different patterns of actions and

perceptions between the two groups in which they have participated, and one prominent difference between group 1 and group 4 is the interlocutor. Specifically, the NS participant in group 1 acts as a leader while the one in group 4 does not. Thus, whether there is an interlocutor acting as a leader seems to play a key role in group dynamics and the NNS members' WTC and verbal participation.

The following extract of an interview with Nina, one of the NS participants in group 3, supports the idea above and it further reveals that the NNS members' WTC and actions around silence can vary with interlocutors in the group.

Researcher:	那你觉得当沉默出现的时候，通常会由谁来化解呢，比如你会有什么办法来化解沉默吗？ Who do you think would normally resolve silence when it occurs? for example, would you do anything to resolve it?
Nina:	我觉得也是不一样的，如果在中国同学这边的话，如果我状态比较好的话，通常都是我自己在 blablabla，然后我会 cue 人比如你觉得这个怎么样或者你有什么看法需要补充的吗？如果是对外国同学的话，我觉得通常是会主要听他们讲，然后我再补充我的一些观点，可能也是性格问题，我也不太愿意去抢话我可能愿意去做补充的人，但是如果没有人补充的话我可能也与跳出来去补充。 像跟 Jackie 谈话的时候我肯定就只能听他讲，因为他比较 talkative，Kat 的话她是那种会让你说话的人，所以我可能会等 Kat 说完之后然后我去补充一些什么。 I think that depends too. If I'm put in a group with Chinese students, and if I'm in a good condition, normally it will be me going blablabla, and I will cue the others, for example, what do you think about this or do you have any comments. If I'm with non-Chinese students, I will normally listen to them talking, and then I will add some of my thoughts. Perhaps it's (my) personality, I don't like to compete and I'd prefer to add things. And if no one would add anything I would jump in. For example, when I talk to Jackie[6] I will certainly just listen to him because his is quite talkative. Kat is like she will let you go first, so I will wait and add my bit after she has said something.

According to Nina, her actions around resolving silences vary with the identity of group members (e.g. as NS or NNS). Specifically, she draws a distinction between her actions in conversations with Chinese students and non-Chinese students. She tends to have higher level of WTC when she talks to her Chinese peers, while in interacting with non-Chinese interlocutors, she would take fewer turns and prefer to listen and add her ideas afterwards. This indicate that interlocutors' identity as NS or NNS may be a relevant factor (see 3.3). Furthermore, as she explained, her ways of dealing with silences would even vary with who

---

[6] Jackie is the pseudonym of a male British student studying on the programme.

the non-Chinese interlocutors is. And what influences her actions in talking to them is relevant to their interactional behaviours in the talk (i.e. persona as a group member). For example, she would take a step back and listen when the interlocutor is more of a talkative and dominant character, while she is more willing to contribute when the interlocutor is less dominant. This supports the findings in studies which identified interlocutors as a key factor shaping students' WTC (Kang, 2005; Cao, 2013), and it further reveals that the interlocutor's dominating behaviours may influence students' WTC, and then fluctuations in their WTC can influence how they deal with silences in conversations.

This section has discussed how the presence of a leader in a group may be a relevant factor influencing how participants deal with silences in group work. Although most of the participants perceive having a leader in the group as constructive and helpful to the discussion, the leader's behaviours, however, may have impact on the group dynamics and the non-leader member's willingness to communicate. This suggests that having one of the members acting as a leader may not necessarily facilitate the interaction in MGW. Moreover, certain behaviours of the leader in interaction may hold the other members back from speaking in some interactional contexts and may foster a dependent mindset among the other members.

6.2 The Nature of the Task

In addition to group dynamics and membership, the nature of task being undertaken in group work has been identified from the data as another factor influencing the form of silence in group work and how the participants perceive them. This has emerged as a particularly salient theme in the interviews with Lina and May, who took part in both group 1 and group 4. The interactional data of groups 1 and 4 were gathered from seminar sessions in two different undergraduate modules and the topics assigned for discussion in these two groups differ in nature. Specifically, the module (A) where group 1 was recorded has a focus on linguistics concepts and theories. In contrast with module A, the discussion in group 4 took place in a module (C) that leans toward an experiential side, dealing with students' experience of and approaches to learning a foreign language. The nature of the task for the interaction in group 1 and group 4 is closely linked to the subject matter of module A and C.

This distinction between the topics in group 1 and group 4 is relevant to a 'problem-solving' vs. 'idea-generation' typology of task types as identified in Murthy and Kerr's (2003) study.

These two types of tasks refer respectively to tasks that require participants to work out a best solution and tasks that generate transmission of information. Moreover, the tasks that motivate discussion in group 1 mostly involve questions about specific linguistics concepts, (e.g. 'metaphors'; and 'subordination' as in extract 8 this chapter), and the participants are expected to work out a 'right answer' to the questions. In contrast, the topics for discussion in group 4 mainly deal with the sharing of personal experience and perspectives related to the subject. For example, in extract 11 discussed earlier in this chapter, May's first turn beginning the conversation shows that the assigned topic is about sharing experience of learning a foreign language throughout the term. Another example can be seen in extract 14 below.

Extract 6.14 (group 4; session 2)

```
1 Lin:     hhh. So maybe we can just like (.) one by one go from
2          each question?
3 Lau:     °yeah°
4          (1.0)
5 Lin:     Mmhm. So how do you feel when you speak a language
6          °that's not your first language with a native speaker°?
7          ((reading from computer)) Uhh:m defini'ly a little bit
8          stressful, or like feeling like .hhh I'm not good at
```

Extract 6.14 is drawn from the very beginning of a group work session between Lina and Laura. Lina opens the conversation by making a proposal about the organisation, i.e. how the discussion works (lines 1-2). Having received Laura's acceptance, Lina proceeds to answer the first question and before she provides an answer, she repeats the lecturer's question verbally in lines 5-6. This turn provides another example of what the topics in group 4 typically look like. It shows that in this session, the topic for discussion is the participants' feelings about interacting with NS using the target language, which contrasts with the problem-focused topics in group 1.

Reflecting what was seen in the interactional data, different nature of topics affecting the interaction in two groups was brought up by the participants in interviews, as in May's comment below.

Researcher: 那具体从对话的角度上，你是否注意到一些有趣的事情，或者是否有什么困难或者问题出现？
            From the perspective of interaction specifically, have you noticed anything

	interesting, or did you have any difficulties or problems?
May:	好像没有什么让我特别印象深刻的对话。我记得((A课))的小组中有给我一些题目去解答的，所以一题一题地去解答的时候就是一个常规的流程，没有什么状况外的给我留下印象的对话。
	I don't seem to find any interaction particularly impressive. I remember in the group in ((module A)), we were assigned with a list of questions to work on, so that was a routine procedure when we worked on one question after another, so there wasn't anything unexpected or left me an impression.
	((3 lines omitted))
Researcher:	那我们来看一下另外一门课，就是在((C课上))和Laura的那个小组，对于这个小组内的经历你有什么感受呢？
	Then tell me about the other group, the one in ((module C)) and you were with Laura. How do you feel about your experience in this group?
May:	我觉得就很明显相对于A，C课给我们的感觉就是更加开放的课题，让我们进行很多的讨论。
	I think quite obviously, compared with ((module A)), I feel like ((module C)) has more open topics, and it allows us to have more discussion.

May's response in this extract points out a distinction between module A and module C in terms of topics, and this can be relevant to her different perceptions of interaction in the two groups. She describes the conversation in group 1 as a 'routine procedure' that moves from one question to another, which suggests that the interactional style in this group is relatively fixed and topic flow is organised closely based on the list of questions prescribed by the tutor. In contrast with module A, group work in module C involves broader and more open topics, which help generate free discussion among the participants. The examples above illustrate the ways in which topics of group work can differ in nature, and they further suggest that the nature of topic may play a part in shaping the interactional practices in group work. The following section continues to explore how the differences in topics are related to (un)equal access to knowledge among participants and the influence on their practices and perceptions.

6.2.1 Different levels of knowledge about the topic

The interview data reveal that the participants' perceived level of knowledge about the different topics being discussed in group work may influence their decision to speak or remain silent. Here, level of knowledge can be related to 'epistemics status' in conversation (Heritage, 2013a), which refers to speakers' access to knowledge relevant to the development of the interaction. For example, when the speakers in group 4 are talking about their own experiences of learning a foreign language, their epistemic status is equal because nobody but themselves has access to their own experiences, or thoughts, etc. In other words, all of them are the most

knowledgeable person in this territory of knowledge. The situation changes in conversations where the topic deals with solving a linguistics problem. The interview data indicate that in discussing problem-based topics (e.g. in group 1), the participants' level of knowledge about the topic being discussed is frequently invoked as a factor influencing how they interact in groups. Specifically, when the Chinese participants talked about their experience of working in group 1 (in module A), they both positioned themselves as people with a lower level of knowledge about the linguistics concepts being discussed. This is exemplified in the following extracts.

Researcher:	首先，还是先看一下 Ellen 这个小组吧，除了你觉得她作为一个 leader 之外，关于这个小组你还有什么想说的吗?
	Firstly, Let's talk about the group with Ellen. Except for the idea of her being a leader, is there anything else you want to comment on about this group?
Lina:	这个小组我觉得和科目比较挂钩吧，就是因为语言学嘛，尤其又是英语语.言学，就感觉离我相对远一点，就比如说有一些特殊的语法现象什么的，中文里根本就没有，所以我有的时候不是我不想说，是我真的不知道该说什么，所以这个小组里我也太会倾向于去主动说一些东西，因为我觉得这个东西毕竟不是我擅长的，或者说，我压根就没见过这些东西。就像是，我记得有一个涉及的概念是关于同一个单词有一个 polysemy 还有一个 homonymy... ((3 lines omitted))
	类似这种，我就是不是感觉我自己意愿上不想参与，我就是真的不知道该说点什么。
	I think (conversation in) this group is connected to the subject. Since it's linguistics, and especially English linguistics, I feel it's relatively distant to me. For example, there are some special grammatical terminology which we don't even have in Chinese. So sometimes, it is not because I don't want to speak, it's I really don't know what to say. So I don't tend to be proactive in speaking in this group because after all this is not something I'm good at, or, it's something I have never seen before. Such as, I remember there was a concept involved in the class and it's about a polysemy and homonymy of the same word...
	Things like this, I don't feel like I was not willing to take part, but I didn't really know what to say.
Researcher:	所以你觉得你的参与程度和话题或课程内容是有关的
	So you think your participation level is relevant to the topic and subject?
Lina:	对的
	Yes.

Lina reported that her silence or lack of initiative in this group had something to do with insufficient knowledge about the topic, and specifically topics that deal with linguistics

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terminology which she found particular difficult and unfamiliar. Here, the participants share some access to the information being talked about, but the level of knowledge that each participant may have acquired about the content may vary. Specifically, some participants are more knowing about the content while some are less knowing. Lina portrayed her level of knowledge about the target topic as somehow lower than adequate to engage in the discussion *(after all this is not something I'm good at),* which may inhibit her from speaking. Moreover, she also highlighted that her silence could be less relevant to reluctance to speak or a lack of initiative but has more to do with her inability to answer specific questions. This is consistent with the findings that highlight context-specific constraints including difficulties with specific subject and pedagogy as reasons for silence (Elliott & Reynolds, 2014; Cheng, 2000), while lying in contrast with the assertions that equate silence to reluctance to speak.

Similar views are shared by another Chinese participant, May, and she further points out an asymmetry in the level of knowledge among the members of group 1.

Researcher:	那么我们现在就具体关注你参与的两个小组。我们先来讨论下 A 课上和 Ellen，Anna 和 Lina 你们的小组。你对于与他们三个人的几次的小组讨论经历有什么总体的印象？
	Now Let's focus on the two groups that you participated. Let's first talk about the group in module A with Ellen, Anna and Lina. What would be your overall impression on your experience in this group?
May:	我记得在 A 这门课的时候，Ellen 她自己说过她是非常喜欢这门课的，所以我记得在小组中她就是处于一个引导我们对话的一个位置。我在这门课上的表现，我的印象是有一点划水的，大部分处于一个去认同 Ellen 还有其他同学说的话的一个状态。对，因为我对于这门课并不是掌握的非常好，所以当我反应过来具体的答案的时候，可能 Ellen 或者其他的同学已经说出了答案了。那这个时候我可能就倾向去表达我同意他们的观点，而不是去解答，因为解答速度上总比大家慢了那么一步。对，所以说的话就不是很多。
	I remember in module A, Ellen has said that she likes this module a lot, so I remember that in the group she has been at a leading position. My impression on my participation in this module is that I was kind of loafing around. Most of the time I was agreeing with Ellen and the other members. Yeah because I didn't do very well in the module, so when I come up with an answer, perhaps it has been said by Ellen or the others. In this case I tended to say that I agree with them, rather than answering the question, because I was always slightly slower than them. Yeah so I didn't speak much.

In this extract, May expressed that her silence in group 1 had something to do with a lack of content knowledge about the subject (*I didn't do very well in the module*), and she further

identified an asymmetric level of knowledge between herself and another participant, Ellen. She perceives Ellen as a more knowledgeable member, i.e. one with more advanced level of knowledge about the content, based on Ellen's practice in group work, including leading conversations (as discussed in 3.1) and displaying interest and competence. This kind of impression and perception clearly have impact on May's verbal participation in group as she reported that she tended to step back (*loafing*) in speaking and hand over the speakership to the person perceived as more knowledgeable.

May went on to describe how the member's level of participation in group 1 contrasts with that in group 4 and how the nature of topic can play a role in this.

Researcher:	那么在这两个小组中，你觉得大家的参与程度或者说话的程度是平均的吗？ In these two groups, do you think each of you participate equally or have a fair share of talk?
May:	我觉得 A 课那个小组的时候，大家说话的时长肯定不是太平均。但是在 C 课时候真的是每一个人都有说很多的话，因为是一个很开放的课题，所以每一个都有发表自己的观点。但是在 A 课的时候，我能明显感觉到说话最少的应该就是我哈哈 I think in the group in module A, it's for sure that we didn't have a fair share of talk. But in module C, every one of us did speak a lot, because it was an open topic, and we all shared our views. But in module A, I can clearly feel that I'm probably the one who spoke the least hah.
Researcher:	Hah hah
May:	因为就是会有一种，它是需要我们找到答案的一些题目，所以它有一个准确的答案在那里，所以就是当我们真的就是，我慢人一步，我没有办法很快的得到答案的时候，我真的没有什么好去说的。因为它有一个准确的答案，它并不是一个我们持有不同观点的开放性的论题吧，我觉得是这样。 Because I feel like the questions are ones we needed to find an answer to, like there is an exact answer to it. So it's really like when I'm slower than them, when I'm not able to get an answer quickly, I just don't have anything to say. This is because it has an exact answer to it. It's not like an open topic which we can have different opinions, I think.

This extract shows that the two groups in which May participated are different in terms of each members' share of participation. Specifically, she reported that the participants took a fair amount of turns in the conversation in group 4, while in group 1, as discussed in 6.1, participation is perceived as unequal possibly on account of one member's status as a leader. That is to say, May is aware of her silence being more salient in group 1 than group 4 *(I can clearly feel that I'm probably the one who spoke the least)*. She also identified the nature of topic or task as a factor contributing to her different practice related to silence in the two groups,

and more specifically, whether the task requires them to find out a precise answer or to share opinions about an open topic seems to be key here. When the topic involves production of a precise answer or a solution related to an academic domain such as linguistics, her verbal participation may be constrained by her knowledge about the subject; however, this can be less the case when the topic deals with simply sharing of opinions and perspectives (i.e. when the focus is not on finding the right answer).

In contrast with how she felt about working in group 1 earlier in this section, Lina seems to have notably different interpretations of her experience in group 4. While concurring with May's ideas above, Lina further reported how her confidence in speaking varied with the topic of group work.

> Researcher: 那除了这一点之外你觉得这两个小组还有什么其他的不同之处?
> Apart from that point, do you think there are any other differences between these two groups?
>
> Lina: 从感受上来说，我觉得还是和学科有关吧，因为我们那个 117 的小组就叫做 foreign language learning， 就是相对来说反而我和 May 可能比 Laura 更有这种体会。就是她其实虽然她之前学过德语，但是就很少嘛，就像我们学英语作为外语这么多年了，就更有发言权吧，从某种角度来说。所以在这门课上我们会更自信的表达自己的观点。
> In terms of how I feel, I still think it has something to do with the subject. Since the module ((for group 4)) is called foreign language learning, relatively speaking, May and I might have more experience of this than Laura. In fact, although she has learned German before, but just a little, and we have been learning English as a foreign language for so many years, I feel like we have more right to speak in some ways. So we tend to feel more confident about expressing opinions in this module.

In contrast with what Lina described earlier about her practices around silence in group 1, she reported that she felt more confident about interacting in group 4 because of a change in the way she perceives her access to the topic. Interestingly, she positioned both May and herself (the NNSs) as having a superior status to the NS, Laura, in terms of the knowledge they have about the topics in this module (*May and I might have more experience of this than Laura*). This contrasts with the situation in group 1 where she perceived her level of knowledge as lower than the NS (Ellen). The growth in her perceived level of knowledge boosts her confidence by enabling a self-recognition as a legitimate speaker (*I feel like we have more right to speak)*, which may be related to fewer silences in her participation in group 4. This suggests that silence in group work is not an inherent or static characteristic of the participants but rather

a fluid aspect of practice which can subject to changes with context and the topic of conversation.

Moreover, the nature of the topic may also play a role in shaping how Lina perceives her level of knowledge in the two groups. From the perspective of epistemics, when the topic deals with sharing experience of learning, the participants share an equal epistemic status because information about one's own experience is within one's territory of knowledge (Kamio, 1994), i.e. no one but themselves knows better than them about their experience. This is largely different from the case in group 1 where the tasks deal with solving linguistics problem, because some of them may know more or less than each other about the question being talked about, so there is an inequality in the level of knowledge among the participants.

In addition, a similar idea was addressed by Sandra, an NS in group 2, too as she noticed that the group members' level of verbal input may vary with the task type.

> Researcher: Mhm. Do you feel that you have to do those kinds of things a lot, or most of the time in group work, such as opening the conversation or eliciting answers from them?
> Sandra: It really depends on the group. ((15 lines omitted))
> It really depends on what the task is and who I'm with. So when we did a whole. seminar about twitter, like cat twitter and dog twitter. Um so it was like not very serious, and so everybody was inputting whereas when there's something serious I find people are a lot quieter.

She commented that when the task deals with what she called as 'not very serious' topics (e.g. twitter), similar to the 'perception-based' topics discussed earlier, the group members had a high level of input, while in discussing topics that have more to with academic domains, there could be more silence than in the former type of task. This observation is surprisingly consistent with what Lina and May have noted above. Although in this extract she was not referring to a particular piece of group work data collected in this project because she only participated in one group, this certainly adds to the evidence for topics being a significant factor.

Furthermore, time as a factor associated with the tasks is invoked by May, as she stated that not being able to provide answers in time or being slower than others would contribute to her silence. As an example, extract 6.15 has been analysed earlier in 6.1 and in chapter 4 (as extract 4.7).

Extract 6.15
```
1  Ell:    I think because the general consensus's that i'
2          includes some auxiliaries? um I will say that it's
3          probably gonna be um: (0.3) that linguistics is fun
4          is the (.) com- uh relative clause in this case.
5          (1.8)
6  Ell:    Yeah, that seems right to me. >Does anyone have< any
7          thoughts? ((typing sounds))
8  →       (5.4)
9  Ell:    Okay, perfect. Uh:
```

Here, Ellen first provides an answer to the task in lines 1-4. She continues to produce a topic eliciting FPP to generate new mentionables from the recipients, however, this is followed by a 5.4-second silence. Previous analysis has shown that the silence is treated by Ellen as a form of 'no' response, which indicates no more mentionable to talk about on this topic. That is to say, Ellen treats the silence not as a problem but something resembling an agreement to her answer, so it is sequentially relevant for them to move on to the next topic. However, May's statement below seems to suggest a different interpretation of the silence in line 8.

((Researcher plays the recording))
Researcher: Okay，在刚刚这个片段中发生了什么样的事情？
Okay. What is going on in this episode?

May: 就是 Ellen 应该是描述了一个语言现象，她还问了有没有其他的想法但是我们都有一点点，就是没有- 没有给出一个回答，就有点面面相觑的感觉。
It looks like Ellen has described a linguistics phenomenon, and she asks if we have other ideas. But we are a bit- like- didn't give an answer. I feel like we were gazing at each other being at a loss.

Researcher: 嗯嗯，那为什么会有这样的感觉呢？
Mmhm. Why do you feel this way?

May：   其实是我给个人没有给出回应的原因是我并没有 （1.0）听懂她在说什么(h)。因为 Ellen 她个人说过她非常喜欢语言学，有的时候她在小组讨论中提出的概念相对于我们来说是有一些超前的，我们可能还没有接触过的概念。所以当她有的时候提出解释的时候，我们可能根本没有明白她在说什么，所以从我这边是我还在尝试理解她所描述的内容，对，所以我会没有办法及时给到她答复。因为我没有很明白她说的- 说的东西。
Actually, my own reason for not responding is that I didn't really understand what she was saying (h). Ellen has said she likes linguistics very much, so sometimes the concepts she mentioned in

group work are a bit too advanced for us, concepts we haven't been exposed to before. So when she gives an explanation, perhaps we don't know what she is talking about. From my side, I was trying to understand what she described, so I couldn't give a response promptly, because I didn't quite understand what she s- said.

From May's perspective, the reason for her silence in extract 6.15 is related to a problem of understanding, and the problem originates from the specific concepts involved in the Ellen' previous turn. Ellen's turn in lines 1-4 may manifest and add to the asymmetry in their knowledge status, as May commented that what Ellen says often involve advanced concepts and vocabulary that are unfamiliar to the rest of the group, which creates difficulties in understanding. She further explained that she was not responding in the 5.4-second silence because she was taking the time to process what Ellen just said considering the complexity of her turn. This extract echoes Lina's comment earlier and shows that silence in group work can be related to specific distant concepts in the interlocutor's situated talk rather than passive attitudes to learning in general terms. It also highlights how an awareness of one member being significantly ahead of others in terms of knowledge about the subject may play a part in contributing to silence among those with a relatively lower level of knowledge.

In the extract below, May suggested that the amount of time assigned for the discussion may be a factor related to practices around silence in response to the question about her experience in group 4 .

Researcher: 那我们来看一下另外一门课，就是在 C 课上和 Laura 的那个小组，对于这个小组内的经历你有什么感受呢？
Then let's talk about the other module, which is module C when you were in a group with Laura. How do you feel about your experience working in this group?

May: 我觉得就很明显相对于 A，C 课给我们的感觉就是更加开放的课题，让我们进行很多的讨论。然后让我印象比较深刻的就是，应该是第二次讨论的时候，当时讨论的应该是一个多语言使用的课题，就是关于双语和单语使用的，然后当时给了我们长达半个多小时的讨论时间吧，我们三个真的很努力的想各种各样的话题，把话题延伸下去，到最后真的（h）真的感觉能说的都说完了。就是其实很少会有这种，真的没有话题说，就是最后那 10 分钟真的感觉自己把所有想说的全说完了，一种完全没有办法找到新话题的感觉。
I think quite obviously, compared with module A, I feel like module C has more open topics, and it allows us to have more discussion. And what left me an impression was, perhaps in the second discussion, and the topic for discussion was multilingualism, like monolingualism and bilingualism. In that

session we were given over half an hour to discuss, and the three of us really tried to think of as many as topics as we could to stretch the talk, but in the end we literally like(h) exhausted everything we could say. It's very rare to have situations like this where we don't have anything left to talk about. In the last 10 minute I really felt like I finished all that I wanted to say and I couldn't find any new topics at all.

In this extract May described an episode of discussion in group 4 when the participants struggled to find things to say close to the end of group work, and she perceived that this might result from excessive time provided. This extract, along with the previous extracts, shows that while the experience-based type of topics in group 4 help facilitate verbal interaction by establishing an equal epistemic status, there is a possibility that silence may arise due to lack of mentionables when more time is given than needed. Silence could be something that they resort to in dealing with this situation. This point is consistent with the CA analysis in chapter 5 (silence after SPPs) that many instances of silence occur at sequence or action boundaries in group 4 are related to lack of new mentionables. However, if we look at silences in group 1, most of the cases are found to occur after FPPs (see extract 6.15 and chapter 4 for more examples), and according to the participants' accounts illustrated above, those silences might be related to a compound of situated factors including specific unfamiliar concepts and lack of confidence due to lack of content knowledge. Therefore, the nature of topic may play a significant role in influencing the forms of and reasons for silence in group work.

To sum up, this section has mainly focused on two Chinese participants' perspectives of the difference between group 1 and group 4 in terms of the interactional patterns and practices around silence. The analysis shows that a distinction between perception-based and problem-based topics may be relevant to an equal or unequal epistemic status among participants, which has impact on their practices and perceptions of silence. Specifically, in discussing problem-based topics where a potential asymmetry of epistemics status exists, the participants reported that they tended to be more silent than they were in discussing perception-based topics. In this case, the level of knowledge about the content comes to play a part in contributing to silence, which includes a lack of content knowledge and the presence of a member identified as more knowledgeable (i.e. a leader as discussed in 6.1). In contrast with group 1, both participants expressed growth in confidence in interacting in group 4 because the topics mostly deal with conveyance of ideas without a need to generate precise answers. One participant also reported a sense of legitimacy to speak when she perceived her access to knowledge about the topic as equal to the other members.

6.3 The Language Barrier and Linguistic Identities

The language barrier emerged from the interview data as another significant factor relevant to silence in this study. This section focuses on two main aspects in which language proficiency and particularly spoken English proficiency may have influenced and shaped the students' practices relating to silence. Specifically, at a micro level of interaction, I will illustrate how silence in specific interactional episodes related to incomprehension and communication problems may be linked to inadequate spoken English proficiency. At a psychological level, silence among Chinese members may be related to an anxiety about speaking in English and a lack of confidence about their English proficiency (Yan & He, 2020).

Moreover, the participants also invoke their linguistic identities as a parallel theme linked to the language barrier. The identity work is done by both British and Chinese participant in their commentary from two aspects. The first aspect lines in the construction of a 'native-speaker (NS)-non-native speaker (NNS)' categorisation through assessment of the Chinese participants' English proficiency, and the second is seen through how Chinese participants describe their language ability in relation to their 'Chinese-ness' in contrast with the 'foreigners'. Here, the term 'foreigner' is a literal translation of the Chinese phrase '外国人' (or foreign classmates for '外国同学') mentioned by the participants in interviews, and it is typically used in the Chinese context to refer to all the non-Chinese. I illustrate both aspects in the discussion below.

6.3.1 Silence in negotiating miscommunication related to spoken English proficiency

Previous discussion in chapter 4 suggests that some instances of silence after FPPs are treated by the first speaker as problems dealing with understanding, for example, in extract 6.16 (which is analysed as extract 4.4 and 4.5 in chapter 4). This extract is drawn from the transcript of group 3 (Lucy, Kat and Nina).

Extract 6.16

```
1   Luc:   An- and from my um: communication with my interviewee,
2           I I I noticed that when I first ask a question that
2           was no- was no biased, and the interviewee's answer
3           was obviously mm toward the more negative part of her
4           online class experience. When I ask directly if there
5           were any good moment, mm the interviewee began to say
```

```
6            about something good, so: yea(h) huh huh that's what I
7            noticed.
8            (3.5)
9    Kat:    That's really interesting.(.)So that's about- I just
10           wanna make sure I understand it sorry, heh heh .hhh,
11           sorry (I didn't mean that >I just wanna<), so you're
12           saying about the question the type of question tha'you
13           asked? so when you ask them more open question, ih it
14           gave us a certain type of answer? and when it was
15           slightly- you felt it was slightly more biased,(.)they
16           then gave a different- style of answer?
17   Luc:    Yea and I think for this interviewee, the negative a-
18           aspect of he- of her online uh: class experience, is-
19           are more obvious.
20           △(1.5)  △
21   Kat:    △nodding△
22   Luc:    Can you understand tha(h)? or maybe she is more willing
23           to talk about this negative part.
24           (3.8)
25   Luc:    Huh huh
26   Kat:    [Di'ju-
27   Nin:    [Do you mean the wa:y(.) we ask question might lead
28           the interviewee to a specific direction that may
29           undermine their own opinions?
```

In this segment of talk, the first speaker, Lucy, shares her experience of doing interviews as well as transcribing interview data. The previous analysis has shown that the silences after Lucy's turns (in lines 8, 20 and 24) are related to difficulties in understanding. The recipients (Kat and Nina) have problems with comprehending what Lucy means in her FPP (lines 1-7), so a relevant SPP to her FPP is delayed and the recipients repeatedly initiate requests (as insert FPPs) for clarification from Lucy (lines 9-16 by Kat; and lines 27-29 by Nina) to repair the problem. The analysis has also suggested that, on top of the problem with understanding, the silences in this extract may also be related to a politeness strategy as the recipients are working out a less direct and face-threatening way to raise the problem. Therefore, while the silences here are co-constructed for an interactional purpose, the source of the problem that creates silences in this instance originates from the form of Lucy's FPP. That is, the way Lucy constructs her turns seems to create difficulties for both recipients to understand, and silences emerge as they work to deal with the problem.

In the interviews with members of group 3, all the three participants have pointed out language proficiency as a fundamental factor affecting silence in this group and especially when it comes to Lucy. For example, in the extract below, Kat commented on the English proficiency of both the NNS members when she was asked to talk about her overall impression on the interaction in group work.

> Researcher: So what would be your first impression on- on interactions between the three of you in the recording?
>
> Kat: So Nina and I know each other quite well, but we haven't had to, we haven't been able to work in groups very often. So it was a really great opportunity for us to work in groups. And she would be one of the people that I would actively want to work with, because she's like, she's really, like, bright, and she's really got good questions. And like, there's a really natural kind of flow of conversation between us, I think, in the group. I think, with our other member, it was slightly more difficult. **Her English wasn't as good**. **And so it was slightly harder for us to understand**. But and this is where I think, like, I didn't want to be patronizing, but also I wanted to make sure, so this is where I feel like in the in, I was watching the video back and you can really see me what I would call flex my style compared to what I'm used to. ((continued on this topic; 6 lines omitted))
>
> Researcher: So you're saying that you are using this kind of strategy to, like, you try to involve her in the conver-
>
> Kat: Yeah I try and involve Lucy in in the in the conversation and trying to get a bit more about out of her? *Because she's naturally a little bit quieter.*
>
> Researcher: Yeah
>
> Kat: So I wanted to- like it was definitely a strategy that I employed to make sure that she wasn't worried about because **Nina has very, very good English. And Lucy has good English, but just not quite as good as Nina**. *And she's a little more reserved in the way that she comes across on things*

In this extract, Kat provided evaluation of both Chinese members' English performance in group work and concluded that Lucy has lower English proficiency compared with Nina. By using descriptors such as "very good", "not quite as good" etc., Kat grades the Chinese participants' (Nina and Lucy) English proficiency into different degrees, which implies that she perceives their linguistic ability is something assessable (Liddicoat & Tudini, 2013). For native speakers, their linguistic ability is not often something to be assessed because one's linguistic ability only becomes assessable when it is not an already existed ability. That is to say, NSs are not usually judged in terms of their linguistic ability in the same way as how the NNSs are. Therefore, in producing the assessment, Kat positions the Chinese participants as

NNSs while positioning herself as an NS, as it is the identity as an NS that entitles her the ability to assess (Liddicoat & Tudini, 2013). This is how the identity work relating to NS-NNS is constructed in this commentary.

In addition, she associated her incomprehension in extract 6.16 to Lucy's inadequate English proficiency as she explained that Lucy's English being not as good created difficulty for them to understand. This shows that she perceives that language proficiency has an impact on the efficiency of communication in group work and may create possibilities for communicative problems that give rise to silence.

Evaluation of the NNSs' linguistic ability is not only produced by the British participants but also the Chinese participants themselves. In the extract below, Nina shared a similar view about Lucy's English performance in response to the researcher's question.

Researcher:	那我们现在来看一下你们这次的小组讨论， 对于你们三人之间的互动你有怎样的初步印象和看法吗? Now let's talk about the discussion in your group, what would be your immediate impression on the interaction between the three of you?
Nina：	可能我的初步印象就是 language proficiency is really important (h)。可能我的口语相对好一点，所以和 Kat 的谈话比较顺利。然后 Lucy 她可能受限于语言的流畅性，然后和表达用词的准确性，她可能就说的比较少一点。然后我们也努力的给她机会然后听她讲话但是中途还是，就没有办法听懂她说什么。所以也只能说 Okay okay yes I agree 这种。 My impression would be language proficiency is really important. Perhaps I have relatively good spoken English, so the conversation between Kat and me went quite well. And Lucy might be constrained by her language fluency and accuracy, so she seemed to talk less. And we tried hard to give her the opportunity and listen to her but still we couldn't understand her half way through. So I was sort of like okay okay yes I agree.

Again, language proficiency comes up strongly as a theme in Nina's perception about the interaction in their group. Nina provided a positive self-assessment by grading her own English proficiency as 'relatively good', and through this she positions herself as an NNS. And by describing Lucy's language fluency as constrained, she not only invokes Lucy's status as an NNS too but also implies that Lucy is a less competent English speaker than her. The fact that she did not assess Kat's English shows that she identified Kat as a NS. She also identified a positive association between the NNSs' linguistic proficiency and the quality of communication with an NS, and in this sense, NNSs with a higher level of linguistic ability may facilitate successful communication in MGW. On the contrary, she perceived the

communication with Lucy as less successful because Lucy's English was difficult to understand. Moreover, by saying '*Lucy might be constrained her language fluency and accuracy, so she seems to talk less*', Nina implied a connection between Lucy's silence and insufficient language proficiency. Both Kat and Nina's comments above suggest a strong association between language proficiency and silence and this association seems to be twofold. Firstly, incomprehensible input from an NNS with insufficient language proficiency may result in silence among the recipients in a way that creates problems of understanding. Secondly, the self-awareness of having lower proficiency may constrain the speaker from speaking in the language and thus lead to the speaker's silent participation.

Nina's description in the last but one sentence (*we tried hard to give her the opportunity*) seems to imply a membership categorial distinction between Kat, Nina and Lucy. The use of 'we' identifies Nina and Kat as incumbents of one category, involved in an activity of providing opportunity for Lucy, who appeared to *talk less,* to talk more (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015). Since categories often 'sit together in paired relationships' (p. 55), Lucy then is categorised as being on the opposite side of the relationship and her category-bound activity is would be to receive opportunity to speak in group work. This kind of category formation can also be seen in Lucy's comment below, where she described how her lack of talk may be related to linguistic ability.

Researcher:	你们的对话中有什么值得注意的事情吗？
	Is there anything worth noting about your conversation?
Lucy:	对于她们的对话没有什么值得注意的，只是我说话比较少，呵呵。
	Nothing in particular about their conversation, just that I didn't talk much, huh huh.
Researcher:	有什么原因呢？
	What would be the reason for that?
Lucy:	嗯....因为 （1.0）我确实对自己的语言能力不是很自信，首先是这一点，我对我的语言能力不是很自信，其次可能是我个人本身的原因，和小组没太大关系，我想说我是一个内向的人。
	Hmm... Because (1.0) I'm not very confident about my language ability indeed. This is the first point. I'm not very confident about my language ability. And secondly, perhaps it's about me and has nothing to do with the group. I'd say I'm an introverted person.

Here, it should be noted that the interviewer's question may play a role in shaping the interviewee's answer. The question posed by the researcher seems to imply that there should be something worth noting and possibly problematic about the data, but it is possible that this was only brought to the interviewee's attention by the interview question. In response to the

researcher's question that probes opinions on interaction between the three of them in a group (by asking '你们'), however, Lucy answered in a way that draws a line between 'them' (i.e. Kat and Nina) and herself, suggesting that the conversation involving the other two participants as different from that involving her, as they are the ones who communicate well while she is the one that stands out and does less talk.

Consistent with Kat and Nina's interpretation, Lucy perceived that language proficiency and introverted personality are two main factors relevant to her silence in the group work. However, rather than grading her own linguistic ability in words such as 'my English is not good' or 'I have low English proficiency', she framed the problem as a lack of confidence about her English instead of her English proficiency itself. This suggests that the source of the problem that might hold her back from speaking is not just about her language proficiency itself but more about an internalised perspective and negative self-evaluation (Liddicoat, 2016). That is, it is more likely to be a feeling of anxiety and concern about communicative incompetence (Zhou et al., 2005) than simply her language production that prevents her from speaking. This idea will be elaborated on in the following section.

6.3.2 Chinese participants' English language anxiety

The previous section has explored how insufficient language proficiency can be relevant to silences in an instance of interaction where a Chinese participant's language production results in problems with understanding. In addition, a self-awareness of low language proficiency may also affect the NNS's confidence and become a source of speaking anxiety (Russell, 2020). However, in other cases where little evidence from the interactional data shows that Chinese participants' language proficiency poses any problems for the communication, the participants still invoke anxiety and lack of confidence about their English as a prominent factor for their silence, for example, in group 2 (Jenny, Sandra and Yang). The analysis in chapter 4 has shown that silences in this group are typically relevant to local issues in turn-taking (e.g. dealing with speaker selection and transition of topics, etc.), and the NS member, Sandra also commented in the interview that she observed a fair amount of input from everyone. Nevertheless, one of the Chinese participants, Yang, provided negative evaluation of his English proficiency and perceived it as a problem in the comment below.

Researcher: 你刚刚提到, 你感觉 Sandra 可能习惯做一个 leader, 那么你觉得你和

Jenny 可能是处于什么样的角色？

You just mentioned that you think Sandra seems to be a leader, then what

kind of role do you think you and Jenny might have played?

(6 lines omitted)

Yang: 就比如说之前在组里，我们要最后确定一个人要去发言，然后 Sandra 说完之后大家都沉默了，因为 Sandra 她自几的话发言太多次了， (...)所以就保持沉默, Sandra 也不想再总结发言。然后我们两个中国学生的话，就更不倾向去发言，因为我会觉得很尴尬而且会害怕自己做不好，最后发现实在没办法了我就说，我来发言。

For example, earlier in the group work, we needed to choose one person to be the presenter at last, and after Sandra said it we were all silent, because Sandra has spoken for so many times. (...) So we kept quiet, and Sandra didn't want to present again. And for the two of us Chinese students, we didn't tend to speak because I'd be embarrassed and afraid that I couldn't do it well. Finally, it ended up with no one doing it, so I was like, I would present.

Researcher: 其实你做的还是很好的，最后结果还是很好的，上次的时候。

In fact you did it very well. It turned out to be good, I mean last time.

Yang: 但是听自己的英语表达觉得 Sandra 都不一定能听懂哈哈

But listening to my own English, I don't think Sandra can even understand me huh huh.

Here, in response to the researcher's question regarding the roles they played in group work, Yang referred to an episode of conversation where Sandra askes them who wants to present on behalf of the group and there is a lengthened silence after her question (see extract 4.3 in chapter 4). Yang explained that he was silent after Sandra's question due to an anxiety about his spoken English. By stating *'the two of us Chinese students'*, he categorised both of them as members of Chinese students, and he proffered a category-relevant account (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015) for why they *'didn't tend to speak'*: a fear of not speaking the language well. This shows that he treated the most salient aspect of his Chinese identity as not speaking English as a first language, which highlights his NNS status and associates his hesitance and anxiety with his identity as an NNS. In fact, in the recording Yang volunteered to report the group's discussion at last (see extract 4.3), and the researcher observed that his presentation went very well. However, Yang still downgraded his English proficiency and threw the fluency of his English into question. This kind of negative self-evaluation is typically made by NNSs to their own linguistic performance (Liddicoat & Tudini, 2013). The mismatch between Yang's

actual English proficiency and his self-assessment indicates a sense of incompetence and a lack of confidence even though his English proficiency is in fact good enough for communication.

In the following extract, Yang continued on the idea of Chinese students' English proficiency and the category of NS/NNS is introduced more explicitly.

Researcher: 那么现在除了这个沉默的问题，你觉得还有什么沟通上交流上的问题吗？
Now, apart from silence, are there any other problems with communication?

Yang: 可能就是像我们中国学生的语言水平，我听了我的录像回放，我感觉自己说的好慢，自己就听不下去自己说的东西。
Then it would be language proficiency of us Chinese students. I listened to the recording, and I feel that I talked very slowly and I couldn't stand listening to myself.

Researcher: 嗯,嗯
Mhm mhm

Yang: 就感觉会很奇怪，我也不知道外国同学是怎么忍受的。
It just felt very weird. I don't know how the other foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates even put up with this.

Yang was asked to comment on the problems he had encountered in group work and he perceived his English ability as a problem. By using the pronoun 'us' and describing Chinese students' English production as 'slow', 'weird', and 'couldn't stand listening', he not only criticised his own language proficiency but also generalised the problem to the whole Chinese cohort in the programme, which reflects a self-stereotype and identifies himself as a member of the category: Chinese students. Moreover, his description of how the "foreign classmates" would feel about his English production invokes a paired categorisation of Chinese - foreign students. Here, a literal translation of the term '外国 (wai guo)' used by Yang is 'foreign', which refers to "non-Chinese" from his perspective (see the annotation); however, there is in fact a cultural connotation behind the term "foreign/foreigners" in a Chinese context. In Mandarin, when people use the expression "foreigners" ("wai guo ren" or "laowai" in Chinese Pinyin), they more often refer to Western white people, typically from English-speaking countries, than any non-Chinese in general (Mao, 2015).

Yang's final turn (*I don't know how the other foreign classmates even put up with this*) implies that Chinese students' English is something, say, not so well articulated that can even be intolerable for the non-Chinese students. This then proffers a category-relevant activity that the

non-Chinese students are involved in: putting up with Chinese students' inadequate English (Stokoe & Attenborough, 2015). In contract, a categorial practice shared by Chinese students can be identified as speaking English '*slowly*' and not native-like. This shows that what essentially distinguishes the two categories is their language ability, although it is not stated explicitly. Moreover, that fact that Yang used a rather encompassing category 'foreign classmates' instead of something more specific such as 'British' or 'Polish' students shows that the primary matter he is dealing with may not be their nationality or cultural identity. The way in which Yang described these categories and their associated activities highlights language as the most salient aspect of their identity, because what is relevant in this extract is specifically the action of speaking or not speaking English as a native language rather than everything else that Chinese and non-Chinese people would generally be involved in. Therefore, the categories being invoked here, although in original words are Chinese/foreign students, can be understood in terms of the participants' status as NS or NNS, or in other words, their linguistic identities. By using 'put up with', he perceived that speaking deficient English is something that may annoy the NS interlocutors, and this may then lead to him feeling embarrassed and even guilty towards the NS for having to bear with his language. This reveals a feeling of inferiority that warrants NS students a right to evaluate the form of his language (Liddicoat, 2016), and he positions himself (i.e. an NNS) as a less competent speaker while his NS interlocutor has a superior status in the conversation.

In the next two extracts, Yang introduced the differences between interacting with other Chinese students and interacting with non-Chinese students, and silence is identified as one aspect of the differences.

Researcher:	那么你刚刚也说到沉默这个现象，对于这个问题你有什么想法，或者你经历到什么具体的事情和这个有关？
	You just mentioned silence, so do you have any comments on it? or have you experienced anything specifically related to this?
Yang：	就是...无论和中国同学还是和英国的同学其实都遇见过沉默，但只不过和英国的同学，就是外国同学他们一起上课讨论的话可能沉默的次数要多一些，然后要长一些。因为有的时候他们说的话我们接不上，或者是大家不太容易想展现自己。就很多人就把自己包围在舒适圈，然后你们讨论我在那里听着就可以了。
	It's like... I encountered silence when I was working with both students from China and UK, but the only thing is when discussing with British students, who are foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates, there were more silences and longer silences. Because sometimes we

couldn't pick up what they said, or we don't normally want to present ourselves, many of us tend to stay in the comfort zone, so it's like you guys discuss I'd just chill and listen.

Yang described that one difference between speaking with British students and speaking with his peer Chinese students is the form of silence in the conversation. Note that here he invoked another category of 'British students', but then he stated that they '[...]就是外国同学（are foreign classmates）', showing that he used the two terms (British and foreign) almost interchangeably. His explanation suggests that the linguistic identity of his interlocutors may affect the form of silence (e.g. in frequency and length) in the interaction. Specifically, he observed more prominent silence from the Chinese students when they interact with NSs on account of both language barrier and a lack of psychological safety .

In the segment below, Yang mentioned how the Chinese students switch between English and their mother tongue in groups with or without British members. Again, he highlighted language as a prominent barrier to interaction with NS, resulting in silence among the NNS.

Researcher:	好的，那你刚才又提到英国同学可能会倾向于去做一个 leader，那么你对于这种现象你是怎么看的呢？
	Okay. You just mentioned that British students tend to be the leader. How do you see this kind of things?
Yang：	我觉得可能就是有些东西对于我们很难，但是对于他们 native 来说就会比较轻松。然后他们有的时候就会，就是 carry 一下全场，就来引导一下我们嘛，然后这样的话也方便进行。因为就是通常情况下，如果我们中国人和中国人自己在一组，老师如果不进来我们都是直接说中文，然后讨论完了之后想办法再到最后发言的时候再翻译成英文。然后如果和外国同学在一组的话我们就要打破语言的壁垒去讨论，但是中国学生又很容易保持沉默，所以就可能更偏向于就是做一个领导者的身份，确定能够保持整个讨论能够顺利进行吧。
	I think there are certain things that are hard for us, but **seem to be easier for them as native** (speakers). And sometimes they would take the lead, so it makes it easier for doing group work. Generally speaking, if there are only Chinese students in a group, we would just speak Chinese if the teacher isn't there, and after discussion we will find a way to translate everything into English for presentation. If we're put in a group with foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates we will have to overcome the language barrier, and Chinese students tend to be quiet, so (they) would be the leader just to make sure the discussion can go well.

Here, Yang explicitly referred to 'native' speakers when he was asked by the researcher how he felt about his British peers in group work. The way in which he responded to the question

reframes British students as a category of 'native speakers', and it further confirms the analyses above that he treats the linguistic identities (NS/NNS) as the most striking aspect of the Chinese - Foreign (or British) categorisation. According to his interpretation, the British students' linguistic identity as NS seems to be key here. His description that 'certain things' involving talking and working in MGW are 'easier' for the British while 'hard' for the Chinese shows a belief that there is an inherent asymmetry between the NS and NNS' status in the conversation, so he believes it is legitimate for NSs to lead the group work. He also recognised the NSs' leading position as something helpful and necessary for the group work, which rationalises the NSs' status as the more competent language users (Liddicoat, 2016).

The other Chinese participant in group 2, Jenny, expressed a similar view about how speaking in her L2 becomes a constraint on participation in group work. She highlighted that the source of her silence is more about inability rather than unwillingness to speak.

Researcher:	你觉得在你们小组中谁的参与程度最高？
	Who do you think participate the most in your group?
Jenny:	那当然是 Sandra，一般都是外国同学参与程度比较高，在我个人经验来看
	Of course it's Sandra. Normally the foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates participate relatively more, from my own experience.
Researcher:	你觉得他们参与度都比较高是一个好的事情吗？
	Do you think it's a good thing that they participate more?
Jenny:	不能说好与不好的事情吧，其实我们也很想参与，但是有的时候我们可能就跟不上他们的脚步呵呵。就有-不是这次的经历，就是以前的经历，就是如果一个小组如果有两个外国同学的话，基本都是他们两个在说话，因为他们说的太快了，我们中国同学甚至没有反应过来，就不知道怎么作答，回应她。常常是这样的。
	It's not about good or bad. Actually, we want to participate, but sometimes we may not be able to catch up with them. Like- not about this group, it's from my previous experience, when there were two foreign [i.e. non-Chinese] classmates in a group, then basically they did most of the talking. They were speaking too fast, and we didn't even have time to process, so we didn't know how to respond. This is quite common.
Researcher:	那如果小组中都是中国同学的话会是什么情况？
	What is it like in a group with Chinese students only?
Jenny:	那大家都会，我觉得会讨论的更加畅快一点。可能还是会有语言障碍吧。因为有的时候我其实很想表达，但是有语言没办法转换过来，所以没办法流畅的表达自己想要说的意思。
	Then we will- I think the discussion would go more smoothly. So it might be still about language barrier, because sometimes I really want to say something, but I couldn't get everything translated into English. So I couldn't express myself fluently.

Despite her desire and willingness to speak, Jenny expressed that she struggled to follow the non-Chinese students and join their conversation, indicating that NNSs in multicultural group work may be silenced by the NSs due to the gap in linguistic competence. She further explained that difficulties in expressing herself in English may constrain her from speaking, while she felt much easier communicating in her L1. This shows that her silence is likely to be unintentional rather than intentional (Wang et al., 2022), as she felt that she was not reluctant to speak but held back by linguistic deficiency.

The British participant in this group, Sandra, also commented on language as a factor for silence. Rather than evaluating the NNS members' language production, she demonstrated understanding and empathy for the NNSs' anxiety about speaking a non-native language.

> Researcher: So how do you feel about those students who- who'd remain silent in
> your group?
> ((8 lines omitted))
>
> Sandra: I think it's might be a- you know, a combination of feeling shy speaking
> a second language I understand, I mean like if I have to present this in
> Mandarin I would have to want to go away and prepare I wouldn't want
> to just do it um on the spot, I understand that. Um and a combination of
> that and I know that when I used to teach, I used to teach in China for
> example, I know that my students felt they weren't a hundred percent
> sure on the answer will feel very uncomfortable being put on the spot?
> You know, it's stressful. Especially in a non-native language, to make
> something up on the spot, I totally get that. But I also know it's a
> combination of not being prepared for lectures, because I go back now
> doing all my assignments and I read- I go to the old lecture videos and
> there's only like 10 views.

In response to the researcher's question about how she perceives the silent students, Sandra related them to her own Chinese students in China. In her description, she invoked 'feeling shy speaking a second language' as a categorial practice for the Chinese students, which shows that she also treats their NNS identity as central to the 'Chinese students' category. Sandra associated the Chinese students' silence with factors related to shyness and anxiety about speaking a 'non-native language' and fear of making mistakes, which echoes Yang and Jenny's

comments above. In addition, she perceived that language barrier is not the only reason and other factors including lack of background knowledge and preparation for the course content may also come into play. This is consistent with the previous discussion in 3.2, indicating that silence in MGW may not be attributable to a single and independent interpretation but a combination of a variety of interrelated factors.

This section has explored how language proficiency and the participants' linguistic identities may affect silence in MWG. The analysis suggests that the impact of language on silence may be manifested in several different dimensions. At an interactional level, inadequate language proficiency may result in comprehension problems, which consequently lead to silence as the participants negotiate miscommunication while attempting to maintain the rapport in the group. At a psychological level, Chinese participants invoke self-devaluation of their language production and lack of confidence about speaking English influenced by an inequality in NS/NNS status and a native-speakerist ideology. This sort of mentality and internalised belief may hold them back from speaking even when their English proficiency is in fact sufficient for communication.

6.4 Chapter Summary

Drawing on both the interaction in group work and interview data, this chapter has discussed three main themes invoked by the participants as related to silence in MGW, including group dynamics, the task and the language barrier. The findings suggest that group dynamics in relation to the roles and persona of interlocutors can make a difference to the participants' interactional behaviours around silence. The interactional data have shown a distinction between the interactional patterns in the groups with an identified leader and those without one in terms of where silences typically occur at a sequential level and who is the one normally resolves silences. Meanwhile, by comparing the perspectives of participants from two different types of groups (centralised/ non-centralised), the researcher has noted that the presence of a member in a leader role is likely to have impact on the other non-leader members' willingness to speak. On the one hand, both the leader and non-leader members recognise that the leaders' actions in organising the conversation, including eliciting responses and managing topic shifts, are constructive to the development of conversation. On the other hand, under some circumstances, an awareness of having a leader who appears to be dominant in the conversation may intimidate the other members and inhibit their willingness to speak by fostering a potential

psychological reliance on the person perceived to be in control. That is, they would be more inclined to silence knowing that there is already a competent speaker in the group.

Moreover, this sort of mentality influenced by group dynamics seems to be compounded by the nature of the task and anxiety about language proficiency in contributing to silence. Although a lack of background or content knowledge has been widely identified as a factor affecting students' silence and reticence in classrooms (e.g. Choi, 2015), there has been little discussion about how the nature of task being discussed may make a difference to the form of silence among students. The analysis shows that the Chinese participants believe that they tend to be more silent in discussing problem-based topics than perception-based topics. Drawing on the accounts of two Chinese students who worked in two groups discussing the two types of topics respectively, the analysis shows that access to knowledge that discussing the topics requires plays a key role in their silence. Specifically, in discussing perception-based topics, the participants reported a sense of legitimacy to speak because they share an equal access to the topic which deals with their own perceptions, while as for problem-based topics, the participants may be constrained by their level of knowledge about the subject. Thus, the Chinese participants' silence may be related to both a lack of content knowledge and group dynamics, and especially when there is a leader presenting him/herself as more knowledgeable. In addition, consistent with previous research, the data suggest that linguistic competence and anxiety about language proficiency also contribute to Chinese participants' silence (Ha & Li, 2014; Kim et al. 2016; Tum, 2014). The findings of this chapter add to this by arguing that their perceived deficiency in English production may be linked to a positioning of NS/NNS status, as some of the participants expressed that they tend to be quieter talking with NS because they feel vulnerable about being evaluated and criticised by the NS on their language. This reveals an impact of native-speakerism on their mindset which positions themselves at a subordinate status in contrast with the NS (Holliday, 2006; Liddicoat, 2016). The feeling of vulnerability and anxiety may become stronger when the NS interlocutor happens to take a leader role (e.g. in group 2) as it aggravates the perceived power imbalance, indicating a combination of factors that may be relevant to their silence.

The findings point out that the factors affecting silence are by no means independent from each other but interrelated, and the causes of silence can vary from groups to groups considering situational factors including group setting and task type. This echoes Choi's (2015) observation that the reasons for students' silence are intertwined and Yan and He's (2020) finding that

students' reticence is related to a combination of dispositional (e.g. lack of confidence and anxiety) and circumstantial factors (e.g. classroom environment). Therefore, the chapter argues that silence in MGW is a complex and situated phenomenon which cannot be simply attributable to a set of fixed determinants. To understand the reasons for students' silence requires sophisticated analysis that takes the context of interaction, including the inherent difference between groups, the types of task and the participants' perceptions into account. In this sense, a combination of interactional data from group work and the participants' reflection in interviews provides a resource for the researcher to link the participants' perspectives to evidence in the interaction and allows contextualised discussion of the reasons for silence with respect to what is going on in the talk. Through the analysis in this chapter, the researcher attempts to propose the usefulness of combining interview data with interactional data in a CA-based study in shedding light on the factors affecting silence as an interactional action.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Given that silence among students in classrooms has been widely observed while being generically perceived negatively in higher education contexts, exploration into the nature of silence in student-student interaction seems imperative for a more sophisticated understanding of the practice of silence. With this thesis, I intended to investigate silence not only by looking at the participants' perspectives, but also by situating instances of silence in segments of talk-in-interaction using the lens of CA. By working with the interactional data gathered in group work, I discussed the nature of silence in two sequential contexts: silence after first-pair parts (FPPs) (Chapter 4) and silence after second-pair parts (SPPs) (Chapter 5). The CA analyses address two main focuses including how the instances of silence are organised and how they are resolved by the speakers. A variety of linguistic devices for managing silence after SPPs have been described. The interview data mainly contribute to the discussion in Chapter 6 where I explicate three main themes emerged as relevant to silence in the group work where the participants took part. In this concluding chapter, I first summarise the finding by answering the two RQs. I then synthesise the findings in relation to the literature on silence in institutional talk, identifying silence as a locally managed contingency in interaction and discussing the agency involved in managing silence in MGW.

7.1 Summary of Findings

7.1.1 RQ 1: the organisation of and solutions to silence in group talk

In order to address the first research question about the nature of silence in students' interaction, I examined how silences are formed and structured in the sequences of talk. The analytic focus of this thesis is on inter-turn silences, as intra-turn silences in the data are typically treated by the speakers as unmarked, i.e. not treated as something accountable. In analysing silences after FPPs, a key finding is that the silences can have sequential implications for the ongoing talk as the silences can be treated as a signal of some sort of interactional problems. In this case, the silence is more likely to be a part of the behavioural process of recognising and dealing with the problems. One recurrent interactional problem related to silences after FPPs is one dealing with speaker selection, as many instances of silences in the data emerge in environments where multiple speakers are responsible for a next action projected by the FPP. These silences can be identified as Type II silences in the typology of inter-turn silences proposed by Hoey (2020a), as shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Types of inter-turn silences (adapted from Hoey, 2020a, p.16)

	Type I	Type II	Type III
Prior action determines range of next actions	✓	✓	–
Prior action restricts range of next speakers	✓	–	–

Unlike the typical silences between adjacency pairs in dyadic interactions (i.e. Type I silences), lots of silences after FPPs in the data are Type II, which suggests that a lack of clear speaker-selection component to restrict the range of next speakers is common in the FPPs prior to the silence. Under this circumstance, the speaker may orient to the silence specifically as a problem with speakership and initiate repair work accordingly (e.g. as in extract 4.2), or they may treat the silence as indicating some other problems in the talk, e.g. with understanding (extract 4.1) or the form of the last turn (extract 4.3). This shows that what contributes to silence between adjacency pairs is often something locally constructed in the interaction, and that an ambiguity around who-should-speak-next can typically create silence in group talk. In other cases where silences are not oriented to and repaired as a result of a problem with the talk, silences may relate to withholding a verbal response to avoid a potential face-threatening act (e.g. extract 4.5).

Although silence occurring after FPPs is typically treated as something that should be repaired and accounted for, i.e. as problematic, not all silence at this location is treated this way. In a particular context where silence follows a topic-eliciting FPP used to open up new mentionables, the absence of response here can be treated by the first speaker as a legitimate form of no-response rather than an interactional problem. Here, the silence is co-constructed by the recipients as a collaborative decline to the opportunity to speak next. Both cases above suggest that many cases of silences in MGW are in fact environments where speakers deal with local incidents in the talk, and that silence in some contexts can be more constructive than obstructive to the talk. The finding is not to claim that all the silences in this sequential context are interactional or result from interactional issues, as other contextual factors including affordances of the online platform and the task being undertaken can also play a role in generating silence.

In contrast to silences after FPPs which can be identified as Type I and Type II silences, most of the silences after SPPs in the data belong to Type III. This type of silences occurs in a sequential context where neither a specific type of action nor a specific speaker is designated. In the data, silences after SPPs routinely emerge at a possible completion of an action or a sequence, where no next speaker is selected and no one self-selects. In this case, the silences are less accountable than the silences after FPPs discussed above, but given the institutional context of group work, a closing of the conversation is not yet conditionally relevant until the task motivating the conversation has been completed or the discussion is terminated by the teacher. That is, although silences occurring after SPPs are typically unproblematic, there is a tacit obligation shared by all the participants in the group to exit the silence and resume the state of talk. The analysis has identified a number of ways to move out of the silences after SPPs. Firstly, two turn-initial tokens, 'okay so' and 'and', are routinely employed by the speakers in the turn immediately following the silences. By prefacing a turn with 'okay so', a speaker resolves the silence in a way that simultaneously recompletes the prior action and initiates a new action that marks a return to the incipient agenda, i.e. the task. The mentionable following 'okay so' can be either a subsequent component of the task (e.g. extract 5.3) or an upshot/ summary relevant to the task (extract 5.7). Another connecting device prefacing a turn after silence is an 'and' token, which can either build on the prior action before silence (e.g. extracts 5.9 and 5.10) or restart an action addressing the overall task. Furthermore, there are a number of other strategies to exit the silences, including announcing a topic (extract 5.14), recycling the last action (extract 5.17), announcing no-more-mentionable (extract 5.18), back-referencing (extract 5.19) and checking for new mentionables (extract 5.20). The solutions above show that the participants regularly return to agenda-related activity as a resource for exiting silence, which points to the fact that these silences are places where participants come to the realisation that no more mentionable is available for the current action. Through the silences at possible completions the speakers are co-constructing a state where no more needs to be talked about and initiation of a new action is relevant. In other words, the silences are places where the group establish shared awareness about the group's current progress into the task. Thus, silences after SPPs can be seen as part of the boundary-marking activity in group work, signalling the accomplishment of subordinate steps in completing the overall task.

7.1.2 RQ 2: the participants' account of silence in MGW

In analysing the interview data, three themes were identified from the participants' interpretation of silence in group work. Firstly, group dynamics shaped by the peers' behaviour and persona is invoked as a factor influencing some Chinese participants' decisions to speak up or not. I compared the description of two Chinese students, Lina and May, who took part in two separate groups (one being a centralised group and another being non-centralised), and they perceived themselves as more likely to be silent in the group where a leader or an 'expert' is present. As they explained, there is a potential tendency to rely on the person whom they deem as more knowledgeable about the subject that the group is working on and to let the 'expert' take the lead. In contrast, Lina and May are observably more outspoken in another group where no recognisable leader was identified. Similar views were shared by participants (Yang and Jenny) in another centralised group as they reported that they tended to refrain from speaking due to difficulties in following the leader's talk or concern about ideas not being acknowledged by the leader. Another factor is the nature of task being undertaken. The participants described they have different orientations towards silence/speech in groups working on problem-solving and idea-sharing tasks. While a few participants perceived that they were more open and confident when the task deals with sharing personal experience and perceptions, they described themselves as more silent doing problem-solving tasks, especially when a correct answer is required. This corresponds with Bao's (2020b) finding that certain classroom tasks can trigger silence as they require more mental processing than spontaneous talk. It is also shown in the recorded interaction that some silences where the participants engage in reading may be prompted by the task.

Lastly, consistent with the findings of previous research (e.g. Kim et al., 2016), language barrier and English proficiency are identified by participants as something typically relevant to the practice of silence. In their narratives of the language barrier, the Chinese participants described that the frequency and length of silences emerge in conversation vary between interacting with Chinese peers in their L1 and with British or other non-Chinese students in English. Although their cultural identities are certainly relevant to the practice of silence, what underlies the Chinese/non-Chinese categorisation is a strong language affiliation and they seem to orient to their linguistic identities as central to this categorisation. The positionality of NS-NNS has consequences on the Chinese students' verbal participation, and this can be seen specifically in the descriptions of their L2 speaking anxiety in interacting with the non-Chinese peers and a sense of vulnerability to being judged by native-speaking interlocutors.

These three themes by no means imply a distinct causal relationship between each single factor and the occurrence of silence. They are more interwoven than independent in terms of their impact on the participants' practices, and it is a compound effect on the overall in-group environment that contribute to the different orientations to silence. For example, while the atmosphere in centralised groups tends to foster a sense of reliance and inclination to silence among the non-leader participants, working on a problem-solving task may add to this sort of mentality if the other members posit the leader as a more knowledgeable person who has greater legitimacy in solving the problem. This is exemplified by May and Lina's contrasting narratives of their experiences in group 1 (centralised and problem-solving) and group 4 (non-centralised and idea-generating). Furthermore, the negotiation of Chinese/non-Chinese identity can compound the centralised dynamics, as having the leader being also the only NS in the group may increase the power distance between the 'leader' and the other members. Corresponding to the relevant literature, the finding highlights that single cause-effect explanations are insufficient in understanding classroom silence (Smith & King, 2020). Therefore, silence in MGW is related to a combination of variables involving both local incidences in the interaction and interpersonal dynamics between the group members.

7.2 Silence as a Local Contingency in the Conversation

One of the key findings of this thesis is that rather than an inherent attribute of a given student group, silence in student group work is a phenomenon locally constructed and managed in the interaction. At a micro-interactional level, silence can represent a process of dealing with some emerging events in the talk-in-interaction, including problems with understanding and speaker selection, etc. as discussed above. These 'problems' at an interactional level do not equal to interpersonal problems that may threaten the relationship between interlocutors, but they are the very common and mundane components of social interaction. Problems and difficulties almost ubiquitously emerge in human interaction, and "the conversation as a self-regulating system" constantly works out the problems through certain mechanism such as repair (Liddicoat, 2022, p.197). This thesis proposes that silence can be part of the practices available for dealing with various difficulties that arise in the talk. Moreover, silence is part of the procedure where participants collaboratively orient to a closing of an action. The analysis shows that by not speaking together at possible completions, the participants signpost to each other that all mentionables for the current action have been exhausted. Thus, silence in group

work can play a role of signalling the group's current state and progress in the overall activity. The evidence above suggests that silence in group work is likely to be what needs to occur in certain sequential contexts.

At an interpersonal and dispositional level, a decision to be silent or to speak can be a result of an interplay between a variety of circumstantial factors, including the task, behaviour of the peers, and the participants' psychological state, e.g. L2 speaking anxiety. More importantly, the data reveal the participants' inclination to silence and participation mode can be constantly changing from group to group, as Lina and May described that they tend to be more verbally engaged in one group but not so much in another; similarly, Nina mentioned that she would take more or fewer turns depending on how much talk the others do in the conversation, e.g. if there is an noticeably talkative and dominant speaker she would step down and talk less. This suggests that being silent is rather a fluid and adaptable practice that may vary instantaneously with the surroundings and circumstances in the group. As Bao (2020a) maintains, to be silent is more likely a reaction contingent upon the situation than a one-way decision made by a silent speaker alone.

This project contributes to the current research exploring the reasons for students' practices of silence. While acknowledging the impact of cultural factors on some students' orientations to being silent, the thesis argues that culture is not a default explanation for silence and putting a 'culture' umbrella over the interpretation of silence seems to be a simplistic way out, and as Piller (2011, p.172) argues, "a convenient and lazy explanation". The findings question the assertation that overemphasises the influence of cultural ideology on students' silent behaviours and treats silence as a cultural product. What this thesis tries to problematise is the assumption that cultural identity is automatically an explanation for any student's silence, which is not to deny the role of culture in shaping any interactional practice including silence. Instead of imposing a fixed cultural image on the silent students, a more sophisticated way to understand silence is recognising the difference between each instance of silence and the importance of interpreting silence in relation to the interactional context. This echoes Wang's et al. (2022) suggestion for "[advancing] theoretical understandings of silences by discussing silence in context" (p.613). Moreover, on opposition to treating the students as 'victims' of their culture, the thesis suggests that in performing the practice of silence the students are active self-forming agents (Tran & Vu, 2017) who are able to not only act upon the circumstances but also make changes. I will expand this idea in the next section.

7.3 Agency in Managing Silence in Multicultural Group Work

Resonating with the idea that silence can be an intentional act (Kurzon, 1995; Wang et al., 2022), this study suggests that the students exercise agency through strategic management of silence (Zhang, 2023); that is, the practices of allowing or extending silence. Here, agency can be understood in terms of people's capability to work around the given situation and make independent decisions (Bouchard & Glasgow, 2019; Liddicoat, 2019). According to Archer (2003), the situations in which people find themselves are shaped by certain cultural and structural conditions, which may have empowering or constraining impact on individuals. In this sense, while the participants may be enabled or inhibited by their innate cultural identity and the group setting as a form of social structure, the analysis shows that the participants are capable of coping with emerging problems in the interaction and making differences to the environment through silences. This is reflected in, for example, how two participants mutually resort to silence as a way to avoid a face-threatening act for the other speaker and how some British participants allow silence to extend after producing an FPP in order to wait for the Chinese participants to respond. Specifically, in Sandra and Ellen's case, by initiating questions and allowing silence to follow, they de-select themselves and pass up speakership to the peers, which according to them was done in the hope to neutralise their dominance over the conversation. Silences in this case are done as a conscious choice, and in other words, the participants are performing actions through the silences.

While the participants can exercise agency through some silences, and there are also some cases where the participants are silent on account of reduced or restricted agency. Here, the silences can be understood in terms of withholding an action rather than performing one. A few participants including Yang mentioned in the interview that they may be influenced by a sense of inferiority when it comes to English proficiency and speaking skills, even though the recorded interactional data did not show any salient issue with their ability to communicate in groups. In their cases, their agency is reduced by speaking anxiety and vulnerability to judgement from their native speaking peers. The reduced agency may stem from their positioning of themselves as a less competent speakers than their NS interlocutors. This shows that the participants' construction of their and their interlocutor's identity has influence on the level of agency they can enact around their practices in working in groups.

The study responds to the dichotomy between voice and silence in classroom participation by promoting an awareness that silence can be part of the natural participation process and that it is important to remove the bias and negative label placed on the 'silent' students. Just as Bao (2014) discovered that the highly expressive students may not necessarily achieve better academic performance than the less outspoken ones, the interview data show that being silent is not automatically equated with lack of engagement or unwillingness to participate. Instead, silence can be practised for various purposes, including creating time for mental processing and translation between L1 and L2 (as Jenny and May expressed), and mitigating potential tension resulting from a dispreferred response. Thus, there is a need to deproblematise silence in institutional talk and classroom participation, which is, however, not to claim that silence is something to be encouraged in classrooms, but to recognise the great distinction between instances of silence and to recommend a neutral understanding of silence in multicultural group work and beyond.

This project makes methodological contributions to how we research issues like silence. In addition to using CA as a tool, it highlights the feasibility and usefulness of combining naturally occurring spoken data with interview data in understanding the complexity of this social phenomenon. While the CA analysis provides empirical evidence to the organisation of silence in naturalistic data, stimulated recalls on the silent episodes shed light on each participant's insights. The triangulation of multiple data sources, i.e. naturalistic spoken data and individual speaker's reflective account, allowed contextualised interpretation of specific cases of silence. Although the participants' comments mostly aligned with the CA analysis, the interview data showed that there were mismatched between different members' interpretation of silence. For example, several NNS participants explained that they were silent when they were trying to process what someone else just said or thinking about what to say next, but the NS participants perceived their silence more generally as a sign of reluctance to participate. This kind of information is hardly available in the interactional data and knowing the information about their perspectives helped me make better sense of the interaction. Moreover, through the interviews with Lina and May who take part in both group 1 and group 4, I was able to compare their experience in different group settings and to link the differences in perspectives to evidence in the interaction.

7.4 Limitations

The study has limitations in several aspects. In terms of research scope, it focuses only on a small number of students. Yet, given the nature of CA research and the amount of time needed for transcribing the spoken data, it would be outside the scope of this study to work with a larger number of participants. More future research is encouraged to explore silence among students in larger groups and to compare results across larger samples.

Since the whole set of interactional data were collected in an online context due to the emergency remote teaching in 2020-21, it is likely that some aspects of the findings describe online interaction more accurately than that in offline settings, and to what extent the findings would be reproduced in face-to-face conversations needs further exploration. This is largely related to a limited number of nonverbal cues including gaze and physical contact that can be employed by speakers on Microsoft Teams. Specifically, during face-to-face conversations, it would be easier for the speakers to access these sorts of resources as an aid to speaker-selection. However, none of the findings discussed in this project is found to be exclusive or unique in online environments. That is, although some situations in the data can be observed more often in online conversations, they can of course occur in face-to-face communication as well.

Internet latency can be another aspect of the limitation related to the online setting. To be specific, the recordings were collected from the researcher's end, and given the fact that latency exists in synchronous online communication, the individual participant's experience of the length of silence may be different from the researcher's and what was captured in the recording (see e.g. Seuren et al., 2021). An analysis of how latency may interfere with the conversation and result in different perceptions of the silence occurring in the interaction is beyond the scope of this study. As previously outlined in the methodology, all the screenshots included in the thesis were edited to comply with the informed consent. Thus, the screenshots can only provide some aspects of the participants' embodied conducts including body postures and head movement, and certain information including gaze orientation and facial expressions may not be shown clearly in the screenshots.

Further to the discussion in 3.4.2, the thesis by no means consider the data gathered from the interviews as the absolute evidence of the interviewees' inner state, and the interviewees' accounts are inevitably a result of the interactional context in the interviews. To some extent, the interviewer's identity and questions may have influence on the interviewees' responses.

Gender is a relevant issue noted in this line of research on silencing and being silenced. As I discussed in the methodology chapter, having only one male in the participants is another limitation of this study. An uneven gender distribution among the target student body played a part in this, as there are significantly more females than males studying on the modules. It would have been interesting to explore whether having more male students would change the dynamics in group, but it was not an option for this project to recruit from a different student group. Lastly, given the research focus on how we construct our understanding of silence, the contribution of the present study leans more towards a theoretical end than a practical one.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations outlined above have indicated that more research is needed to explore a few areas. On top of the need to research in-person group work, this thesis recommends that comparing the organisation of silence in multicultural groups with that in monocultural groups would be a direction worth exploring. Moreover, since all the four groups in this study have roughly the same composition, consisting of one native speaker of English and two to three non-native speakers, further exploration is needed to study the interaction between students from more diverse cultural backgrounds and across different group settings. For example, it would be interesting to see whether having more NSs would change the dynamics and interactional patterns in groups, and whether different group memberships would have impact on the participants' tendency to silence.

One of the findings of this thesis is that students working in groups with or without a leader tend to have different practices around and orientations to silence. In the former type of groups, it was observable that the centralised dynamic has been established before the sessions recorded for the project, as the participants seemed to have developed a consensus on who will be leading. Since the data were collected in the second term when the participants had basically known each other and their personal style from the past few months of study, it is very likely that an in-group environment had been formed. Thus, designing longitudinal studies exploring the formation of dynamics in groups would make an interesting direction of research. Specifically, how the leadership is established, and how the groups come to be centralised or non-centralised will be worth investigating. It would also be useful to study how the participants' interactional practices develop throughout the process.

7.6 Concluding Comments

The present study has shed some new light on the understanding of silence among students in institutional talk. The thesis argues that silence as a locally managed event in interaction can be performed and manipulated by speakers in various ways and for specific communicative purposes. It also reveals that a range of factors at both interactional and interpersonal levels can have influence on the behaviour of silence. Methodologically speaking, the study goes beyond a single focus on the participants' account of there is silence by paying attention to how silences operate in different sequential context, proposing the usefulness of incorporating interview data in CA analysis for understanding conversational practices like silence. Yet, this project has only been a moderate step towards unravelling the intricacies of silence in social interaction. More ongoing research is required to continue contributing to the understanding of silence in conversation.

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Appendix A. Transcription Conventions

(.)	short pause
(1.0)	timed pause (in seconds)
wor:d	lengthened sound
>word<	talk which is noticeably faster than the surrounding talk
<word>	talk which is noticeably slower than the surrounding talk
wor-	a sound is cut off abruptly
=	latching
?	rising intonation indicating a question
.	falling intonation indicating a sentence end
,	a slightly rising intonation or a hearable incomplete intonation contour
↑	rising intonation
↓	declining intonation
[	start of overlapping talk
]	end of overlapping talk
£	smile voice, talk produced while smiling
hhh.	exhale
.hhh	inhale
huh, heh	laughter
w(h)ord	laughter while speaking
°word°	talk which is quieter or whispered
w<u>or</u>d	stress/ emphasis
( )	talk which cannot be understood for transcription
(words)	alternative possible hearings
((word))	transcriber's comment, description

Embodies actions (Mondada, 2019)

* *	Description of embodies actions are delimited between two
+ +	identical symbols (one symbol per participant) that are synchronized
△ △	with correspondent stretches of talk or time indications.
*--->	The action described continues across subsequent lines
---->*	until the same symbol is reached.
>>	The action described begins before the excerpt's beginning.
--->>	The action described continues after the excerpt's end.
.....	Action's preparation.

----   Action's apex is reached and maintained.

,,,,,   Action's retraction.

Appendix B. Participant Information Leaflet

Participant Information Leaflet for Students

Study Title:	Talk-in-interaction between university students in multicultural group work
Investigator(s):	Lyu Zhang

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Who is organising and funding the study?

I am conducting this study as part of my PhD thesis and it is not funded by an external body.

What is the study about?

The study explores the interactional strategies that the students employ in multicultural group work by recording and analysing naturally occurring interactions. The study intends to focus on both face-to-face and virtual interactions.

What would taking part involve?

The participants will be involved in the study for about two months in 2020/21. The participants will be video or audio recorded in group activities in their regular courses for three times over the period of time. They will also take part in an individual interview with the researcher and the interview will be audio recorded. As the group discussions to be recorded are part of their regular classes, participants will not need to attend any additional sessions for recordings. They only need to attend an interview at the end of data collection. The interview session will last 45 to 60 minutes and it will be about the participants' perceptions of the communication in the previously recorded group discussions.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and choosing not to take part will not affect you or your grades in any way. You can also choose to withdraw your participation at any time during the data collection without giving a reason. Further details about withdrawing from the study are provided later on in this document.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

The participants will be provided with an opportunity to review and reflect on the communication between themselves and others in group work. By taking part in this study, they will have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of working collaboratively in a multicultural group. They may also improve their intercultural skills for communicating with their peers from different cultural backgrounds. The findings of this study may have implications for universities seeking to promote students' experience of intercultural learning.

What are the possible disadvantages, side effects or risks, of taking part in this study?

There will not be any disadvantages or risks of taking part in this study.

Expenses and payments

The participants will not receive any form of payment for their participation in the study.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All data of the participants will be kept confidential throughout the study. Personal data will not be transferred to other organisations outside of the University of Warwick. Research data will be collected in person or via online meetings. Video/audio recordings of group work will be collected to understand how students communicate in group work. Interview data will be collected to understand participants' perceptions of communication. Participants will be given pseudonyms once data collection is completed and personal data will be stored separately to the research data on the Warwick server. Direct quotes which may reveal the participants' identities will be avoided in any report or publication of this research project.

What will happen to the data collected about me?

Research data will be pseudonymised as quickly as possible after data collection. This means all direct and indirect identifiers will be removed from the research data and will be replaced with a participant number. The key to identification will be stored separately and securely to the research data to safeguard your identity. It will not be possible to withdraw your data after the second month following the completion of data collection.

We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with data protection legislation. The University of Warwick will keep identifiable information about you on Warwick servers for ten years after the completion of study.

Data Sharing

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. The University of Warwick has in place policies and procedures to keep your data safe.

For further information, please refer to the University of Warwick Research Privacy Notice which is available here: https://warwick.ac.uk/services/idc/dataprotection/privacynotices/researchprivacynotice or by contacting the Information and Data Compliance Team at GDPR@warwick.ac.uk.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on being part of the study?

You may withdraw at any time during the data collection by letting the researcher know you no longer wish to participate. You may also withdraw by emailing the researcher up to two months after the data collection. Withdrawal of participation without giving a reason would not affect you in any way. Please note that if you withdraw from the study, it will often not be possible to withdraw your data which has already been collected, after it has been anonymised. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible and keep the data secure in line with the University's Information and Data Compliance policies.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will mainly be reported in the researcher's PhD thesis. The study may also be submitted to journals for publication and presented in academic conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the Applied Linguistics Graduate Progress Committee at the University of Warwick.

Who should I contact if I want further information?

Please contact the researcher via email: l.zhang.38@warwick.ac.uk

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance
Jane Prewett
Research & Impact Services
University House
University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 8UW
Email: researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk
Tel: 024 76 522746

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: DPO@warwick.ac.uk.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet.

Participant Information Leaflet for Tutors

Study Title:	Talk-in-interaction between university students in multicultural group work
Investigator(s):	Lyu Zhang

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Who is organising and funding the study?

I am conducting this study as part of my PhD thesis and it is not funded by an external body.

What is the study about?

The study explores the interactional strategies that the students employ in multicultural group work by recording and analysing naturally occurring interactions. The study intends to focus on both face-to-face and virtual interactions.

What would taking part involve?

The study will video or audio-record the interactions between students as they work in groups in one/some of your courses in 2020/21. The participants will be recruited from students who have volunteered to take part in the study. They will be recorded in three sessions and they will be asked to work together throughout this period of time. The students will also be invited to a reflective interview by the end of data collection. We would ask you, as their tutor, to arrange them in set groups during the data collection period.

The recordings might be made in both online and in-person classes. The researcher will need to present in the classes to make the recordings. As tutors often join small groups as students are working, you and your voice might be incidentally captured in the recordings.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and choosing not to take part will not affect you in any way. You can also choose to withdraw your participation at any time during the data

collection without giving a reason. Further details about withdrawing from the study are provided later on in this document.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

Your students who take part in this study will be provided with an opportunity to review and reflect on the communication between themselves and others in group work. They may also improve their intercultural skills for communicating with their peers from different cultural backgrounds. The findings of this study may have implications for universities seeking to promote students' experience of intercultural learning.

What are the possible disadvantages, side effects or risks, of taking part in this study?

There will not be any disadvantages or risks of taking part in this study.

Expenses and payments

The participants will not receive any form of payment for their participation in the study.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All data of the participants will be kept confidential throughout the study. Personal data will not be transferred to other organisations outside of the University of Warwick. Video/audio recordings of group work will be collected to understand how students communicate in group work. The recordings will be made by the researcher in person. Participants will be given pseudonyms once data collection is completed and personal data will be stored separately to the research data on Warwick servers. Direct quotes which may reveal the participants' identities will be avoided in any report or publication of this research project.

What will happen to the data collected about me?

Research data will be pseudonymised as quickly as possible after data collection. This means all direct and indirect identifiers will be removed from the research data and will be replaced with a participant number. The key to identification will be stored separately and securely to the research data to safeguard your identity. It will not be possible to withdraw your data after the second month following the completion of data collection.

We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. We are committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with data protection legislation. The University of Warwick will keep identifiable information about you on Warwick servers for ten years after the completion of study.

Data Sharing

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. The University of Warwick has in place policies and procedures to keep your data safe.

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What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will mainly be reported in the researcher's PhD thesis. The study may also be submitted to journals for publication and presented in academic conferences.

Who has reviewed the study?

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Who should I contact if I want further information?

Please contact the researcher via email: l.zhang.38@warwick.ac.uk

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint?

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered will be addressed. Please address your complaint to the person below, who is a senior University of Warwick official entirely independent of this study:

Head of Research Governance
Jane Prewett
Research & Impact Services
University House
University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 8UW
Email: researchgovernance@warwick.ac.uk
Tel: 024 76 522746

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter: DPO@warwick.ac.uk.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Leaflet.

Appendix C. Invitation Email

Subject: Multicultural Group work at Warwick

Dear students,

I am Lyu Zhang, a PhD student at the Centre for Applied Linguistics. I am interested in how university students communicate in multicultural groups and I warmly invite you to take part in my research project about **multicultural group work at Warwick**. The study will start in **Term 2** in 2020/21.

The study explores the challenges that students may have in multicultural group work and the interactional strategies they employ to deal with problems in communication. I hope to use the information from this research to find ways to help the university understand students' experience of and attitudes to multicultural group work and to promote the quality of students' learning experience. You will also have the opportunity to improve your intercultural skills by taking part in this study.

If you take part in this study, you will be audio or video recorded as you participate in group discussions in your regular courses. You and your peers will be recorded three times over a period of two months. You will also be invited to an interview after the completion of group recordings. The interview will mainly be reflections on your participation in the previous group work.

I have included a detailed information leaflet where you can find out more about this study in the attachment. If you are interested in taking part, please fill out the Registration form (click here). If you have any questions about this study, please don't hesitate to contact me via l.zhang.38@warwick.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting you in the study.

Best wishes
Lyu

Appendix D. Consent form

CONSENT FORM (for Students)

Participant Identification Number for this study:

Title of Project: Talk-in-interaction between university students in multicultural group work

Name of Researcher(s): Lyu Zhang

Please initial all boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation without giving any reason and without my education rights being affected.

3. I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Warwick and regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.

4. I consent to the group work where I take part in being video-recorded.

5. I consent to the group work where I take part in being audio-recorded.

6. I consent to the interview being audio-recorded.

7. I consent to the use anonymised verbatim quotations in publications resulting from this study.

8. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Lyu Zhang	_03/02/2021_	_Lyu Zhang_
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

CONSENT FORM (for Tutors)

Participant Identification Number for this study:

Title of Project: Talk-in-interaction between university students in multicultural group work

Name of Researcher(s): Lyu Zhang

Please initial all boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from The University of Warwick and regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.

4. I consent to the researcher being present in my class(es).

5. I consent to the group work where I take part in being video-recorded.

6. I consent to the group work where I take part in being audio-recorded.

7. I consent to the use anonymised verbatim quotations in publications resulting from this study.

8. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Lyu Zhang	03/02/2021	*Lyu Zhang*
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

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Appendix E. Descriptions of tasks used in each recorded session

Group number	Session number	Tasks
Group 1 **Anna, Ellen, Lina and May**	Session 1	The students need to identify the clauses from a list of sentences, (e.g. I ate until I felt sick), and work out what types of clauses they are.
	Session 2	Identify the entailment relations in a list of examples and consider what types of entailment they are.
	Session 3	Identify and describe the style of metaphor used in a list of examples.
Group 2 **Jenny, Sandra and Yang**	Session 1	Work through a list of interview transcripts, identify common themes from the data, and come up with issues and reflections.
Group 3 **Kat, Lucy and Nina**	Session 1	
Group 4 **Laura, Lina and May**	Session 1	Work through a list of examples involving the use of names in Russian and consider what kind of relationship these people have in relation to how they address each other.
	Session 2	Share opinions on a list of questions about learning a second language: -Do you imagine yourself in the future as a speaker of this language, or in a situation (social, educational or professional) where your skills in this language will be valuable? -How important and desirable is this future self-image for you?
	Session 3	Share opinions on a list of questions related to language learning and native-speakerism: -How do you feel when you speak a language that's not your first language with a native speaker?

		-Do you have being native-speaker like as a possible future goal for your language learning? Why or why not?