

Silent dialogues: The shifting flow of silence and solitude in Tokyo Story and implications for L2 pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to illustrate portrayals of silence and solitude in the film Tokyo Story (1953) and to depict the ways human relationships and bonds evolve through characters' silent dialogues. It also explores ways a study of silence such as this can help second language (L2) learners to raise their awareness of the facilitative use of silence in interaction by using film-mediated L2 learning material. Drawing on the intertwined concepts of silence and solitude understood as means of self and mutual reflection, and shared understanding through silent dialogue in the film, this study proposes the theoretical framework, Multimodal Social Interaction Analysis (MSIA) to explore the use of silence in Japanese contexts. Its analytical aspects include silent dialogues, gestures, and semiotic resources such as surrounding sounds, visual stillness, and cinematography as context-rich L2 learning material. This study suggests that diverse meanings of multifaceted uses of silence included attentive, empathetic, self-protective, shared, and truthful silence, with solitude experienced as inner dialogue underlying a character, Noriko's stream of consciousness in her life-story. The present study seeks to widen perspectives on silence within interaction, which acts as an implicit but facilitative interactional tool, also suggesting implications for L2 pedagogy.



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*I am looking at how sound can be translated into sight,
how words can be interpreted in visual form*

Kamal Boullata

1. Introduction

Silence is an indispensable part of social interaction. In recent years, its facilitative value has been addressed and revisited in many settings, including language pedagogy, education, psychology and art to name a few, and in relation to key pedagogical concepts: reflective practice (Farrell, 2019), slow pedagogies (Clark, 2022), productive silence such as cognitive fluency (Bao, 2014, 2023a) and visual literacy (Eilam, 2012). As an applied linguist and L2 teacher, the theme of silence in L2 learning has been inspiring me to closely observe its role in interaction and to search for ways to help L2 learners to voice their silent messages using words or to nurture their silent learning through various language activities in diverse learning contexts. However, the place of silence in L2 learning is often discussed

and prioritised with the goal-oriented assumption that audible output is spontaneously required, and this preconception can restrict the exploration of renewed pedagogical perspectives in order to consider the facilitative use of silence as inner dialogue in interaction. It also can limit ways we understand the nature of interactional silence necessary for developing learner-centered materials that support learner interaction while fulfilling individual needs. This study is, therefore, designed to revisit the role of silence in pedagogies from a wider perspective with a focus on art.

This study was specifically inspired by observations on the role of visual language learning materials in my recent critical pedagogical encounters with L2 learners. The first encounter highlights language input to providing contextual information in situated contexts. While language learning materials or pedagogies can take different forms, including text-driven, audio/visual-enhanced, multi-sensory-oriented and technology-enhanced, I recently had invaluable opportunities to work with L2 learners who each needed different processing times to communicate with Japanese written texts within an interactional sequence, in terms of: (1) recognition of three different types of character (*Hiragana*, *Katakana* and *Kanji*), (2) information-processing time and (3) preparation/response time for output either in writing or speaking. To support individual needs, auditory input, time support, orthographic adjustment, and the use of technology were implemented. However, my pedagogical and scholarly interests also motivated me to understand the role of audio/visual materials such as video-clips or films to give learners access to richer contextual information from the earliest stage to meet their needs. The use of film/video-oriented materials came to my mind as such a medium for this approach. The use of films for example, gives L2 learners opportunities to enjoy interaction with visually context-rich narratives within and outside the classroom.

Further, at a workshop I gave on silence in intercultural interaction at a British secondary school, a student asked an insightful question, whether silent films could be used to raise awareness of the cross-culturally diverse use of silence. While some L2 teaching materials suggest the use of silent films in L2 learning to elicit fluency through narrative (Muslimah, 2018) or the creation of storyboards with images or words (Eddy, 2022), perspectives on silence as an interactionally facilitative resource involving linguistic and cultural entities, along with underlying psychological flows such as solitude, remain under-explored. Although there are differences between uses of silence in natural interaction and those in cinema where they are part of production designed by the film director (Raeymaekers, 2019), the use of silence in films that captures and delivers specific silent moments as art can provide valuable insights and opportunities to observe, analyse, interpret and exchange ideas on silence as an indispensable interactional tool across cultures.

To provide such an opportunity, I have chosen Tokyo Story (TS) directed by Yasujiro Ozu, which adopted a universally shared theme, family drama involving inter-generational conflicts and reconciliation. This globally acclaimed Japanese masterpiece artistically illustrates the nature of silence while exploring the flow of time and space and a main character's psychological shift (Bordwell, 1988; Phillips, 2022; Richie, 1974) integrated in key aspects of cinematography and silent dialogues. It also beautifully depicts the Japanese Zen aesthetic tradition from a minimalist perspective (Ritchie, 1974), which conveys Japanese perspectives on silence.

Drawing on the concept of silence as an interactional resource and the intertwined concept of solitude as inner dialogue, this study focuses on analysing the widowed Noriko's use of silence and solitude in communication with her parents-in-law in situated key contexts. Adopting Multimodal Social Interaction Analysis (MSIA) to capture the way interaction progresses in sequence (Mondada, 2019a), and as a part of visual semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020; Pink, 2021; Rose, 2002), this study explores the shifting psychological and interactional flow of the use of silence and solitude enhanced through silent dialogues which took place chronologically both in Onomichi and Tokyo.

This study's pedagogical approach preparatory to film-mediated L2 learning material has two objectives: 1) to illustrate the facilitative use of silence depicted in a Japanese film as a valuable interactional resource able to enhance L2 learners' awareness of culturally-significant silence in Japanese contexts, in which understanding on silence can be extended to relevant intercultural contexts and 2) to explore the role of visually context-rich narrative in film-mediated learning materials for L2 learners, deepening understanding of a character's underlying psychological flow conveyed in silent dialogues, fostering learners' self-reflection. Although L2 learners referred to in this study are typically Japanese language learners, its pedagogical approach can be extended to others whose focus is the use of Japanese language and culture in intercultural contexts.

2. Silence and Solitude in Films and Implications for L2 Pedagogy

Silence in interaction can take diverse forms, shapes, and meanings in different sociocultural contexts. Raeymaekers (2019) specifically illustrates the unique dimensions of silence in sound films. Depicting its characteristics, he writes: “different images give silence different meanings, as do different sounds preceding or following silence” (p. 22). He thus postulates that a film can create a space where the audience can seek or create meaning, that is, “a space where their anticipation or interpretation of art at hand is exposed to them” (p. 13). In this sense, as Bao (2023b) posits, it is important to remember the “richness of what silence means and what it does in social contexts” (p.1). Films as art have such a powerful mediative role in connecting with others or different values through ‘inter-personal’ silence (Bao, 2023b) in wider social contexts. To understand how individuals can interact with such meaningful silences in films, this section discusses the significance of the key elements which bring such moments to fruition: (1) the intertwined concept of silence and solitude, (2) the connection between the culturally- significant meaning of silence in Japanese contexts, and visual, spatial and emotional triangulation created by film as a form of silence, and (3) its pedagogical implications.

Silence and Solitude are intertwined concepts as they share the phenomenon of a quiet space for self-reflection. Stillness allows for moments of reflection (Gordon, 2015). Sink (2022, p. 237) postulates that “inner-directed solitude” can be nurtured “by the pursuit of self-discovery, self-reflection and inner-peace”. Further, Arenat (cited in Lee, 2022, p. 83) regards solitude as a “means to be with oneself, and thinking,” and therefore the most solitary of all activities. However, both Sink and Lee emphasise the way that solitude is also meaningful in relationship to others as “other-directed solitude” (Sink, 2022, p. 37) operationalised by seeking connections with others through mutual support or respect. In this sense, characters’ agency towards their interaction with self and others reflected in silent moments is significant and functions as an underlying core element in film narrative. Solitude as the inner dialogue of the main character and its shifting response to social contexts can be infused with highly specific meanings in film.

While silence, along with solitude in narrative, is one of film’s most powerful conveyors of psychologically implied messages to the audience, alongside visually emotive material (Pink, 2021; Rose, 2002), silence expressed through other modalities, such as visual rhythm, including still images as a part of narrative or spatial composition also has a highly significant role. Thus, this section reinforces the central role of extended modalities used in film, of all three components stemming from visual, spatial, and social/emotional aspects of visual material which are integral to silence. This holistic observation and interaction with silence is indispensable to understanding the messages conveyed by film as a form of art.

Further, in L2 learning, the importance of acquiring interactional competence, the ability to engage in social interaction has been revisited in recent years (Harumi, 2023a, 2023b; Mondada, 2019a). These focus on the facilitative use of silence in interaction. However, the means for L2 learners to acquire such invisible interactional skills requires conscious attention and it is challenging for learners to develop these skills without L2 learning materials able to mediate such learning. Previous studies (Harumi, 2023a, 2023b) suggest that the use of visual resources such as video clips, conversational transcriptions from natural interaction help learners raise awareness on the diverse use of silence and associated cultural values. The need to create learning opportunities promoting self-discovery of invisible interactional practice through close observation has been emphasised. The facilitative role of video-mediated L2 material is also addressed by Harumi’s study (2023c), which illustrates collaborative L2 classroom interaction enhanced by learner-initiated questions in response to the cultural content of visual materials. These findings urge further exploration of the role of audio/visual-based materials that can play a key role in helping learners to understand the multi-faceted use of productive silence in interaction. The next section illustrates the role of silence and space in TS, highlighting the ways in which it exemplifies context-rich interactional silence.

3. Silence and Space in Tokyo Story

TS is considered the finest and most globally influential film Ozu produced during the golden cinema age in Japan. It illustrates the life stories of the Hirayama family, who originally lived in Onomichi in western Japan and begins with the old couple Shūkichi and Tomi’s family visit to Tokyo, where their grown-up son (Kōichi) and daughter (Shige) live with their families. Although their

parents rarely visit Tokyo, their children are too busy, and they prioritise their convenience. However, Noriko, the widow of the Hirayama's second son, Shouji, devotes her time to being with her parents-in-law and the core storyline centers on their communication in Tokyo and later Onomichi, culminating in Noriko and Shūkichi's resumed journey after Tomi's passing. In this film, Ozu's acute awareness of the changing landscape of Japanese society at a time of rapid modernisation is also reflected in his repeated use of still images such as smoke from factory chimneys in industrial areas, or moments such the scene where a boy reads aloud from an English textbook as he studies.

Alongside this widely shared theme which spoke to the audience's perspectives on humanity, another distinguishing characteristic of this film is the use of space and silence in key aspects of cinematography. Previous studies (Bordwell, 1988; Ritchie, 1974) connected Ozu's artistic style to minimalism. It not only mirrored but transcended certain Zen-influenced practices that embodied the core Japanese aesthetic principle of respecting simplicity by focusing on representation instead of elaboration or dramatization. Ozu could be seen to clearly support this interpretation when he outlined his artistic approach to directing:

It's easy to create drama through actions and emotions in film- my aim is to make people feel without resorting to drama [...]. For a long time, I have wanted to do away with dramatic elements, to express sorrow without tears, to capture a sense of life without any emotional upheaval (Cited in Lapworth, 2016, p. 8)

Ozu pursues this 'logic of thoughts' (Lapworth, 2016) by creating space for thoughts which enable the audience to sense life in films by themselves, rather than being the direct and passive recipients of visible dramatic effects. For example, the camera hardly moves, creating a sense of calmness and steadiness in the visual rhythm. Additionally, the arrangement of objects and positioning of people is symmetrical, creating a sense of stillness. In terms of composition, Ozu also uses still images of objects or scenery such as trees or skies, between scenes as pauses or punctuations (Ritchie, 2002) in a story. Spatial visual silence or pauses used in Ozu's unique technical and compositional device are the subject of many extensive film studies (Bordwell, 1988; Ritchie, 1974, 2002).

However, interestingly, in TS the use of silence as an interactional resource in actual dialogue and its meaning from conversational or linguistic perspectives involving the analysis of multi-modalities as a part of cinematography still needs to be explored. Also lacking is an analysis of interactional shifts in characters' uses of silence within: (a) situated contexts which are part of sequences and (b) continuing life stories in which they interact with their own solitary inner dialogues as part of longer time frames. This study, therefore, aims to illustrate such examples of multi-faceted silence to provide an additional route to deepening our insights into, and understanding of, the nature of silence as depicted in interaction while also seeking to address useful implications in L2 pedagogy, exploring a form of self-reflection through a film.

4. The study

4.1 Research methods and theoretical framework

In order to provide opportunities for L2 learners to observe how silence or solitude is communicated in interaction, this study adopts Multimodal Social Interaction Analysis (MSIA), that draws upon Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) and Multimodal Conversational Analysis (MCA) (Mondada, 2019a). This original theoretical framework was devised to explore the use of silence in films in non-Western, specifically Japanese context.

The key term 'modality' in social interaction has been referred to as "a direct connection exists between the external world and what we see" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. xv). While Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) acknowledge multiple dimensions of modality (e.g. visual, spatial, and social modes including sound, gestures, cognition) to bring the fullness of meaning in situated contexts, they also emphasize the dynamic and holistic interaction among these modes and address that each mode does not exist in isolation but mutually interactive and also constantly being reshaped. Further, they noted their framework is situated mainly in Western contexts, referring to the culturally different perceptions that exist. Other studies (Collier & Collier, 1986; Scollon & Scollon, 2003) also address that every culture must be seen in its own terms and warn that the notion of "seeing is viewed as passive and speaking as active" is not applicable across cultures, referring to the example of the Navajo who consider visual images as literal information and language as coded interpretation (Hall, 1986, p. xvi).

As such, to analyse multimodalities of visual materials in social interaction, it is essential to explore the nature of multimodality through the situated cultural lens. The place of silence in films is unique as it involves diverse modalities. As an analytical approach, MDA mainly deals with visual semiotics as a mode rather than language as a powerful mediator. On the other hand, MCA deals with co-constructive interaction within an interactional sequence, hence acknowledging difficulties in describing silence. Furthermore, interaction between talk and other modalities (e.g., spatial, or psychological modes) needs to be considered. While both analytical frameworks involve the key terms, such as visual, social, interaction, gesture, and cognitive in their analytical lenses, each has a specific analytical focus depending on the nature of the scholarly inquiry.

When it comes to the use of silence or space in films which involves visual, compositional, social aspects, interactional/linguistic aspects of silence used in interaction along with the character’s psychological shift as solitude in a life story has yet to be previously studied. For this, the study devised an analytical perspective, MSIA, highlighting the psychological and interactional aspects of silence used in interaction. Yet analysis incorporates key elements of interaction in the film, namely speech, sound, and visual phenomena. The analysis of silent dialogues and relevant cinematographic compositions of moving images will be used as a vehicle for helping L2 learners to shape their understanding of interactions in situated contexts.

My analysis centres around silence as an interactional resource which is integral to dialogue in narrative. This linguistic and semiotic analysis surrounding language use includes related non-verbal interactional resources such as the meaning and timing of silence within interactional sequences, gestures, and language use. For example, repetition or indirect expressions such as conversational ellipsis in the Japanese language (Maynard, 1986) act as implicit but collaborative ways to convey messages through interaction. These sequential analyses aim to reveal the nature of silence and its signified meanings in interaction.

Table 1. Semiotic representations of Silence and Solitude in Tokyo Story

Visual	Symmetry of objects or humans Physical positioning (side-by-side)
Sound	Still images Music
Spatial	Surrounding sounds Composition (parallel) Multiple layered perspective (focal point)
Social	Silence shared across time and place Narrative (situated life events) Psychological agency (solitude)
Interactional & linguistic	Incomplete sentence (Ellipsis) Repetition (Parallelism) Non-verbal cues (gestures, eye-direction) Indirect expressions Attentiveness in silence

Further, drawing on the analysis of moving images, this study explores ways in which the key linguistic element of communication interacts with other semiotic resources, such as surrounding sound or visual stillness, rhythm, and also spatial composition, including the physical positioning of the main characters (Yamada, 2004) as cinematographic devices. These analytical perspectives aim to foster understanding of the qualitative use of silence as seen from a holistic perspective in a film, involving renewed outlooks on multi-modalities of interaction acting to reveal the diverse forms and meanings of silence. The overview of the analytical criteria based in relation to silence and solitude based on MSIA can be found below. This helps L2 learners to observe the types of interactional silence and space in a film from multi-modal perspectives.

4.2 Research purpose and contexts

In order to use film-mediated L2 learning material aimed at developing L2 learners' understanding of the diverse roles of silence as an interactional resource, this study draws on the intertwined concepts of silence as an interactional resource and solitude as an inner dialogue. To study the interactional use of silence, after several viewings, the focus of analysis was set in the interactions between Noriko and her parents-in-law in their key situated contexts as they seek mutual encouragement for their future journey. In particular, this study closely examines Noriko's use of silence along with her solitude, underlying her stream of consciousness in her life story. This study's subject matter is, therefore, the following three analytical perspectives: (1) key life events, (2) use of silence and (3) solitude. These multi-layered viewpoints serve as platforms for understanding the nature of silence in interaction. The specific key contexts for analysis are as follows.

Five key situated contexts for analysis

- 1) Noriko and her parents-in-law's reunion in Tokyo
- 2) Shared recollection of Noriko's late husband Shouji in Tokyo
- 3) Noriko and Tomi's conversation about Noriko's future in Tokyo
- 4) Noriko and Shūkichi's conversation after Tomi's funeral near the harbour in Onomichi
- 5) Noriko's and Shūkichi's conversation before Noriko's departure for Tokyo

In order to analyse the use of silence in these contexts, the following research questions were set.

- Q1 How can the film-mediated L2 learning materials help L2 learners to understand the facilitative use of silence in Japanese contexts from multi-modal perspectives?
- Q2 What types of silence and solitude does Noriko's life-story involve? How do they depict her shifting psychological flow and signify it as self-dialogue in situated contexts?
- Q3 How can interactional, psychological, and semiotic uses of silence in TS contribute to enhance L2 learners' understanding of silence in cross-cultural contexts?

5. Silence and Solitude in Tokyo Story as film-mediated learning material

This section has two parts. The first explores TS for pedagogical approaches able to deepen understanding of silence and solitude. The second part comprises detailed analysis of silent dialogues in the film, with key observational points for L2 learners and educators.

5.1 Pedagogical approaches

L2 learners could take the following steps to observe how silence and solitude have been used in TS. Subject to class time constraints, learners can take the first two steps outside the classroom before proceeding from the third step in class. The recommended steps are:

- 1) Learners watch the entire film, noting the types of silence in TS and the ways in which they speak to them.
- 2) After watching the film, learners could reflect on their observations, individually or in group discussion, using the analytical criteria (Section 4.2) suggested by ticking components they recognise.
- 3) Learners would be encouraged to watch specific segments identified in Section 5.2 below to explore and share their initial understanding of the use of silence.
- 4) After watching TS again, learners could then discuss it further, focusing on interactions around visual images, along with silence, using transcription and analytical criteria from multi-modal perspectives.

The conversational scripts and analytical criteria would help learners to recognise types of silence, along with semiotic resources and dynamic interactions in films seen as art. The Japanese version of this film is available via this [YouTube link](#).

All the selected settings involve Noriko's communications with Shūkichi and Tomi. The findings include grouping into five diverse types of silence seen in these key events: (1) attentive, (2)

empathetic, (3) self-protective, (4) shared and (5) truthful silence, with solitude experienced as loneliness and inner dialogue. The detailed analysis explores such moments to further deepen our understanding of interactional silence in situated contexts.

Relevant transcript conventions can be found in the Appendix. In these transcripts, initials are used to represent each character, Noriko (N), Shūkichi (S) and Tomi (T), [Shige (S2) and K (Kōichi)]. Lines, images, and silences selected for analytical focus are highlighted in bold. The Japanese version of selected scenes was transcribed directly from the film by the author but is also rendered in Japanese screen script for accuracy, particularly in the use of dialects ([Libro Cinematheque, 1984](#)) and then translated into English.

5.2. Findings: Shifting flow of silence

The following scene takes place soon after Shūkichi and Tomi arrived in Tokyo and settled in their son Kōichi's house for their stay. Noriko visits them in haste as she was unable to welcome them at the station. Noriko appears from the left at the start of their first reunion in Tokyo.

1) Attentive silence Extract 1 (From 13:51, [publicchannell, 2021](#))

01N: ((Noriko has just arrived at her sister-in-law's house and come upstairs.))



(Image 1)

+standing in silence while watching parents-in-law before uttering words
(4.0)

02 ST: [Tomi folding *tabi* (Japanese cotton socks), both looking downwards

03 N: *irasshaimase*

Welcome

+sits down

04 S: *yō*

Ah

+both look at Noriko

05 T: (.) *ma::a shibaraku deshita nou, Nori san*

Uh::m, what a long time it's been, *Nori san*.

06 N: (.) *gokigen yorosyuu*

You look well

+bowing deeply while smiling

(2.5)

07 S: (.) *isogashikattann jya nakattan ka*

You must have been busy

+smiling

08 N: [looking into S's eyes] (1.0) *iie (.) nann desu ka, gotagota shiteorimashite*

No, what can I say, it's just been a bit hectic,

kigatsuki mashitara mou jikannga ippai de

and by the time I'd finished, it was too late.

09 T: (.) *sou wazawaza kyou kitekurenn demo (.) shibaraku orunn jyamonn*

Ah, but you did not have to come today (.) We will be here for some time

10 S: *nn::n yappari mae no kaisha ni otutomeka*

Uhm::: you are still working for the same company

11 N:



(Image 2.)

ha::a

- Ye::s
+**looking down**
(3.4)
- 12 S: *Annta mo hitori de taihen jyanou*
It must be hard for a person to be alone.
- 13 N: *Iie.*
no.
- 14 S: *otō san ofuro*
father, the bath is ready
((Shūkichi's daughter, Shige is calling her father from downstairs))
- 15 S: *a:::: ima iku (3.0)*
O:::k, I'm coming now
+ Shūkichi stands up and goes downstairs.
- 16 N: +**Noriko sees Tomi folding an obi, stands up and get closer to Tomi, then tries to help her to fold it**
(10.0) *okaa san itashimasyou*
Let me help you, Mother



(Image 3.)

Analysis:

In this scene, Noriko's first silence, as she stands and watches her parents-in-law (image 1), illustrates the way she closely observes them. Although this is their long-awaited first reunion, she is silent for 4 seconds, attentively observing Shūkichi and Tomi. They are unaware of Noriko's presence, and look downwards while doing their business. Noriko's silence is attentive as a prelude to speech (Harumi, 2020), necessary more to determine how and when to speak to them and her first words, are noticeably short but convey the warmth of her welcome. Her second silence, lasting 2.5 seconds, in line 06, is shorter and accompanied by deep bowing and smiling. In line 08, her silence of one second, as she is making eye-contact (Mondada, 2019a) with Shūkichi, comes before she responds to Shūkichi. Her reply in line 08 uses a very indirect expression (Maynard, 1986), hinting at how busy she has been, but with a softened, blandishing tone. There is similar deliberate ambiguity in her response in line 11 (Image 2.), where she can be observed looking downwards (Mondada, 2019a, 2019b) while silent for 3.4 seconds. Further, in the final ten-second silence (Image 3) as she moves closer to Tomi to help her, she once again shows her modesty and hospitality in a kind manner through careful observation and attentiveness. In this first reunion, her sequence of silences is enhanced by her kind and empathetic attitudes expressed in attentive silence. These silences all function as preludes to speech within a sequence.

Discussion points:

- How do you interpret Noriko's four-second silence in Image 1? Why didn't she talk to her parents-in-law immediately?
- Why is Noriko looking down while being silent for 3.4 seconds in Image 2?
- How do you interpret Noriko's ten seconds silence before helping Tomi?

2) Empathetic silence

In this scene, Noriko has just returned to her room after visiting a neighbour. Shūkichi and Tomi have been looking at a framed photograph of their late son Shouji, who died in the war. On Noriko's entry, they look towards her.

Extract 2 (From 40:22)

01S: +look towards Noriko



(Image. 4)

aa kono syouji no shashin dokode tottann jyarō

Well, well. This picture of Shouji, I wonder where it was taken

02 N: (.) *kamakura desu.*(.) *otomodachi ga tottekudasatte*

(.) It's in Kamakura (.) A friend kindly took it.

03 S: sou

I see

04 T: *itsu goro*

When was it taken, roughly?

05 N: (.) *sensou ni iku mae no toshi desu*

(.) A year before he went to war.

06 T: *sou (3.4) mabayusou na kao shite*

I see (3.4), he has a striking face.

+looks back to the photo and faces to the picture

+ [Noriko watching them from behind in silence for 9 seconds



(Image. 5)

07 S: *u::n kore mo kubi o magetoru naa*

Uhm...even in this photo, he leans his neck to one side.

+[Noriko's silence continues

08 T: *anoko no kuse deshita ne*

That was his custom.

+ [Noriko's silence ends]

09 N: (1.2) +smiling and leaves the room

Analysis:

In this context, Noriko's first silence indicated in (.) at the beginning of the conversation (Image 4) is brief and transactional, providing information about where and when the photo was taken. However, while Shūkichi and Tomi look at their late son's photo, recalling his facial expression or his custom of putting his head to one side, Noriko quietly shares this special moment in silence for 9 seconds (Image 5) as she stands behind them. Due to the spatial composition (Phillips, 2022; Richie, 1974), Noriko's presence can only be imagined, and she is not actually in the audience's view. However, her presence can be felt as if the audience are watching all three from further behind. This could be seen as an example of what Phillips (p. 60) is referring to when he writes: "intensely felt compositional perspectives as so many feelings, all belonging to a specific location and time" through a multi-layered lens. As Phillips (2022) observes, this is one of several quiet but emotional moments for all three: the memory of Onomichi in Shouji's childhood, Noriko's recollection in Kamakura, of her time with Shouji and all three's shared but silent moments with Shouji in Tokyo in front of his photo. While Shūkichi and Tomi are talking, there is an absolute silence of 3.4 seconds in line 0.6, during which Noriko shares complete silence with them, and an additional 9 seconds of her own silence as she watches and listens to her parents-in-law. Ozu's implicit yet powerful establishment of "temporal, spatial, and emotional triangulation" among these three can be understood as "inter-generational empathy" (Phillips, p.61), which creates deep empathetic moments of silence that belong to each of them.

Discussion points:




- a. Why are the silences before Noriko's answers in lines 02 and 05 brief? Discuss the types of information during these silences?
- b. Referring to Image 5 and Noriko's nine seconds silence, Phillips (2020) says, "*intensely felt compositional perspectives as so many feelings, all belonging to a specific location and time*" through a multi-layered lens. How would you interpret Phillips' statement based on the conversation between the three characters?
- c. How would you interpret the meaning of silence by Noriko discussed in question 2?

3) Self-protective silence

In this context, Tomi unexpectedly stays with Noriko at her apartment, sitting by Noriko's side, starts talking about Noriko's future when music starts. The following is the continuation of the conversation from this point.

Extract 3 (From 1:13:21)

- 01T: + ♪.....*continues till the end of line 16*
- iie hontou yo (.) watashi (w)a annta ni suman omoute(.) tokidoki otō santomo
hanasunn jya keedo (.)*
No, it is true(.) I feel we are sorry for you (.) I've often talked with father,
ee hito ga attara itsudemo kigane nashini oyomeni itte kudasai yo
but if you meet somebody nice, please get married anytime without worrying about us,
please
- 02 N: +smiling
- 03 T: *honn tou yo (.) soushite morawann to watashiramo honntoui tsurainn jyakee*
That's the truth(.) If you don't do that, we will also feel deeply sorry.
- 04 N: *jya, iikoto ga arimasitara*
Well then, if I have an opportunity
- 05 T: *aruyo arimasutomo (.) anntana ra kitto arimasa*
Surely there will be. Since it's you, there will definitely be (something nice)
- 06 N: *sou de syou ka*
Do you think so
- 07 T: *annta nyaa ima made kuou no sase doushi de konomamajya watashi wa suman suman
omou te*
We have been a trouble for you all the time and if it's like this we feel sorry, sorry.
- 08 N: *iino okā sama (.) watashi katteni kou shitemasu no*
No, that's fine (.) I am doing this because I want to do.
- 09 T: *demo annta sorejyaa anmari nou*
But it's too much for you.
- 10 N: *iie iinndesuno watashi konohouga kigaraku nanndesu no*
No, that's fine. I like it this way.
- 11 T: *demo annta imaha sou demo danndann toshidemo tottekuruto, yappari hitorijya
sabishiiennnou*
You may now, while you're still young. But when you get old, surely you will find it
lonely.
- 12 N: *iinn desu no(.) watashi toshi toranai kotonu kimetemasu kara*
Don't worry. I've decided not to get older.
+ smiling showing her determination

- 04S: *otō sama*
Father
aa
Oh
- 05N: *Keizo san omieni narimashita*
Keizo has come
- 
- (Image. 8)
- 06S: *souka aa::: kireina yoake datta*
Has he?:: It was such a beautiful dawn
- 07N: [+ changes her direction looking towards the sea
- 
- (Image. 9)
- 08S: (10.0)
[looking at the ocean together in silence
- aa::: kyou mo atsuku naru*
Uhm... it will be another hot today
- 09S: +walking back together (18.0)
- 10N: sound of Shūkichi's geta (wooden sandal) $\Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda \Lambda$))
- 
- (Image. 10)

Analysis:

After Noriko starts searching for Shūkichi, and until she finds him in the harbour, the only audible sounds are those from the tugboat and Noriko's sandals in the background. While Noriko's visually rhythmic (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) short steps bring her closer to Shūkichi, the sound of the tugboat is amplified. In line 05, while the sound of tugboat continues, Shūkichi and Noriko have a brief face-to-face conversation about Keizo's arrival. Shortly after that, Shūkichi's focus is on the beautiful dawn he witnessed in the early morning when his wife Tomi's passed away. Soon after, Noriko turns around so she too faces the ocean, side-by-side with Shūkichi, with whom she feels and shares the same moment of silence, as they accept the loss of and say farewell to their loved one during a ten-second silence (Image 9). Although this silence is brief, it is a crucial moment for both to accept the sorrow they share before resuming and stepping forward on their new journey in silence. Shūkichi then casually mentions the weather, as if this is an ordinary start to a day like any other. Their footsteps and the sound of geta (wooden sandals) as they walk home during an eighteen-second silence (Image 10) is a metaphor for their new steps towards the future. The silence they share in this scene has been identified as the climax of TS (Phillips, 2022, Richie, 1974). While Shūkichi's sorrow and pain are

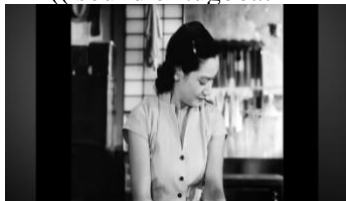
- 08N: we feel so sorry, and it hurts me
+ looks up and towards Shūkichi
iie, sonnna koto arimasenn
No, it's not



(Image. 12)

- 09S: *iya soujya yo. annta mitaina ee hitona iute okā sann mo hometotta yo*
No, that's what I mean. She also praised you and said she'd never seen a person as nice as you
- 10N: *okā sama watakushi wo kaikabutte rashitann desu wa*
She gave me too much credit
- 11S: *kaikabutto rya shen yo*
You're wrong
- 12N: *iie, watakushi sonna ossyaru hodo no ii ninngen jya arimasenn*
No, she did. I'm not as good a person as she says
otou sama ni made sonnna fuuni omotte itadaite tara watakushi no hou koso
If you (father) see me that way, kind thoughts actually make me feel embarrassed,
kaette kokorogurushiute
more so than you
- 13S: *iya sonnna kotaa nai*
No, you shouldn't
- 14N: *iie, sou nann desu (.) watakushi zuruinn desu (.) otousama ya okaasama ga*
No really. I am selfish. I am not what you (father) and mother take me for,
omotte rassharu hodo itsumo itsumo shouji san no koto bakari kanngaeteru
wake jya arimasenn
I am not thinking of Shouji all the time
- 15S: *eenn jya yo (.) wasurete kurete*
That's totally fine. It is ok for you to forget (him)
+smiling
- 16N: *demo konogoro omoidasanai hi sae arunn desu. Wasureteru hi ga ooinn desu (3)*
But there are days when I do not think of him at all. There are more days when I have forgotten him (3)
Watakushi (.) itumade mo konomama jya irarenai youna kimo surunn desu
I feel that I cannot go on like this forever
konomama koushite hitoride itara ittai downarunn darou nannte yonaka ni futo
If I stay alone, what will happen, I suddenly wonder during the middle of the night
kanngae tari suru kotoga arunn desu (2) ichinichi inichini ga nannigoto mo naku
There are times like that (2.0) A Day passes without anything special
sugite yukuno ga tottemo sabishiinn desu (.) dokoka kokorono sumi de nanika wo
matteirunn desu
When I think this way, I feel lonely (.) I am waiting for something, somewhere
(3.0) *zuruinn desu.*
To my mind, (3.2) I am selfish
+ looks down
- 17S: *iyaa, zuruuwa nai*
No, you are not
- 18N: *iie zuruinn desu (.) souiu koto okaa sama ni wa moushiage rarenakattann desu*
But I am selfish (.) I could never say anything like this to my mother-in-law.
- 19S: *eenn jya yo, sorede (.) yappari annta wa eehito jya yo (.) syoujiki de*
That's alright (.) After all you are an incredibly good person, and honest.
- 20N: (3.4) *tonndemo nai*
Far from it
+ looks away and starts sobbing

((sound of tugboat-----))



(Image. 13)

21S: [+ stands up and walks towards chest of drawers and picks up watch
then returns to centre of room to speak to Noriko

(62.1) -----))

koryaa okā san no tokeijya kenndo na (.) ima jya konnna mono wa hayarumai ga
This watch belonged to (your) mother (.) It's not in the least fashionable nowadays
okaa san ga chyoudo annta gurai no toki kara mottonn jyatta (.)
But she began wearing it when she was around your age(.)

katami ni morouto yattekure

Please take this to remember her by

+hands the watch to Noriko



(Image. 14)

22N: *demo sonna*

But I

23S: *eenn jya yo moroutoite okure (.) annta ni tsukoute moraya, okaa san mo kitto yorokobu (.)*
That's fine, please accept it (.) She will be happy to know that you'll be wearing it.

24N: + looking down on the point of tears

25S: [*naa moroute yatte okure yo*

Please take it for her sake

26N: [*suimasenn*

Thank you

27S: *iyaa otō sann honntouni annta no kiganenou sakizaki shiawaseni*

Uhhh, please believe me. I want you to be happy in the future

natte kurerukoto wo inottouyo, honntoujya yo

I really pray for you, very earnestly

28N: [crying loudly

(8.0)

29S: [*myou na monnjya (.) jibunn ga sodateta kodomoyori*

[It's a strange thing (.) More so than the children we raised,

iwaba taninn no anntano hou ga yoppodo washirani you shite kureta

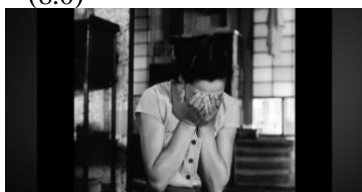
to speak frankly, it is actually another, you, who has done most for us

iyaa::: arigatou

Uhm:: thank you

30N: [+crying

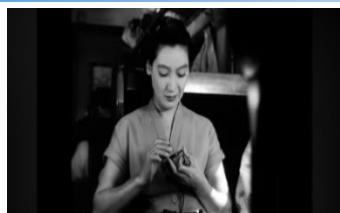
(8.0)



(Image. 15)

[...] omitted

31N: ((final scene on the train, looking at and holding the watch Shūkichi has given her



(Image. 16)

+ *****)) rattling sound of train movement stops



(Image. 17)

+ holding a clock gently while looking forwards in silence

Analysis:

After sharing intense silence while looking at the sky near the harbour, Shūkichi and Noriko's life returns to normal. In line 02, Noriko conveys information about her return but does not actually fully complete the sentence in the talk (Maynard, 1986), but immediately, Shūkichi interprets her intention and himself completes the sentence collaboratively as co-constructed turn. This shows their simple but natural coordination as they complete the sentence together, revealing their harmonious and growing relationship. Then, as Tomi once did at Noriko's apartment in Tokyo, Shūkichi starts talking about Noriko's future. As the first response, Noriko remains silent for 3.2 seconds (Image 11), while lowering her head and looking down. But after Shūkichi firmly repeats this point, Noriko looks up as if she is determined to speak her mind being open to her vulnerability to him.

In line 12, she hesitates to accept Shūkichi's praise, but she then opens up to reveal her true-self, referring to the self-perceived selfishness which has been echoing in her mind as inner dialogue. Her confession about her inner struggle, thinking about her future, reveals that she is ready to be open about her ongoing mindset and describe herself as selfish. In return, in line 19, Shūkichi accepts her struggle gracefully as Noriko starts sobbing as she experiences difficulty in dealing with her emotions, immersed in her struggle, and overwhelmed by the kindness Shūkichi expresses. However, soon after that, Shūkichi quietly moves towards a chest of drawers to pick up Tomi's watch and tries to hand it to Noriko. Noriko then starts crying, but she finally accepts the watch and his thoughtfulness by quietly touching the watch during an eight-second silence followed by (Image 14). In line 29, there is an emotional moment when Shūkichi expresses his appreciation for Noriko's devotion. Both mutually accept each other's empathy, as seen in the past and present, and their emotional bond is strengthened through this meaningful conversational sequence. Noriko's crying in silence (Image 15) signifies a special moment of reconciliation with her inner self and thankfulness for this moment supported by Shūkichi, a point she was unable to reach in a crucial earlier scene in with Tomi. In the final scene of the film, on the train, Noriko finally accepts her longstanding inner struggle and her sorrow for the death of Shouji and Tomi by holding the watch in her hands, feeling the new journey beginning as the watch hands turn in silence (Image 17). These scenes involving Noriko and Shūkichi and her solo appearance at the end shows her compelling stream of consciousness as she sets out on her new path.

Discussion points:

- How would you interpret the meaning of silence in Images 11 and 15? Are they similar in meaning? If different, explain how and why.
- How would you interpret the meaning of silence by Noriko with image 17?

5.3. Nexus of silence and solitude in a life-story: Reflection for self-dialogue

In this study, Noriko's use of silence as an interactional resource and solitude as the inner dialogue was analysed through multi-layer perspectives: life events, use of silence and solitude as Figure 1 illustrates. The detailed analysis found that silence used in the specific contexts of life events had

different meanings, but that it closely intertwined with her stream of consciousness which stems from her solitary inner dialogue, a form of solitude. Silence was thus a representation or reflection of her inner thoughts and dialogue, revealing what could be seen as the different colours of her life. Following key events, Figure 1 shows how Noriko's use of silence and her solitude combined to create a shifting psychological flow as time went by. Figure 1 can be used as a discussion point for L2 learners to reflect on the types of silence Noriko experienced in her life-story: 1) by looking at key words and concepts of silence and 2) with L2 learners reflecting on whether they share similar types of silence in their lives and asking if some uses of silence in TS are culturally different from those in their own cultures.

Table 2. Nexus of silence and solitude in Noriko's life story

Life event				
Re-union in Tokyo	Recalling past	A night with Tomi	After Tomi's funeral	Departure for Tokyo
Silence as interactional resource				
Attentive silence	Empathetic silence	Self-protective silence	Shared silence	Truthful silence
Solitude as inner dialogue/self-reflection				
Kindness	Ambivalent feeling	Inner struggle	Coexistence	Transparency/Determination

1) *Attentive silence*

First, at the reunion in Tokyo, Noriko's silence is attentive in its nature, as she observes before speaking and making any attempt to communicate with Shige or Shūkichi. She carefully observes how she can support them through her warm welcome, either by words or actions, for example by helping them to tidy up things together. In these instances, silence precedes and could be seen as the thinking space for determining, her subsequent actions (Harumi, 2020) as she is constantly observing her parents-in-law.

2) *Empathetic silence*

In the second type of silence however, all three share a period of silence in front of Noriko's late husband's photograph, as Shūkichi and Tomi reminisce on Shouji's childhood. This is a time for their being together alongside Noriko, feeling sorrow for Shouji's absence and sharing a silent moment with a certain mutual ambivalence but also an empathetic pause as they share memories and perceived reality together within very short space of time.

3) *Self-protective silence*

The third form of silence illustrates Noriko's inner struggle and suppression of her concern about her future. Despite Tomi's open-minded words, Noriko finds it difficult to clearly state her feelings to Tomi, adopting comic verbal strategies, for example where she says: 'Don't worry. I've decided not to get older.' However, Noriko's private tears in the darkness after her conversation with Tomi depict her protective silence, her difficulty showing her own vulnerability at this stage.

4) *Shared silence*

The fourth type of silence which Noriko and Shūkichi share after Tomi's death, as they stand in the harbour facing the sea, shows them sharing sorrow for their loved ones' death but also mutually supporting one another through their presence before accepting and resolving on the need to resume their lives on a new footing, all within a noticeably short but meaningful period of silence. At this stage, their strengthened psychological bond is palpable.

5) *Truthful silence*

This is the final truthful silence, the moment when Noriko is at last able to acknowledge her vulnerability, being honest about her struggle and confessing this to Shūkichi, also accepting him and in every sense the deceased Tomi's thoughtful present. Tomi's watch symbolises the passing of time on her new journey. Her quiet determination can be felt when she holds the watch in silence on the train to Tokyo.

As discussed above, there are multi-coloured silences in Noriko's life story and its shifting flow is intertwined with her inner solitary dialogue. These are both challenging and fulfilling silences, all related to her footsteps and contributing to her onward journey, indispensable to an interactional and psychological flow of silence and solitude as not static but dynamic semiotic and interactional resources, being reshaped as time goes by (Bao, 2023a, 2023b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). These silences are enhanced by Noriko, Shūkichi and Tomi's co-presence and mutual support. These attentive, empathetic, self-protective, shared, and truthful silences serve as the moments when Noriko can advance to her next step. Further, although the concept of solitude is often negatively associated with loneliness, Noriko's solitude is something different to isolation. Rather, it serves her as a silence in her dialogue with herself, a facilitative interactional resource that she harnesses as she strives towards her future, and one that strengthens her bond with Shūkichi. This shifting flow of silence and solitude depicts and anticipates Noriko's trajectories on her future journey. This study suggests that understanding these parallel shifts in an individual's psychological and interactional flow, which also draw attention to the quality and meaning of silence in interaction to presence, can be an invaluable asset supporting personal growth and nurturing empathy for others.

All elements of dynamic use of space and silence, ranging from dialogue to narrative, as well as spatial and visual compositions, all interacting together from past to present, and present to past seem to merge into one, as if by magic, as Ozu intended, creating a flow of visual space, dialogue and rhythmic silence offering deep and visceral insight into Noriko's evolving inner world, illustrating silence as dynamic shifting semiotic resources.

6. Pedagogical implications

In response to pedagogical insights shared by L2 language learners outlined in the introduction, my attention was drawn to the invaluable role of audio/visual material as a form of art in TS's descriptions of silence and solitude. This study suggests that TS provides context-rich narratives for L2 learners by illustrating diverse uses of silence through multimodal perspectives: visual, spatial, acoustic, interactional, and cultural. TS is also highly relevant for its cross-culturally unique insights into, and exploration of, interaction in Japanese contexts. These help L2 learners to deepen their understanding of the nature of silence and solitude as forms of reflective inner dialogue in interaction traversing multi-layers' perspectives. The implications for L2 pedagogy are elaborated below.

First, used as film-mediated L2 learning material, TS illustrates diverse types of silences associated with solitude: attentive, empathetic, self-protective, shared, and truthful silences charted through observation of Noriko's inner dialogue. By using the observational criteria templated in the proposed theoretical framework, MSIA and transcriptions for video-viewing, this study provides the observational tool learners can wield to reflect on the use of silence in TS and its meaning, as experienced by Noriko, as an interactional resource. The analysis of the film illustrates the dynamic interplay between silence in social interaction and other types of semiotic resource on visual, spatial, and acoustic levels. The film as art, i.e. a celebration of rich experience, is an invaluable medium which provides opportunities for learners to benefit from context-rich resources and the way thoughts are silently crafted in self-dialogues.

Second, the types of silence experienced by Noriko have been presented as a part of her life story. In this sense, L2 learners can trace Noriko's psychological shifts which accompany her reflective silent dialogue as she proceeds step by step. These processes of self-reflection invite learners to relate to their self-dialogue individually as an interactional process of thinking.

Further, intercultural perspectives on silence can be honed and nurtured by reflecting on the way TS thoroughly explores the use of language and specific interactional resources in Japanese communication, notably the value of 'space for thoughts', and this can be compared with silence in other cultures, seeking to separate unique interactional perspectives from learners' own practices in their first or alternative languages. These practices can involve extra language activities, such as conversation analysis, translation, or role-play as dramatization and discussions about visual images from selected scenes used to explore different values of silence which can be observable across different languages and cultures. This study also offers invaluable insights on how to learn to communicate in Japanese socio-cultural contexts, involving salient aspects of communication such as the use of incomplete sentences, repetition, indirect expressions, and attentiveness to facilitate co-construction of interaction, utilising silence in relation to sound and space in juxtaposition to

languages and cultures where the role of silence can be interpreted differently as a sign of miscommunication.

Finally, though by no means in order of importance, understanding of the concept of silence and its use can make a significant contribution to learners' personal growth, as it has a deep and strong relationship to inner dialogue, which reflects individuals' journeys as 'interpersonal solitude' (Bao, 2023b, p.9) or 'inner-directed solitude' (Sink, 2022, p.237) vis-a-vis universally shared social and personal issues in social contexts. Tokyo Story helps us to realise that listening to silence, our own and that of others, compels us to see visually colourful and meaningful silence as dynamic shifting multidimensional semiotic resources in our lives.

Appendix [transcript notation]

The selected transcript notation is partially adopted from Mondada (2019a) with additions to transcribe sound effects devised by the author.

[Simultaneously starting talk
(.)	Short pause (less than one second)
(2.0)	Longer pause (in seconds, and tenths of seconds).
wo::rd	Colons indicate prolongation of immediately preceding sound
+	Beginning of non-verbal action
-----	Sound of tugboat
-----	Higher volume is indicated by line thickness
=====	dual lines indicate significantly higher volume
<i>hai</i>	Italics indicated Japanese language
(())	Additional contextual information or notes
♪.....	Background music
^^^^^^	Soft sound of Noriko's sandals
ΛΛΛΛ	Louder sound of Shūkichi's wooden sandals
*****	Rattling sound of train

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