# Strategic Use of Silence by Teachers in Classroom Interaction

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**Abstract**

　本論文では、教育場面の相互行為における教員の発話における沈黙を分析する。様々な研究では、日常会話における沈黙は相互作用や順番交代に関与し、自然的に発生するものと示している。しかし、それが教育現場のような制度的な場面では、常に当てはまるとは限らない。例えば、教員の発話では教員は特定の目的で意図的に沈黙を展開することもある。この論文は日本とネパールの英語教室のデータを用いて、教師が生徒の理解を深めるための戦略として沈黙を置いていることを次の三つの特徴に分類して分析する。それらは（a）教師の発話を強調するための沈黙、（b）授業目標対象の語彙を分離するための沈黙、及び（c）学生に質問を理解するための時間を割り当てるための沈黙、である。本論文が示す結果は、教員育成プログラムのほか、教室内の相互行為の理解を深めることにも役に立つと考えられる。

## 1. Introduction

Silence in conversation is principally understood as a time in interaction where no participants take a turn to talk. Previous studies proposed that when no participants are selected as next speaker by the current speaker, and when none of the participants self-select to take a turn-at-talk in interaction, silence emerges according to the organization of turn-taking (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Thus, in a broader sense, silence could be analyzed as the participants' unwillingness to talk, uncertainty on the topic of talk, or disagreement with the issue in the ongoing interaction. When minimal silences occur, they are commonly filled in with some sort of non-verbal activities such as, looking at a paper, pointing towards something, etcetera. However, longer silences in interaction could suggest some other troubles with the interaction. These features of silence commonly represent the mundane nature of interaction. However, in institutional interaction, such as teacher-student talk in classroom, silences are not always filled-in, rather they appear to be intentionally designed. Thus, instances of silence in institutional and mundane interactional context call for further examination. This paper highlights the features of silences in one type of institutional interaction, classroom interaction, and attempt to explicate how they are related to pedagogical goals. The analysis of data reveals three representative features of silences

in classroom. As appeared in the data, they are silences used to （a） emphasize some part of teacher talk, （b） produce new and target vocabulary item in isolation, and （c） allocate time to comprehend known-answer questions. All the silences appear to support pedagogical goal of language teaching.

## 2. Background

In a general sense, silence in conversation is the result of no participants taking a turn at talk. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson （1974） interpret silence as a result of the turn-taking system where no practices of turn allocation become applicable. The practices of turn allocation in turn-taking mechanism explain the organization of turn taking as systematic machinery where the participants equally monitor each other's turns. In further explaining the systematics of turn allocation techniques, Sacks et al. suggested that it is grounded in three basic practices: （a） current speaker selecting next speaker, （b） next speaker self-selection, and （c） current speaker continuation. If none of the above three practices are applied, the current speaker may, but not necessarily, continue their turn until another speaker takes a turn, and the process recycles, giving the right of turn allocation to the last speaker, as in （c） above. According to these rules, if the current speaker does not select a next speaker after arriving at a possible completion and if a next speaker also does not self-select, silence occurs for a brief moment. This type of silence is relevant in the system because for both current and next speaker, it is not obligatory either to continue talking or to self-select. However, any of the participants may choose to take a turn if the silence further continues.

The model of turn taking proposed by Sacks et al. （1974） presents silence as a relevant sequential phenomenon occurring in mundane interaction. They also discussed how silence is not simply a lack of talk, but a phenomenon in which much can occur during that absence of speech. The great deals of different aspects of interaction taking place during the absence of talk have been demonstrated by a number of other studies （e.g., Davidson, 1984; Jefferson, 1989; Pomerantz, 1984）. Pomerantz （1984） proposed that the silence after a First-Pair-Part （FPP） of some specific speech act could be understood as trouble indicative. That is to say, delaying the relevant Second-Pair-Part （SPP） can at times result in the production of responses that are dispreferred, such as disagreement to a proposal. For example, a silence following invitations or requests could probably result in the declination of invitation or denying the request. Thus, the speaker of the SPP delays their response to minimize the dispreferred responses by providing extra time to the previous speaker to modify their talk （Pomerantz, 1984）.

In a similar study, Davidson （1984） demonstrated that speakers of a FPP reformulate their talk if the utterance faces silence instead of an expected relevant response in the SPP. In reformulating their original statement, the producer of the FPP displays their understanding that their recipient is reluctant to respond, or not hearing them well, or having some other

problem and withholding their response. For example, the following extract from Davidson （1984） demonstrates how the producer of an utterance modifies their talk if they experience a silence in the place of an expected response and how the silence shades the meaning of the talk.

（1）（Davidson 1984, p. 104）
A： Well did you want me to just pick you- get
　　into Robinson's so you could buy a little pair of slippers?
　　（silence）
A： I mean or can I get you something?

In the example above, the silence after the proposal or request leads the speaker to review the prior talk. The speaker makes an attempt to make it clearer and more understandable to their recipient by reformulating and perhaps trying to make it more acceptable to the recipient.

In an insightful study of the occurrence of silence in interaction, Jefferson （1989） discussed length variation of silences and concluded that normal silences are of approximately one second in duration. In her detailed examination of 289 pages of transcribed data, she observed 170 instances of silences where they appeared problematic as they were not filled up with other actions. Out of the total of 170 instances of trouble-indicative silences, she found that 106 of them （62%） were between 0.9 seconds to 1.2 seconds. Her study reported that silences longer than 1.2 seconds are generally filled-in in some way with non-verbal activities such as writing something down or looking at some documents.

The evidence from Jefferson （1989） suggests that the average metric of silence is of approximately one second and that trouble-indicative silences vary in length in mundane interaction. However, Davidson （1984） found instances of silences with much smaller gaps in his research about reformulation of speech acts by the speaker of a first-pair part. Whatever the average length may be, one thing that is clear is that the production of silence in mundane conversation is a sequentially relevant and dynamic interactional phenomena which follows the turn-taking machinery proposed by Sacks et al. （1974）. However, interaction in institutional settings does not follow similar organization of turn-taking system as mundane conversation. The participants in institutional interaction are entitled with some sort of defined actions they can accomplish while participating in the interaction. As a result, the interactional right of allocating turns or selecting/changing the topic might be limited to one particular speaker, for example, to the interviewer in news interviews （Heritage, 1985; 1987）, and to the teacher in the interactional setting of classrooms （McHoul, 1978）. Hence, a question arises as to whether the change in the participants' organizational structure in institutional settings changes the understanding of silences and other interactional features. In institutional settings, the participants appear to produce silences longer than those discussed by Jefferson

(1989) for mundane conversation but are not seemingly filled-in with non-verbal activities. Where the participants are not found to be orienting to the silences as trouble-initiating or recipient's unwillingness to respond, this paper defines them as "designed silences." Basing their research in classroom interaction, although various studies (e.g., Ewert, 2009; Haneda, 2004; Young & Miller, 2004) have attempted to explicate the features of silences in teacher-talk, there still is dearth of research to explore what specific tasks the silences accomplish when teacher-talk is produced in slower pace with multiple pauses. Thus, this paper attempts to explicate such silences and attempts to relate them to teachers' strategies in developing student understanding

## 3. Data and methodology

The data consists of about 25 hours of video recordings of naturally occurring English language classroom interaction from the educational settings of Japan and Nepal. The data from Nepalese English language classrooms includes ten 40-minutes-long lessons where the teacher and students are Nepalese nationals, and the data from Japanese English language classrooms builds up to six 45-minutes-long lessons with teacher and students from Japan. As the data includes students from all levels in the high schools, the age group of the participating students range from 14 to 17 years of age. In the part of the teachers, all the participating teachers in the Japanese setting hold a teaching license while only five among eight teachers from the Nepalese sector hold a teaching license. However, all the teachers have achieved educational degrees that is required to work as a teaching professional.

Though this study uses two sets of data from varying educational settings, the main purpose is in observing the universality of classroom interactional features but not in comparing the practices teachers execute in conducting their lessons. Using the presented data representatives of EFL classrooms, it is expected to have a deeper understanding of teacher actions in language classrooms in general. Thus, this study uses the conversation analytic methodology in observing the interactional features and analyzing the data. The central focus is given to the observation and analysis of video recording without any prior perspectives. The video recorded data is repeatedly viewed and carefully transcribed using the transcription conventions outlined by Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). After a careful observation of the video and the transcribed data, occurrences of silences are categorized and analyzed in relation with the talk surrounding and other conduct. Understanding of the instances is built from the perspective of the participants rather than applying pre-conceived categories from the observer's mental aspects.

## 4. Analysis

As discussed earlier, the occurrence of silence in mundane conversation is an interactional

phenomenon. It could occur as a result of turn taking system (Sacks et al., 1974), or because of the recipients withholding their talk orienting to the preference organization (Pomerantz, 1984). In the following example from Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks (1977, p. 370), the silence indicates some sort of problem in the previous utterance.

   (2)［GTS: 3:42］
   01   Ken: Hey (.) the first ti:me they stopped me from selling
   02       cigarettes was this morning.
   03       (1.0)
   04   Lou: From selling cigarettes?
   05   Ken: Or buying cigarettes.

This extract exemplifies how silence occurs in mundane interaction and how the participants treat the absence of talk. In line 4, Lou indicates some problem in Ken's utterance produced in lines 1 and 2, and does not immediately produce the next turn. By not directly indicating the problem at the moment, he provides an extra opportunity to Ken to initiate repair – thus orienting to the preference for self-repair in conversation (Schegloff et al., 1977). However, Ken does not take a turn to repair the problematic part of his utterance and Lou initiates other repair in line 4. Then Ken repairs the original utterance. We can find the silence completely relevant in this example. The occurrence of silence in line 03 is equally relevant from the perspective of the speaker and recipient. For the speaker, once he has come to the possible completion, he waits for the recipient to take a turn, and on the other side the recipient waits for a transition-space repair from the speaker, indicating some problem in the speaker's talk. Though he waits, the speaker does not initiate repair and the recipient takes the turn to initiate repair, by which the silence becomes justifiable.

In what follows, this paper presents some representative examples from the data set and presents their analysis. Each sub-section below discusses the three phenomenal aspects of silences: (a) to emphasize some part of teacher talk, (b) to produce new and target vocabulary item in isolation, and (c) to allocate time to comprehend known-answer questions, as they appear in the data under scrutiny.

### 4.1.　Silence as a strategy to emphasize part of teacher talk

The examples presented in this section discuss some representative features of silences that work on emphasizing teacher talk. As discussed in the literature review section, in the setting of traditional teacher-fronted classrooms, a teacher has excessive right to control the interaction as the turn-taking rights for the students are limited. Thus, it is obvious that students rarely volunteer to take a turn without being nominated. Hence, teacher-talk tends to take a longer form compared to casual conversations. However, teachers are found to produce comparatively longer pauses within their turn with specific purpose. The following example

presents one such instance where the teacher produces longer silence to emphasize some part of his talk. In this example, from a Japanese Senior High School English class, the silence produced by the teacher takes an intentionally designed form.

（3）［Seed Bank］
01　T:　and ah:: but ah:
02　　　one thing（.）that we need to care is that（0.8）
**03　　　seed banks.（0.8）can't（0.8）change（0.6）our**
04　　　environmental problems right.

This example clearly demonstrates how a teacher uses silence as a strategy to emphasize teacher-talk. In the ongoing interaction, the teacher is describing the importance of seed bank in preserving different varieties of seeds so that they continue to exist in the future. First, the explanation begins with the intra-turn silences in lines 02 and 03. With the production of "but one thing we need to care is that" the teacher produces a silence of 0.8 seconds. In the continuation of his utterance another silence occurs after "seed banks", "can't", and "change" respectively. In each of these instances, the production of silence after a stressed utterance suggests that the message due in the utterance is of importance. Thus, the teacher designs the silence as a technique to emphasize his talk so that he could draw better student attention to the upcoming part of his utterance. Also, this designed silence works as one of the techniques teachers make use of to allocate processing time for the student before delivering important information.

　　The way of emphasizing some part of teacher-talk could be observed in the following example, too. This example comes a regular lesson of English language classroom in Nepal. In this extract, the teacher is teaching a poem from in the course book. Before explaining the theme of the poem, the teacher is describing elements of a poem. In this extract, his focus lies on explaining what "setting" of a poem means. Let's consider the following example.

（4）［Setting］
01　T:　it is called setting my dear.
**02　　　setting means:（0.4）where the（.）event takes place.**
**03　　　where（1.0）and when the event takes place.**
04　　　setting is an answer to that very question
05　　　（.）
06　　　confused?
07　　　（1.2）
08　　　where the event takes place,
09　　　an' where the event takes place is called
10　　　setting. =for example wha……

After producing "it is called setting" and addressing the students, the teacher moves to explain the meaning starting in line 02 with "setting means:" In this utterance, it has two basic features: sound stretch, and a silence afterwards. By producing a 0.4 second silence before the actual explanation of "setting", the teacher attempts to draw student attention so that they can grasp the meaning of the upcoming part of the utterance. Again, in reformulating the meaning the teacher produces a stressed "where" in line 03 and produces another silence before producing "when". Using this technique of separating the two head words "where" and "when" by a designed silence, the teacher puts emphasis in producing the focal sections of his utterance in an emphasized manner so that it becomes noticeable to the students.

The following extract, which also demonstrates teachers' strategic use of longer pause in emphasizing surrounding talk. Extract 5 below is from English language lesson in Nepal where the teacher is explicating the theme of a poem "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" by the American poet Robert Frost. The part of talk below occurs when the teacher finishes introducing the poem title by writing on the blackboard. After writing the title, he moves on to describe the meaning and the theme of the poem.

(5) [Example: Beginning]
01 T:    before I begi:n (.) teaching this poem.
02       let me give you an example.
**03       (0.8)**
04       in fact what this poem is about (.) I'll tell you of course
05       before that、(0.4) .hh ah:: let me tell you、
06       <to<u>day</u> (.) like ah::- (.) I was about to come to s<u>ch</u>ool.

In line 1 and line 2, the teacher clearly states that he has a plan in his mind that he is going to teach the poem. However, before doing the actual teaching, he plans to provide an example. In between his description of plan and initiation of the presentation of an example, there is a longer pause of 0.8 second. In surface, this silence could be viewed as time taken by the teacher to move from one ongoing action to initiate another action, from explanation of his plan to beginning of an example. However, the silence does more than that. With the silence in line 03, the teacher simultaneously checks whether the students are ready. In other words, the silence does not simply occur as a result of the interactional resources, rather it is strategically produced by the teacher to demonstrate his emphasis on the example he is about to initiate.

A similar phenomenon is observed in the continuation of the interaction presented in Extract 5. Extract 6 below also demonstrates how a teacher strategically uses a longer pause to emphasize the surrounding talk so that student attention is achieved. In teaching theme of a poem that is a part of the textbook, the teacher gives shares his own experience as an example of whether to focus on duties and responsibilities or to be driven away by desires and temptation.

（6）［Example: Ending］
01　　　at first do your <u>duty</u>, it is an entertainment,
02　　　don't listen to it. go and teach.
03　　　and therefore I came.
04　　　look at my example. in my example,
**05**　　　**（1.0）**
06　　　I:: （.）did not stay at home,
07　　　I did not watch the cricket chat- t- cricket <u>program</u>.
08　　　simply because, （.）in front of me what was there.
09　　　there was my duty and there was my responsibility
10　　　（.hh）did you see this? on the one hand side ......

The extract above is made up of two parts in the teachers' ongoing talk. In the first half（lines 01 to 04）, he continues explaining the example to connect to the theme of the poem, which is the objective of this lesson. In the second half（lines 06 to 11）he summarizes his example and starts relating it with teaching of the poem. After calling for student attention with "look at my example." in line 04, the teacher puts a longer pause of one second in line 05. By calling verbal attention and designing a pause before the explanation of his example and its relationship with the poem, the teacher prepares the students so that they are ready to grasp the intention of introducing a personal example. Resembling the silences in previous extracts, the silence in line 05 also is strategically used to emphasize the description and comparison of the teachers' own example with the theme of the poem.

### 4.2. Silence as a strategy to isolate target vocabulary item

As previous studies reported silence as a commonly occurring phenomenon in classroom talk（Chaudron, 1988）, it is no exception to find numerous cases of silences. Teachers tend to speak slowly to make their audience, students in classroom, understand and comprehend the content of their teaching. However, as we start scrutinizing natural data, silences do not occur simply to slow down the pace of talk. For example, in vocabulary explanation, some teachers tend to pause before and after the production of their target vocabulary. For example, the intra-turn silence in line 06 demonstrates how a teacher strategically produces an intentional silence to scaffold student understanding of the vocabulary item by producing it in isolation.

（7）［Insurance］
01　T:　if so, I will do it.
02　　　（1.6）
03　　　is it possible
04　　　（3.0）
05　　　no:¿ right.

**06        so it's a kind of (1.2) <u>in</u>surance (0.2) service to::**

In the example above, before production of the word "insurance" with a stress, the teacher inserts a pause in his utterance. With this strategic use of silence, the teacher attempts to produce the new vocabulary item "insurance" in isolation so that the student can pay proper attention to the word and recognize the new vocabulary. The teacher does so by choosing to produce the word in isolation with a 1.2 second silence prior to the word and a 0.2 second silence after it. In addition to producing the vocabulary item in isolation, his pauses before and after it also puts the word in public scrutiny so that attention from the whole class is achieved.

The following is another example where teachers use silence to introduce lexical items in isolation. The target vocabulary item is "photographs" in the following interaction. In the beginning of the example, the teachers start asking questions that are available in the worksheet. The students have read information about an art exhibition and in the following part of interaction, the teacher is conducting reading comprehension checks.

(8) [Photographs-Pictures]
01  T:  okay. first I (will) ask you questions.
02        ↑ this is the story about exhibition.
**03        how <u>many</u> (0.2) photographs (0.2) how many**
         pictures (.) does it have.
04        (4.0)
05        anyone.
06  S1:  °three hundred pictures°

This part of talk begins with the teacher's brief description of his plan for this lesson as he explains that he is going to ask questions concerning the story about an exhibition that the students have just read "this is the story about exhibition." As the interaction continues, the teacher recalls the information about the reading and begins a question-answer sequence with "how <u>many</u> (0.2) photographs (0.2) how many pictures (.) does it have." Although "photographs" is replaced with the superordinate "pictures", this inquiry, " how <u>many</u> (0.2) photographs (0.2) how many pictures (.) does it have." the pauses before and after producing "photographs" demonstrates the teacher's strategy to produce the targe vocabulary item in isolation. It is essential to pay attention in this extract that when the teacher reads the question, the talk displays some specific characteristics. They are: (a) stressed production of "<u>many</u>", (b) use of superordinate and subordinate vocabulary item ("photographs" and "pictures") that seem to make it easier for the students to understand by moving from infrequent to more frequently used word, and (c) pauses. These features fundamentally demonstrate the teacher's attempt in focusing on the vocabulary item. In other words, the

use of varying vocabulary within a semantic category, and the application of multiple pauses, serves to simplify the question, possibly making it easier for the students to comprehend, and may be also to respond to.

### 4.3. Silence as a strategy to allocate time to comprehend known-answer questions

The third strategic use of silence to discuss in this paper is teachers' use of longer pauses surrounding some known-answer questions (Heritage, 2005; Lerner, 1995; Mehan, 1979; Schegloff, 2007). When teachers' pose known-answer questions, they assume that the students already know the answers to the questions. Thus, for such questions, teachers they do not necessarily wait for a response. However, observation of the data under scrutiny of this study demonstrated that such known-answer questions were posed with longer pauses surrounding them. It is obvious that the teachers strategically use longer pauses so that the students could comprehend the question and realize that they already have answers. Also, it hints retrospectively that the utterances in known-answer questions do not necessarily pursue a response rather check student understanding.

The following extract, for instance, exhibits how a teacher strategically uses longer silences before and after known-answer questions. Extract 9 below comes from an interaction in a Japanese English language classroom where the teacher is describing the causes of global warming and preserving some plant species for the future.

```
(9) [Seeds]
01  T     =can we change global warming if I collect a lot of seeds.
02         (1.8)
03         Yes?
04         (1.2)
05         can I chan[ge the environmental problems if I collect the seeds.
06 Ss:               [((laughing))
```

As the interaction above unfolds, the teacher asks a question to the students in line 1 of which the answer is publicly available among the students. Following the question there occurs a silence of 1.8 seconds where no students take a turn at talk as they are not selected. The teacher reformulates the same question in the design of a Yes-No Question in line 3 and produces "Yes?" with a rising intonation to suggest that an affirmative response there would be inappropriate. In line 4, another silence of 1.2 seconds arises, and the teacher initiates another reformulation of his question. To the known-answer question in line 5, the students respond with a laughter. This suggests that the students would also treat an affirmative response to the teacher's initial question inappropriate. Furthermore, the teacher strategically leaves longer pauses in lines 2 and 4 to aid the students in comprehending his question that presupposes a negative answer and of which an answer is not expected at all.

The following example adds in the analysis with another representation of the teacher's strategic use of silence in allocating time to comprehend known-answer questions. In the following extract, from Nepalese English-language classroom talk, the teacher is eliciting responses to the questions in the textbook. The instruction in the textbook suggests "read the front page of the newspaper quickly and answer these questions". The students have a picture of the front page of a newspaper as a sample, and they are required to answer the questions according to the text.

```
(10) [Newspaper]
01          and uh where is it published?
02          where do we publish this =the rising Nepal.
03  Ss:     (   )
04  T:      where?
05          (1.0)
06          it is published in,
07  Ss:     kathman[du
```

In the above extract, the teacher initiates the sequence with a question "where is it published" in line 01 and immediate modification of the question, possibly to make it more definite. On the second delivery of the question, the teacher uses the name of the newspaper and produces his utterance as "where do we publish this =the rising Nepal." in line 02. Though some students respond in line 03, it is not quite hearable to the analyst. However, the teacher might have heard what the students say, but he treats the response as an insufficient and asks the question again. This time, he focuses on "where" to make it apparent to the students that the question is looking for a place name as an answer. After making the question explicit, the teacher leaves a one second silence in line 05 to provide time for the students to comprehend the question as well to find answer in the sample newspaper page available in the textbook page. Then, he begins another turn as responding action and leaves it designedly incomplete (Koshik, 2002) to let the students complete it.

## 5. Discussion

The instances discussed in the analysis section demonstrate how teachers strategically make use of silence in classroom talk to assist student understanding. The examples presented in Extracts 3, 4, 5, and 6 showcased one of the strategies teachers employ in drawing student attention to the surrounding talk. Though silence occurs commonly as the nature of teacher-talk tends to be slower speech (Chaudron, 1988), they do not simply occur to slow down the pace of the talk, but teachers purposefully design silences and perform a variety of other actions during the absence of talk. Additionally, the examples presented in

Extract 7 and Extract 8 exhibited that teachers tend to explain vocabulary items in isolation. By isolating the target vocabulary item, as the examples suggest, the teachers are trying to accomplish two things: (a) drawing student attention to the teaching goal (for the time being, teaching vocabulary), and (b) making the lexical noticeable so that it would not go unheard or unexplained. Finally, Extract 9 and Extract 10 indicated the strategy teachers use to provide time for students to comprehend questions they ask. Though the teachers do not expect students to provide responses, as the questions presuppose that the answers are known to them, teachers tend to provide some wait time to have the question comprehended by the students. In all the instances presented in this paper, the nature of silence seems to be "designed" with specific purpose of developing student understanding. However, as institutional interaction is also a form of talk in interaction, there also occur silences that are result of natural interactional procedure, which needs an analysis from different perspective.

## 6. Conclusion

In conversation, lack of talk is frequent after some speakers completing their turn. However, the silence does not simply mean an absence of talk, but a lot more takes place during the silence. In mundane conversation, the occurrence of silence is always addressed by the participants in the following turn, commonly by initiating repair. The participants orient to the silence in mundane conversation as a problem in interaction and attempt to justify its occurrence in their talk. However, institutional interaction exhibits distinct features of silences as they appear in the talk. This paper tried to address silences in one of the institutional interaction, classroom interaction. Though silences in classroom interaction exhibit feature of mundane interaction, this paper presented the silences from institutional perspective and analyzed them as teacher strategy in developing student understanding.

In classroom interaction, the teachers are mainly found providing opportunity for students to process and understand the information provided. The teacher's designed silence also works to mark the important message being delivered. The teachers mark the vocabulary item and target message of the teaching by isolating the main information with the production of silences and pauses before and after them. Thus, this paper claims that the teacher production of designed silence helps in the development of student understanding. In addition, this is equally helpful for teachers in analyzing their own teaching and understanding various aspects of teacher talk.

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**Appendix: Transcription Conventions**

| Convention | Explanation | Indication |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [text] | square brackets | start and end of overlap |
| = | equal sign | latched utterances |
| (0.5) | timed pause | indicates pause in tenths of a second |
| (.) | period in parenthesis | shows a micropause (less than 1 second) |
| (hh) | | audible laughter within a talk |
| hhh | | audible exhalation |
| .hhh | | audible inhalation |
| o<u>ka</u>y | underline | stress or emphasized talk |
| okay? | question mark | rising intonation, continuing intonation |
| okay, | comma | low-rising intonation |
| okay. | period | falling intonation |
| OKAY | capitalized text | increased loudness |
| °okay° | degree symbol | decreased volume |
| >okay< | greater than symbols | faster than the surrounding speech |
| <okay> | less than symbols | slower than the surrounding speech |
| oka::y | colon(s) | prolongation of sound or syllable (more colons indicate more prolongation) |
| oka- | hyphen | cut-off of the ongoing talk |
| ((text)) | text in double parentheses | non-verbal behavior / transcriber's comment |
| ( ) | blank parentheses | inaudible talk |
| (text) | text in parentheses | uncertain transcription |
| [ | | indicates beginning of overlapping talk |
| ] | | indicates ending of overlapping talk |
| ↑ | | talk higher in pitch |
| ↓ | | talk lower in pitch |
| **bold** | text in bold | indicates the target utterances in the transcript |