Chapter 1  Introduction

Listening to silences can be just as instructive as listening to voices, maybe more so.  
(Losey 1997: 191)

1.1 Purpose of the research

This thesis is about silence, Japanese students and their negotiation of silence and talk in Australian university classrooms. In Australia, an increasing number of overseas students has been accepted to programs in higher education in recent years. According to Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), the number of overseas students in all education sectors grew more than three times between 1988 and 1998 (source: DETYA 1998-99 Annual Report), and enrolments of overseas students in higher education courses in 2000 increased 19.1% during 1999 (source: DETYA 2000-2001 Annual Report). Students from Asian countries make up a large percentage of these enrolments. In the year 2000, 188,277 overseas students were studying in Australia. Among them, 82.6% were students from Asia, and among the 188,277 overseas students, 57.1% were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs (source: DETYA).

With an increasing flow of Asian overseas students accepted into Australian university programs, problems in Asian students' adaptation to the unfamiliar learning environment of Australian universities have drawn the attention of researchers in higher education, TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language), and EAP (English for Academic Purposes). Studies in these fields have revealed difficulties faced by both overseas students and staff members in the students' adaptation to new culture and learning environment, and have suggested ways to improve the educational experiences of overseas students (e.g. Marriott 2000; Volet & Ang 1998; Jones 1999; Ballard 1996; Braddock et al. 1995; Samuelowicz 1987; Thorp 1991; Ballard & Clanchy 1991).

Lack of participation by Asian overseas students is one of the major concerns which has been widely discussed. The image of 'silent' Asian students as a problem is commonly found in the literature on overseas students. This image has been damaging to both the educational institutions involved and to Asian overseas students themselves (Liu 2000, 2002), particularly in the light of the development of interest in student-centred and interactive approaches to education common in Anglophone western universities in the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand in which the acquisition of knowledge through active discussion among students and with teaching staff is encouraged (Wells 1999;
The present research was initially designed to identify problems and sources of problems in intercultural communication in Australian university classrooms involving Japanese students. From my experience as a teacher of English in Japan, I had become interested in how learners of English would cope with life in English-speaking countries. In Australia, support for overseas students ranges from helping them to adjust to Australian life to enhancing their academic skills in English. Problems which are likely to be faced by overseas students seem to be recognised by those who engage in academic preparation programs, but not much empirical inquiry has been made into the problems experienced by students and teaching staff after students actually join mainstream university programs. Therefore, we do not know much of what happens in 'real performances' in mainstream university classrooms after these students have gone through the 'rehearsals' provided by their academic preparation programs. The present research was concerned to look at 'real performances' in the mainstream classroom from sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives. The questions originally addressed were:

1) What are the problems faced by Japanese students in communication in Australian university classrooms?
2) Are there any discourse patterns characteristic of Japanese students which could be sources of problems in communication in Australian university classrooms?
3) What are the implications for university teaching and for academic preparation programmes involving overseas students?

In order to identify the problems and concerns of Japanese students, it was decided that an ethnographic approach involving semi-structured interviews and observation of natural classroom interaction was the most appropriate method. Furthermore, discourse analysis of classroom interaction recorded during observation was considered necessary to identify and describe sources of problems so that concrete and practical suggestions could be made for improvement of classroom communication.

The results of the interviews with Japanese students suggested that their silence was the most frequently raised concern in relation to their participation in class, and hence the focus of this research was narrowed to silence in the classroom. At this point, since the issue of silence was found only through the accounts of Japanese students themselves, it was clear that perspectives of other parties in the classroom needed to be known. In other
words, it was necessary to know if Australian lecturers also perceive Japanese students as silent or not.

The issue of perceived silence brings up a question of linguistic ideology. The relationship between the perceived silence and the actual performance in class had to be investigated. In other words, the stereotypical image of 'silent Japanese students' found in the existing literature, in commonly held perceptions of Australian educators and among Japanese students themselves needed to be challenged. Furthermore, another important question arises in relation to this: whether or not actual performance in class reflects the perceived patterns of behaviour, what could be the causes of the perceived silence? Since Japanese students indicated that their silence is a problem in Australian classrooms, the nature of the silence needs to be investigated to improve the learning environment of not only Japanese overseas students but all other participants in the classroom communication context. Consequently, the following questions were addressed in a focused inquiry stage which constitutes the main part of the thesis:

1) Are Japanese students silent in others’ perceptions as well as in their own?
2) Are Japanese students silent in their real performances in class?
3) How is the silence of Japanese students created?
4) What are the implications for improvement of teaching and learning in Australian multicultural classrooms involving Japanese students?

As discussed in Chapter 2, the existing literature tends to rely on personal observations and anecdotal accounts from colleagues or students to account for Asian students’ silence (Liu 2000). Alternatively, survey methods have been used (e.g. Braddock et al. 1995; Jones et al. 1993; Samuelowicz 1987), but the focus of such studies has often been general themes of the adaptation process or learning strategies; silence itself has not come under exclusive attention. The present research aims to approach the issue of Asian overseas students' silence from pragmatic and semiotic perspectives, probing silence as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. In other words, rather than looking at silence as a consequence of difficulties in adaptation to learning in a new culture, this research investigates the nature of this perceived silence itself and attempts to describe the mechanisms of silence in the multicultural classroom. Thus, the question of what is meant by 'silence' is also addressed in this research. Perceptions of silence and how it is created in social interaction in the classroom are the concerns of the present research. Thus the notion of silence discussed throughout this thesis covers a wide range of
phenomena (see Chapter 2 for detailed explanations of notions of silence in communication) which can be associated with the perceived silence of Japanese students. For example, it can refer to a silent pause within a speaker's turn, or to something which is not spoken when it is expected to be verbally expressed (Enninger 1987; Jaworski 1993; Blimes 1998, see also Chapter 2). One of the aims of the present research is to challenge the negative stereotypes associated with the silence of overseas students by asking what it is that we really mean by 'silent students.'

1.2 Background to the research

The universities where this research took place are in Sydney, Australia. Sydney is the largest city in Australia and the capital city of the state of New South Wales. With an ethnically diverse population not only in Sydney but all over Australia, and with aspirations for an increasing internationalisation of higher education, successful multicultural education has been one of the major issues in education in Australia (cf. Volet & Ang 1998) in recent years. According to the latest available census results (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2001 Census), in 2001, 20% of Australia's population spoke a language other than English at home. According to 1996 Census results (the results from 2001 Census are not yet available for this category), the proportion increases in capital cities, so that we can find in Sydney (capital of New South Wales) and in Melbourne (capital of Victoria) 27% of people spoke a language other than English at home. The results of 2001 Census also indicate that while the overall number of people who spoke European languages at home showed a decrease from 1991, the number of people who spoke Asian languages such as Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese increased between 1991 and 2001.

Because of its geographical location in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia has close ties with countries around Asia, and has accepted a large number of students from Asia. According to the DETYA Annual Report 1999-2000, Australia is the second most popular destination behind the US for students from East Asia. Not only for political reasons but also for economic reasons overseas students bring benefits to Australia, contributing $3.1 billion to the Australian economy in 1999 and $3.7 billion in 2000. Table 1.1 shows the top 10 student numbers for source countries of overseas students in Australia in 1999.
Table 1.1 Top 10 student numbers for source countries of overseas students in Australia in 1999 (Source: DETYA 2000-01 Annual Report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source country</th>
<th>Student number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>18,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>17,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>17,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>15,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>9,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>9,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>9,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>8,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>6,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>5,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>120,239</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>37,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>157,834</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see in Table 1.1, students from Japan are the fifth largest group among overseas students in Australia. Furthermore, the DETYA report notes that a large number of working holiday visitors taking up short-term courses and students on short duration study programs are not included in the table given above as they do not hold student visas. This means that the actual number of Japanese students in educational institutions in Australia would be much larger than the figure above.

Let us now look specifically at overseas students in Australian higher education. In 1999, at the time when the data for the present research was collected, 12.1% of the whole population of students in higher education in Australia were overseas students. Among these, 77.8% were from South East and North East Asian countries, as shown in Table 1.2 below. This may explain why a large proportion of the literature and surveys on overseas students pays greater attention to Asian students. The number of Japanese students studying in Australian higher education institutions was 1,659 in 1999, which is about 2% of the whole population of overseas students. Thus, Japanese students make up a small minority group in universities in Australia, compared with, say, Singaporean or Hong Kong students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>13,702</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3,292</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2,211</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,659</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea (South)</td>
<td>1,710</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,574</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.2%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>16,603</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>13,739</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>8,081</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2,546</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,055</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64,629</strong></td>
<td><strong>77.8%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALL overseas</strong></td>
<td><strong>83,111</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2 Number of students from East Asia in higher education in Australia
(Source: DETYA, Students 1999: selected higher education statistics)

The main location of the present research was the University of Sydney, which is the oldest university in Australia and the largest in New South Wales. In 1999, the total number of students enrolled was 36,976, among whom overseas students numbered 3,532, including 221 Japanese overseas students. The other university from which Japanese students participated in interviews was the University of New South Wales. This university has a large population of overseas students, which reached 20% of the whole population of students in the year 2001. The total number of students enrolled in 1999 was 33,194, among which were 5,836 international students, including 84 Japanese students. In 2001, the number increased to 104.

In terms of social networks and contacts of Japanese students, while the University of New South Wales has a Japanese students' association for which occasional gatherings were organised including barbecue lunches or reunion dinners, there is no equivalent at the University of Sydney where most data collection for the present research took place. On the other hand, Chinese and Korean students generally seem to have wider and well established networks among themselves at both of these two universities, which could be due to their large number of enrolments but could also be due to the existence of large migrant communities in Sydney. The Japanese community in Sydney, however, is relatively small, and a large proportion of Japanese residents live in Sydney on a temporary basis for business purposes or on working holiday visas. Thus, the social networks among the Japanese may not be as solid as that of the Chinese or Korean communities, and at universities, Japanese students do not seem to have a large circle of social contacts but rather operate in small groups. The social aspects of Japanese students' life in Australia...
will not be described in detail here, as their friendship circles and interaction with local students will be described in greater detail in Chapter 4. A small number of the Japanese participants in the present research lived on their own or with their families, but most of them lived in shared accommodation with local and/or non-local students or working people.

With regard to the areas of studies which Japanese students tend to choose, a different pattern from the general pattern among overseas students can be found. In 1999, according to DETYA (source: Students 1999: selected higher education statistics), while more than 50% of all overseas students in higher education in Australia were in Business-related fields and only 10.3% were doing Humanities majors, 41.6% of Japanese students were in Humanities and only 25.9% of them were in Business-related fields. As the number of Japanese students (691) who were in the area of Humanities was larger than that of Koreans (512), Chinese (161) or Taiwanese (468), Japanese students were thus a larger minority and less inconspicuous among overseas students in Humanities fields. In fact, half of the Japanese participants in the present research (20 altogether) were majoring in Humanities.

The above is a general background to the present research and of the Japanese overseas students who were involved in the present research. Although Japanese students do not form a large minority group at Australian universities, Australia receives a large number of Japanese students in various areas and at various levels of education, and the findings of the present research can be applied to the improvement of teaching and learning in institutions other than universities. Moreover, although caution is required in the application of the research findings to the wider population of Asian students generally, the approaches to understanding the silence of students may be informative for the teaching of and learning by other Asian students in Australia.

1.3 Overall structure of the thesis

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), the notion of silence will be explained in terms of its forms, functions and meaning in communication with reference to the existing literature on silence. Subsequently, after a brief overview of the research on silence in the tradition of the ethnography of communication, a review of literature on silence in intercultural communication and in Japanese communication will be given. Finally, silence in the classroom context with a specific focus on multicultural classroom settings will be discussed with reference to the existing literature.
In Chapter 3, I will describe the methodology and design of the present research which involves four data sources: interviews with nineteen Japanese students; a lecturer questionnaire; case studies at the University of Sydney; and visits to Japanese high schools. The chapter aims to locate the present research in the qualitative research paradigm, and to provide descriptions of data sources, data collection methods and methods of analysis.

In Chapter 4, I will present and discuss the results of the interviews with the Japanese students, who gave rich and insightful explanations for their own silence, and I will propose a model of silence as articulated by them in this study. Following this, the results of the questionnaire distributed to lecturers at the University of Sydney will be presented and discussed in comparison with the Japanese students' perceptions. Lastly, findings of visits to high school classrooms in Japan and recent comparative studies of Japanese and Australian schools will be discussed in relation to characteristics of classroom practices in Japan. This section will provide background knowledge of Japanese students' socialisation into classroom practices in Japan, which will be informative for interpreting Japanese students' performance in the classroom case studies presented in Chapter 5, 6 and 7.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 follow the performances of three Japanese students in Australian university classrooms and constitute three classroom case studies. I will explore the classroom performance of these students and go on to discuss how each of these students is perceived in Australian lecturers' and peer students' views, and how certain types of classroom performance can affect perceptions of silence. The three Japanese students in the case studies differ in their degree, types and perceptions of silence, and I will discuss silence, in depth, in relation to various contextual factors at different levels of social organisation, and I will use a combination of different approaches to discuss the empirical data from the classroom.

The findings of the three case studies mentioned above will be integrated in the concluding Chapter 8, and discussed in relation to the findings presented in Chapter 4. The nature of silence found in the present research will be summarised, and the model proposed in Chapter 4 will be reappraised in the light of the findings of the case studies. In addition, I will return to the notion of silence in communication outlined in Chapter 2 and reexamine it in the light of the findings of the present research to address the question 'What is silence?' Finally, implications for the improvement of teaching and study-abroad experiences of Japanese and Asian overseas students as well as for the future of research on silence in intercultural communication will be given.
Overall this research aims to demonstrate how silence is created in complex interactions between the aspirations of Japanese students as individuals, the emerging local contexts of talk, and the sociocultural backgrounds which Japanese students bring to the Australian classroom. Their silence has been discussed by teachers and researchers, but the students' voices tended not to be heard. I will thus attempt to present the phenomenon of Japanese students' silence by focusing on their own points of view as well as on the perspectives of other classroom participants including peer Australian students. By taking this approach, I hope to contribute to better communication in Australian university classrooms in which the silence of students has not previously been heard.
Chapter 2  Review of Literature on Silence in Communication

2.1 Overview

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the role of silence in communication in the field of linguistics (cf. Jaworski & Stephens 1998). Researchers have indicated that silence is not simply an absence of noise but constitutes a part of communication as important as speech (e.g. Sacks et al. 1974; Tannen & Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993, 1997; Blimes 1998). Yet, since silence is such a multifaceted and ambiguous phenomenon, it is a challenging task to study. This chapter begins with an overview of the forms, functions and meanings of silence as background to the present research. Next, ethnographic approaches to the study of silence which are relevant to the present research will be discussed. The next section will review literature on silence from intercultural and cross-cultural perspectives, including those on silence in Japanese communication. The last section in this chapter will review literature on silence in the classroom context, particularly in multicultural classroom settings. Throughout this thesis, the term 'intercultural communication' is used to cover communication which some writers refer to as ‘cross-cultural.’ However, the term ‘cross-cultural’ will be used when discussing ‘communicative characteristics of distinct cultural or other groups’ within each of these groups and not in interaction across groups, following the distinction made by Scollon & Scollon (2001: 539). In their distinction, the field of ‘intercultural communication’ assumes different groups ‘in interaction with each other’, while in ‘cross-cultural communication’ different groups ‘do not interact with each other’ but characteristics of groups are discussed separately and compared.

2.2 Silence in communication - forms, functions and meanings

2.2.1 Forms of silence

Silence takes various forms. Silence at a macro level may involve a total withdrawal of speech at a communicative event; for example, the unanimous silence of the participants in ritual or religious events such as in American Indian or African tribal communities (e.g. Basso 1972; Nwoye 1985; Maltz 1985). It can also include silence of individuals while others are talking as in classroom (e.g. Jaworski & Sachdev 1998) or courtroom interaction (e.g. Eades 2000). There is also the temporary silence of a whole participating group or certain individuals during a certain speech event. In ordinary conversation, some participants remain silent for a certain period of time while others engage in conversation.
The smallest unit of silence can be found between sounds within a word, as shown in Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) who looked at the role of the small unit of silence when consonants are produced. Other types of micro-level units are switching pauses and inturn pauses (cf. Sacks et al. 1974; Walker 1985) in interaction. Following definitions in psychology, Walker (1985) states that switching pauses 'occur at margins of speakers' turns' while inturn pauses 'take place during the utterance of a single speaker only' (p.61). It should be noted, however, that there are some problems with the identification of these pauses. In Walker's study, pauses of no shorter than 1.5 seconds occurring between turns were coded as switching pauses, and those within turns no shorter than 1 second were coded as inturn pauses. This becomes a problem if interactants’ rates of speech show considerable gaps, since an appropriate length of pause from each individual’s viewpoint is likely to vary. Moreover, contextual factors may affect the significance of short pauses less than 1.0 seconds in impression management, which was in fact the focus of the study. Although Walker (1985) suggests that pause phenomena should be understood in reference to contextual factors and social settings, there is a danger of missing or misinterpreting significant silences shorter than 1.0 seconds in this method of identification of pauses.

Sacks et al. (1974) list different types of silences in conversation from a conversation analytical perspective. In their terms, silence within a single turn is a 'pause,' and silence which occurs at a transition relevance place (TRP) where speaker change is relevant is a 'gap' (p. 715). Silence at a TRP where no one claims the floor and 'the ensuing space of non-talk constitutes itself as more than a gap' is described as a 'lapse' or discontinuation of talk (p. 714-715). This type of silence is similar to what Goffman (1967: 36) called a 'lull' which occurs when participants in conversation do not have anything more to say. However, as Tannen (1985) points out, it is likely that 'how much silence' is perceived as a 'lull' can vary (p.96) and could be a source of negative stereotyping. Scollon (1985) exemplifies this type of negative stereotyping, using a metaphor of (relatively) long silences as 'malfunction' to represent an Anglo-American point of view. Moreover, in intercultural communication involving non-native speakers, participants' language proficiency can play a role in pacing the speed of turn-taking including switching and inturn pauses. Therefore, it is possible that an application of these interpreting processes in native-non-native communication can cause misunderstanding.

In relation to the notion of switching pauses or gaps, it is important to note that this type of silence is often attributed to the speaker of the turn after the pause (or gap), particularly when the turn before the gap is a question (Levinson 1983 based on Sacks et
al. 1974; Walker 1985; Blimes 1998). Thus, in classroom situations a gap after a question is most likely to be regarded as the selected student's silence (Rowe 1974; Gilmore 1985; Jaworski 1997).

When a gap becomes a more extensive silence, it can often be interpreted or intended as a 'silent response,' which itself can perform a speech act in an indirect manner. Below is an example of this from Levinson (1983):

A: So I was wondering would you be in your office on Monday (.)
   by any chance?
\[ \Rightarrow \]
A: Probably not

(Levinson 1983: 320)

In the above exchange, A interpreted the silence of two seconds after the question as a 'silent response' meaning 'no'. This type of silence can be differentiated from a switching pause or a gap which does not carry illocutionary force or propositional meaning in that it can function as a 'turn' without words. It is however crucial to recognise the possibility that the nominated speaker has the intention to speak but is taking time, whereas the nominating speaker or other participants may interpret the silence as intended to perform the illocutionary act on its own. Again, in intercultural communication, and in communication between native speakers and non-native speakers, misunderstandings of this type may occur. This issue has not been studied empirically and is one of the major issues explored in the present research.

Finally, one other form of silence which is not as explicit as the above-mentioned types is 'hidden' silence. This refers to what remains 'untold' in discourse, and is often associated with power differences and researched by social scientists, as Blimes (1998) claims. He explains, drawing on Neubauer & Shapiro (1985) and Neubauer (1987):

The notion is that any actually existing form of discourse monopolizes the field of talk and so displaces, or 'silences,' other possible discourse. (Blimes 1998: 84)

Thus, this type of silence does not have a recognisable 'form' itself, but it can be noticed or even 'created by the analyst' (Blimes 1998: 84). In Jaworski’s (2000) terms it can be described as 'an absence of something that we expect to hear on a given occasion, when we assume it is "there" but remains unsaid' (p. 113). One relevant example here is the silence of female factory workers in Java, discovered and described by Berman (1998). In her ethnographic and discursive analysis of the lives of these women in Java, Berman finds, in the women's discourse, their silence on the suppression of women in the factory. Another
example is an absence of information through censorship, as discussed by Jaworski & Galasinski (2000) regarding an omission of information by the government through censorship in Poland. Hence, this type of silence may be a consequence of an avoidance of certain discourse for political or other reasons.

To summarise, I have listed the forms of silence below, from micro units to macro units:

1) micro unit of non-phonation within a word and between sounds (as a prosodic feature)
2) intra-turn pauses
3) inter-turn (switching) pauses / gaps
4) turn-constituting silences with illocutionary force
5) temporary silence of individuals who do not hold the floor in interaction
6) an individual's total withdrawal of speech in a speech event
7) silence of a group of participants as a constituent of social / religious events

As this review of forms of silence in communication shows, silence can be found extensively in communication. Some silences are noticeable, but others are seemingly insignificant and may never normally come to attention in our everyday life. When we look at these different forms of silence, it makes us realise how complex, ambiguous yet finely-tuned our use of silence in communication can be. This takes us to the next aspect of silence, its functions.

2.2.2 Functions of silence

Studies of silence have shown a wide range of functions of silence. However, before we look at those functions, silences in communicative situations and non-communicative situations have to be distinguished, as silence can only have communicative functions in 'communicative' situations (Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993, 1997). In addition, silences which 'structure communication' and 'regulate social relationships' (Saville-Troike 1985: 4) have to be differentiated from silences 'which carry meaning' (ibid.: 6). Examples of the former type can be the customary use of silence in certain social contexts in specific communities (e.g. Nwoye 1985; Basso 1972; Agyekum 2002), but the silence which can be found and conventionally accepted in encounters between strangers at a public environment, for example on public transport, can also be considered to fall into this type. (On the other hand, silence is expected to be broken between strangers who sit next to each other at a party.) The latter type of silence ‘which carry meaning’ (Saville-Troike 1985:4) in communicative situations is described as silence which is either meaningful but without propositional content, or 'silent communicative acts which are entirely dependent
on adjacent vocalizations for interpretation, and which carry their own illocutionary force’ (Saville-Troike 1985: 6). The first type of silence in this distinction can be represented by hesitations and pauses, which may play a role in projection of impressions, attitudes or emotions (e.g. Crown & Feldstein 1985; Scollon & Scollon 1985; Walker 1985). The second type can include silence with non-verbal communication such as gestures, but it can also be silence without any accompanying non-verbal signals. For example, silence of a child after his/her parent’s question ‘Have you done your homework?’ can be a communicative act with a propositional meaning of ‘No’. In other words, it involves saying something without actually uttering a word, the interpretation of which requires a high level of reliance on the context of the discourse (cf. Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993; Jaworski & Stephens 1998). These distinctions described above are important in studying the functions and meanings of silence.

The functions of silence investigated in existing literature can be grouped under the headings cognitive, discursive, social and affective. First, silence phenomena such as pauses and hesitations have been considered to have the function of earning cognitive processing time in communication. For example, Chafe’s (1985) work on pauses in retelling a story showed that the lower the codability of items in the story, the longer the pauses. Moreover, when a change in perspective occurred in the retelling of the story, longer pauses were found. Another study on pauses by Sugitō (1991) looked at the roles of pauses in understanding talk (monologue) in Japanese, and the results indicated that without pauses listeners have great difficulty in keeping up with ongoing talk and interpreting it correctly. Thus, pauses appear to play a crucial role in achieving successful communication in that they allow not only the speaker time to organise his/her thoughts but also the listener time to understand what the speaker is saying.

Another function of silence is a discursive one, which indicates junctures and meaning or grammatical units in speech. For example, Brown and Yule (1983) claim that units of speech defined by prosodic features such as tones are often followed by pauses. Jaworski (1993) attributes cognitive, discursive and stylistic functions to pauses and describes the discursive one as ‘an important factor in defining the boundaries of utterance’ (p. 12), marking boundaries as a prosodic feature of discourse (see also Saville-Troike 1985).

Then, there are also the social functions of silence. Using Halliday’s (1978) terms for the metafunctions of language, Jaworski (2000) claims that silence can perform the interpersonal metafunction just as small talk does. Examining the use of silence and small
talk in plays as literary sources, Jaworski (2000) shows how social distance is created, maintained and reduced by silence. He goes on to argue that 'certain manifestations of silence and small talk may be treated as functional equivalents' (p. 118) in performing the interpersonal metafunction.

The social functions of silence go beyond functions equivalent to small talk, however, and silence has indeed been claimed to perform various interpersonal metafunctions in communication. Silence, particularly in terms of pause length and speech rate, can affect the formation of impressions in social encounters. An overview of studies in pauses from psychological perspectives given by Crown & Feldstein (1985) suggested that length of pauses, as well as overall tempo of speech, can be associated with personal traits such as extroverted or introverted. Furthermore, pauses and tempo of speech can affect negative and positive assessments of interlocutors' personalities in that long pauses were associated with the formation of a negative impression of the speaker. In her study of courtroom discourse, Walker (1985) found that lawyers formed negative impressions of witnesses who had relatively frequent and long silent pauses although they advised witnesses to use pauses to think carefully before they responded to questions. Therefore, we see in this instance the clash between silence as a means for cognitive processing and silence as a factor in impression management. As Tannen (1985) says, following Allen (1978), silence has two opposite valuations - 'one negative - a failure of language - and one positive - a chance for personal exploration' (p.94).

It has also been discussed in the literature that silence serves to form conversational styles (Saville-Troike 1985; Tannen 1984, 1985). Tannen (1985) demonstrated how features of discourse such as preference of overlap to silent switching pauses and relatively fast rate of speech characterise the conversational style of New York Jewish people. Her analysis of interaction over a Thanksgiving dinner among three New Yorkers, two Californians and one Briton showed that the two groups had different conversational styles characterised by different levels of tolerance of silence. Moreover, as Scollon & Scollon (1981, 1983), and Scollon (1985) argue, different orientations to silence can become a cause of negative stereotyping.

Silence can also be a means of social control. It can be used for punishment (Saville-Troike 1985), as in the Akan community in Ghana where community members refuse to talk to 'people who violate socio-cultural norms' to deter 'future violators' (Agyekum 2002: 39). The Igbo community in Nigeria is also reported to have the same use of silence (Nwoye 1985). Similarly in Western Apache country, people who are 'enraged' are not
spoken to by others as talking to them may cause violence (Basso 1972: 77). These examples are of silences occurring in the form of temporary cessation of verbal communication among particular individuals for social purposes.

Silence as a means of social control can also take place in the form of censorship. Jaworski & Galasinski (2000) argued that silencing by 'omission' and 'ambiguation' through censorship in Poland was a way for the regime to 'preserve its political power' (p. 198). Such examples of silence as sanctioning and controlling show silence not simply functioning as a background to speech but taking an active role in social interaction.

Another aspect of the social function of silence is defining or maintaining role relationships and negotiating power. The use of silence in certain contexts can serve to confirm and reinforce the role relationships in various social encounters. According to Agyekum (2002), in the Akan community, the king uses silence to mark his 'power, authority, rank and status' (p. 42). However, the use of silence can mark not only authority but also subordination. Lebra's (1987) explanation on social hierarchy and silence in Japanese communication illustrates this point:

> [...] silence is an inferior's obligation in one context and a superior's privilege in another, symbolic of a superior's dignity in one instance and of an inferior's humility in another. (Lebra 1987: 351)

The contradictory aspect of silence with regard to its association with powerfulness and powerlessness as shown above indicates the complex and context-dependent nature of silence in communication.

In relation to silence and power, silence has been found to serve as a tool for the negotiation of power. Kurzon (1992, 1997) argues that while questioning in one-on-one situations gives power to the questioner, the respondent can reverse the situation by refusing to give a response. Gilmore (1985) discusses this negotiation of power which is an attempt to overturn the power relationship by silence in his study of students' silent sulking in response to the teacher's reprimand. However, it is not only silent responses but also inturn pauses and switching pauses in general which can function as a means for negotiation of power. Watts (1991, 1997) showed how these silences can be used for manipulation of status in conversation in his analysis of family interaction at dinner. While pointing out that inter-turn pauses beyond 1.3 seconds to 1.7 seconds in verbal interaction may be interpreted to carry propositional meanings, Watts (1997) shows that shorter inter-turn pauses can be significant in negotiation of interactional status depending on the context of talk. By not taking up a topic presented by one participant but instead leaving a
silent pause, the topic-suggesting speaker's status in discourse can be lowered. On the other hand, this type of silence can be challenged by persistence in talk despite the silence of recipients. Thus, silences at different levels of discourse seem to be able to affect power relationships in communication.

One of the important functions of silence in social interaction is as a politeness strategy. Silence can be used to avoid unwanted imposition, confrontation or embarrassment in social encounters which may have not been avoided if verbal expressions had been used (Brown & Levinson 1987; Sifianou 1997; Jaworski 1993, 1997; Jaworski & Stephens 1998). However, surprisingly, Brown & Levinson (1987), who established the theory of politeness, do not recognise the significance of silence in politeness phenomena (Sifianou 1997). In their framework of politeness strategies, almost all the communicative acts are face-threatening, and thus can be labelled as face-threatening acts (FTAs). To perform FTAs without causing conflict in social relationships, there are strategies to be employed which are gradable depending on the level of threat to face (see Figure 1. below).

![Figure 2.1 Strategies for doing FTAs (from Brown and Levinson 1987:69)](image)

When the risk of threat to face is too great, one may decide not to perform that FTA at all, and this is called the strategy of 'Don't do the FTA' (Brown & Levinson 1987). Therefore, the assumption is that silence would be the equivalent of this 'Don't do the FTA' strategy.

However, Sifianou (1997) claims that this is not the case and explains how silence can be used to perform most of the politeness strategies identified by Brown & Levinson (1987). She argues that silence can be used as a positive politeness strategy when it functions as a sign of solidarity and good rapport, while it can also be a negative politeness strategy if it functions as a distancing tactic. In addition, it is also possible to use silence as
an off-record strategy when it functions as the most indirect form of speech act (Saville-Troike 1985; Tannen 1985). It is worth noting that Sifianou (1997) claims that while silence has a positive value in avoiding imposition, it can also be 'the least polite’ form because it 'places high inferential demands on the addressee' (p. 73). Talk and silence in relation to politeness strategies are also discussed by Scollon & Scollon (1995), who list 'Be voluble' as one of the positive (in their term, involvement) strategies and 'Be taciturn' as one of the negative (independence) strategies (p. 40, 41). However, they do not explicitly indicate solidarity-oriented silence as a positive politeness strategy. The various roles that silence plays in politeness in social interaction show the importance of contextual factors, especially participants' knowledge of and competence in using silence in interaction.

Silence as a politeness strategy can also be used in communication by people who have limited capacity in verbal communication. Jaworski & Stephens (1998) discussed avoidance of talk by hearing-impaired people as a face-saving strategy. In their study based on self-reports by the subjects, it was revealed that avoidance of talk was used not only to avoid loss of face due to their inability to understand what was being talked about and the consequent need to ask for repetition but also to avoid imposition on others by requiring them to repeat what they say. Thus, silence in this case is used as a 'Don't do the FTA' strategy and as a negative politeness strategy, in Sifianou’s (1997) sense. Jaworski & Stephens (1998) conclude that although there is a 'severe doublebind' of avoiding loss of face and 'feelings of isolation' (p.74), silence in this context can be regarded as having a positive value in that it ensures fluency of communication and thus social harmony.

What is worth noting in this paper by Jaworski & Stephens (1998) in relation to the present research is that there appear to be some similarities in the avoidance of talk by hearing-impaired people and non-native speakers. Jaworski & Stephens (1998) discuss a study by Gass & Varonis (1991) which suggests that face-threatening communication between non-native speakers and native-speakers may be avoided as a face-saving strategy. Below is an example from Gass & Varonis (1991) quoted in Jaworski & Stephens (1998):

An American university student once told us that if she were walking down the street and saw her NNS conversation partner [an international student paired up with her for mutual language practice] when she was particularly tired, she would turn around and walk the other ways so as not to engage in what would undoubtedly be a difficult and stressful conversation. (Gass & Varonis 1991: 124, quoted in Jaworski & Stephens 1998)

Thus, native-speakers may avoid talking to non-native speakers to free themselves
from the imposition of being required to repeat or speak loudly. On the other hand, non-native speakers may, like hearing-impaired people, prevent loss of face by avoiding asking native speakers to repeat. However, the question which remains is whether this strategy of avoidance in native and non-native speaker talk can be given a positive value as in the case of hearing-impaired people, since non-native speakers have the potential to become fluent speakers of the target language and often, if they are learners, have the motivation to improve language skills. For non-native speakers, practising oral skills with native speakers is necessary for the improvement of language skills, and avoiding practising means a reduced prospect of acquiring skills in the target language.

Finally, silence can also have a role in the management and display of emotion. For example, Saunders (1985) describes how serious emotional conflict within a family can be avoided by family members' use of silence in an Italian village. Avoidance of talk with a person who is extremely angry among the Western Apache mentioned earlier (Basso 1972) is also a way of managing intense emotional states.

As shown above, silence has almost as many functions as speech. Only those which are of importance as a background to the present research were discussed above. The multifaceted and ambiguous nature of silence described above suggests that its interpretation is highly context dependent (cf. Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993, 1997). This has a methodological implication in that research into the phenomenon of silence requires multiple perspectives and approaches to reach a reliable interpretation and understanding. The following is a summary of the functions of silence discussed above:

(1) cognitive
- pauses, hesitations for cognitive/language processing
(2) discursive
- marking boundaries of discourse
(3) social
- negotiating and maintaining social distance
- impression management through pause length, frequency and speed of talk
- conversational styles through pause length, frequency, speed of talk and overlapping
- means of social control through avoiding verbal interaction with specific individuals
- means of maintaining power through avoiding certain content of verbal expressions
- means of maintaining and reinforcing power relationship
- means of negotiating power
- politeness strategies (negative, positive, off-record, Don't do FTA)
(4) affective
- means of emotion management
2.2.3 Meanings of silence

Various meanings can be assigned to silence. As already mentioned, it can carry different types of meaning such as impressions, attitudes, emotions, and intentions with illocutionary force. Individual styles of pauses and uses of silence can serve to project certain impressions or personality, as shown by Walker (1985) and Crown & Feldstein (1985). Culturally characterised uses of pauses are likely to create stereotypes which can often be negative (e.g. Scollon 1985; Lehtonen & Sajavaara 1985; Sajavaara & Lehtonen 1997). The use of silence can also project participants' orientation to communicative situations, and consequently attitudes towards one another: silence can indicate affection and common ground in one context but hostility, deference or distance in another (cf. Scollon and Scollon 1995; Tannen 1985; Sifianou 1997). One can also use silence when no words can express an emotional state because of its intensity (cf. Jaworski 1993; Kurzon 1997), and this type of silence can be exploited in the arts and literature for aesthetic effect (cf. Hokari 1980 cited in Saville-Troike 1985; Hassan 1967, 1971 cited in Jaworski 1993). Saville-Troike (1985), refers to Hokari (1980) and states that this type of effect is frequently used in Japanese literature where the marker of silence '...' can appear so often that in one example it appears 173 times in 103 pages. The prevalent use of this marker is even parodied in a sarcastic manner in Ikeda's (1995) short story, 'Conversation', an extract of which is below:

'Uhm'
'What?'
'Nothing'
'...'
'...'
'...'
'Who was I?'
'I'm not sure.'
'Who are you?'

In Davies & Ikeno (2002), silence in traditional Japanese performance arts such as kabuki and noh is also ascribed an aesthetic effect in that 'it is the silence between the lines that expresses tension, excitement, and the climax' (p. 52).

Silence can also be used to display anger or defiance, especially when accompanied by the effective use of non-verbal expressions such as eye-gaze or posture. For example, Gilmore's (1985) study of silence as used by both teacher and students in the classroom shows that silence accompanied by serious facial expressions, certain body orientation and gestures is used as the teacher's strategy to maintain control. Students in the same study
also used silence to display their defiance towards the teacher, along with certain postures and facial expressions. What is interesting about the findings is that the teacher and the students seem to be sending the same message: 'pay attention to me' and 'what you're doing is not acceptable to me' (p. 154). Thus, while the silence is emotionally charged, it is also used to deliver encoded messages to negotiate power. In relation to this emotional aspect of silence, one may need to consider intentionality. While emotional display can be used intentionally to show anger or defiance, silence can also be caused unintentionally by emotional states such as fear, embarrassment or shame (Kurzon 1997). Thus, in the negotiation of power through the use of silence by the teacher and the students as described in Gilmore (1985), silence appears to be intentional, whereas students who suffer from second language anxiety may remain silent unintentionally (Lehtonen et al. 1985). It is often possible to distinguish between these two types of silence if they are accompanied by certain eye-gazes or gestures. However, there are borderline cases in which it is difficult to ascertain whether students' silence is intentional or unintentional, as silence can be used as an alternative to verbally expressed 'I don't know,' or 'I did not understand your question', and so on (cf. Lehtonen et al. 1985; Jaworski 1993; Kurzon 1997). The intentionality of silence is one of the issues which will be explored in the present research.

Finally, silence can be used to perform numerous speech acts with illocutionary and perlocutionary forces to deliver meanings in the most indirect way, and is an important resource for politeness (Saville-Troike 1985; Tannen 1985; Jaworski 1993). As the example from Levinson (1983) above in section 2.2.1 shows, a silent response to a first pair part of an adjacency pair such as a question or a request can often represent a dispreferred second, which is a more marked form of response as a second pair part than a preferred one (Levinson 1983; Blimes 1998). When a completely silent response occurs, it is often interpreted to deliver an unexpected meaning (Blimes 1998). Thus, the interpretation process is conventional in that it is made on the assumption of a set of preferred and dispreferred seconds. For example, a silent response following an invitation is likely to imply it has been declined, and one following an offer is likely to imply rejection in English-speaking societies. A silent response following an information-seeking question can be regarded as a lack of cooperation (again in English-speaking societies), and in situations such as the courtroom or in police interrogation, silent responses can give an impression of concealment or challenge (Kurzon 1997; Malone 1986).

As we have seen above, silence covers a diverse range of meanings, which are heavily context-dependent. Therefore, in general, interpreting silence requires a greater effort than
speech, and it is possible that even between native speakers misunderstandings can occur due to the ambiguous nature of silence. When we look at various conventional uses of communicative silence with illocutionary force which are culture-specific (Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993), we see potential risks of miscommunication in intercultural encounters. Among the culturally specific uses of silence in certain contexts, silence as an affirmative response or a negative response can cause serious problems in intercultural communication, and this will be discussed later in this chapter, section 2.4. Below is a summary of the meanings of silence introduced in the above section:

(1) personal impressions
- introverted
(2) attitudes
- affection; solidarity; cooperation / hostility; deference; distance; lack of cooperation; concealment
(3) emotions
- intensity of anger, joy, sadness, embarrassment
(4) illocutionary force
- acceptance; consent; compliance / rejection; disagreement; challenge

2.3 Ethnographic approaches to silence

As we can see above, it is clear that silence is an ambiguous phenomenon. Yet as Jaworski (1993) states, 'when communication is expected or perceived to be taking place, silence becomes potentially relevant' (p.91). Thus, silence is not merely a background to speech but is abundant and meaningful in communication. Moreover, using and interpreting silence are fine-tuned activities, since silence is susceptible to various interpretations and is highly context-dependent. This in turn has brought attention to the potential risk of misunderstanding in intercultural communication (Leech 1983; Enninger 1987; Saville-Troike 1985; Scollon 1985; Jaworski 1993, 1997; Kurzon 1997).

Silence has been studied from various perspectives such as semiotics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, social psychology, and anthropology (cf. Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993, 1997; Kurzon 1997). In this section, I will specifically review literature with an ethnographic approach to silence.

Anthropologists were one of the earliest groups of researchers who turned their attention to culture-specific uses of silence. Their ethnographic approaches to communication systems of the target speech communities have revealed a wide range of situations and manners in which silence can be used in different communities. One of the classic and pioneering works on silence by anthropologists is Basso's (1972) study on
silence in a Western Apache community, which showed the important roles of silence in the social life of Apaches. Extensive observation, participation and interviewing in the community allowed Basso to provide detailed and in-depth accounts of how silence functions in a number of contexts in this particular community, and led to the conclusion that silence can be used in dealing with socially ambiguous situations. Similar ethnographic works which describe cross-cultural differences in uses of silence followed (e.g. Nwoye 1985; Scollon 1985; Philips 1983; Agyekum 2002), highlighting alternative views of silence which are often attached negative values due to the 'typical Western bias in treating speech as normal and silence as a deviant mode of behaviour' (Jaworski 1993: 46).

Thus, for both intercultural and cross-cultural studies of silence, the ethnographic approach has played a major role. Saville-Troike (1985) and Jaworski (1993) argue the values of the tradition of the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1974a, 1974b; Saville-Troike 1984) as it allows description of functions and meanings of silence by integrating various perspectives, making silence as important a feature as speech in human communication (Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993). In the ethnography of communication, appropriate use of silence is also considered as a part of 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1972) required for members of a speech community to participate in various communicative events.

By describing who uses silence, and when, about what, and how people use silence in various communicative events (Saville-Troike 1985: 13), it is possible not only to identify the roles of silence at different levels of social organisation but also to point out sources of misunderstanding in intercultural communication.

2.4 Silence in intercultural communication
2.4.1 Cross-cultural differences in silence

It has been claimed that people in each speech community share culture-specific uses of silence just as they do other linguistic features (Saville-Troike 1985; Enninger 1987; Jaworski 1993), and a large proportion of ethnographic studies have exemplified this (e.g. Basso 1972; Saunders 1985; Nwoye 1985; Scollon & Scollon 1983; Agyekum 2002).

Uses of silence can differ at both micro and macro levels of social organisation. At a macro level, for example, communities have rules in which certain member(s) are not to be spoken to in some specific situations. Enninger (1987) distinguishes between this type of situation-specific silence and culture-specific silence (p. 272), but specific situations in
which silence is assumed or practised can also vary across different cultures (Jaworski 1993). In some communities, religious ceremonies and rituals may be delivered in silence partly accompanied by non-verbal expressions or gestures (e.g. Nwoye 1985; Agyekum 2002; Basso 1972). Silence can also be observed in certain situations such as visiting or meeting with families which recently had a loss, as among the Apache where silence of and towards the bereaved family is a sign of 'intense grief' (Basso 1972: 78) and believed necessary since the family is regarded as going through a personality transformation due to their loss. Similarly, in Akan (Agyekum 2002) and Igbo (Nwoye 1985) communities in Africa, a long period of silence takes place when contact between the bereaved family members occurs.

Institutionally or socially defined roles can also affect the use of silence. As already mentioned, the king in Akan appears to mark his authority by silence (Agyekum 2002). Scollon & Scollon (1983) report that in Athabaskan Indian communities children's learning takes place by listening and observing adults silently and not by displaying and discovering errors as among Anglo-American children. Philips (1972, 1983) also reports the distribution of talk between adults and children in the Warm Springs Indian community as showing a similar pattern to the Athabaskan Indian one. Thus, distribution of talk and silence can be one of the ways to mark authority, and can differ widely between communities.

Another aspect of silence which can be characterised as part of wider sociocultural frameworks is what not to talk about. In other words, topics to be avoided can vary across cultures. For example, in Aboriginal communities in Australia, there are topics which can only be mentioned by women or men, and these topics have been called 'secret women's business' and 'secret men's business' (Moore 2000:138). In Australian Aboriginal communication, there are numerous other strict restrictions on what certain members of community can talk about, and topics which are allowed for speaking are distributed according to traditional rules in each community, which Walsh (1994) calls 'knowledge economy' (p. 225). The distribution of talk in relation to topics can also reinforce the power relationship, as shown by Berman's (1998) study on Javanese women's silence on their unsatisfactory work conditions (see above section 2.2.1).

As we can see above, norms of silence use can vary across cultures and are as important as norms of speech use in communication. Thus, when one faces intercultural encounters, knowing and managing the differences in uses of silence in both cultures will be important. As Basso (1972) puts it:
For a stranger entering an alien society, a knowledge of when not to speak may be as basic to the production of culturally acceptable behaviour as a knowledge of what to say. (p. 69)

Norms of interpretation of silence can also be culture-specific. An example given by Saville-Troike (1985), based on Williams (1979) and Nwoye (1978), is that silence of a woman to a marriage proposal by a man is interpreted as an acceptance in Japanese while it will be a rejection in Igbo (p. 9). Although the Japanese example may have become less typical in recent years, this example illustrates the wide range of meanings which can be assigned to silence and the possibility of cultural differences in the interpretation of silences occurring in similar situations. It should be noted that the non-verbal expressions accompanying silence may also have an important role in the interpreting process, and these expressions can also be culturally fine-tuned features of communication.

At a micro-level of communication, norms of silence use such as length of pauses can be culture-specific. In fact, this aspect of cultural differences in silence in communication has been one of the most extensively discussed issues in the field (e.g. Scollon & Scollon 1981; Scollon 1985; Tannen 1985; Jaworski 1993; Enniger 1987; Lehtonen & Sajavaara 1985, 1997; Kurzon 1997; Carbaugh & Poutiainen 2000). Sifianou's (1997) comment is representative:

"[...] the length of 'gaps,' types of fillers and amount of the overlapping talk are culture-specific. In some societies, gaps and silences are preferred to what is considered to be 'idle chatter.' In others, such idle chatter is positively termed as 'phatic communion,' [...]" (p. 75)

For example, in their discussion of the stereotypical image of 'the silent Finn', Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) suggest that Finns use long silent pauses in their talk compared to Southern Europeans or Anglo-Americans. However, their claim is based on '[C]omparison of the intuitive data' (p.194) and they reveal that the frequency of pauses and the rate of speech in the Finnish sample group do not show differences from those of other cultural groups. Enniger (1987) also reports long silent pauses in Amish interaction, pointing out that different cultures tolerate different lengths of silence. Long pause length was actually measured by Enniger (1987) in support of the idea that there are cultural differences in tolerable length of silence. However, there do not seem to be enough empirical studies carried out in a systematic manner to support claims about culture-specific norms of pause length. One empirical study of tolerance for silence which seems convincing is Jefferson's (1989) study on the length of silent pauses which native speakers of English seem to tolerate. Her study on naturally occurring conversation data
found that native speakers of English seem to tolerate up to around 1.0 second of silent pause. Except for this study, there do not seem to be any large scale empirical studies on tolerable length of silent pauses in different cultures. Although his assumption is not based on a large set of data as in Jefferson (1989), Watts (1997) can also be referred to here as he claims that 'at least within Western European and North American white culture' (p. 93) a silence of between 1.3 to 1.7 seconds and above will be significant and 'open for interpretation' (p. 94). However, it should also be mentioned that pauses of the same length can be interpreted differently as contextual factors affect their significance and meaning to a great extent (cf. Watts 1997), and thus careful analysis of pause length considering contextual factors is required.

What seems to be argued often instead of the empirically-measured length of silence is different levels of tolerance for silence found through ethnographic observation. For instance, Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) and Sajavaara and Lehtonen (1997) report that the Finns often attach a positive value to silence on social occasions. Similarly, Jaworski (1993) mentions Reisman's (1974) description of long silences typically observed in social encounters among neighbours in Lapp communities in Northern Sweden. Non-Western communities are the most often referred to as having a much greater tolerance compared to Western cultures. Walsh (1994) describes how Aboriginal people in the town of Wadeye in Australia can sit together without uttering a word for a long period of time. Corcoran (2000), in questioning the Western valuation of talk over silence, describes some uses of silence in Australian Aboriginal communities as 'silence at the time of pleasure, sorrow, adopting the meditative and consensual "mark of silence"' (p. 185). Similarly, communities such as the Western Apache (Basso 1972), the Athabaskan (Scollon 1985), the Igbo (Nwoye 1985) and the Amish (Enninger 1987) are found to be more tolerant of silence and attach a more positive value to silence than do Western-communities.

In this regard, attitudes to talk and silence in each culture seem to be important since they also affect the way we perceive how people in different cultures and communities talk. In general, there have been a number of suggestions that there is a tendency for Westerners to prefer talk to silence (Scollon 1985; Enninger 1987; Jaworski 1993; Giles et al. 1991). Argyle (1972) says, 'In Western cultures, social interaction should be filled with speech, not silence' (p. 107-108). On the other hand, it has been frequently argued that there seem to be more positive values attached to silence in the East (e.g. Enninger 1987; Giles et al. 1991; Scollon & Scollon 1995). Giles et al. (1991) made an attempt to empirically test this 'typical Western bias' (Jaworski 1993: 46). In their study, university
students of Anglo-American, Chinese-American and Chinese (non-American) background completed questionnaires on their beliefs about talk and silence. The results confirmed the 'Western bias', with the Anglo-Americans viewing talk more positively than the other two groups while the non-American Chinese group saw silence more positively. The Chinese-American group came in the middle in their valuation of silence and talk. However, it should be mentioned that even within the 'Western' group, different levels of valuation of silence and talk can be found. Tannen's (1985) study suggests that her New York Jewish participants valued overlapping talk and avoidance of silence while the Californians and the Briton viewed the New Yorker's frequent overlapping negatively. Giles et al. (1991) in a different study also found that Hong Kong students viewed small talk more positively than students in Beijing, and there is also a generational gap in beliefs about talk and silence, which along with Tannen's (1985) findings warns us to be cautious about the stereotypical views about specific cultural groups on their use of silence and talk.

With regard to cultural differences in silence in the literature discussed above, it is worth noting how prevalent the comparison between 'Western' and 'non-Western' cultures is. Moreover, what groups the 'Western cultures' cover is ambiguous. The use of the general label 'Western' is so prevalent that it seems to contribute to and reinforce the stereotyping of voluble or silent racial groups. As Tannen's (1985) study shows, there appear to be different orientations to silence and talk among people from 'Western cultures', which should not be overlooked in the strong stereotypical images of 'Westerners' preferring talk and 'non-Westerners' preferring silence. Even in Tannen's (1985) work, identifying 'New York Jews' as an ethnic group as talkative and fast-talkers is rather simplistic. Factors such as professional backgrounds of participants in talk are not considered although they may play an important role in creating lack of balance in distribution of talk and silence. This issue will be further discussed in the section on silence in Japanese communication (section 2.4.3).

2.4.2 Silence in intercultural communication

The differences in uses of silence, amount and length of silence and tolerance for and attitudes to silence across various communities as described above have serious implications for intercultural communication. It is often suggested in the literature on silence that children are socialised to use these functions of silence, including community-specific uses, from an early age, in particular in their family environment (Saville-Troike 1985; e.g. Philips 1972, 1983; Scollon & Scollon 1981; Clancy 1986; Lehtonen &
In addition, the use of silence may also be more unconscious than speech, and this can cause problems in intercultural communication. Saville-Troike explains:

Learning appropriate rules for silence is also part of the acculturation process for adults attempting to develop communicative competence in a second language and culture. Perhaps because it functions at a lower level of consciousness than speech, many (perhaps most) otherwise fluent bilinguals retain a foreign 'accent' in their use of silence in the second language, retaining native silence patterns even as they use the new verbal structures. (p. 12-13).

Furthermore, the interpretation of silence generally requires a great effort of the listener because of its ambiguous nature (Saville-Troike 1985; Tannen 1985; Sperber & Wilson 1986; Jaworski 1993). This suggests that lack of familiarity with culture-specific uses of silence may become a cause of misunderstanding and consequently stereotyping when participants in a communicative encounter come from different speech communities. Lehtonen & Sajavaara (1985) explain, for example, that Finnish speakers' lengthy silences and lack of listener backchannels suggest a lack of interest in and commitment to interaction with people from other cultural backgrounds. However, from the Finnish point of view, those features of silence are not intended to mean lack of interest or commitment. Carbaugh & Poutiainen (2000) report that Finnish speakers allow longer silent pauses than American English speakers in self-introduction to show respect by taking time. They also report that American English speakers may be considered to talk too much in Finnish contexts as they try to cover up the silence of their Finnish company. Similarly, Scollon & Scollon (1981) and Scollon (1985) claim that Anglo-American English speakers often dominate conversations with Athabaskan Indian people because of the longer switching pauses of Athabaskan people. Moreover, in these two communities the framework of talk in various social contexts shows different patterns. For example, subordinate people are not supposed to display their abilities verbally in front of their superiors in Athabaskan communities while it is almost the opposite in Anglo-American culture. Another example is that observation and silence is a norm in first encounters among strangers in Athabaskan culture while small talk is the way to establish a relationship among Anglo-Americans. Taboo topics such as future plans are avoided by Athabaskans but are generally welcomed by Anglo-Americans. Thus, from Anglo-American perspectives, their communication with the Athabaskan people is perceived as a failure, as suggested by the title of Scollon's (1985) paper, 'The machine stops'. On the other hand, from the Athabaskan point of view, Anglo-Americans talk too much and are rude (for details, see Scollon & Scollon 1985: 36). However, as already mentioned, Tannen's (1985) study suggests that even within white
American culture, there may be different orientations to silence and talk.

These different orientations to talk and silence often lead to the domination of talk by one group over another, and consequently to negative stereotyping of each group, as is the case in Scollon & Scollon (1985) and Tannen (1985). In Tannen’s study, the faster speakers who made a great amount of effort to avoid silence perceived the slower speakers as being 'withholding, uncooperative, and not forthcoming with conversational contributions' while the slow speakers' perceptions were that the faster speakers were 'dominating' (p. 108). The domination of one cultural group over another in interaction as a consequence of gaps in orientation to silence can have serious impacts on institutional contexts such as courtrooms. Studying courtroom interaction involving Aboriginal witnesses in Australia, Eades (1992, cited in Eades 2000: 172) advised lawyers to 'use silence between answers and following questions' (p. 41) in order to take into consideration the fact that 'Aboriginal people often like to use some silence in their conversation, and they do not take it as an indication that communication has broken down' (Eades 2000: 172). A number of examples in her data show that this advice has been put into practice by Anglo-Australian lawyers, allowing Aboriginal witnesses to give their own story in their own way. However, Eades argues that the lack of understanding of Aboriginal ways of living and an obsession with 'answer to questions' (2000: 188) by judges and lawyers lead to restrictions on witnesses' opportunities to provide their accounts and thus to the 'silencing' of Aboriginal witnesses.

Institutional settings, as we can see in the above example, often have expected interactional procedures for their practical goals (Drew & Heritage 1992). However, while the expectation of courtroom questioning which requires only relevant and concise answers leads to a silencing of Aboriginal witnesses in Eades's (2000) study, in other institutional settings such as language proficiency interviews, long responses by the interviewee to questions by the interviewer are preferred due to the goal of the interaction being assessment of oral proficiency. Therefore, in language proficiency interviews, underelaborated responses are negatively perceived and silence is noticed as a marked behaviour. Ross (1998) reports Japanese interviewees' underelaborated responses in oral proficiency interviews in English, describing the underelaboration as 'the minimalist approach' and a strategy 'in which they transfer the pragmatics of interview interaction from their own culture' (Ross 1998: 339, drawing on House 1993). Therefore, silence, as a consequence of cross-cultural differences, is perceived and can be negatively evaluated by the interviewer as an inappropriate response in these interview situations. Young &
Halleck (1998) also report Japanese students' underelaboration in oral interviews in English, comparing the discourse of Japanese students' with that of Mexican students. However, this study does not seem to be rigorous enough to claim a role for cross-cultural differences in norms of response elaboration, as each sample group has only three students who are at different levels of proficiency. Similarly Ross's (1998) paper also does not clarify the number of participants or the size of the analysed data, leaving questions about the validity of his argument. However, the issue of underelaboration in oral proficiency interviews is an important one and candidates and interviewers should be aware of the cultural differences in expected and assumed levels of participation in interview situations (Ross 1998; Young & Halleck 1998).

In relation to the above mentioned issue of silence in proficiency interviews, one of the contextual factors which can affect silence in intercultural communication is participants' language proficiency and affective factors in speaking in a second language. Lehtonen et al. (1985) discuss the role of second language anxiety in silence in communication in a second language. The results of their study of Finnish students suggested that communication apprehension in L2 is likely to be caused by a 'perception of low personal competence or low self-esteem, inability to identify appropriate social behaviour, and anticipation of negative outcome to communication' (p. 61). Although the actual proficiency was not measured in this study, it is argued that the actual proficiency may not be the most decisive factor in communication apprehension but the self-perception of proficiency in L2 can be one of the major causes of avoidance of communication. Furthermore, Lehtonen et al. (1985) say that one in five Americans feels apprehensive about communication because of a pressure in their culture where articulate verbal performance 'is considered to be one of the most important measures for success and positive image' (p. 56).

Thus, it appears that negative perceptions of self-image against what is considered to be successful communication are strongly related to silence as avoidance of communication, which brings us back to silence as a face-saving strategy (Sifianou 1997; Jaworski & Stephens 1998). As Lehtonen et al. (1985) suggest, in communicative encounters between non-native and native speakers it is possible that non-native speakers opt for silence if they anticipate negative outcomes from speaking. In this sense, the silence of the non-native speaker can be a face-saving strategy just as hearing-impaired people use silence to avoid loss of face (Jaworski & Stephens 1998). However, at the same time, having to accommodate to non-native speakers and make special efforts for
communication can be 'face-threatening' (Brown & Levinson 1987) for native speakers. Gass & Varonis (1991) show instances of how this face-threatening situation can be avoided by native-speakers if they decide to avoid the occurrence of the communicative situation itself.

As this review of literature on silence in intercultural communication shows, silence can be created when comparison between communicative styles of distinct communities are made. Communication may be avoided from anticipation of negative consequences of intercultural communication when different orientations to talk and silence are perceived, further reinforcing silence of one group and dominance of the other. At the same time, cultural stereotypes are also reinforced, which widen the gaps between cultures. Hence, perceptions of marked silences or unexpected volubility in intercultural communication themselves can bring further silence or dominance of one group. Scollon & Scollon (2001), referring to Bateson (1972), describe this type of amplification process of problems in intercultural communication as 'complementary schismogenesis'. Therefore, to investigate silence in intercultural communication, it will be important to recognise the role of stereotypes in interpretation processes. Sifianou (1997), drawing on Tannen (1993a), states:

\[
\text{[...] silence in itself is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, just as volubility in itself is not necessarily a sign of domination. It is the interaction of the two which attributes meaning to each form of behaviour.} \\
\text{(Sifianou 1997: 68)}
\]

2.4.3 Silence in Japanese communication

2.4.3.1 The 'silent Japanese'

The Japanese are one group who are often described as attaching strong values to silence, and as making abundant use of silence (Doi 1974; Barnlund 1975; Loveday 1982; La Forge 1983; Clancy 1986; Lebra 1987; Davies & Ikeno 2002). Lebra (1987) states that 'there are many indications that Japanese culture tilts toward silence' (p.343), and even goes on to say that 'Japanese silence stands out not only in comparison with Southern Europeans or New Yorkers but with East Asian neighbors like Koreans and Chinese as well' (p. 344). Doi (1974) also makes a strong statement that 'Japanese just don't talk much' (p. 22). This prevalence of silence is often explained by the values attached to silence in Japanese culture. Lebra (1987) presents four dimensions of silence in Japanese communication: truthfulness, social discretion, embarrassment in expression of love, and defiance. The first two dimensions are related to a strong valuation of silence. As Clancy
(1986) puts it, the 'Japanese have little faith in verbal expression or in those who rely upon it' (p.214). This is supported by researchers such as Barnlund (1975), Kunihiro (1976), Loveday (1982, 1986), Lucas (1984) and Pritchard (1995). This emphasis on silence over verbal expression is further illustrated by numerous sayings and proverbs, as listed in Loveday (1986): 'To say nothing is a flower'; 'Mouths are to eat with, not to speak with'; 'Close your mouth and open your eyes'; 'Honey in his mouth, a sword in his belly'; 'Even a lie can be expedient' (p. 308). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the aesthetic value of silence has been explored to a great extent in Japanese literature and arts (Saville-Troike 1985; Lebra 1987) (see section 2.2.3). Summarising Lebra (1987), Maynard (1997) claims that silence in Japanese is 'a communicative device that can express many intentions and feelings' (p 154).

The claims that Japanese people value and make prevalent use of silence, however, are mostly not based on empirical findings. Miller (2000) criticises claims which dichotomise Japanese and American communication styles on the basis of accounts from personal experiences or collections of observations made by others, saying these approaches 'do not necessarily describe how speakers actually use language' (p. 245). Clancy (1986), who conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses of recorded mother-child interactions in Japanese, may be an exception in the literature on Japanese silence. Her study however focuses on language socialisation processes of Japanese children and she does not directly address silence in relation to her findings.

A classic and frequently-quoted paper which specifically focuses on the silence of Japanese is by Lebra (1987), but her discussion is based on her 'personal observations and experiences' (p.343). Thus, there have been remarks on this popular claim about the silence of Japanese that this 'stereotype is hardly accurate' (Anderson 1992: 102). Anderson (1992) further describes:

Japanese do talk, and at times they talk a lot. But the contexts in which talk is culturally sanctioned, and the types of talk that occur in these settings, do not correspond to those of the West. (p.102)

Mizutani (1997) makes the same point that contextual factors such as social settings or topics must be taken into consideration when talking about volubility or silence. Similarly, Miller (1994b) and McCreary (1992) question the stereotypes of Japanese being 'silent' or 'indirect,' criticising 'nihonjinron' literature for overemphasising the uniqueness of the Japanese by placing Japanese and Americans as 'polar opposites' (Miller 1994b: 52, see also Miller 2000). Miller (1994b) further argues that 'we should specify what the particular
situations are in which differences emerge and matter' (p. 53). Hence, there is a need to identify the nature of silence in communication in Japan in more specific terms: how are talk and silence distributed, and in what kind of contexts? Silence needs to be examined by identifying its forms, meanings and functions in context.

2.4.3.2 Distribution of talk and silence

More specific accounts of silence, nevertheless, can be found, some supported by empirical evidence, others based on personal observations. Regarding the distribution of talk and silence, there are a number of claims that the hierarchical structure of the society is reflected in the use of silence (Nakane 1970; Kunihiro 1975; Lebra 1987; Beebe & Takahashi 1989). Watanabe's (1993) study of Japanese and American group discussions also makes a contribution to this issue. However, as Lebra (1987) and Beebe & Takahashi (1989) explain, silence can serve either for the superior to assert power or for the inferior to demonstrate deference, depending on the context. Another dimension in which talk and silence can be distributed is the private-public continuum. It has been frequently mentioned that the Japanese make a clear distinction between in-groups 'uchi' and out-groups 'soto' and accommodate their social behaviour accordingly (Loveday 1982; Moeran 1988), and that relatively more silence is likely to be observed in communication in an out-group context than in an in-group context such as among family members, close friends or business allies with whom self-expression and direct negotiation are more common (Kunihiro 1974; Miller 1994b; Pritchard 1995).

2.4.3.3 Length of silent pauses in Japanese

The specific forms which silence can take have also been explored in the literature. Other than the 'prevalence' of silence in social encounters mentioned earlier, pause length, tempo of speech, silence as a communicative act, minimal responses and underelaborated turns appear to be discussed as characteristics of Japanese silence. In Davies & Ikeno (2002), the following account of silence in Japanese communication can be found:

> In daily conversations, business meetings, and school classrooms in Japan, silence is much more common and is of longer duration than in Western countries. (p. 51 Italics mine)

Thus, as we can see, length of silent pause is often described to be relatively longer than that of native English speakers, and is claimed as one of the causes of intercultural miscommunication. Pritchard (1995) reports that Japanese students in an EFL classroom
with a teacher who is an English native speaker are likely to feel that their own space is covered with their teachers' speech as they try to fill in the silences. Marriott (1984) also argues that Australian English native speakers corrected themselves or used prompting in their interaction with Japanese speakers whose tempo of speech they found slow. Furthermore, Murata (1994), comparing frequency of interruptions in interaction between 1) native speakers of Japanese in Japanese, 2) native speakers of English in English and 3) native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English in English, suggests that Japanese ways of speaking 'prefer not to have interruptions' while English ways of speaking prefer to have interruptions as a sign of commitment to conversation. These findings imply that the tempo of turn-taking is relatively slower in Japanese than in English. In addition, what is interesting is that the Japanese participants interrupted more frequently when they interacted with English native speakers in English than in their own language, which according to Murata (1994), suggests that the Japanese participants may have accommodated their interactional style.

2.4.3.4 Length of silent pauses at TRPs from intercultural perspectives

Silences which occur at TRPs of first pair parts are sensitive issues in intercultural communication in English with Japanese speakers. In particular, native speaker English teachers seem to have difficulty in making judgement as to whether a long pause at TRPs after questioning Japanese students are for thinking time required before responding or for a silent speech act indicating that one does not know the answer, or for even nervousness (cf. Anderson 1992; Pritchard 1995). Anderson (1992) notes that Japanese students' non-comprehension tends to be signalled by facial expressions and attitudes, and their period of silences should not be interpreted as 'unwillingness to comply' (p. 102). On the other hand, Pritchard (1995) points out that transfer of L1 communicative style causes a problem for Japanese students in an EFL classroom:

For the Japanese, slow, careful speech is an indication of thoughtfulness and prudence which in English discourse may cause frustration and impatience. In an EFL classroom, silence is equated with 'I don't know the answer,' rather than 'I'm thinking about it.' Students, therefore, need to be taught ways of coping with this silence. (p. 255)

Pause length is apparently one of the major concerns for EFL teachers in their interaction with Japanese students, and again cultural awareness and adaptation is made, as we can find in Thorp (1991):

[...] I did adapt to Japanese ideas concerning what was an acceptable pause length between
While the understanding of 'culturally appropriate' silence is important in language teaching, it is also dangerous to rely on cultural differences in interpreting silence because the role of language difficulty and psychological factors such as lack of confidence and embarrassment in speaking English are ignored in interpreting Japanese students' silence. Lawrie (2002) also reports that native speaker EFL teachers find the silence of Japanese students problematic, but she found that rather than lengths of pauses, location of pauses was likely to affect Japanese students' silence particularly as their pauses tend to occur around the beginning or end of their turns rather than in the middle. One of the issues which arise from these observations by researchers in intercultural communication as well as in EFL/TESOL is whether empirical evidence can be found to show that Japanese native speakers' length of inter-turn pauses in their native language is relatively longer than that of English native speakers in theirs. Another issue to be addressed is whether the reported 'longer pauses' and 'slow tempo of speech' are results of a transfer of communicative style from L1 to L2 or due to language difficulties in L2 (cf. Lucas 1984; Neustupný 1985), or something else.

Regarding the timing of turn-taking by Japanese students learning English, Carroll (2000) reports that his Japanese students 'are sensitive to and capable of, at least on occasion, precisely timing their entry into talk' (p.77) when they interact in English, although the students are novice learners of English and their interaction shows more frequent gaps than in native speaker interaction. Furthermore, some extensive gaps were observed to occur due to the students' orientation to avoid premature overlaps over dysfluently produced turns. These findings suggest that Japanese speakers who are more proficient speakers of English as a second language would be capable of managing timing of turn-taking with an orientation to 'no gap, no overlap.' However, since Carroll's (2000) study examined interaction among Japanese students who were all non-native speakers, management of precision timing in interaction between non-native and native speakers may show different patterns. Murata (1994) shows, nevertheless, that Japanese students who are more proficient in English than in Carroll's (2000) study seem to interrupt more often in English conversation than in Japanese. This suggests that despite the fact that Murata (1994) found much less interruption in talk between Japanese native speakers than between native English speakers, Japanese speakers show orientation to 'no gap' in English.
How then do we make sense of the claims about long pauses and slow speech rate of Japanese speakers? The various arguments presented above seem to come from observations and analysis made in different contexts in terms of participants' proficiency, levels of public exposure and formality of speech events. Therefore these contextual factors must be taken into account when considering silence. As Anderson (1992) points out, if a Japanese student is called on by a native English speaker EFL teacher in a classroom, embarrassment or nervousness from having to speak in public may bring about a longer pause rather than transfer of communicative style in L1. On the other hand, a one-on-one conversation between a native speaker of English and a Japanese student in an informal setting may lead to a removal of inhibition and we may observe shorter and less frequent pauses. In any case, more inquiry using empirical approaches and more detailed reports of studies which carefully take variables into account are necessary.

2.4.3.5 Silence as performing speech acts

Silence as communicative acts, or more accurately, 'formal exponents of acts' (Enninger 1987: 286), is another form of silence which has been discussed extensively. As introduced in the first section of this chapter, silence which realises illocutionary force to perform a speech act seems to exist almost universally (Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski 1993; Sifianou 1997). It seems, however, there are types of speech acts often performed by Japanese with silence which have drawn special attention in existing research. Disagreement and rejection are commonly mentioned types of speech acts which tend to be performed through silence in Japanese (Nakane 1970; Ueda 1974; Clancy 1986; Enninger 1987; Maynard 1997). Enninger (1987) notes that the Japanese discourse system does not follow Levinson's (1983) statement that dispreferred seconds are more morphologically marked than preferred seconds, and are often preceded by a delay (i.e. gap), as dispreferred seconds 'do not always take an elaborate formal exponent' (Enninger 1987: 294). Enninger goes on to say that this use of silence for dispreferred seconds 'such as declines, refusals' (p. 294) serves to avoid loss of face. He refers to Nakane (1970):

One would prefer to be silent than utter words such as 'no' or 'I disagree.' The avoidance of such open and bald negative expressions is rooted in the fear that it might disrupt the harmony and order of the group. (Nakane 1970; 35 cited in Enninger 1987; 295).

However, it should be mentioned that long silent pauses in the position of second pair parts are likely to be interpreted as prefaces to dispreferred seconds or even as the dispreferred seconds themselves, as we have seen in the example from Levinson (1983) in section
2.2.1. Thus, one could say that silence in place of disagreement or rejection is not a communicative behaviour particularly unique to Japanese people. It could be what happens after the silence itself which causes puzzlement to non-Japanese. For example, McCreary's (1986) example of silence as a dispreferred second in Japanese-American business negotiation is followed by another adjacency pair in which the Japanese negotiator responds with the preferred 'yes' without really meaning to 'agree' but only indicating that he is attending to his American negotiator's suggestion. Therefore, one should be careful in looking at exactly what silences are 'doing' in relation to the contexts in which they occur. It should also be mentioned that the theory that confrontation is avoided in Japanese is not always the case. Miller (1994a) shows that confrontation and argument do take place in Japan, but in private rather than public. Similarly, Ueda (1974) reports that the direct use of 'no' is likely to be found at home with family members and not in public social situations outside home.

2.4.3.6 Underelaboration

The last type of silence which often comes under attention is the underelaborated speech of Japanese speakers. Although in the literature on Japanese and their communicative style, there are numerous comments on values like taciturnity, such as 'a man of few words is trusted more than a man of many words' (Lebra 1987: 345), specific accounts of underelaborated communication by Japanese are again discussed in their communication in English with native speakers of English. Neustupný (1985) states that one of the problems in Australian-Japanese contact situations is avoidance of communication by Japanese, which includes 'lack of elaboration' (p. 54). In relation to this, he reports a study by Marriott (1984) which found that one of the reasons Japanese speakers of English were negatively evaluated by native speakers of English was that they did not manage to supply enough topics or expand and elaborate on topics introduced by native speakers. Asaoka (1987) also reports that Australian participants at a party found Japanese participants 'uncooperative,' and explains this can be explained by the Japanese participants' avoidance and insufficient provision of suitable topics. However, proficiency may again be playing a role in these studies, as Japanese participants' inability to comprehend or formulate propositional content of communication was reported in both Marriott (1984) and Asaoka (1987).

Another instance of underelaboration by Japanese speakers of English is reported by Ross (1998). He claims that Japanese interviewees' underelaborated responses to questions
in language proficiency interviews (LPIs) by American interviewers are likely to be due to pragmatic transfer of framing of the interview from L1 (cf. Roberts & Sayers 1987; Tannen 1993b). Drawing on Barnlund (1975) and Lebra (1987), Ross (1998) describes interviews in Japanese in which interviewees are not expected to provide 'superficially trivial factual information,' since 'appearing superfluous or verbose' has a negative impact in Japanese culture (Ross 1998: 339). Moreover, he suggests that questions which address personal issues may receive minimal responses as Japanese interviewees are likely to be sensitive about discussing or exposing personal matters in formal occasions such as LPIs. Similarly, Young & Halleck (1998) discuss their study of LPIs in English with Japanese and Mexican students focusing on Japanese students' underelaboration. However, their sample group is extremely small (three participants from each group, one from each group representing each proficiency level out of three), and findings are not consistent, particularly with the advanced level Japanese speaker. Despite this, Young & Halleck (1998) still suggest that the Japanese interviewees tend to make the interviewer 'work harder' (p. 374), giving examples of short responses from the most proficient Japanese participant. In discussing the role of proficiency in underelaboration, they also claim generalised patterns even though findings across proficiency levels are inconsistent. Considering that Ross (1998) did not provide quantitative accounts of underelaboration, the tendency of Japanese speakers of English to produce underelaborated talk because of pragmatic transfer of their L1 needs more reliable empirical evidence. Similarly, the role of proficiency in underelaboration is unclear. Young & Halleck (1998) state that ascertaining how proficiency and pragmatic transfer of L1 interact in underelaboration is difficult, but examining LPIs of a larger sample group of people from different cultural/language backgrounds who display proficiency in receptive skills may offer clearer answers.

2.4.3.7 Summary: Silence in Japanese communication

In this section, the silence and its claimed prevalence in communication among Japanese people has been reviewed. It has been shown that the stereotype of the 'silent Japanese' is deep-rooted in the tradition of research on Japanese language and culture. It was also shown that explanations are given for this silence in terms of its association with Japanese cultural values and key social themes. Furthermore, these explanations are often seen as ways to 'understand' or 'solve the problems of' Japanese speakers of English when they engage in interaction with English native speakers. Since the silence discussed in the literature mostly refers to silence found in Japanese native speakers communicating in
English with native speakers of English, attention has also been given to the role of proficiency in English as a second/foreign language. What tends to be argued, however, is that the silence of Japanese speakers of English is more to do with a consequence of pragmatic failure or of a transfer of Japanese communicative style than to do with surface linguistic competence (e.g. Lucas 1984; Anderson 1992; Maynard 1997; Ross 1998).

Whether this claim is valid or not, the problem is that the silence in communication in Japanese by native speakers of Japanese has not been studied sufficiently from an empirical perspective (Miller 1994b, 2000). Critiquing a large body of applied linguistics literature which draws on sociocultural differences to explain problems in teaching Japanese students, Kubota (1999) argues:

In these arguments, authors tend to create a cultural dichotomy between the East and West, constructing fixed, apolitical, and essentialized cultural representations such as groupism, harmony, and deemphasis on critical thinking and self-expression to depict Japanese culture.

(p.9)

She goes on to argue that one should approach these generalisations critically and seek evidence that can challenge these stereotypes. It seems, however, that globalisation and increased opportunities and demand for intercultural communication has given the relative silence of Japanese marked attention, and the problematisation of this silence has made Japanese themselves aware of the silence attributed to them. This can be found, for instance, in an article in *AERA*, titled 'Japanese cannot talk' (Yamauchi 1998). The article discusses the importance of the ability to communicate well, and explains the problems with traditional Japanese ways of communication. In spite of the positive values traditionally attached to silence mentioned earlier, negative valuations of silence also seem to be given by Japanese. However, supposing Japanese do make a relatively more extensive use of silence than English native speakers, the roles that silence plays in communication must be specified and differences in the use on silence and talk in intercultural communication have to be identified. At the same time, interaction between Japanese native speakers and English speakers of Japanese as a second/foreign language, that is, the reverse situation, needs to be examined as well. Among the limited number of such studies is one by Harumi (1999) who compared use of silence by Japanese learners of English and British learners of Japanese in their language classrooms. The results of her study show that British learners use silence in their communication in Japanese, although Harumi argues that the British students' silence was often accompanied by explicit non-verbal expressions such as eye-gaze, posture or head movements, showing 'willingness to
participate' (p. 183). As for the Japanese learners of English, based on interpretation of silent responses elicited from both Japanese native speakers and English native speakers, it is claimed that their non-verbal expressions accompanying silence were not 'clear enough' to communicate their intention and 'problematic' (p. 182). However, the instances of silent responses examined are limited to two cases for each group, and further studies such as Harumi's (1999) of a larger scale are required. As argued by Sajavaara & Lehtonen (1997) as well as Scollon (1985), for some communities, silence can serve communicative/social functions which, in others, can be realised and performed by speech. It is worth referring again to Sifianou’s statement (1997: 68), that it is the interaction of talk and silence which gives meaning to each.

2.5 Silence in classroom contexts
2.5.1 Silence in classroom communication

The focus of research on silence in the classroom has mostly been on the negative aspects of silence associated with domination and power. According to Jaworski & Sachdev (1998), a number of studies confirm the idea that power relations in educational settings are constructed and reproduced through silence (p.277). There is, first of all, a power relationship between the teacher and the students. Teachers have the right to control the discourse of the classroom and decide when they speak or when they allow students to speak (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). In this power relationship, teachers' silence is a sign of control and dominance over their students (Jaworski & Sachdev 1998). Teachers' silence, accompanied by non-verbal signals, can be used to gain students' attention or even warn them of inappropriate behaviour (Gilmore 1985). Yoneyama (1999), discussed in detail in Chapter 4, demonstrates how students in Japanese high schools are disempowered through silencing by their teachers, who are in fact also silenced in power struggles within the Japanese education system. However, as mentioned in reference to Gilmore (1985), students can also use silence to negotiate power relationships with the teacher, although their silence in general marks subordinate status (Jaworski & Sachdev 1998).

In addition to the institutionally-defined status difference between teacher and students, power relationships can also be manifest in classrooms with students from ethnic and/or language minority backgrounds. Silences of minority students may be derived from different types of sources such as racism and prejudice (Biggs & Edwards 1991), accommodation to the minority culture (Gilmore 1985), desire to avoid loss of face (Losey 1997), or a combination of these. Jaworski & Sachdev (1998) suggest that silence or
silencing of minority students may be 'the silence of puzzlement, embarrassment or anticipation of disambiguation of the situation' caused by the recognition of differences or deviance (p.276). One could say that minority students tend to suffer more from silence and silencing in the classroom than students from mainstream language backgrounds since they are vulnerable to two types of power relationship: institutional and ethnic/linguistic. Research into silence in the multicultural classroom will be reviewed in greater detail in the following section.

Connections between power and silence in the classroom can also be found among students. Jaworski & Sachdev (1998), summarising a number of studies in gender in classroom contexts (Kramarae & Treichler 1990; Swann 1988, 1992; Spender 1982; Clarricoates 1978), state that general findings are that girls are more silent than boys, and in some of these studies girls are silenced by either their male classmates or the teachers, allowing boys more opportunities for participation than girls. Apart from studies focusing on gender, studies in negotiations of power and silence in the classroom among students are scarce. As reported in Losey (1997), minority students may be silenced by peer mainstream students' interruptions in mainstream classrooms, but it appears that most studies on silence in the classroom focus on teacher-student interaction.

As described above, silence in the classroom tends to be regarded negatively as it often marks asymmetrical power relationships. Nevertheless, positive aspects of silence in the classroom have also been reported. Rowe (1974) examined how increase in ‘wait-times’ affected performances of students, finding that increased ‘wait-time’ enhanced quality of instruction in the classroom. If the standard 'wait-time' of teachers after questioning was increased from around 1.0 second to around 3.0 seconds, the length of response increased, frequency of failure to respond decreased and quality of responses as well as initiation by students increased. Moreover, confidence reflected in student responses increased, and students who were regarded as slow and poor performers contributed more and gave better performances. In relation to this 'wait-time,' Mohatt & Erickson (1981) found that Indian students at an all-Indian school on Odawa reserve in Canada were more responsive to an Indian teacher who gave a 'wait-time' of 4.6 seconds average while the responsiveness of students decreased with a non-Indian teacher whose 'wait-time' was 2.0 seconds average. Hence, not only does the increase of 'wait-time' increase the quality of classroom communication and student performance, but also there are differences in community-specific expectations about 'wait-time' which may affect teacher and student performances in multicultural classrooms. In both cases just discussed, silence played a facilitative role.
in classroom communication, increasing the quality of students’ performance and learning.

Another study which underscores the positive roles of silence in the classroom is Jaworski & Sachdev (1998), in which students’ beliefs and attitudes about silence were investigated. They found that from the students’ point of view, students’ silence is not marked in classroom communication while the teachers’ silence is. They further suggest that while student-centred classes have recently been encouraged in the mainstream education in England, it could be causing anxiety to students who would feel more comfortable in teacher-centred classes where they are not expected to participate actively in classroom interaction. In addition to this, the results revealed that students found themselves to be silent when they are learning. Hence, a facilitative use of student silence in the classroom is suggested in their study. However, their results also showed differences in valuations of silence in the classroom among three types of schools: suburban, rural and inner-city. Explanations were given for the differences as stemming from students’ physical environments and in particular the social structures of the schools. It is argued that in the inner-city classrooms where different social or ethnic groups meet, silence can be interpreted as a manifestation of ‘conflict, anxiety and uncertainty in trying to conform to the school “norm.”’ (p. 285) The authors conclude that their results are supported by earlier research in which silence implied an imbalance of power and ambiguity of social status and situations.

Finally, La Forge (1983) reports positive outcomes of utilising silence in EFL classrooms in Japan. He argues that social and cultural silences among Japanese students can be used facilitatively in learning a foreign language. In his approach, teachers adopt cultural silence, as the 'leader in Japanese society tends to be a silent person' (p. 79). Students are given more time for their speaking, and are given time to reflect on their silence in the classroom, putting their reflection in a written form, which receives feedback from the teacher. They also spend time in silence preparing for their speaking activities, which increased the amount and quality of speech. Similar positive outcomes of silence in a foreign language classroom are reported by Muchinsky (1985, cited in Jaworski 1993) in Polish high school language classrooms, supporting the notion of a facilitative role for silence in learning.

The studies mentioned above suggest that silence in the classroom should not always be regarded simply as a negative, marked and detrimental element, while the negative aspects of silence should not be ignored either as they are likely to reflect problems of domination and power. It should also be noted that silence as a problem in the classroom
has emerged as approaches to teaching which emphasise critical thinking and interactive modes of learning have been foregrounded. In this type of approach, students’ silence is regarded negatively, while in traditional teacher-centred teaching methodology, silence would be unmarked but volubility would be negatively regarded. In Matsuda's (2000) report on teaching approaches in Australian classrooms, Australian teachers commented that, when they were students, they normally sat quietly and listened to the teacher most of the time. This suggests that valuation of talk and silence in the same context may change historically.

2.5.2 Silence in multicultural classroom settings

Studies in multicultural classroom settings have shown students from minority ethnic groups being silent in the classroom, in comparison with their majority peers. According to Jaworski & Sachdev (1998), 'research has previously suggested that the multiethnic and multilingual educational environment is strongly associated with a "culture of silence"'(p. 276). In his ethnographic study of Sioux and Cherokee students, Dumont (1972) found that these students' silence in the classroom was a consequence of conflicts based on cultural differences. Because the structure of communication in the classroom was incompatible with that of their own communities, the children had to resort to silence to cope with the imposition of mainstream communicative orientation in the classroom by teachers. Dumont (1972) explains that in both Sioux and Cherokee societies, community members are not used to the 'highly individualized atmosphere of the classroom' (p. 362), and being singled out for a response repeatedly by the teachers brings only silence from the children. As a consequence, these ethnic minority students do not learn to speak English and are therefore not able to achieve academic success in the mainstream structures of teaching and learning. For the minority students, this means no prospect of future economic stability and a powerless status.

Similarly, Philips (1972, 1983) explains the silence of children from Warm Springs Indian communities in central Oregon as a way of coping with cultural differences - between the Warm Springs culture and the mainstream white American one - in the classroom. She also explains how aspects of communication in different social and educational contexts can affect the way Warm Springs children perform in the classroom. For example, she talks about the non-verbal ways in which one's wish to talk or one's attention to the speaker are realised differently in Warm Springs communities and in mainstream classrooms. She further explains that because learning takes place more
through the visual channel than through verbal exchange in Warm Springs communities, learning by trial and error through verbal performance in mainstream classrooms is not compatible with the way Indian children learn in their own communities. Thus her research also shows silence leading to the underachievement of minority children and marking the powerless status of the children at school as well as in the community.

Biggs & Edwards (1993) approach silence in the multicultural classroom from a different perspective. They used a combination of ethnographic approaches and quantitative analysis of recorded classroom interaction, and found that teachers interact with black children much less frequently and for a shorter duration than with white children. When the frequency of initiation by children was examined, there were no obvious differences. The authors show, with the support of qualitative data, that the less frequent exchanges with black children initiated by the teacher derive from racial prejudice and discrimination.

Similar findings are reported by Ortiz (1988, cited in Losey 1997) who found that Mexican American students are called on 21% less frequently than their Anglo-American peers in American mainstream classrooms. The explanations for this discriminatory treatment of minority students given by the teachers were that they preferred to avoid embarrassing students for their poor English or feeling embarrassed themselves if any miscommunication occurs.

While most of these studies on silence in the multicultural classroom focused on primary school classrooms, Losey (1997) looked at the silence of Mexican American adult college students. In her study of an English composition classroom at a college, she found that although 55% of the class was made up of Mexican American students and 45% of Anglo-American students, only 19% of initiations were made by Mexican Americans. Moreover, Mexican American female students who made up 47% of the class made only 12.5% of initiations and 8% of responses. Mexican American male students made up 8% of the whole class, but participated significantly more than Mexican American female students. Overall, the participation hierarchy was Anglo-American males followed by Anglo-American females, and then Mexican American males followed by Mexican-American females after a significant gap. Losey (1997) gives negative self-perception as a powerless and silenced minority compounded with language differences, cultural differences and teachers' perceptions and approaches to these differences as major factors creating and reinforcing Mexican American women's silence in the classroom. The teachers' questioning tends to be directed to the whole class, which makes it difficult for
Mexican American students to react quickly enough before their Anglo-American counterparts. Even when Mexican students manage to respond or initiate, interruption by the teacher or peers frequently occurs, further damaging self-esteem and leading to more silences. In addition, Mexican students suffer from not being given opportunities to speak about the 'real' issues which they are interested in or with which they may empower themselves, as the teacher's questions are mostly 'display' questions to teach 'academic discourse' for improvement of composition skills. However, in one-to-one tutorial sessions and unofficial talk in class with peer students, Mexican American students, in particular the most silent female students, broke their silence when they received social support from peers and tutors. The teacher in Losey's (1997) study was committed, but the silence and inhibition of the Mexican American women made her form a negative perception of them, and consequently this was reflected in her communication with them in the classroom, which further brought about a negative assessment of their performance. Losey's work is significant in that she integrated language differences, gender differences, cultural and historical backgrounds, and the immediate environment of the multicultural classroom in investigating the silencing of minority students.

It should be mentioned here that in all these classroom studies, the majority group seems to be English-speaking Anglo-Saxons. Little is known about whether Anglo-Saxon students as a minority group would be more silent than non-Anglo majority peers, in situations such as American students in a Japanese-speaking school in Japan.

In the studies mentioned above, silence or silencing of the minority students in the classroom can be seen as a sign of discrimination and control and in the tension which exists in negotiating power relationships between the teacher and students, as Gilmore (1985, mentioned in section 2.2.3) shows. The black students in his study, who compose the dominant population in the school, used their 'stylized sulking' to show defiance against the teacher. Although Gilmore (1985) interprets this defiant silence also as a face-saving strategy (cf. Sifianou 1997; Jaworski & Stephens 1998), it 'often turns the loss of face back to the teacher' (Gilmore 1985:155), and teachers regard this behaviour as 'bad attitudes' (ibid: p. 157). What is interesting is that white teachers tend to show understanding of what they regard as culturally patterned behaviour, while black teachers and parents do not tolerate the silent sulking. This study shows that teachers can also be challenged by the silence of their students, and feel that their face is threatened.

2.5.3 Silence of overseas students from Asia in the Anglo-mainstream classroom
This section discusses previous research on the silence of Asian overseas students in mainstream classrooms of countries such as UK, US and Australia. The reasons that a separate discussion is given for this particular type of student are firstly, that the current research focuses on the silence of Japanese students studying overseas, and secondly, that this particular area of study seems to be treated differently from ethnographic studies in schools and in minority communities such as those discussed in the previous section. Put another way, such students are not 'ethnic minorities' who have settled in these countries but 'sojourners' who have come to these countries motivated by academic aspirations.

Students from Asia are often described as 'reticent', 'quiet' or 'silent' in fields such as TESOL (e.g. Young 1990; Kubota 1999), English for academic purposes (e.g. Adams et al. 1991; Thorp 1991; Jones 1999), higher education (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Ballard 1996; Liu 2000) or intercultural studies (e.g. Milner & Quilty 1996; Marriott 2000). Most of these studies explore why Asian students are silent, or 'reticent,' and how this 'problem' can be improved. To address these issues, research methods such as interviews, questionnaires and observations have generally been used. Overall, it is predominantly sociocultural factors which have been discussed as having the strongest impact on the silence of Asian students (Adams et al. 1991; Thorp 1991, Jones 1999; Liu 2000, 2002) although second language anxiety or actual language difficulties are also claimed to be one of the major causes. (Braddock et al 1995; Volet & Ang 1998). Among the studies mentioned above, Liu's study (2000, 2002) is particularly relevant to the present research, as the focal issue of his study is silence of Asian students in American university classrooms. Based on interview and observation data, Liu (2000) lists five major categories for factors affecting the participation modes of Asian students: cognitive, pedagogical, affective, sociocultural and linguistic (p. 163). Among these, sociocultural and affective factors are claimed to affect participation to the largest extent. The sociocultural factors are explored in fuller details in Liu (2002) in which cases of three Chinese students are discussed. Here, silence as a powerful tool for learning and internal information processing as well as silence as a sign of respect for the teacher as an authority are argued as culturally framed silences among these Chinese students. In Liu (2000), it is also suggested that personality and gender are related to participation modes in that introverted students and female students show stronger tendency to remain silent in class, while it is argued that linguistic factors on its own did not predict the level of participation. However, the number of students observed was 20, and no quantification of participation or analysis of classroom interaction was presented as empirical evidence.
One of the sociocultural factors affecting Asian students' silence is their unfamiliarity with the way communication is structured in the classroom, which brings us back to Philips’ (1972, 1983) study of Warm Springs Indian children who were silent in mainstream classrooms as they had been previously socialised into 'participant structures' of communication different from Anglo-American norms. Asian overseas students who are not used to classroom discussions in which spontaneous participation tends to be the rule may find it difficult to adjust themselves to the 'free for all' (Thorp 1991: 114) turn-taking system (Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Jones 1999). For instance, Marriott (1998) reports that Japanese postgraduate students at a university in Australia have difficulties in participating in tutorials and seminars because the 'Japanese students had not experienced any tutorial genre in Japan' and 'important sociolinguistic norms concern not only complex turn-taking rules but also the content of such talk' (p. 286).

Furthermore, different sociolinguistic norms apply to the role of teacher in the classroom in that, in Asian cultures, students are not to challenge their teachers but are instead expected to attend and receive knowledge. Jones (1999) points out that students who come from cultures where they are 'expected to behave as a respectful and silent recipient of the teacher's knowledge' (p.248) may apply the same behaviour to the new educational environment of Western universities. She goes on to argue that 'inappropriate deference' (p. 249) may be adopted where there is a mismatch in politeness systems (Brown & Levinson 1987; Scollon & Scollon 1995) between the classroom of a student’s native culture and the Western classroom, resulting in marked passivity and silence of students from Asian countries where deference is expected towards teachers (see also Thorp 1991; Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Milner & Quilty 1996).

Different structures of classroom communication and communicative styles which affect the silence of Asian students are also associated with emphasis on different types of knowledge. This would be a potential problem in terms of a gap between what to speak about and what not to speak about in the classroom. Ballard & Clanchy (1991) claim that Asian cultures place value on the conservation of knowledge while Western cultures have an inclination towards the extension of knowledge. They argue that this difference is reflected in teaching and learning styles where Asian cultures rote learn through memorisation and repetition whereas in Western cultures critical and analytical approaches to learning are emphasised. A similar view is repeated by Milner & Quilty (1996), who argue that the Confucian ethos has a strong impact on ideas about the conservation of knowledge and rote learning. These claims suggest that discussions which take a critical
and analytic approach to content in the Western classroom may be considered irrelevant, or experienced as uncomfortable by students from Asian cultures, again bringing on their marked silence.

Finally, the value given to modesty and the importance of 'face' are also cited in the literature as crucial factors in understanding Asian overseas students' silence. It is argued that volunteering answers or being voluble in class is likely to be regarded as lacking in modesty. Anderson (1992), for instance, refers to a Japanese proverb 'The nail that sticks up gets pounded down' (p. 103) when he comments that Japanese students 'are hesitant to talk in settings where they will stand out in front of their peers'. On Hong Kong Chinese students' silence in the ESL classroom, Tsui (1996) also argues that students' silence may be due to their inhibition due to a 'maxim of modesty' in the classroom (p. 158).

However, in contrast to this valuing of modesty is a fear of loss of face. It has been suggested that Asian students often regard asking questions as wasting time and lacking consideration for other students (e.g. Thorp 1991; Milner & Quilty 1996), or as a face-threatening act for themselves as questioning can be interpreted as a lack of ability or intelligence (Milner & Quilty 1996). Citing the study of Japanese children's acquisition of communicative styles by Clancy (1986, discussed above) along with a study of Japan-US intercultural communication by Bowers (1988), Anderson (1992) argues that in Japanese communication there is a stronger responsibility for the listener to interpret the message correctly than for the speaker to transfer the message clearly. Due to this 'burden placed on the listener', Japanese students 'may be too embarrassed about not having understood the message to request clarification' (Anderson 1992: 106). In relation to this avoidance of speaking in public, compensatory strategies by Asian students have been reported. These strategies are to ask questions either of their classmates privately or of the lecturer after class (e.g. Thorp 1991; Anderson 1992; Braddock et al. 1995). Such strategies are often viewed negatively by lecturers (Thorp 1991).

As we can see above, these explanations for silence of Asian students in Western universities and in EFL programs which emphasise the role of cultural values and sociocultural norms of discourse in students' native culture and language are dominant in applied linguistics and education literature. However, as Kubota’s (1999) critique regarding the literature on silence in Japanese communication (discussed in section 2.4.3) points out, there is a danger in setting up a dichotomy between Asian and Western culture and falling into a deterministic view on the non-participation phenomenon. Littlewood (2000) also reveals that the dominant perceptions of Asian students as passive and
submissive does not mean that they ‘want to sit in class passively receiving knowledge,’ and Willing (1988) states that no direct correlation can be found between ethnic or cultural background and learning styles. Neustupný (1985,1995) warns that the importance of participants’ modification behaviour as well as perceptions of one another in actual 'contact situations' should not be overlooked in understanding intercultural encounters; that is, in intercultural cultural contact situations where participants from different language and cultural backgrounds interact, modifications or correction are likely to take place if participants notice deviations from norms of communication (Neustupný 1985, 1995; Marriott 2000). Gumperz (1982) also claims the importance of ongoing interaction as evolving a context and a basis for judgement for interpretation and message formation.

Asian students who join mainstream classrooms at colleges and universities in Western countries go through numerous contact situations and are gradually socialised into the new academic environment. They also bring diverse experiences of exposure to English and to the academic environments of English speaking countries. Therefore, caution has to be exercised in discussing the silence of Asian students so that one does not overlook the factors immediately associated with 'contact situations' as well as other variables such as affective factors and personal histories which students bring with them.

Furthermore, discourse analysis of turn-by-turn management of talk as evidence of Asian students' silence is scarce in existing studies. Asian students are not always sitting in class in complete silence. It is important to examine what they actually do in the classroom when they have opportunities to speak, or when local peer students are speaking. If Asian students feel 'overwhelmed by native English speakers in class' (Liu 2000:165) whereas local students show an 'active participation mode' (ibid: 183), we need to know how turn management is performed by local students, Japanese students and lecturers. The structure of silence of non-local and non-native speaker students in their encounters with local students and lecturers in the classroom needs to be discussed empirically and more systematically.

Finally, the silence of Japanese students themselves has not been given a focused discussion in this review of silence in classroom contexts. However, as reference to the silence of Japanese students in the existing literature has been made throughout this literature review, a specific section for the discussion of silence of Japanese students was considered unnecessary. Educational practices in Japan which are often mentioned in literature on Japanese students' silence will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, section 4.3.
2.5.4 Summary: Silence in classroom contexts

In this section, the existing literature on silence in classroom contexts has been discussed. It has been shown that within the power relationships which are inherent between the teacher and students in the institutional structures of school, silence tends to occur as a consequence of the teacher's power to control talk and silence in classroom settings. The teachers' power to control classroom discourse was found to highlight negative functions of silence, but it was shown that positive functions of silence as a facilitating device in learning can be explored. However, research findings predominantly suggest that when groups of students from different ethnic/language backgrounds share the classroom, a 'culture of silence' (Jaworski & Sachdev 1998: 276) is often found with the minority group being 'silenced' by teachers and students from mainstream backgrounds.

The silence of Asian students studying as overseas students in Western universities, on the other hand, was found to be interpreted from different perspectives in that 'cultural differences' were emphasised instead of asymmetry of power and oppression of minority groups. Different approaches to knowledge, preferred learning styles, politeness systems which emphasise hierarchical relationship between the teacher and students, and values attached to modesty and silence were given as major sociocultural factors frequently discussed to be sources of Asian students' silence in the existing literature. In addition, the danger of emphasising cultural opposites has also been brought up in the literature, stressing the necessity of more empirical and systematic studies in this field.

2.6. Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, literature on silence in communication has been reviewed. Section 2.2 discussed the various forms, functions and meanings of silence which have been studied mostly in applied linguistics but also in social psychology and anthropology. The range of phenomena which studies of silence in communication cover is wide, and the functions and meanings of silence are so versatile it appears that silence performs as many communicative roles as does speech. On the other hand, there appears to be a general view that interpreting silence involves difficulties as well as a greater amount of inferential effort due to the ambiguous and context-dependent nature of silence.

The benefit of an ethnographic approach to capture this complex and subtle nature of silence was discussed in section 2.3 (see Chapter 3 for further details on the use of ethnography in the present research).
Following this, in section 2.4, the ambiguity and context-dependency of silence were described as sources of problems in intercultural communication. This section included a review of the literature on silence of the Japanese, as it is relevant for the focus of the present research. The literature on silence of the Japanese, however, was seen to be mostly based on intercultural communication between Japanese people and native speakers of English. The lack of raw data for analysis of silence in interaction in Japanese as well as the danger of stereotypical and essentialist views of Japanese, such as their strong valuing of silence and harmony, were pointed out.

Finally, in section 2.5, the literature on silence in classroom contexts was discussed. Previous research was discussed in terms of positive and negative roles of silence in the classroom, and studies on silence in multicultural classroom settings were reviewed. The silence of ethnic minority students was often found to be a consequence of silencing by classroom participants from mainstream cultural groups and was suggested to be a mark of powerlessness and oppression. On the other hand, the silence of Asian overseas students has been treated in the literature as an intercultural problem and cultural differences have been predominantly given as explanations for the problem. This was critically discussed because of the tendency to propose an East-West dichotomy in dealing with silence rather than scrutinising the complex structure of silence systematically and empirically.

Although silence has been discussed as having an important role in communication, silence in communication itself has not been treated widely as a focus issue. Yet, as we can see in the above review, it is important to recognise its role and approach it just as we approach talk. As we have seen, there seem to be a number of methodological problems in the literature to date, such as insufficient empirical data or reliance on a single approach in interpreting silence. Jaworski & Sachdev (1998) argue that for studies of silence, 'sophistication of a fine-grained, interdisciplinary analysis' (p. 273) is required. The present research aims to offer such analysis of silence to overcome the problems found in the existing literature on silence. The following chapter will describe the approaches to data collection and analysis embraced in the present research.
Chapter 3  Research Method and Design

3.1 Research questions
3.1.1 Exploratory stage

The present research was designed to fill the gap in applied linguistics research on overseas students who are between the ‘practice phase’ and the ‘real performance phase’. With the scarcity of preceding research on specific issues concerning intercultural communication in university classrooms in this field (cf. Liu 2000), the starting point of the present research was to find what happens when Japanese overseas students go into mainstream classrooms at Australian universities and what problems they tend to face. It was considered that these aspects of classroom communication could be best examined and explained by setting out with broad questions and narrowing down the focus to more specific phenomena to be investigated. Therefore, at the exploratory stage of the research, the following three questions were addressed:

1) What are the problems faced by Japanese students in communication in Australian university classrooms?
2) Are there any discourse patterns characteristic of Japanese students which could be sources of problems in communication in Australian university classrooms?
3) What are the implications for university teaching and for academic preparation programmes involving overseas students?

These research questions were designed to develop so that patterns emerging from the investigation of the first question (1) could be analysed with a more specific focus (2). Any patterns emerging in (2) were expected to provide a narrower focus for the research, ultimately explored as the main topic of the research with more specific, redefined questions. Through the analysis of the focus phenomenon, practical implications for teaching would be expected, question (3).

3.1.2. Qualitative research paradigm

The process described above is in keeping with qualitative research. Before the design of the present research is presented in any further detail, it is necessary to clarify the position of this research within the qualitative research paradigm in terms of its methodological framework.

As can be seen, the questions in the exploratory stage of the research, as presented above, are aimed at generating a more focussed research question. It was expected that some specific problems and possible causes of these problems among Japanese students
participating in Australian university classes would emerge through this exploratory stage of the research. This process is one of the major features of qualitative research, which sets out with rather ‘rough’ ideas (Berg 1998) and redefines a narrow focus to be investigated further to explain, interpret and test the emerging pattern (Green & Wallat 1981; Seliger & Shohamy 1989; Nunan 1992; LeCompte & Preissel 1993; Lancy 1993; Davis 1995; Layder 1996; Berg 1998). When a pattern emerges from the exploratory stage, qualitative researchers go back to their data and re-examine them with a specific focus on the emerging pattern, or gather more data to investigate the specific phenomena more closely. Unlike the linear process of quantitative research which tests hypotheses by setting categories and counting frequency of variables, the process of qualitative research has been described as ‘spiralling’ (Berg 1998), ‘cyclical’ (Davis 1995), or ‘funnel’ (Seliger & Shohamy 1989).

This characteristic feature of qualitative research reflects the basic assumption of qualitative research that the social phenomena to be investigated ‘must be discovered’ (Hammersley 1990). Hammersley goes on to say that ‘this can only be achieved by first-hand observations and participation in ‘natural’ settings, guided by an exploratory orientation’ (1990: 598). This position is related to another characteristic principle of qualitative research which is the effort to understand and interpret the investigated phenomena from the perspectives of participants (Seliger & Shohamy 1989; Nunan 1992; LeCompte & Preissel 1993; Lancy 1993; Davis 1995; Layder 1996; Berg 1998). These principles of qualitative research are relevant to the present research in that it was necessary to understand what issues there are for participants in multicultural contact situations in Australian university classrooms as well as to explain what brings about these issues.

At this point, it is important to further define the term ‘qualitative research,’ since it seems to cover a wide range of concepts across various fields and literature (Lancy 1993). A clear distinction of these concepts is given by Lancy (1993) who presents three levels of concepts often represented by a single term ‘qualitative research.’ These three levels of concepts are: 1) qualitative paradigm; 2) qualitative method; and 3) qualitative technique. Qualitative paradigm refers to ‘an entire philosophy of inquiry,’ whereas qualitative method refers to a particular form of method that ‘deviates somewhat from the purest form of the paradigm’ (Lancy 1993: 8). Qualitative techniques are the techniques for data collection or for data analysis which reflect the principles of a qualitative paradigm but at the same time could be incorporated in research within the quantitative paradigm. In the
context of the present research, the term ‘qualitative research’ is meant to refer to research in a qualitative paradigm, and other concepts are referred to using terms such as ‘method’ or ‘technique.’ Following Lancy’s description, the design of the present research will be outlined and described using these terms.

However, as Lancy (1993) suggests, it does not mean that quantitative techniques are never used in this research. In fact, it is widely accepted that it is effective to integrate methods and techniques from the quantitative and qualitative paradigm. It is often suggested that qualitative research should be complemented by an ‘etic’ account of the phenomena under investigation which can be done using quantitative techniques to ensure validity (Green & Wallat 1981; Erickson 1981; Lancy 1993; Layder 1996; Berg 1998). The present research also takes this position, and aims to incorporate quantitative methods and techniques into a qualitative framework.

In the qualitative research paradigm in the social sciences, a combination of informant interviews and participant observation have been considered the most commonly used and effective techniques (Davis 1995; Layder 1996; Berg 1998). In qualitative research in education, it is also the most popular procedure (Green & Wallat 1981; Erickson 1981; Seliger & Shohamy 1989; Nunan 1992; LeCompte & Preissel 1993; Lancy 1993). Since this approach resembles the main characteristics of ethnography in the field of anthropology (Spradley 1979; Agar 1980, 1998; Berg 1998), studies of classroom phenomena using observation and interview have often been referred to as ‘classroom ethnography’ (Trueba et al. 1981; Green & Wallat 1981; Wilkinson 1982). Although the distinction between the purer types of ethnography in educational settings (Heath 1983; Philips 1972, 1983) and classroom studies utilising ethnographic methods and techniques has been rather unclear, ethnographic methods and techniques have played important roles in classroom studies. In particular, bringing participants’ perspectives into the analysis has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of teaching and learning processes in classroom settings in bilingual classroom research. With participants from different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds involved in the classroom settings in question, it was considered that the combination of observation and interview techniques in an ethnographic approach was the most appropriate way to explore issues in such a multicultural classroom setting (cf. Trueba et al. 1981; Green & Wallat 1981; Wilkinson 1982; Lancy 1993). However, as mentioned above, quantitative methods such as frequency measurement techniques can also be included, where necessary, as part of ethnographic approach.
At this point, there is a practical question regarding the scale of the research to be conducted using the ethnographic approach. As is the case with most qualitative research in educational settings, the main objective of the present research is to make a contribution to improving educational practice with regard to particular issues found in a particular setting. For this objective, case studies have been found practical and useful particularly because of their immediate applicability to classroom practices (Seliger & Shohamy 1989; Nunan 1992; Lancy 1993). Although the particularity of case study findings are often challenged by critics on the basis of lack of generalisability, case studies can give a deep understanding of a specific issue in a particular group. As has been suggested widely among qualitative researchers including many in the field of applied linguistics (Cicourel 1974, 1980; Erickson 1981; Mehan 1981; Kasper & Dahl 1991; Davis 1995; Berg 1998; Layder 1996), case studies can be regarded as a valuable approach if validity is reinforced by triangulation of techniques and methods of data collection and analysis.

Thus, the design of the present research involves case studies using ethnographic methods and techniques complemented by other approaches including quantitative techniques, and aims to provide ‘extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth’ (Berg 1998) explanations of the issues found in multicultural classrooms.

In the field of classroom research in applied linguistics, ethnographic techniques such as observation and interview were often combined with techniques such as a detailed analysis of naturally occurring classroom interaction recorded by audio or video recording devices. Erickson (1996) calls this type of research ‘microethnography’ or ‘ethnographic microanalysis’ (p. 283), and argues that to understand the subtle aspects of interaction which are often socially organised (Hymes 1972, 1974a, 1974b), it is necessary to analyse interaction directly and in detail. He goes on to suggest that frequency data are also useful to triangulate the findings (Erickson 1981, 1996). Based on these principles, this ‘microethnographic’ approach was found to be beneficial for the present research which examines issues in classroom interaction involving second language speakers who are already proficient in the language which is the medium of teaching and learning. Erickson’s position in his approach is influenced by a view of communication advocated in Hymes’ concept of ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes 1972), which is also considered an important theoretical concept for the present research (see also Chapter 2).
3.1.3. Emergent focus of the research

As a result of the exploratory stage of ethnographic inquiry (see 3.2.1. for further details) into classroom issues involving Japanese overseas students, ‘silence’ emerged as one of the salient issues. It was found through interviews that the majority of Japanese students hold stereotypical images of themselves as being ‘silent’ and of Australian students [i.e. Anglo-Australian students] as being ‘talkative’. Moreover, Japanese students regarded this difference as a problematic and negative aspect of their learning experience. The field notes also suggested that Japanese students are much more silent than Australian students in general. Consequently, these findings led to more focused research questions which address the function and meaning of silence in intercultural communicative situations in classroom settings. From the perspective of the ethnography of communication, it is the question of what a successful participant in a communicative situation needs to know in order to fully participate in terms of forms, functions and meanings of silence. To investigate this issue, questions for the present research were redefined as follows:

1) Are Japanese students silent in others’ perceptions as well as in their own?
2) Are Japanese students silent in their real performances in class?
3) How is the silence of Japanese students created?
4) What is silence?
5) What are the implications for improvement of teaching and learning in Australian multicultural classrooms involving Japanese students?

Although Japanese students reported in the interviews that they were silent in classroom contexts in their own perceptions, it was necessary to find out how they were perceived by their lecturers and peers. Thus, question 1) was addressed. One of the basic assumptions of ethnography is that there is always a possibility that perceptions of communicative behaviours vary across different communities (Spradley 1979; Agar 1980, 1998), and therefore perceptions of other groups have to be investigated. Only after doing this investigation, can one start exploring how these perceptions are formed.

Consequently, there are two sets of perceptions in play: whether or not Japanese students are perceived as silent by other parties, and whether the Japanese students themselves perceived themselves as silent. If either group perceives the silence of Japanese students, it is necessary to investigate both the perception and the real existence of silence to assess the accuracy of perceptions. It may also be necessary to examine the Japanese students' performances in naturally occurring communicative situations in classroom
settings to find explanations for any differences between the perceptions of the two groups. This step addressed by question 2) actually involves two layers of inquiry. On the one hand, the question asks whether Japanese students’ perception of their own silence was reflected in their actual performance. On the other hand, it evaluates the researcher’s interpretation of the interview results. In other words, the first agenda is the triangulation of data sources by comparing interview data with observation data, while the second agenda is the triangulation of data analysis by applying various analysis techniques to recorded classroom communication data.

Whatever the outcome of question 2) however, the silence of Japanese students has to be explained, because there must be reasons for the perceptions of silence, or for the presence of silence in the actual behaviour in communicative situations. These reasons are often causes of intercultural misunderstanding and miscommunication, as has been illustrated by ethnographers such as Heath (1983), Philips (1972, 1983), Scollon & Scollon (1981) and Scollon (1985). Therefore, question 3) is addressed to explain how both the perceived and performed silences of Japanese students are constructed. This is the central part of the present research because its task is to explain the issue of silence in intercultural communication: what do participants in Australian university classrooms need to know in order to succeed, and what causes problems in participation, in terms of meanings, functions and forms of silence?

Through an attempt to answer these three questions, the present research addresses an issue which seems to run through the whole investigation: what is silence? what do we mean by silence? what is its role in communication?

Therefore, in this way, this research concerns the operationalisation and conceptualisation of ‘silence’ by exploring both universal and culturally-patterned meanings and functions of silence in multicultural classroom settings. Berg (1998) describes this type of qualitative research as interpretative and phenomenological research seeking ‘to discover naturally arising meanings among members of study populations’ (p.26). Thus, silence is treated as an ambiguous, subtle and multifaceted phenomena in this research which requires ‘thick’ but systematic description for its understanding in monocultural as well as intercultural communication.

Finally, based on the explanations and descriptions given in answer to questions 3) and 4), practical implications for teaching of overseas students are to be sought by addressing question 5).
3.2 Methods of data collection

3.2.1 Data sources

As it was necessary to approach the issue of silence from multiple perspectives to provide holistic and detailed explanations, data were drawn from a large number of sources. As has been suggested frequently by qualitative researchers (Denzin 1978; Cicourel 1974, 1980; Silverman 1985, 2001; Layder 1996; Berg 1998), using multiple research strategies in terms of data collection, data analysis and even theoretical perspectives enhances the validity and depth of research findings. In the field of ethnographic research in educational settings, it is also considered important to triangulate research strategies and perspectives particularly if the research employs a case study approach (Sevigny 1981; Erickson 1981; Nunan 1992; Lancy 1993; Davis 1995).

3.2.1.1 Overview

Data sources of this research are as follows:

1. Individual interview
2. Focus group interview
3. Questionnaire
4. Survey
5. Case studies: fieldnotes and artefacts from classroom observation
6. Case studies: video and audio recording from Classroom observation
7. Case studies: stimulated recall interview
8. Case studies: follow-up interview
9. Classroom observation in Japan: fieldnotes, and artefacts and video recording
10. General fieldnotes and artefacts

In the following section, the collection methods will be described and the sample population will be presented.

3.2.1.2 Individual interview

Method

Nineteen Japanese students were interviewed twice in relation to classroom communication over a period of four months in 1999. Most of the students participated in two interviews within a two or three week period. Interviews were conducted in Japanese in the researcher’s office or a quiet lecture room on the university campus for 45 minutes to an hour per session. The students were mostly interviewed individually. On eight occasions focus group interviews were organised. (For discussion of the focus group interviews, see section 3.2.1.3 below). On all of these eight occasions the participants
knew each other as friends or classmates. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the participants’ consent.

Since the major aim of the interviews was to find problematic aspects in classroom communication from the Japanese students’ perspective, interview questions focused on eliciting the students’ behaviour and communication styles in lectures and tutorials. (The prepared questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix 1.) However, these focused questions were asked in the course of a natural flow of general questions about university life followed by a more specific account of their experiences in university lectures and tutorials. The interviews were semi-structured, with myself as the interviewer roughly following prepared questions but topics were diverted to, expanded on and probed into where students showed stronger concerns. All the interviews with the Japanese students were conducted and transcribed in Japanese, and the comments by Japanese students which appear in later chapters are translated by me. Rapport between myself and the students was established smoothly particularly due to my background as native speaker of Japanese, former ESL student, ESL teacher and overseas student. As most of the participants were in their early twenties and younger than me, in my early thirties, an informal style of language was mostly used in the interviews to encourage a relaxed atmosphere, although some adjustment to a slightly formal style was made to accommodate the older participants following Japanese communication norms.

The interviews were transcribed for further in-depth content analysis of the emergent focus of the research, and frequently mentioned issues were recorded in my notes during and after interviews. My thoughts and reflections about the interviews were also kept in fieldnotes, which helped not only to record ideas before they were forgotten but also so that I could maintain consistent, balanced and unbiased attitudes in interviews. Notes were also taken about recurring patterns and explanations for these patterns during transcription. Interview transcriptions were examined in detail to measure frequency of the focus issue of silence mentioned by the participants as well as to find their explanations of their silence from their own perspectives. In other words, the interview data were recycled and re-examined in the main part of research to analyse the silence of Japanese students.

Sample population for the interviews

The sample population for the interviews was Japanese students studying at Australian universities in the Sydney area. Initially four students were recruited from a class at the University of Sydney through a personal contact with the lecturer in charge, and
subsequently more students were introduced to the researcher through these students’ personal networks. Apart from this source, six students participated in the interviews through the Nippon Students’ Association (Japanese Students’ Association) at the University of New South Wales. Nineteen students, nine male and ten female, were interviewed twice each during a four month period.

Seven of the female students were enrolled in programs in the Faculty of Arts, one female student was from Science, one from Commerce, and one from Education. The male students showed more variety in their majors, three coming from Arts, two from Industrial Design, one from Education, one from Engineering, one from Commerce and one from Chemistry. Although the female students were mostly enrolled in Arts majors, it should be noted that a large number of them were taking subjects from other faculties such as Economics and Politics, which was permitted in their degree programs. In the interviews, it was ensured that the participants were given sufficient opportunities to give their perceptions about classes outside their own faculties. The distribution of the participants’ majors, concentrated in the humanities, reflects the distribution of the whole population of Japanese students enrolled at these two universities.

Two male students and two female students were enrolled in postgraduate degree programs. Their length of stay in Australia varied from one year to ten years. Two of the male students came to Australia with their parents as migrants and went to local mainstream schools, and two of the male students and four of the female students received Australian mainstream secondary education for three years before they entered university. Table 3.1 and 3.2 show participants’ background information. More detailed biographical information on the participants can be found in Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Length of residence in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>B. of Education</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B. of Industrial Design</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>B. of Industrial Design</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B. of Chemistry</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>7.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B. of Engineering</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>M. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>M. of Commerce</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Description of the Japanese participants in the interviews (male)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Length of residence in Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>5.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>6.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>3.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B. of Arts</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B. of Commerce</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of NSW</td>
<td>4.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>B. of Science</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M. of Education</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M. of Commerce</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>U. of Sydney</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Description of the Japanese participants in the interviews (female)

3.2.1.3 Focus group interview

Focus group interviews, with two participants, were organised on eight occasions out of thirty interview sessions with Japanese students to elicit shared views from Japanese students and compare them with the findings from individual interviews. On all of these eight occasions the two participants knew each other as friends or classmates. These interviews were conducted at university campuses in the same settings as for the individual interviews. The style of interview was also semi-structured with the same set of questions used for the individual interview, but the researcher took a more passive role in the focus group interviews and encouraged interaction between the two interviewees. This is because the focus group interview is regarded as having the strength of eliciting shared views of the group to which participants belong, and these shared views are likely to be expressed more explicitly in focus group interviews (Sussman et al. 1991; Berg 1998).

One of the studies in which the focus group interview has been used effectively is a study by De Cillia et al. (1999). They were able to give a convincing analysis of the co-construction of national identities in discourse because of the nature of group discussion where participants negotiate and co-construct meanings. This is not usually possible in a face-to-face individual interview. In the present research, participants in focus group interviews were encouraged to expand on their discussion unless topics diverged from the issue at hand.

The focus group interview was expected to elicit spontaneous comments from the Japanese students because of reduced pressure. Moreover, it provides an excellent opportunity for the researcher to observe how the target group talk about the issues under investigation (for example, labelling of speech events, terms for stereotyping, etc.). Analytic observation of how informants describe social phenomena or social organisation is one of the important processes in ethnographic research to gain access to informants’
orientation to social order and organisation of their community (Spradley 1979; Agar 1980, 1998; Saville-Troike 1984; Berg 1998).

However, as Berg (1998) warns, although the focus group interview can reveal shared views of the target group in a more extreme manner than individual interviews, it cannot produce as much data as the individual interview. Therefore, having both individual and focus group interview techniques enhanced the degree of balance in the data (cf. De Cillia et al. 1999; Espin 1999). Participants in focus group interviews are shown in Table 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number of Focus group interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M2, F8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M5, M6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F1, F2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F3, F4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F6, F7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Participants in focus group interviews

3.2.1.4 Questionnaire

A questionnaire survey was conducted by sending email questionnaires to 371 lecturers across six faculties at the University of Sydney, of which 34 responses were obtained from four of the six faculties. These selected 371 lecturers were those whose email addresses were available on the university website. The low rate of responses is most likely due to the small ratio of Japanese students in the whole population of students at this university as well as the method of questionnaire distribution by bulk email which is less demanding than a more individual approach. In fact, the number of Japanese overseas students at the University of Sydney was 221 in 1999 (0.6% of the whole student population of 36,976). Another factor affecting the response rate is that some faculties such as law or science have only a handful of Japanese overseas students enrolled. Therefore, considering the relatively small number of lecturers who had actually had Japanese overseas students in their classes, the response rate can be considered reasonable.

This questionnaire survey was intended to elicit lecturers’ perceptions of Japanese students’ behaviour in lectures and tutorials in comparison with Japanese students’ perception of their behaviour elicited in the interviews described above. Moreover, this process is not only a check but also a part of an analysis of the intercultural communication from the lecturer’s perspective. The questionnaire is also a strategy to bring micro and macro, or emic and etic approaches together, which is frequently encouraged in a qualitative research paradigm (Sevigny 1981; Davis 1995; Layder 1996; Berg 1998).

The questionnaire was administered by email through the International Student
Services Unit at the University of Sydney in the name of the head of this unit. The questionnaire included three broad questions which allowed free responses and a simple question about the strongest/first language of the respondent. The questions are: 1) What is your impression of Japanese students in Australian university classrooms?; 2) What are particular strengths of Japanese students you perceive in your classes?; 3) What are particular problems of Japanese students you perceive in your classes?; and 4) What is your first and strongest language? This open-question style made it possible not only to elicit lecturers’ impressions of Japanese students in their own words, but also to find whether the silence of the Japanese students is perceived as a marked phenomenon among lecturers without mentioning it. The content and the format of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

3.2.1.5 Survey

Although the results of the questionnaire survey designed for the present research showed a clear pattern of stereotypes and images of Japanese students’ behaviour as well as lecturers’ explanations for them, it seemed that surveys of a larger scale would be necessary to supplement the small scale of the above email questionnaire survey conducted at the University of Sydney.

Consequently, a large scale survey conducted at another university in Australia to investigate teaching and learning experiences involving overseas students was included as one of the data sources for the present research. This data source sets its research in a larger sociocultural context of multicultural classroom settings of Australian universities, which is regarded as an important procedure in the qualitative research paradigm. The holistic and emic orientation of qualitative research requires consideration of such wider sociocultural and political contexts of the communicative events being investigated (Davis 1995; Layder 1996).

The survey was conducted at Macquarie University in Sydney, one of the universities in Sydney which has similar characteristics to universities from which data were collected for the present research. This substantial survey study by Braddock, Robers, Zheng and Guzman (1995) at Macquarie University looked at the gaps in perceptions and expectations between international students and teaching staff in the learning and teaching environment. Although this study put Asian students together in one group without referring to characteristic patterns found in subgroups, data from this study which is relevant for the present research is utilised as a supplement to the questionnaire. Given the
large sample population (239 overseas students) and the similarity of settings (large university in Sydney area offering similar types of programs), the data from this Macquarie study can be treated as providing appropriate support for the present study. This type of support is a strategy which ensures research credibility by bringing in quantitative components as ‘satellites around the central axis of qualitative fieldwork’ (Layder 1996).

3.2.1.6 Classroom-based case studies

Following the interviews with the 19 Japanese students, classroom-based case studies involving three Japanese students, one male and two female, were designed. These case studies consist of three major data sources: observation fieldnotes, video recording of classroom sessions and stimulated recall or follow-up interviews of key participants including the Japanese students, the lecturers and one to three peer Australian students from each class. The rationale and description for each of these data sources will be given in the following sections, but the combination of these data sources allows triangulation of not only data sources but also perspectives and analysis techniques.

The aim of these case studies is to provide insights into the reality of classroom interaction, examining the performance of Japanese students in interaction with their peers and lecturers in naturally occurring situations by using different tools such as observation, interview, coding and conversation analysis of recorded classroom interaction. Because these case studies are expected to reveal factors which are likely to interact with silence and to give possible explanations of the complex mechanisms and functions of silence in the classroom, variables in these observation sessions were not controlled. The only concern was to avoid lectures with a large number of students. Either seminar-type lectures or tutorials were the target classes because more equal opportunities for interaction were expected in these types of classes.

Descriptions of Japanese participants in these case studies, observed classroom sessions and hours of observations and recording are shown in Table 3.4. All names are pseudonyms. The names of courses have been modified for confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of residency in Australia</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Subject names of the classes observed and recorded</th>
<th>Hours observed (recorded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tadashi</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>BED LOTE (Languages)</td>
<td>Teaching as a Profession</td>
<td>3 hrs 20mns (3 hrs 20mns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Other than English</td>
<td>Curriculum and Examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miki</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>MA Japanese Studies</td>
<td>Intercultural Communication</td>
<td>20 hrs (4 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>BA Japanese &amp; Education</td>
<td>History of Secondary Education</td>
<td>5 hrs 40 mins (4 hrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 Japanese participants in classroom case studies

3.2.1.7 Case studies: fieldnotes and artefacts from classroom observation

For any ethnographic study, observation of naturally occurring social settings is the essential aspect, and often through observation and interviews with key informants, ‘discovery’ or ‘noticing’ is expected to take place and to then be described in detail (Agar 1980, 1998; Saville-Troike 1984; Nunan 1992; Berg 1998). Thus, for the purpose of the exploratory stage of the present research, it was essential to observe naturally occurring classroom settings and interview the participants in these settings. Following the practice of ethnographic research (Berg 1998), fieldnotes were taken during and after observation. Fieldnotes are sources for description and analysis of communicative events in the communicative setting under investigation obtained from the researcher’s perspective which is more objective, or rather ‘neutral’ than that of participants’. The fieldnotes also were resources for explaining the main issue of the silence of Japanese students.

The male student, Tadashi, was observed in five sessions from two different classes for a total period of 8 hours 20 minutes over a month. One of the female students, Miki, was observed in 10 sessions from two different classes for a total of 20 hours over the whole term of four months. The other female student, Aya, was observed in four sessions from one class for a total of 5 hours 40 minutes over a month. The researcher also visited one session from another class after a stimulated recall interview with Aya, but this observation was not video or audio recorded. All the sessions observed took place at the University of Sydney during the period from July 1999 to October 1999. Observed sessions include two types of tutorials and one seminar-type lecture from the Faculty of Education, and one seminar-type lecture and one tutorial from the Faculty of Arts.

In the observation, the researcher sat in the corner of the classroom and took notes, except for the observation of the female Japanese student which took the style of participant observation. In these sessions the researcher also participated in the seminar style lectures as an auditing student. In all the sessions observed, notes were taken to record the number of attending students, configuration of seating, content of the sessions, non-verbal behaviour of students and lecturers including participants’ gaze, participants’ manner of speech, and any phenomena which seemed to have some significance in terms
of gaps in intercultural communication. After each session, reflections and thoughts about observed classroom interactions were recorded in the fieldnotes. Classroom materials from the observed sessions were also obtained and kept as references for data analysis.

The notes taken during and after observation were sorted for content analysis according to the patterns of behaviour of different participants as well as the observers’ views on the observed behaviour. This analysis was then compared with the findings of the interviews with the 19 Japanese students to triangulate the findings about the patterns of behaviour and discourse characteristics of Japanese students against those of Australian norms projected by lecturers and peers.

Sample population for observation

Two of the Japanese students who participated in observation were among the 19 Japanese students who were interviewed in the initial stage of the research mentioned above. They are Tadashi and Aya, who gave their consent to have an observer in some of the sessions which they attended. Observations of other students who participated in the interviews were not possible due to their strong reluctance to have an observer in class as well as to time constraints.

Miki was approached within the department to which the researcher belonged. She was from a different department (Japanese Studies), but was allowed to take one course from linguistics. Although other courses in which Japanese students were found to be enrolled were explored for possible participants, the researcher was frequently faced by obvious reluctance. From the reaction of those who were approached, it seemed that this reluctance was due to the students’ fears of losing face in the researcher’s presence as well as to the possible negative effect of nervousness on their performance caused by the presence of an observer.

The other difficulty in finding participants was lack of consent from the lecturer. On one occasion, through a participant, one lecturer was approached for permission to observe his tutorials. However, permission was declined because of the lecturers’ sensitivity to the very focus issue of oral participation. According to this lecturer, an observer’s presence would intimidate students’ oral participation in his tutorials, about which he was seriously concerned at that time.

As a result, the three students who kindly gave their consent to allow an observer in class participated in the observation. After obtaining consent from these Japanese students, lecturers and peers were also consulted for the possibility of observation and recording of
the sessions and consent was obtained from all participants.

One of the observed tutorials from the Faculty of Education which Tadashi attended is called Teaching as a Profession. It was offered for the students who had completed their teaching practicum. This class was observed twice, and the number of students was 22 in the first session and 23 in the second session, with each session running for two hours. In the first session, Tadashi was the only overseas student and all other students were Australian-educated native speakers. In the second session, there was one other overseas student, who was from Korea. The lecturer was an Australian female lecturer who is a native speaker of English.

Tadashi was observed in another class from the same faculty which will be called Curriculum and Examinations. This was a seminar-type tutorial which ran for two hours each session, with a small number of students attending, ranging from two to five. All the students except Tadashi were Australian-educated native speakers including three Greek-Australian female students. The lecturer was an Australian male lecturer who is also a native speaker of English.

Another session from the Faculty of Education, in which Aya was observed, was called History of Secondary Education. This was a tutorial led by the lecturer in charge, in which four students participated, including Aya. Two of the students were female Australian students, and one was an English male student. These three students were all native speakers of English. The lecturer was a male Australian lecturer who is a native speaker of English.

Miki was observed in a class which will be called Intercultural Communication offered by the Department of Linguistics. This class was a joint class for Master’s students and undergraduate students in which 12 students were enrolled. The group had a variety of backgrounds, including four Anglo-Australians, two Filipino-Australians, one Finnish-Australian, three Koreans, one Chinese, and one Japanese (Miki). The male-female ratio of this class was four to eight. The lecturer was a female Australian lecturer who is a native speaker of English. The overview of the classes and participants in the observed sessions are given in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Japanese participant</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
<th>Average no. of students</th>
<th>Students’ backgrounds</th>
<th>Peer students interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching as a Profession</td>
<td>Tadashi</td>
<td>Australian NS / female</td>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>1 Australian male 1 American male 1 Italian male 18 Australian</td>
<td>1 Australian female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.1.8 Case studies: video and audio recording from classroom observation

All the participants of the observed sessions had given their consent for recording of the sessions. The observed sessions were audio taped and video recorded for detailed discourse analysis and coding of interactions. Analysis of video or audio recorded classroom interaction has been valued (Mehan 1979; Trueba et al. 1981; Lancy 1993; Nunan 1992) particularly in ethnographic case studies in educational settings because of the possibility of ‘producing etic data which can be quantitatively summarised’ as well as providing ‘categories of emic structures relevant to the point of view and purposes of teacher and students’ (Erickson 1981: 32). Direct analysis of actual classroom interaction processes is again a triangulation strategy to allow close and reliable analysis to be combined with analysis of classroom events by observation.

Recording of the classes was organised with a video camera set either at the front or the back corner of the classroom. All but one of the participants said that the presence of an observer and video recording facilities had not affected the behaviour or the atmosphere of the class. This participant was actually one of the lecturers, who said that, because of the presence of the researcher, he put more effort into including the Japanese student participant in classroom interaction than he would have done otherwise. Although the presence of the observer affected this lecturer’s behaviour, the adjustment he made seems to have a significant implication for the research itself in terms of the focus issue of Japanese students’ silence. In the follow-up interview, this lecturer indicated that he consciously tried to include the Japanese student in tutorial discussion because of the researcher’s focus. In his words, the Japanese student in his tutorial was described as ‘retiring,’ and without the researcher’s presence, he could have ignored her and left her in silence. Thus, because of the significance of this aspect, the data from this lecturer’s

Table 3.5 Participants in the observed classes in the case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum and Examinations</th>
<th>Tadashi</th>
<th>Australian</th>
<th>NS / male</th>
<th>3-5 educated females</th>
<th>1 Australian female</th>
<th>3 Australian educated Greek females</th>
<th>1 Australian female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication</td>
<td>Miki</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>NS 10</td>
<td>3 Australian males</td>
<td>2 Australian males</td>
<td>2 Australian females</td>
<td>1 Australian female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ female</td>
<td>2 Australian females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Filipino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greek females</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Chinese male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Chinese female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Korean females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Secondary Education</td>
<td>Aya</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 Australian females</td>
<td>1 Australian female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NS / male</td>
<td>1 English male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 British male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sessions have not been eliminated from the analysis.

3.2.1.9 Case studies: stimulated recall interview

Interviewing participants in the communicative settings under investigation is a classic ethnographic case study method in classroom research. In particular, in multicultural and second language classroom research, stimulated recall, in which participants are asked to explain their behaviour as well as their perception of others’ behaviour in the video-recorded classroom events, has been used as a powerful strategy to validate the findings from observation and interaction analysis of recorded classroom events (Sevigny 1981; Seliger & Shohamy 1989; Nunan 1992; Gass & Mackey 2000). This retrospective interview technique enables the researcher to gain insights into the observed interaction which would not be accessible through observation or interaction analysis. Therefore, stimulated recall interviews with participants in the observed classroom sessions in the present research were an important process to triangulate interpretations of the communicative events under investigation.

All three Japanese participants observed in class, all four lecturers in charge of the observed sessions, and seven of Australian students who were in the observed classes were interviewed separately a short time after some of the observed sessions. The aim of these interviews was to obtain interpretation of data which may not be available from other types of analysis incorporated in the case studies. By combining the interpretation of data from the two sets of analysis of classroom interaction described above with the interpretation of data by the participants themselves, it is possible to give reliable and valid explanations of the issue of silence. Besides, silence itself is a context dependent, ambiguous feature in discourse whose meaning and function is heavily dependent on the inferences and perspectives of participants (Saville-Troike 1985; Jaworski, 1993). Thus, a technique such as the stimulated recall interview is extremely useful in analysing intentions and interpretations of silence. However, it should still be noted that participants may not give reliable explanations due to self justification or consideration of other participants, or they may simply have forgotten what happened and how they interpreted the event. This is exactly where the triangulation of data analysis becomes essential for the present research; the case studies thus incorporate analysis from four different approaches to classroom interaction.

For stimulated recall interviews, the interviewees were shown sections from the video recording of classroom interaction and asked questions about their interpretation of other
participants’ speech as well as their own intentions as evinced through their behaviour. The selected sections showed classroom interaction in which the Japanese participant was either speaking or expected to speak. All the participants in these interviews were interviewed individually to minimise pressure as well as to ensure confidentiality. In the interviews, the participants were asked to describe the typical procedures in the class to see how the participants framed the speech events in class. This type of strategy is often used in ethnographic studies with the aim of learning the perspectives of the members of the target community (Spradley 1979; Agar 1980; Saville-Troike 1984), and it was found useful to check if the parties in the observed classes, namely the Japanese student, the lecturer and other students, had the same assumptions or frames in recognising various speech events in class. The participants were also asked about their impression of the other parties, their interpretation of the behaviour of the others, and the intentions of their own behaviour in class. The lecturers were also interviewed about the aims of the teaching and learning activities in the observed sessions.

Thus, prepared questions for these interviews, which naturally had partial differences across the different sessions concerned, focused on eliciting participants’ intentions and interpretations as well as perceptions of the behaviour of other participants. However, there was no strict control in the interviews other than the elicitation of intention and interpretation of some of the crucial parts of classroom interaction, and diversions from prepared questions were not unusual. In order to avoid biased comments, participants of the interviews were not informed about the focus issue of Japanese students’ silence. Instead, they were told that the main focus of the research is problems and gaps in classroom communication involving overseas students.

Sample population for the stimulated recall interviews

All the Japanese students observed were interviewed once each for an hour, but two of the students, Tadashi and Miki each had one more short interview later in order to confirm some points. The lecturers from all the sessions observed were interviewed once each for an hour. One peer student of Tadashi, two of Aya and three of Miki were interviewed. The difference in the number of peer students interviewed was due to constraints on securing interview hours within a limited period of time. They were all Anglo-Australian background students who had attended the same sessions with the Japanese students at least three times but who were not any closer than a classmate. In fact, none of the peer students in the observed classes had a close friendship, involving contact outside the
classroom, with the Japanese students. This means that the Australian peers had no assumptions based on frequent personal contact with the Japanese students. Because of the lack of personal contact between the Australian peers and the Japanese students outside the classroom context, the Australian peers’ perceptions about the Japanese students obtained in the interviews are likely to have been formed genuinely through their interaction with the Japanese students in class. Thus, perceptions obtained through these recall interviews are valid resources for evaluation of the impact which students’ behaviour in class can have in forming perceptions and stereotypes in others.

3.2.1.10 Case studies: follow-up interview

In some cases of retrospective interviews with the participants, it was not possible to conduct a stimulated recall interview with audio-visual support. Therefore, some of the participants were interviewed without being shown the video recorded sessions. The two male lecturers, a peer of the male Japanese student Tadashi, and two peers of Aya had follow-up interviews without audio-visual stimulation. However, the principle and objective of this procedure was the same as for the stimulated recall interviews, and the interviewees were asked to give their interpretation of events and judgement-making processes by recalling some of the key incidents of the observed sessions.

3.2.1.11 Classroom observation in Japan: fieldnotes, artefacts and video recording

During the researcher’s two visits to Japan in 1999 and 2001, classroom observation was carried out in two Japanese high schools. These high school classrooms can be considered as sources of information on educational expectations and experiences of Japanese education, in other words, as instances of socialisation into Japanese educational practice. In an ethnographic approach to intercultural communication, it is crucial to look at participants’ culturally patterned ‘ways of speaking’ (Hymes 1974b) as well as wider social organisation, values and beliefs, norms of behaviour and so on (Scollon & Scollon 1995). Thus, the aim of the classroom observation in Japan was to analyse and describe the communicative events in Japanese high school classrooms from both micro and macro perspectives. This opportunity in particular enabled micro-level discourse analysis of actual processes of interaction in Japanese high school classrooms. Through a contrastive analysis with micro-level discourse analysis of video-recorded Australian classroom data, the Japanese data can contribute to an explanation of the issue of Japanese students’ silence in Australian classrooms.
In June 1999, four sessions with different subjects were observed for 90 minutes each at a co-educational private high school in Tokyo. One and a half years later, in January 2001, six sessions with different subjects were observed for 50 minutes each at a co-educational public high school in Tokyo. In the present research, the private school is referred to as JPR High School and the public school as JPC High School, as consent for observation of classes at these schools was obtained on condition that the names of the schools, the teachers and the students remain confidential.

JPR High School was approached through the researcher’s personal contact with one of the teachers, while JPC High School was one of the three public high schools around the researcher’s hometown in Tokyo. Since the aim of the observation of Japanese high school classes was to obtain data to bring in some perspectives on the educational background of Japanese students, social science and Japanese were the subjects targeted for observation following the popularity of humanities majors among the Japanese participants in the interviews and observations in Australia. In other words, these opportunities to observe classrooms at Japanese high schools were regarded as collection of data which would provide some insights into where the Japanese students in Australia come from, especially in terms of classroom communication styles, teaching and learning styles, attitudes to learning, and relationship between the teacher and the students. In addition, English classes were observed in both high schools to see how Japanese students learn English since English becomes, for those Japanese students studying in Australia, the medium of teaching and learning in mainstream education.

The data from this observation are valuable sources not only to confirm and/or evaluate the comments made by the 19 Japanese students in the interviews in Australia but also to possibly explain some of the phenomena observed in intercultural classroom interaction involving Japanese students observed and recorded in Australia. Fortunately, JPR High School allowed all the sessions observed to be video recorded, which made it also possible to have a comparative analysis of Japanese and Australian classroom interaction data using conversation analysis.

Sample population

The classes observed at JPR High School were History of Japan, History of the World, Japanese, and English. The number of students for each class was 21 for History of Japan, 22 for History of the World, 22 for Japanese and 17 for English. The history classes were
taught by male teachers and the other two classes were taught by female teachers. The English class was taught by a Japanese teacher who is a non-native speaker of English although she had a background as a returnee student and holds a Master’s degree from England. All the observed classes were second year level. Some students were participants in more than one of the observed classes.

The classes observed at JPC High School were Expressing yourself in Japanese (third year level), Japanese (second year level), Classical Japanese (second year level), Japanese (first year level), Philosophy (third year level) and English (first year level). The number of students for each class was 16 for Expressing yourself in Japanese, 40 for Japanese (second year level), 42 for Classical Japanese (second year level), 38 for Japanese (first year level), 40 for English (first year level), 27 for Philosophy (third year level). The same teacher taught Expressing yourself in Japanese and Classical Japanese. The English class was team-taught by a native English-speaking teacher and a Japanese teacher who is a non-native speaker of English. The teacher who taught Japanese for the first year level and the Japanese teacher who taught English were the only female teachers.

JPR High School is a private school in the middle of the Tokyo city with a liberated policy and atmosphere, although it is not academically a prestigious school. Many of its students are motivated to learn special skills in Fine Arts or English, and are not interested in general academic achievement. There are no uniforms and the students are permitted to dye their hair or have piercings. The class size is very small compared to typical Japanese high schools. The average student number in one class is around 20 to 22, less than half the number of students in most other Japanese high school classes. At JPR High School, the students were generally friendly and relaxed. Teachers and students tend to interact in a very relaxed and casual manner.

JPC High School is a public high school in the western suburbs of Tokyo and academically more prestigious than JPR High School, having most of its graduates proceed to university level education. In terms of its policy and atmosphere, although more control was exercised on students than JPR High School, a casual manner and good rapport among students and teachers could be observed. For example, although there is a student uniform, there were students with dyed hair and piercings. The interaction between teachers and the students was not very formal in terms of students' use of honorifics towards the teacher and the seriousness of topics, but there were occasional indications of respect for teachers in most students’ manners such as frequent bowing. The average student number in one class is around 40, which is typical of most Japanese high schools. Overall description of the
observed classes in Japan is given in Table 3.6 and Table 3.7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Hours of observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Female, Japanese</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World History</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese History</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Female, Japanese*</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.6 Classes observed at JPR High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Hours of observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>Female, Japanese</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Japanese</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>Female, Japanese</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>Male, Japanese</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.7 Classes observed at JPC High School**

Observation

Observations of classes at these Japanese high schools were conducted in a similar manner to observation of classes in Australia, with the observer sitting in a corner of the classroom taking notes. In the case of JPR High School, a video recorder was also set up in a corner of the classroom. At JPC High School, in order to compensate for the lack of recording equipment, some of the exchanges were recorded manually and included an estimation of pauses between turns.

Notes were also taken after observations which recorded the researcher’s reflections and thoughts about the observed classes. In addition, the researcher had a short conversation with teachers after their classes whenever it was possible, and took notes on these teachers’ comments. There were no set questions for this conversation with the teachers except for a question to enquire if the presence of an observer affected the behaviour of the students and the teacher. It was left to the teachers to decide what they wanted to talk about, and the researcher asked a few questions regarding what had happened in the observed sessions.

3.2.1.12 Classroom observation in Japan: video recording

As mentioned earlier, in the researcher’s two visits to Japan, one of the two high schools allowed video-recording of the classes for observation.

The video-recorded data from JPR High School was partially transcribed and analysed.
applying a conversation analysis approach. Along with the findings from the observation, the findings from this conversation analysis have been integrated with the interview data relating to educational backgrounds of the 19 Japanese students interviewed in Australia as well as with the discursive conversation analysis of Australian classroom data in order to see if any transfer phenomena of classroom communication styles can be found.

3.2.1.13 General fieldnotes and artefacts

Notes were taken whenever communication with people involved in teaching and/or studying at an Australian university was considered relevant to the research as ethnographic data. In addition, any artefacts, documents and materials of relevance were collected as they provide valuable support to the research to increase its validity and credibility. Such artefacts are considered important data in various areas of qualitative research including applied linguistics (Davis 1995; De Cillia et al. 1999), ethnography (Agar 1980; Saville-Troike 1984), education (Lancy 1993) and case studies (Nunan 1992; Hamel et al. 1993; Stake 1994; Berg 1998).

For example, materials from courses offered by learning centres at the universities involved were collected since they reflect the attitudes to teaching and learning at Australian universities. Newspaper articles reporting current issues in education in Japan and Australia were collected to gain wider perspectives on classroom practices. On another occasion, personal contact with Japanese students in Australia provided interesting accounts of their silence. This was recorded in the fieldnotes.

3.2.2 Performance and perception data

As is evident from the number of data collection strategies, this research tries to explore silence in the classroom from as many different perspectives as possible. Jaworski & Sachdev (1998) claim that studies of silence require adoption of such multiple perspectives:

It is only through the adoption of diverse methodologies that we will be able to come to a better understanding of how control, affiliative and facilitative functions of silence are fulfilled in interactions between participants in the classroom. (p. 288)

There is an underlying assumption to the approach taken by the present research that because of the ambiguous and multifaceted nature of silence, its functions, meanings and interpretations are susceptible to ideologies which participants bring with them to any communicative situation. ‘Ideologies’ here refers to subjective significations or notions
about the world and society which an individual or a group holds, and in particular, it refers to linguistic ideologies that are ‘shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world’ (Rumsey 1990: 346).

Judgements by participants in a communicative situation regarding their own behaviour as well as that of other participants and of the communicative situation itself are influenced and shaped by participants’ ideologies of the world and the language. An example of this is a study in the US which revealed that perceptions of tone of voice were influenced by gender-related ideologies (Johnson et al. 1999).

However, there is no one-way relationship between ideologies and communicative behaviour. As Scollon & Scollon (1995) suggest, the surface form of discourse is shaped by ideologies but at the same time ideologies are also shaped and modified through the surface form of discourse. According to Scollon & Scollon (1995), misunderstanding and miscommunication in intercultural communication are often caused because of the gaps between the ideologies and the forms of discourse of members from different communities. Furthermore, in their work of communication between Anglo-Americans and Athabaskan Indians, Scollon & Scollon (1981) show how stereotypical perceptions about other cultural groups can affect intercultural communication and cause communication mishaps. In this way, it is not only the ideologies about one’s own world but also the ideologies about members of other communities that are at work in intercultural communication.

On these grounds, interaction between perception and performance is considered a key aspect of the present research to explain the phenomena of silence in multicultural classroom settings. The starting point of the present research was the issue of silence mentioned by the Japanese students’ themselves in interviews. The research then moved on to investigate if the silence ‘perceived’ by the Japanese students was also perceived by other parties (i.e. peer students and lecturers) by means of questionnaire, survey and interviews. Through these sets of data such as the interviews with Japanese students, questionnaires to lecturers and the large scale survey, perceptions about events and acts in the classroom communicative situations concerned have been gathered. In addition to this, fieldnotes and artefacts helped build up models of collectively-held ideologies of language use, teaching and learning, and the world. Data collected at Japanese high schools also served to explain ideologies which are likely to be affecting Japanese students’ perceptions and performances in Australian classrooms.

These ‘perceptions’ were further examined in terms of their interaction with ‘performances’ captured through observation and detailed analysis of recorded classroom
interaction. One of the most important aims of stimulated recall and follow-up interviews in the case studies was to explain how perceptions and performances mutually influence each other. This was done by probing participants’ judgements and their basis and then combining them with a more objective analysis of recorded classroom interaction data.

Thus, the multiple sets of ‘perception’ and ‘performance’ data in this research were collected, analysed and integrated to give a holistic but systematic explanation of silence in the classroom. This approach can be represented by a diagram which shows the distribution and interaction of different types of data in this research.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

For the analysis of data collected in the manner described above, three strategies were used. Content analysis was applied to interview data while recorded classroom sessions were coded and analysed using conversation analysis tools. What follows is a detailed explanation of these analytic strategies as applied to the present research.

3.3.1 Content analysis

For the analysis of interviews in the present research, content analysis was applied to the transcribed interview data. Although it is a common analysis technique in qualitative social research, content analysis involves what may be considered a quantitative approach, namely, ‘counting’ frequencies of variables. There are different attitudes towards this issue.
of quantification (cf. Spradley 1979; Agar 1980; Lancy 1993; Berg 1998). In some studies content analysis is used as ‘a major measurement procedure, allowing researchers to claim that materials and observations are ultimately quantifiable’ (Lauer & Asher 1988: 27). In others, however, a more qualitative-oriented attitude is taken in using content analysis. For instance, Berg (1998) treats content analysis as ‘a passport to listening to the words of the text, and understanding better the perspectives of the producer of these words’ (1998: 225), and a similar attitude can also be found in Agar (1980) who emphasises that researchers have to be careful not to impose categories particularly in the early stages of ethnography.

The present research follows the ethnographic approach to content analysis, and the interview transcription was studied without imposing externally developed categories. The researcher read through the transcriptions in order to be immersed in the ways in which interview participants talked in the interviews. Then, the researcher went through the transcription marking off parts of the interview which illustrated recurring topics. The recurrent topics with categories (and sub-categories) were reorganised into more systematic and appropriate categories, after which counting of frequency and exemplification took place.

As a consequence, in the very first stage of the present research referred to as the exploratory stage, silence of the Japanese students emerged as a recurring issue. Later on, the same transcripts of interviews were analysed in the same way as explained above with a more specific focus on silence. In this focused stage, an analysis of participants’ terms used in expressing their experiences was incorporated. This type of analysis was expected to provide important findings about how the participants view communicative situations, events and acts, and is regarded as highly relevant in ethnographic research including the ethnography of communication (Spradley 1979; Agar 1980; Saville-Troike 1984).

Another set of data which was analysed with content analysis was the stimulated recall and follow-up interviews with key participants in the classroom case studies. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, and subsequently analysed using content analysis. The content analysis of these interviews was aimed to reveal perceptions of participants in the observed sessions about one another as well as about specific classroom incidents. However, at the same time, as is often considered the main purpose of stimulated recall and follow-up interview, explanations of the judgement-making process which cannot be observed or found in transcription (Cicourel 1974; Mehan 1979; Nunan 1992; Gass & Mackey 2000) were qualitatively sought as well.

Here, it should be noted that there is another aspect of content analysis in this research.
It is the aspect of interview data as ‘performance’ itself. As Agar (1980) suggests regarding this aspect of interviewing, ‘Aren’t people behaving when they talk, and don’t they talk when they behave?’ (p.107). Therefore, interviewing can (and should) also be regarded as a part of ‘performance’ data. To give an example in this research, interaction between perceptions and performance surrounding the silence of Japanese students could be reflected in the interaction of Australian lecturers and the Japanese interviewer (researcher) in the interviews (see an earlier section 3.2.2 for performance and perception data). Thus, this aspect of interviewing as ‘performance’ and the ‘deep structure of meaning’ underlying the surface message physically presented in the interview data (Berg 1998: 225-226) was also investigated.

3.3.2 Coding

Video and audio recorded classroom interaction data were coded in order to evaluate the patterns found in the observation, in the self-reports of the Japanese students obtained from the interview, in the self-reports of the lecturers in the questionnaire responses as well as in the stimulated recall and follow-up interviews. In other words, in the whole process of data collection and data analysis in this research, this coding process was a stage in which patterns which had emerged through qualitative data collection and analysis processes were tested.

As Erickson (1981) argues, by directly analysing recorded classroom interaction data, one can produce ‘etic data which can be quantitatively summarised yet which also can be articulated with categories of emic structures’ (p. 32) that are relevant to the perspectives of the teacher and students. Silverman (2001) also supports inclusion of quantification processes in qualitative research saying:

[...] simple counting techniques can offer a means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive, qualitative research. Instead of taking the researcher’s word for it, the reader has a chance to gain a sense of the flavour of the data as a whole. In turn, researchers are able to test and to revise their generalizations, removing nagging doubts about the accuracy of their impressions about the data. (p.35).

Following this approach, with the analysis of a large quantity of video and audio recorded data as objective measures, the present research triangulates the findings from self-reports and observation. The recorded data was analysed not only by coding all the recorded interaction but also by detailed discourse analysis of transcribed extracts from the recorded data. In this way, it is possible to give ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ accounts of investigated phenomena.
From the results of the interviews and observation, it appeared that silence which was ‘performed’ and ‘perceived’ in the classroom settings concerned in this research is related to various aspects of communication which are intertwined. These aspects were: 1) amount of verbal contribution; 2) degree of pressure to make participation; and 3) quality of participation. Consequently, interrelationships of these aspects of communicative behaviour were analysed by systematic coding of the recorded classroom data.

First, the amount of verbal contribution was measured, by counting the number of turns as well as the length of turns. This approach was taken based on the shared view of Japanese students that Australian students participate much more than Japanese students do. The same finding was noted in the observation fieldnotes. Furthermore, it was unclear whether ‘less talk’ or ‘less participation’ frequently mentioned by interview participants referred to frequency of participation or duration of talk. Thus, it was necessary to check these aspects with the quantifiable recorded data, which makes it possible to provide detailed but still overall accounts of participants’ behaviour covering all the observed sessions.

Second, the number and the length of turns were coded in three situational categories derived from different participation patterns found in university tutorials and seminars. For the coding of classroom interaction with a specific focus on students’ silence, three major types of participation patterns were found useful: individual nomination, open floor and bidding. Identification of these participation patterns was derived from the idea of ‘participation structures’ in classroom settings originally developed by Susan Philips (1972), but was also data-driven since the focal point is markedness of students’ silence.

Unlike ‘ordinary conversation’, classroom interaction imposes on its participants levels of pressure to make verbal contribution depending on activity types and the conventionally and institutionally practised organisation of talk selected for these activity types. Thus, situations in which the teacher is producing a long stretch of turn which consists of multiple turn construction units (TCUs) or in which a student is producing a turn as a ratified speaker can be described as ‘bidding’ and bears relatively low pressure for students to participate verbally. Situations in which the teacher (or a student) asks a question to the whole class such as ‘Do you have any comments?’ can be described as ‘open floor’ participation patterns with medium level and equally distributed pressure for participation, whereas situations in which an individual or a specific subgroup of students in class is nominated by either the teacher or a student are regarded as ‘individual nomination’ patterns with a high level pressure for participation. Hence, from the teacher’s perspective,
the silence of students in the latter situation is more marked than in the former.

Interruption in terms of turn-taking behaviour is classified in the ‘bidding’ in unratified floor participation pattern, and self-selecting a turn when there is no explicit stimulus to open the floor to the whole class is also coded as a turn in ‘bidding’ category. However, turn-taking with overlapping near the previous speaker’s turn completion, in other words, transition relevance place (TRP) (Sacks et al. 1974), is not considered interruption (for interruption and overlap, see Sacks et al. 1974; Tannen 1983; Blimes 1997, Schegloff 2000) and it can occur in any of the three participatory patterns described above.

The third aspect of classroom interaction for coding is the quality of verbal participation. This aspect of verbal contribution in tutorials and seminars was found important in investigating the silence of Japanese students, since interview as well as observation data suggested that Japanese students could be perceived as silent because they are silent about something specific in their learning process in the classroom settings. As Jaworski (1993) points out, silence does not only refer to total withdrawal from interaction in a certain communicative situation but could also refer to partial withdrawal. If there is a specific type of participation task which makes Japanese students more silent than other students, this silence could be noted by others as marked. Moreover, if that hypothetical specific type of participation task is valued in Australian higher education classrooms, then it is possible that silence of Japanese students specifically in that type of task is evaluated negatively and thus has a great impact on perceptions of silence.

Since the interview and observation data suggested that comments and questions are rarely raised by Japanese students in the classroom, participation types were given the following categories: comments, questions, clarification questions, factual response, yes-no response and supporting moves (e.g. ‘yeah’, ‘that’s right’, etc.). The categories are data driven and derived from interviews, questionnaires, survey and observation as grounded theory. For details of coding categories, sample coding sheets can be found in Appendix 4.

3.3.3 Conversation analysis

The second analysis applied to the recorded classroom interaction data is discourse analysis using a conversation analysis (CA) approach. In classroom ethnography, more specifically microethnography of classroom case studies, it has been widely acknowledged that detailed analysis of recorded classroom interaction data is an important part of research (Mehan 1979, 1981; Guthrie & Hall 1981; Erickson 1981; Nunan 1992). One point which is particularly important in including interaction analysis in studies of
multicultural classrooms is that by presenting and discussing actual interaction that occurred in natural classroom settings, it is possible to produce valid and well balanced claims about the phenomena under investigation. This point is clearly illustrated by Gumperz (1981):

> When interpretations of behaviour differ as they do in most ethnically mixed classrooms, there is no way to safeguard against cultural bias in evaluating performances and to distinguish between differences in cultural style and differences in ability. Without reference to the actual process of interaction, nothing can be said about how participants react to and make sense out of particular tasks (p.6).

As mentioned earlier in the section for data sources, this recorded data from the observed classrooms allows the researcher to examine the ‘performance’ of the participants as opposed to their ‘perceptions’, particularly of the Japanese students. However, unlike the coding which tries to give a general picture of participants’ performance from the researcher’s point of view, CA analysis of the naturally occurring classroom interaction enables discussion of the actual process of classroom interaction from the participant’s point of view. In addition, analysis of recorded data makes it possible ‘to capture subtle and usually out-of-awareness aspects of classroom interaction and communication’ (Guthrie & Hall 1981: 8-9).

At this point, there is a question of why the analytic tool has to be CA. Although traditionally, ‘ordinary conversation’ was the main interest of CA research (cf. Sacks et al. 1974), it has been applied to a wide range of studies of institutional talk-in-interaction and has been successfully used in insightful studies of institutional talk (cf. Drew & Heritage 1992; Hutchby & Wooffit 1998; ten Have 1999). However, CA studies of organisation of talk in classroom interaction have been scarce, although there are some instructive studies in organisation of talk in classroom interaction (e.g. McHoul 1990; Learner 1995). Nevertheless, there is no reason why classroom interaction cannot be analysed with CA approach, since classroom interaction can be described as having features of institutional talk as characterised by Drew & Heritage (1992) in that it is ‘goal-oriented’, ‘constrained’ institutionally, and ‘associated with inferential frameworks’ (Drew & Heritage 1992: 22-25).

The next point which is often controversial is the application of CA in analysis of native speaker (NS)-non-native speaker (NNS) interaction. Until recently, CA has exclusively studied monolingual interaction involving only native speakers of the language (cf. Carroll 2000; Wong 2000; Markee 2000). This is mainly because in a CA approach, participants in an interaction collaborate to create talk relying on their shared orientation
and resources, negotiating and creating context locally as interaction proceeds (Sacks et al. 1974; Duranti & Goodwin 1992; Hutchby & Wooffit 1998; ten Have 1999). Thus, NS-NNS interaction could be problematic in that there may be gaps in relevance of context, as there ‘is the onus of using the details of the talk to demonstrate that context is a relevant feature for the participants’ (Wong 2000:245).

However, recent studies of NS-NNS interaction with CA have been able to reveal how NSs and NNSs behave in negotiating and constructing context (e.g. Firth 1995; Firth & Wagner 1997; Wong 2000). Thus, there is a growing claim that CA can play an important role in studying NS-NNS interaction (Firth & Wagner 1997; Markee 2000). Furthermore, there are some CA studies in classroom interaction involving NSs and NNSs, although the number is still very limited and they mostly examine ESL classrooms (McHoul 1990; Markee 1995; Lerner 1995). Therefore, studying NS-NNS interactions in classroom settings could demonstrate possible benefits of CA to future classroom research in bilingual or mainstream classrooms with non-native speakers.

In terms of the relevance of CA in investigating silence, it seems reasonable to suggest that CA is one of the most appropriate tools to study silence in talk. This is because CA treats silences such as gaps, pauses and lapses as important units of analysis of talk-in-interaction (Sacks et al. 1974). For example, Jefferson’s study (1989) of silent pauses and gaps in ordinary conversation in English has made an important contribution in that participants in talk are likely to make certain moves when silence of around 1.0 seconds or more occurs in conversational situations. This finding is relevant to the present research, along with one of the norms of turn-taking argued by Schegloff & Sacks (1973) that at the next possible opportunity to speak the doer of the second pair part (SPP) of an adjacency pair has to do the SPP. The relevance of these CA studies to the present research is that in studies of silence in intercultural communication, duration of gaps and use of silence in performing SPPs are discussed extensively (e.g. Scollon 1985; Enninger 1987; Carbaugh & Poutiainen 2000). In addition, the core of CA analysis, which is the analysis of turn-taking and sequence organisation, can reveal what participants are doing with respect to management of turn-taking (and thus ‘floor’ and ‘participation’). The fact that CA analysis aims to reveal participants’ orientations to classroom interaction in the local context as built up in the process of interaction means that the analysis is not biased by assumptions such as ‘non-nativeness’ of interactants. Thus, CA analysis is another strategy of triangulation in data analysis techniques for the present research.

The last point to make regarding the relevance of CA in the study of silence in
multicultural classrooms is the place of ethnographic information in CA. Ethnographic information gathered in interviews, observation and general fieldwork plays a major and important role in the present research, and it can contribute to the CA analysis of recorded interaction in supporting some of the explanations of the participants’ actions in classroom interaction. However, there is a large gap in the description of ‘context’ between CA and ethnography; CA insists on limiting ‘context’ to locally evoked context while ethnography includes culture and environment external to local ‘context’ (Moerman 1988; Duranti & Goodwin 1992; Markee 2000). Thus, it has generally been considered impossible to integrate CA and ethnography in a study (Schegloff 1987; Markee 2000).

Nevertheless, some researchers have integrated CA with ethnography in their studies of talk-in-interaction, justifying the importance of ethnographic information to understand what goes on in culturally situated talk-in-interaction (cf. Cicourel 1992; Moerman 1998). The present research takes a similar position that CA and ethnography can benefit from each other and aims to integrate analysis from both approaches. This is because the main interest of the research is in interaction between perception and performance about silence, and ethnography can provide mainly for perception while CA can for performance. Furthermore, both approaches allow us to see how perception affects performance and vice versa. For this purpose, the fundamental principles of ‘pure’ CA, which only takes account of local context, was followed in the analysis, and only after describing how the participants co-constructed the context and social order was the ethnographic information brought in.

For the actual analysis, all the sections of recorded classroom interaction in which Japanese students took turns were transcribed and analysed. In addition, other sections that appeared relevant were transcribed for analysis. For example, even if one of the Japanese students was not participating verbally, if there was a cue or an environment for possible participation, such a section was selected for transcription. A number of interactions in which only Australian students participate were also transcribed for contrastive analysis.

The transcribed data were analysed without attempting to find sources for silence or differences between NNs and NNSs but rather to describe what the participants were doing and how the turn-taking and sequence organisation was managed. When the description of each transcription was complete, patterns were sought and examined with reference to silence. Since the analysed interaction data were in English and the researcher is a non-native speaker of English, another CA analyst who is a native speaker of English was consulted for counter-check of the analysis.
Chapter 4 Perceptions: ‘Silent’ Japanese Students

4.1 Self-perceptions of Japanese students
4.1.1 ‘Silent’ self-image in the classroom context

Interviews with Japanese students revealed that they regard themselves as inactive in oral participation in lectures and tutorials. Fifteen out of nineteen Japanese students (78.9%) referred to their silence in classroom communication although no reference to silence was made during the interviews by two of the ten female participants and two of the nine male participants. The self-perception of silence was most typically characterised by comments such as ‘I don’t talk much in class’ or ‘I am very quiet during tutorial discussions.’ In addition, the contrast between the silence of Japanese students and the volubility of local Australian students in classroom communication was frequently mentioned. (‘Local Australian students’, as defined from the Japanese students’ point of view, generally referred to Anglo-background but often included Australian-born students with non-Anglo ethnic family background). Fourteen out of nineteen Japanese students (73.7%) described their Australian peers as active participants in class. Reference to ‘Asians’ as an inactive group in class was also frequently made when Japanese students’ silence was described. The following comment illustrates Japanese students’ perceptions about themselves as a part of the ‘Asian’ group in contrast with Australian students:

[1] If there are a lot of Australians in class, the class is more lively. I mean they all participate. But Asians don’t participate much. Including myself, we still haven’t adapted to raise our hands immediately to respond to a question in class. I think all Asian students are like that. [29-69 F7]

As discussed in Chapter 2, inactive classroom participation by international students from Asia has been widely discussed in research on overseas students studying in Australia, the US and UK (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Adams et al. 1991; Braddock et al. 1995; Milner & Quilty 1996; Ballard 1996; Jones 1999; Liu 2000, 2002). Japanese students’ comments from the interviews in the present research seem to be consistent with the findings of these existing studies. Although what is treated as a problem in classroom participation in existing research is given various labels such as ‘reticence,’ ‘inactiveness’ and ‘silence’, the present research uses the label of ‘silence’ to cover a wide range of phenomena which can be directly associated with lack of participation in the classroom and aims to clarify what is actually meant by ‘silence’ in various classroom situations.
4.1.2 Participant structures and pressure to speak

Japanese students’ interview comments suggested that participants’ orientations towards verbal participation vary depending on how a communicative activity is organised and how much contribution is expected at a certain point in the class. This means that silences occurring in different types of organisation of classroom talk need to be considered separately.

Susan Philips (1972, 1983) developed the concept of ‘participant structures’ in her studies of children from Warm Springs Indian community, which enabled identification of sources of problems in classroom communication involving those children. She found that the Anglo-background teachers’ structuring of classroom communication was not compatible with the communicative practices into which Warm Springs Indian children were socialised, and that this resulted in the silence of the Warm Springs children. Through careful analysis of attention structures common in each community, an explanation of Warm Springs children’s non-participation became possible.

Following and modifying the framework of Philips (1972, 1983), participant structures in Australian university classrooms were identified from Japanese students’ interview comments in order to consider Japanese students’ silence. These participant structures were also confirmed in the observed lectures and tutorials. These participant structures are: 1) teacher nominating a student individually; 2) one-to-one ‘unofficial’ interaction between a teacher and a student; 3) small group discussion; 4) open class discussion; 5) open class discussion after student’s own presentation; 6) student giving a presentation; 7) teacher-centred ‘straight’ lecturing.

In the first type of participant structure, one student is nominated by the teacher to make a comment or respond to a question, while other students in class attend to the teacher and the nominated person.

The second type is a one-to-one interaction between the teacher and a student (initiated by either of them), found in a situation where students are engaged in individual or small-group work. The difference between (1) and (2) is that while the student’s speech is heard by other students in (1), the interaction between the teacher and the student may not be heard by others in (2).

The third type of participant structure has students in small groups of typically three or four discussing some questions or issues. Usually a whole class feedback session follows this type of activity to exchange ideas from different groups.

In the fourth type of participant structure, the whole class attends to a discussion in
which the floor is open to all the participants. This includes when a short period of talk occurs after a certain kind of cue (verbal or non-verbal) or a question is given to the whole class.

The fifth type is similar to the fourth in that the floor is open for all the participants in class for discussion, but the discussion leader’s role is assigned to the student who is the presenter. In the Australian context, although the teacher still has the ultimate authority to control the discussion, student presenters are expected to take responsibility for the discussion after their own presentations (Marriott 2000).

The sixth type is student presentation itself. It resembles teacher lecturing, but it is a different type of participation since the roles are reversed.

The final type is when the teacher is giving a long stretch of talk in a straight lecture style, holding the floor for a certain period of time, while students listen and take notes. It is possible, however, to find students interrupting or jumping in to ask questions or make comments.

Among these participant structures, Japanese students are not described as silent when they are nominated by the teacher individually (1), interacting with the teacher in one-on-one situations (2) and giving a presentation (6). Some of the Japanese students said that the only time they talk is when they are nominated by the lecturer:

[2] Usually I end up observing. If I am nominated, I say something. [28:97 F4]

[3] [...] normally the only time I open my mouth is when she [the lecturer] nominates me and ask ‘What do you think [the student’s name]?’ or ‘How about you?’ [2:140 M1]

One-on-one private talk was found to be preferred and more frequent than public interaction:

[4] It’s no problem to talk one-on-one or privately, but I don’t like talking in public. [28:43 F3]

In the interviews, active participation by Japanese students in small group discussion (3) was referred to. One of the students even mentioned that she often takes a leading role in small group discussions to keep the discussion on track. On the other hand, Japanese students’ participation in whole class discussions (4) contrasts with their participation in small group discussions:

[5] Well... in group discussion, I talk a lot, but usually, I don’t know, in open, open discussion, what can I say, I am left behind. [30:93 F7]
With regard to the discussion after a student’s own presentation, some mentioned their reliance on the lecturer for to respond to questions or to lead the discussion. It appears that the mode of participation in this participant structure is passive, as implied in the following comments:

[6]  I: And when people started to talk in these presentations in Asian Studies courses, how do you respond to it as a presenter?
F5: How? Well, I just listen. (giggle) [17:165 F5]

[7]  I: How do you find it [the question time]?
M1: Well, how to say, because it’s about education, um, it’s kind of problem if someone asks me a question. (giggle). I don’t know very well. ... I know the basics, but if someone asks me a difficult question, I’d go like, ‘Please ask the lecturer.’
I: Um.
M1: In that presentation in education, about cooperative learning, after the presentation, discussion started, but the leader then was already the lecturer.... [2:96-98 M1]

In addition to these comments suggesting the passivity of these Japanese students in class, their giggles seem to imply their embarrassment in telling the interviewer about their passive participation. This in turn indicates that they are aware of the more active role they are expected to take as presenters.

In the case of students’ presentations (6) and teacher-centred lecturing (7), the silence of Japanese students was not explicitly mentioned. However, comments suggested these are the times for students to listen. When asked to describe large lectures in lecture theatres, it was often mentioned that ‘there are people who want to ask questions to the lecturer,’ which in turn suggests that the Japanese students themselves did not ask questions. Although less interaction is expected in lecturing and during student presentations, from the Japanese students’ perspective, silence is assumed to be unmarked but verbal participation of students is a marked behaviour. This is illustrated in the following comment from a Japanese student about one of the subjects she liked:

[8] Even though it’s a lecture, people ask heaps of questions. Also, there is a lot of interaction between the lecturer and the students, how can I explain, people ask questions one after another even though it’s a lecture. [27:136 F3]

In this way, considering Japanese students’ comments on when to speak and when not to speak, using the concept of participant structures makes it possible to examine different degrees of silence. Their comments suggest that their silence would be unlikely to occur in participant structures such as (1), teacher nominating student individually or small group discussion, (3). On the other hand, in an open class discussion, (4), discussions after own student presentation, (5) and straight lecturing, (7), silence is more likely to be observed.
Among the latter group of participant structures, there seems to be an awareness among Japanese students that they are expected to participate more actively in (4) and (5) than they do, while being silent in structure (7) is assumed to be unmarked.

In interpreting these different degrees of silence in different participant structures, two dimensions can be useful: pressure to speak and public exposure. First, it seems that the level of pressure to speak affects the occurrence of silence in that being called upon places a student under a lot of pressure, while an invitation to the whole class for comments or responses does not entail as much pressure on students. This can be explained by the notions of adjacency pairs (cf. Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Levinson 1983) and preference organisation (Pomeranz 1984; Sacks 1987). In one-on-one conversation, relevant responses are expected from the addressee for a request or a question, and therefore silence will be unexceptionally assigned a meaning as a ‘dispreferred response,’ although this interpretation is based on the discourse of native English speakers (cf. Sacks et al. 1974; Levinson 1983; Blimes 1998) and cannot simplistically be assumed as a norm for Japanese speakers of English. This assumption of more pressure attached to participation through individual nomination should thus only be taken as a possibility, and whether Japanese students are unlikely to be silent when they are nominated in their actual classroom performances will be addressed in the case studies (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

In open class discussions (4) and question time after a student’s own presentation (5), pressure to participate still appears to be felt by Japanese students, as there are often marks for participation as part of the assessment or they have an awareness that they are expected to play an active role in discussion after their own presentations. However, a student’s silence when the floor is open to everyone in a class discussion would not be interpreted as a specific message as it may be in one-on-one situations. Therefore, different levels of pressure to speak are likely to be felt by students in different participant structures, and the more the pressure to speak is felt, the less frequently silence is expected to occur. One of the Japanese students in fact told the interviewer that he found one of the tutorials difficult but at the same time good for him because everyone was nominated for comments and it forced him to participate.

The second dimension of the relationship between silence and participant structures is degree of public exposure in participation. How public a student’s verbal participation is in class is another variable to be considered, as apprehension about ‘speaking in front of people’ was given as a reason for silence by six Japanese students:
I don’t like speaking in front of people, though I don’t mind speaking in a small group. [24:184 M5]

I don’t like that kind of, speaking in front of people, you see. [16:162 F5]

A preference for asking questions of lecturers in private after class rather than during the class was also expressed in interviews:

[...] even if I have something I didn’t understand [during the lecture], I’d prefer to, like um, go and ask a question to the lecturer by myself later. [28:46 F3]

This preference for private communication with lecturers has often been discussed in studies in teaching of international students (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Thorp 1991) and Japanese students (e.g. Anderson 1992). In the survey study by Braddock et al. (1995) at Macquarie University in Australia, 69% of the overseas students (among whom more than 80% of respondents were from Asian regions) indicated that they preferred asking questions after lectures rather than during lectures (p. 48), as we can see below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I would rather go to my lecturers/tutors to ask questions than to ask questions during the lectures.</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Preference for asking questions after lectures to asking questions during lectures (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 48, Table 83)

The local students’ responses in fact showed a similar pattern for the above question in the Macquarie survey. It should be noted, however, that the study did not include sufficient Anglo-Australian controls for meaningful comparisons to be made.

As shown earlier, it was reported that there is a tendency for less silence to occur in small group discussions (participant structure 3), and more silence in open group discussions of the whole class (participation structure 4). This contrast needs to be addressed by considering the degree of public attention in class. In other words, participant structures which give a lower degree of public attention to the speaker are likely to find less silence from Japanese students, while in participant structures in which a higher degree of public attention is given to the speaker, one may see Japanese students being more silent. The degree of public attention is also related to face-risk (cf. Goffman 1955; Brown & Levinson 1987) in that the more public attention, the greater the threat to face. Silence has been found to serve as a strategy to avoid loss of face in public among hearing-impaired people (Jaworski & Stephens 1998), and it can be used for the same purpose by
Japanese students. This silence in open discussion is to be explored in more detail in the next section, and further investigated in the case studies in Chapter 5, 6 and 7.

When we look at the two dimensions of pressure and public attention, the degree of public exposure seems to be overridden by the pressure to talk. Students reported to opt for speaking even if they will be heard publicly in participant structure (1), in which the pressure is high. Kurzon (2001) points out ‘the difficulties people may have remaining silent’ when ‘asked a question’, by referring to Malone (1986). Schulhofer (1987). Kurzon (2001) also claims these difficulties are particularly felt when the questioner is in an authoritative role. Therefore, although a student’s turn through nomination in participant structure (1) is heard by the whole class, silence in this participant structure would be a highly marked behaviour, and hence is likely to be avoided. As Sifianou (1997) states, silence can be seen as a sign of rudeness rather than as an attempt to avoid a face-threatening act when not responding to a question.

From another perspective, however, when the level of public exposure is high and the pressure to talk is low as in open class discussions or in straight lectures, Japanese students’ silence is likely to be most distinctively found, according to their comments. In the interview Japanese students’ comments on silence concentrated particularly on open class discussions. Moreover, in their comments, their silence was often compared with their Australian peers’ volubility in this participant structure.

[12] M2: Well I think Australians need to be talking, or you could also say they like discussions.
I: Is that so. But there must be shy people, you know. Would they like discussions?
M2: Not so many Australians are shy, I think... compared with Asian people who are shy, they are somehow totally //different... // Even if they are shy, they would say their opinions.
F8: //totally different// [23:353-356, M2&F8]

Another student’s comment reflects this contrast and furthermore suggests that there may be something more than an issue of language proficiency in his silence.

[13] I: What is your impression of Australian students in class?
M5: Well, you know, they speak a lot. Of course, compared with international students, there may be a role of language proficiency in it, but even if I were studying at uni in Japan, I don’t think I would be so enthusiastic. [8:111-112 M5]

From the Japanese students’ point of view, speaking in open discussions by actively volunteering as their Australian peers do is something ‘different’ from their own behaviour. Yet at the same time, not speaking in open discussions is also perceived as a ‘problem’ by Japanese students, not only because they are aware of the expectations from Australian university classroom but also because participation is often a part of assessment
for the course in which students are enrolled.

In this section, Japanese students’ self perceptions of their silence were presented in relation to participant structures. The degree of pressure to speak and level of public exposure in participation were shown to vary in these participant structures, affecting the amount of silence. In one-on-one situations such as participant structures (1) and (2), pressure to speak is so strong that it is assumed that students do not remain silent, whereas in open discussions or in lectures where the pressure is lower and public exposure is high, silence is self-reported to prevail among Japanese students. However, interview comments also suggested that Japanese students view their ‘unmarked’ silence in open discussions as problematic. Hence, it seems important to investigate this ‘problematic’ silence and identify its sources, as this silence was also found to be a major concern among the lecturers who have had Japanese students in their classes (see section 4.2).

4.1.3 Explanations of Japanese students’ silence from their own perspectives

Japanese students’ comments from interviews provided a number of explanations of their silence particularly in open discussions. Through careful examination of these explanations, this section aims to discuss what is behind the silence of Japanese students in the classroom and how Japanese students themselves perceive their own silence.

4.1.3.1 English proficiency

One of the explanations given by Japanese students for their silence was their lack of language proficiency in English.

[14] Discussion, I find it a little hard to keep up. Yeah. lectures are okay, but with my level of English, it’s a bit [difficult]. [1:231 M1]

This represents a common perception among Japanese students that their lack of proficiency in English holds them back from participation in discussion. Half of the Japanese students interviewed indicated that they felt that their lack of proficiency in English was a major barrier for participation. It is, however, difficult to tell whether the negative perception of their English proficiency is realistic or not. What is worth noting here is that students who have lived in Australia for more than five years also gave English proficiency as one of the reasons for their silence; this includes the student who gave the comment above.

Some students also mentioned that difficulty in understanding what their peers and
lecturers are saying is a major problem:

[15] For example, I know I have accent when I speak, but if I could understand what is being discussed in discussions - I wish I could. People say I don’t have any problems in speaking, but I cannot grasp the content of the discussion. [30:111 F7]

Peer student speech often appears to be more difficult to understand than clearer and more formal lecturer speech, because of the fast rate of speech, manner of speaking and vocabulary use of the former.

[16] F10: Well, say during the class, for example, I can’t understand native speaker’s English. I: Oh, because they speak too fast. F10: Fast but also um they don’t seem to know grammar, do they? (laugh) So I don’t understand what they are saying. Also, they use different kinds of language. [22:14-16 F10]

If this gap between peer students’ ‘native speaker’ English and lecturer’s English exists, it is possible that a difficulty in understanding peer Australian students’ speech in discussion plays a role in the silence of Japanese students. Lecturer speech can be understood sufficiently by Japanese students as it tends to be produced in a clear and formal manner to ensure good understanding by all the students in class. However, the speech of peer Australian students may not be produced in such a manner unless they are giving a presentation. If that is the case, it is not exactly the formal lexico-grammatical competence of English but rather a sociolinguistic gap in the rate of speaking that may be playing a role in Japanese students’ silence.

4.1.3.2 Norms of interaction

As noted above, a different manner and speed of speech produced by native speaker peers in the classroom seems to trouble Japanese students. Difficulty in finding the right timing to join discussions was expressed by a number of Japanese students in interviews. Therefore it is likely that this silence is due to lack of ‘interactive competence’ which requires sociolinguistic adaptation to Australian classroom interaction norms rather than improvement of lexico-grammatical proficiency. Japanese students’ perspectives are reflected in the following comments:

[17] It’s the question of timing. Particularly in English, I just can’t work out the timing to speak. Mmm... I wonder if it is because I am not a native speaker. [2:112 M1]

[18] The interaction, even before I finish talking, they [Australian students] come in, interrupting me. [24:147 M5]

The student who gave the first comment above went on to say he is not very good at
jumping into discussions in his first language of Japanese either. The student who gave the second comment also mentioned that it is not only the speed of each utterance produced by native speakers of English but also the turn-taking which he finds too fast. The following comment from a Japanese student in a web discussion page set up for students enrolled in a linguistics course illustrates how Japanese students regard the speed of interaction in Australian classrooms. The access to this web page was allowed through personal contact with the lecturer in charge of the course:

I am a Japanese and one of the surprising thing [sic] when I came to Australian university was how much Australian students express their opinions during the lecture [sic]. In [course name] class., [sic] it’s even more than other classes. I often find the way students [sic] express [sic] their views is as if bullets are shooting. (I mean very quick) For Japanese student, sometimes t’s [sic] very hard to because of language handicap and it’s [sic] speed and moreover, we don’t get used to this style of approach. (my emphasis in italics)

These reactions to the speed of interaction in Australian classrooms suggest that norms of interaction practised in Australian classrooms may be different from those into which Japanese students had been socialised before they came to Australia. (for details of turn-taking practices in Japanese classrooms, see section 4.3.2.3 below.)

In addition, Japanese students do not seem to be immersed in opportunities to interact with local Australian students outside the classroom, which may hinder the development of sociolinguistic competence of Japanese students’ English. It was frequently indicated by Japanese students that they have less social contact with local Australian students than with international students from Asian countries. One student observed that her English could have improved more if she had more interaction with Australian students:

[19] If I had more Australian friends, my listening would get better. As you know, because most of my friends are international students, I don’t worry about my English and I enjoy communicating with them even if my English is wrong. [30:1-2 F7]

Although Australian students were described positively to be easy to talk to or relaxed, they were found to be uninterested in getting to know Asian students. Disappointment in the separated communities of Asian students and Australian students was expressed even by those who went to secondary schools in Australia. They find it harder to find Australian friends at university because of fewer chances to see the same students in different classes. An observation by one of the Japanese students can be found below:

[20] I can’t tell just from my observation, but we might be perceived incapable of communicating with them, they may be thinking, it’s like, um, Australians and Japanese, or Australians and Asians, they are separated like this. [25:67 F2]

The survey study by Braddock et al. (1995) at Macquarie University also found that
international students are mostly socialising with students from their own cultural groups, and not actively socialising with local Australian students. In the survey, almost 80% of international students selected ‘false’ for spending a lot of time with their Australian peers, and almost 70% of international students have more friends of their own nationality than Australian friends. Moreover, 95% of the teaching staff found international students often socialising with students from the same cultural background (see Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I spend a lot of time with my Anglo-Australian friends</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRUE</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Number of Students who spend a lot of time with their Anglo-Australian friends (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 13, Table 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have more friends of my own nationality than Australian friends</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Number of Students who have more friends of own nationality than Australian friends (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 14, Table 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International students often stick together with people from their own nationality or culture</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRUE</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALSE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Staff impressions of international students’ socialising behaviour (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 13, Table 2)

As some students mentioned, this lack of social contact and solidarity beyond surface ‘friendliness’ with Australian students is likely to deter the development of Japanese students’ sociolinguistic competence in Australian classrooms. Similar findings are also reported in Volet & Ang (1998) in their study of interaction among Australian students and Asian overseas students at Murdoch University in Australia.

Accounts of incidents as given in [17] and [18] in which Japanese students lose their turns due to interruption or are simply overwhelmed by native speakers’ fast rates of speech (‘bullets are shooting’) suggests that they were silenced by other students or the lecturer, at least from the Japanese students’ point of view. Another Japanese student’s
negative experience in a similar situation is reflected in the following comment:

[21] If I struggle a bit, then often it was like, ‘all right, then,’ and the door was closed for me. [20:87 F9]

There is also an interface case between this kind of sociolinguistic clash and general social rules of interaction. Social rules for and assumptions about participants’ roles and behaviour in Japanese classrooms were given as another explanation of silence. Being considerate to others by not asking irrelevant questions which take time from both lecturers and peers as well as avoiding interruptions were mentioned by some. The following comment expresses a Japanese student’s discomfort about interrupting.

[22] You know, I cannot volunteer, and on top of that, interrupt when someone’s talking. It’s like, offensive, or what can I say, I feel I have to wait until someone finishes talking before I speak. I feel I shouldn’t interrupt. [28:39 F3]

This account can be interpreted as an expression of discomfort caused by sociocultural difference but it is also possible to consider this as a problem arising from a gap in learned discourse styles. The same student expressed her difficulty in keeping up with Australian students’ speed of turn-taking. Thus, both Japanese social etiquette and differences in norms of turn-taking can be at work together at the same time. As Tannen (1985) argues in her study of different communicative styles, fast-rate speech with frequent overlapping talk can be a sign of ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘solidarity’ for some while for others it can be regarded as ‘interrupting’ and as a sign of ‘rudeness’ or ‘lack of attention.’ The latter group, who regard fast rate of speech and overlapping talk negatively, was in a way ‘silenced’ because of the difference in communicative styles as well as a difference in perception of communicative styles. West & Zimmerman (1983) argue that women tend to be interrupted by men considerably earlier in their utterances than men are by women and that this early interruption by men has a ‘silencing’ effect on women.

4.1.3.3 Cognitive processing

Another explanation for silence from the Japanese students’ perspectives is the cognitive processing time they need. Word-search and formulation of ideas unrelated to proficiency in English can cause a period of silence. Although this silence for cognitive processing is necessary for all the participants in interaction, it was mentioned by nearly half of the Japanese students that Australian students’ turn taking behaviour is too fast to keep up with. Comments such as ‘We need more time to think,’ or ‘We cannot come up
with ideas so quickly’, were made by five Japanese students.

[23] When I am asked a question, it takes a while for me to think about it. So, while I am thinking about the question, other people say various things, and the lecturer makes the final remark, moving on like ‘Okay, next.’ It’s like that. They finish and move on.[30:93 F7]

There is a possibility that this student needs time for linguistic processing, but nevertheless it seems that she requires more time for formulation of content of her response than her peers, as she says ‘thinking about the question’ takes a while. Some students, however, explicitly attribute their silence to the speed of their language processing.

[24] A little bit of time, say, for about three seconds before I say something, I need it to decide what to say. I cannot think and talk at the same time like in Japanese. [8:162 M5]

As a matter of fact, it is difficult to distinguish between linguistic and non-linguistic cognitive processing. The student who gave the above comment is most likely to find himself struggling to find the right words and expressions to use in his second language, but at the same time he may be experiencing the gap in response speed caused by differences in learned speed of cognitive processing in the classroom.

In fact, with regard to the rapidity of response, Japanese students’ comments about their own inability to formulate ideas contrasted with their view of Australian students. Australian students were described as being capable of ‘coming up with ideas so quickly.’

[25] F3: Well, surely I envy them [Australian students] for being able to talk like that. The moment a question is there, they come up with their own opinions so quickly.
F4: And we don’t.       [28:116-117 F3&F4]

These students also seem to believe that differences in classroom practices may be holding them back.

[26] F4: You know, they are so quick. They are ready, and very quick.
F3: Yeah. So quick. I suppose it’s because they are used to it, or even because they have been educated that way.
F4: It looks like it.       [28:122-124 F3 & F4]

These students further discussed the possible influence of different styles of upbringing on Australian students’ rapidity in reacting to questions and cues in the classroom. In their views, Australian children are trained to make their own choices and express their own opinions while Japanese children are trained to listen to adults and not to assert themselves against them. Thus, in their opinion, the gap that they feel in classroom interaction can find its root in children’s socialisation in Japan and Australia. In fact, this view is often repeated
by Japanese expatriates living in Australia. Nichigō Press, which is a local Japanese newspaper published monthly for Japanese expatriates in Australia, often notes in its columns on education in Australia that choice-making, expressing opinions, and acknowledging different perspectives of individuals are characteristics of Australian education both in the home environment and in schools. These characteristics are often compared with those of Japan and regarded as positive models. In one issue, the Sydney Japanese school principal was interviewed for a column called ‘Australian Education.’ The column reported:

The principal, Mr. Iwataki, who had been engaged in education in Japan for more than 30 years, applied for this position overseas because of his ambition to reconsider Japanese education from outside. What he realised in particular through exchanges with local schools is local students’ ‘attitudes to clearly state their own thoughts and ideas, and to listen to what others say.’ (Nichigō Press, April 2000. p. 74)

To give another illustration, a Japanese student learning English at a private English language school, mentioned in personal communication that when she found Japanese students in her school silent, she could clearly see ‘what impact the education in Japan had had’ on Japanese students.

In this way, Japanese students seem to consider that their socialisation in Japan plays an important role in the communication problems they face in Australian classrooms. However, it should be noted that the Japanese student interviewees were mostly trained in academic preparation courses or in secondary or primary education systems in Australia. Although attribution of their silence in the classroom to their educational background can be a realistic explanation, it is also possible that it is a form of justification for their silence. In the interviews, Japanese students’ own silence was often not mentioned until the focus of the interview was shifted to their own behaviour in the classroom. For example, after talking about a lecturer who is always willing to answer questions (‘He answers to any questions as much as he can’), when the interviewer asked, ‘What kind of questions have you asked?’ a Japanese student answered, ‘I don’t ask questions. I just listen.’ When the silence was mentioned, it was often followed by a mention of their feeling of inadequacy and of their awareness of expected behaviour in Australian classrooms. As the impact of education in Japan on Japanese students’ adaptation to the Australian classroom is not only referred to by many of the Japanese interviewees, but also discussed extensively in the literature on Asian overseas students (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.3), it will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (section 4.3).
4.1.3.4 Psychological withdrawal

The fourth explanation for silence given by Japanese students related to psychological aspects of classroom participation; that is, silence reflecting inhibition, fear, anxiety, embarrassment and trauma about speaking in public. There was a general tendency among Japanese students to explain their withdrawal from oral participation in class by their lack of confidence in their understanding of issues being discussed in class, second language anxiety and negative perceptions of their own ideas and opinions. In the comment below, the student indicates that a lack of confidence in English, and anxiety caused by having to speak in front of native speakers causes her silence.

[27] You know, with Chinese people for example, their English is not perfect. So, in fact it’s easy for me to speak with them. I get nervous when I speak with native speakers, thinking something like, ‘What if my English is not correct?’ But with people like Chinese people, I can speak without worrying about this kind of thing. [25:92 F1]

This student also mentioned that she experienced racism during her time at a secondary school in Australia, and her friendship group tends to be a group of Asian students. The fear and rejection she experienced during her secondary education in Australia could have had a silencing effect on this student, similar to that shown in Losey’s (1997) study of Mexican American female students in the U.S.

Not only lack of language proficiency but also lack of confidence in other aspects of classroom communication appear to be one of the causes of silence. Anticipation of negative perception by the lecturer due to one’s weak background knowledge also seems to inhibit participation:

[28] I must say asking questions to the lecturer is kind of scary. Because I don’t have confidence in grasping the theories, I have this fear that lecturers may in fact spot my weakness if I ask questions. So I decide I’d better not do it. [20:69 F9]

In comment [28] above, the Japanese student describes her fear of having her weaknesses revealed as a consequence of asking a question. Silence due to lack of confidence can be interpreted as an indication of fear of having one’s speech (and its content) negatively evaluated by the lecturer and peers. Asking questions or making comments without being prepared well enough for class or without having an adequate grasp of the subject matter were described by other Japanese students as causes for their silence. One Japanese student mentioned her fear of saying something wrong as a cause of her silence:
The type of psychological barrier shown in the comments above can be described as fear of ‘losing face’ in public. This fear of losing face appears to play an important role in Japanese students’ silence, but the ‘unspoken’ thoughts of Japanese students could be heard if modification were to take place in how participation is organised. There were students who mentioned that their participation was successful because they went to a class having prepared their comments or responses to questions which would be asked in class. One student spoke to the lecturer after one class and asked if he could have the questions for the next class so that he could take them home to think about them and prepare his comments. He also asked the lecturer to nominate him for these comments so that he would not miss out by failing to jump into the discussion. Another student made an arrangement with his classmate to have a question and an answer ready before his presentation, since he feared that he would not be able to answer difficult questions in the question time. Opportunities for preparation seem to allow Japanese students to be sure about not only the validity of their ideas but also the correctness of the language.

However, as Goffman (1955) argues, in any social encounters human beings do ‘face-work’ to avoid losing face, in which case fear of losing face would not be a complete explanation of the gap between Japanese and Australian students’ participation in the classroom. Nevertheless, there were comments by Japanese students about Australian students speaking more casually without this type of fear:

> F8: They don’t keep it to themselves, I think. Like, it’s a bit of an idea, and it’s not a big deal.
> M2: I think they just put their thoughts into words and speak straight away. And they don’t think they are silly. Or, they are not wrong, and it’s not like they don’t want to feel embarrassed because they are wrong. They think opinions are opinions, and it’s a good thing to speak. [23:265-66 F8&M2]

These comments seem to suggest that for these Japanese students making a comment is in fact ‘a big deal’ and they ‘don’t want to feel embarrassed’ by saying something wrong. Then, why do the Japanese students feel it is ‘a big deal’ to participate in discussions while they think it is ‘not a big deal’ for their Australian peers? One way to explain this is differences in orientation to politeness strategies in that Japanese students tend to frame classroom communication as a formal and deferential situation. The other possibility is the Japanese students’ assessment criteria for relevance and correctness of student comments.
in the classroom. As we have seen, Australian students’ participation was criticised by a number of Japanese students for its carelessness and irrelevance. This brings up questions about the schema and interpretive frame (cf. Gumperz 1982; Roberts & Sayers 1987; Tannen 1993) which may influence Japanese students’ behaviour in classroom communication. However, there are Australian students who do not participate or find it difficult to participate, and it is possible that the Japanese interviewees may have overgeneralised ideas about their Australian peers (see chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

4.1.3.5 Influence of wider sociocultural context (1) : face systems

Comments from Japanese students implied that their silence can also be explained by problems in adjusting to the sociocultural framing of classroom communication in Australia. As has already been discussed, due to different expectations of participation in different participant structures and different norms of rapidity in responding to questions or cues, Japanese students’ silence may be regarded as marked behaviour.

Two more aspects of sociocultural context of classroom communication emerging from Japanese students’ comments can be addressed. A clash of politeness strategies, especially those learned in educational contexts is one aspect. For instance, the social distance and hierarchical relations between students and lecturer which are assumed by Japanese students imply more silence on the side of the students, as less talk is listed as one of the strategies to work on negative politeness (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987; Scollon & Scollon 1995). There were comments supporting this which indicated that Japanese students would not challenge or make critical comments to the lecturer.

[31] I don’t really challenge lecturers. ... There were times when I didn’t understand what was wrong with the way I was working, but I didn’t particularly challenge the lecturers. I didn’t change the way I had been working. I continued the work the way I wanted to anyway. [7:24 M4]

[32] As you know, because Australians particularly have their own stance and sort of never compromise, the lecturers would get them to justify their positions. As for me, I accept what the lecturers say at once, like ‘Oh, I see.’ (laugh). [5:88 M3]

What can be inferred from these comments is that Japanese students can be silent about something rather than simply not speaking. In the first comment above, the student was silent about his doubts about the lecturer’s comment on his work. In fact, his silence was not acceptance or submission to the teacher’s comment about his work but avoidance of confrontation or even resistance covered up with surface acceptance, as he continued to have his own way of working on his project.
On the other hand, the second comment above, as well as other comments made by this student in interviews, suggests that acceptance instead of disagreement or doubts comes rather automatically. The student indicated he has confidence but if someone gives him an instruction he finds himself simply accepting it. He compared himself with Australian students, saying ‘you know I find myself weak.’ If this ‘accepting’ or ‘non-confronting’ behaviour is considered to be characteristic of Japanese students, what is surprising is that this student has lived in Australia with his family since he was 10 years old.

In this way, it is possible to see two interpretations of silence in situations such as those represented by the two comments above where teacher-student hierarchical role relationship is assumed: covering up confrontation and genuine acceptance. One should note that ‘silence’ here may not simply be total lack of verbal communication. Rather, it can be *not speaking about* something while one talks, although it is likely that the amount of verbal communication would be smaller than when one makes challenging comments in justifying oneself. This type of silence is discussed in Berman (1998)’s study of Javanese women who are not supposed to express their will to win their rights over their disadvantaged social situation. The Javanese women were silent about their empowering movement, since their society expected its women to keep this silence. However, Berman (1998) also showed how these women were empowered by breaking this silence. In a similar sense, Japanese students’ silence around confrontation can also be explained by their social expectations of communicative behaviour in teacher-student encounters (for teacher-student relationships in Japanese schools, see section 4.3.1.1 below).

As some of the Japanese students mentioned in their interviews, Australian students are often found to express a critical attitude to lecturers, which suggests that they may assume a less hierarchical relationship with their lecturers. Indeed, it is possible to say that relationships which are less hierarchical can be observed at least on the surface level of interaction. Whether or not less power difference is assumed in a real sense, Australian students may have been socialised into classroom practices in which they are expected to show a critical attitude to learning. Learning with critical thinking has been described as one of the characteristics of Australian and Western education, and students are encouraged to critically approach what teachers say (Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Milner & Quilty 1996). This encouragement of critical thinking and acceptance of different views other than the teachers’ own is often reflected in evaluation questionnaires administered to students at the end of each term in Australian universities. To list a few examples, a University of New South Wales teacher evaluation questionnaire has items such as ‘The
teacher is open minded and discusses points of view other than his/her own,’ or ‘I have learned to think critically.’ The Centre for English Teaching at The University of Sydney lists ‘develop your critical thinking capacity’ as one of the skills to be introduced to students in their Advanced Skills for Academic Success program.

While Japanese students may find this expectation difficult to cope with, it is worth noting that solidarity in class or developing close relationships with teachers seems to enhance the participation of Japanese students, as we can see in the comment below:

[33] F6: This term, even though I didn’t say anything at all in any subjects before, I began to speak from this semester.
I: How did you work out, how?
F6: Well, the strategy is, not with the lecturer but with the tutor, I am close. That way, I don’t feel nervous, because it’s someone I always talk to. Because I know that what I say will receive proper attention. I can speak calmly.        [30:43-45 F6]

Identifying oneself with other interactants as sharing the membership of a group raises the possibility of more positive politeness strategies being applied in interaction, as Brown & Levinson (1987) argue. In their view, positive politeness strategies are applied when there is relatively less threat to face while with higher threat to face, negative politeness strategies are appropriate. If one assumes that each time a verbal contribution is made it entails a threat to face, when less threat to face is assumed, more spontaneous participation can be expected, and this is what the above example seems to reflect.

Brown & Levinson (1987) claim that not only hierarchical relationships but also social distance among participants in a social encounter provide conditions for them to work on negative politeness which in turn orients participants towards avoidance of imposition. As it was noted earlier, social distance between Asian international students and Australian students is commonly perceived by Japanese students (see also Volet & Ang 1998). If social distance rather than solidarity among students in the classroom is perceived, it is likely that politeness strategies to avoid imposition are employed. Scollon & Scollon (1995), adapting Brown & Levinson (1987), give a list of positive and negative politeness strategies which can be used in social encounters. They include ‘Be taciturn’ (p.41) as one of the negative politeness strategies. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), if there is a high risk of losing face, then the ultimate resolution is not doing any act, which in the present study can be reflected in Japanese students’ silence. These claims can explain the silence of Japanese students in class if they assume negative politeness to be an appropriate type of politeness to use in classroom interaction with peer Australian students. They
would opt for silence and avoidance of direct confrontation.

Why, then, are Australian students regarded as ‘talkative’? It is possible to say that Australian students interact using positive politeness strategies, assuming solidarity-based communicative situations in the classroom, although their positive politeness strategies are not responded to reciprocally by Japanese students. If this is one explanation for the contrast between Japanese students and Australian students, the social distance described by Japanese students may be a result of the negotiation carried out as the two groups use different politeness strategies.

4.1.3.6 Influence of wider sociocultural context (2): norms of relevance

Another aspect of sociocultural context that seems to lead to Japanese students’ silence is the notion of relevance in classroom settings. Japanese students seem to have stricter criteria for relevance of comments in discussions and questions for lecturers than Australian students, which can make them a relatively silent group.

First, Japanese students seem to limit their rights to speak if they feel that their preparation for the class is not sufficient or they do not have enough background knowledge or experience. One of the Japanese students criticised his Australian peer students for asking questions even though the answers are ‘written in the book.’

[34] M8: But when you cannot finish the reading assignment, you would rather not ask questions, I think.
I: Right. I wouldn’t-
M8: If you ask about what is written there [as an answer], it is rude. Not even embarrassing but rude, don’t you think? [13:56-58 M8]

This student (M8) also complained that in one class, a peer student asked why a certain technical term was used to explain the concepts discussed in class even though the definition of the term was clearly indicated in the reading material for that particular session. The Japanese student was not happy about the fact that the lecturer took time and effort to answer the question. He went on to say:

[35] Also, at times when you cannot understand something, well I think it’s rather psychological, but when you cannot understand, how can I put it, well, it’s not really anybody’s fault, but whether you think you are not good enough or something else, you know, it’s definitely a difference, I think. If it’s me, if I didn’t know something, even though I wouldn’t think it’s bad, but I would think I should have covered that area myself. But other people probably tend to .... ask the lecturer if they don’t understand. [13:62-66 M8]

Another student indicated that in the teacher training course in which she is enrolled she does not speak if she lacks teaching experience in the specific areas discussed in class.
On the other hand, her peer students seem to participate despite the fact some of them have even less experience than she has:

[36] Even someone who is not so much older than me, they would acknowledge their lack of experience, but they have spent longer time as students than teachers and they talk about it… Yeah. I find more people who speak out even if they don’t have enough experience. [20:35 F9]

In addition, F9 said she would speak more often about education in Japan, as it is likely that she has more background knowledge and experience being the only Japanese student in the group.

These comments indicate that Japanese students have more strict criteria than their Australian peers for relevance of speech content in class. This takes us back to the psychological aspect of participation which holds Japanese students back. If Japanese students have criteria for relevance which is more strict, there is more chance of risking loss of face when they participate. The more strict criteria which Japanese students seem to apply to the relevance of their thoughts expressed in spoken language in class would give them fewer opportunities to speak than Australian students. In addition, Japanese students do not commit themselves to interaction in discussions if they find Australian students’ contribution irrelevant.

In fact, there are instances where Japanese students seem to ‘switch off’ and choose to stop engaging in discussions when irrelevance is perceived. The following exchange from one of the focus group interviews with Japanese students seems to illustrate this:

[37] M2: I think it is possible that Asian students just give up if they find it [discussion] pointless.
F8: Often it’s not because lack of understanding but because of lack of attention.
[23:248-249 M2&F8]

This aspect of Japanese students’ silence does not seem to be recognised by lecturers (which will be discussed in the section 4.2 on lecturers’ perceptions of Japanese students), as was the case with the student who neither challenged the lecturer nor gave up his own approach (see also 4.2). In this case, silence symbolises the message ‘I am not going to change my approach’ while in the quotation above, it symbolises the message ‘This discussion is pointless.’

In fact, negative feelings can be found among Japanese students accusing Australian students for saying what is irrelevant, as the following comments show:
[38] F9: My impression is that occasionally, occasionally, or well, often, how can I say, because they can use English, they, like, say what they don’t need to say. How can I put it...
I: What do you mean by ‘what they don’t need to say?’
F9: Well for example, going off the track. But because they are native speakers, they can say even tedious things as much as they like, right? [20:48:50 F9]

Furthermore, some students argue that they are unfairly judged as incompetent because of their silence:

[39] When I feel I am perhaps misunderstood is, like, it is said that, like over here, how can I say, if you don’t claim where you stand, or if you don’t speak up, um people would think you are not thinking at all, something like that. I think there is a tendency to be regarded that way. [8:152 M5]

[40] I don’t worry [about participation marks] too much. (laugh) Well, but I wonder what it is to ‘participate’. For example, may be there are students who always ask questions, but if you know [the answer], you don’t need to ask questions, right? [30:87 F7]

Whether or not the comments which these students have in mind would be found irrelevant in the framework of the Australian higher education system is not possible to discern in the present research. There might be cases in which Australian students’ comments are actually irrelevant, but the point is that there seem to be cases where Japanese students’ thoughts and ideas which are potentially relevant are likely to remain unspoken, and unrecognised. However, it is also possible that these comments from Japanese students on relevant speech in the classroom may be used, in some cases, to justify their silence due to inability to participate because of lack of interactive competence or lexico-grammatical competence.

Naturally the question arises as to what is actually regarded as ‘irrelevant’ by Japanese students but ‘relevant’ by Australian students. Australian students talking about personal knowledge or personal experiences is noticed as marked behaviour by Japanese students, which suggest that they themselves do not contribute their personal knowledge or experiences in class.

[41] For example, it is impressive to see them [Australian students] making clever use of their own knowledge or something they have seen on TV, or something from other books that they read not necessarily for the particular class. [28:114 F4]

If Japanese students do not see the relevance of personal experiences or knowledge brought in from outside the classroom, it is possible that the knowledge learned in the classroom may not be associated with personal life outside the classroom in Japanese students’ ideas of ‘knowledge,’ while Australian students were often found to be associating their personal life outside the classroom with the knowledge learned in the
classroom.

This difference in turn can reinforce the problem of participation for Japanese students if they are not familiar with local issues and culture such as history, media, sports, entertainment or general social issues which Australian students often seem to bring into classroom discussion.

[42] Especially when those people who ask questions to the lecturers, who have their own stances, bring in examples from something they are personally familiar with, well, often these things are not familiar with me, and I feel ‘Oh, I have no idea,’ and give up. [22:18 F10]

It was mentioned earlier that it could be the local Australian students’ colloquial English and their style of interaction and not the lecturer’s which causes difficulties for Japanese students to participate in discussions. Bringing in ‘local’ topics and cultural, historical background is likely to reinforce the disadvantage of Japanese students who are already unfamiliar with sociolinguistic norms of classroom interaction. However, this is not to say that local issues should not be brought up in class. Overseas students can be encouraged to know about the everyday concerns of Australian public if they wish to make the best of their studies in Australia. On the other hand, there are also relevant issues in countries other than Australia, which could be brought into class discussions. Through personal correspondence with a lecturer in business in an Australian university, an account was obtained in which one Australian student showed his surprise saying ‘Asians can contribute!’ after Asian overseas students actively participated in his class. What this lecturer did was simply to bring up a number of examples from Asian countries related to the issue being discussed, so that Asian students were able to share their background knowledge with the class.

Aside from the difficulties coming from differences and gaps in schema and interpretive frame, Japanese students do show signs of adaptation. Japanese students indicated that they recognise or even experience the relevance of a different education framework.

[43] I know that for questions, for questions, we Japanese students only look for the answers. It’s like ‘So what is the answer?’ But it looks like students here often pour out things which make me think ‘It’s got nothing to do with the question!’ …But the lecturers don’t say things I would say such as ‘You are off the track,’ if I was them. Rather, they seem to value these comments. I think these things may be important, but for us, it is the most difficult thing, for Japanese people. [27:123 F4]

It can be seen in the comment above that although the student finds the new framework ‘important,’ she cannot adapt herself to it easily. However, it is also possible to find
Japanese students’ adaptation to the Australian education framework. One of the Japanese students commented on the active participation of some Australian students, comparing how participation is viewed in Japan and in Australia:

[44] I think that kind of participation is actually to receive some feedback. It doesn’t really look like they want to show off like Japanese do, does it? It’s not that they want to show that they know this and that, but somehow it’s like genuinely, they share what they know and want to get some feedback for it. [13:109 M8]

He also described his own positive experience from participating in class:

[45] I said something once, in class. I expressed my ideas and the lecturer expanded on my ideas. That was quite good, as learning. [13:13 M8]

In fact, numerous comments from Japanese students indicate their appreciation of the Australian educational framework as allowing them to explore their ‘own’ ideas and opinions. The expression jibun no kangae ‘my own idea(s)’ was frequently used when they described what they like about studying at university in Australia. They also perceive themselves having sufficiently adapted, particularly in written assignments. However, the spoken mode of communication is perceived as the major difficulty in their adaptation. While written assignments do not require immediate output and interaction with other students, spoken learning processes or ‘performance’ to show competence in a certain subject does. One of the Japanese students who described Australian students as good at improvising jokes in class often uses manga ‘cartoons’ in his presentations. At the beginning of a presentation in his Chinese class, for example, he showed the class a four-column cartoon in Chinese - the original was in Japanese - on an overhead transparency. He finds this strategy useful to attract attention as well as making his presentations interesting, but it can also be a way of compensating for the difficulty in spoken performance by a written mode of ‘performance’ in manga characters’ spoken words. This student in fact admires Australian students for being clever in ‘improvising jokes.’ Thus, as we have seen, immediate classroom contact situations – oral communication - seem to provide the most difficult task for Japanese students in their academic performance.

4.1.4 Summary: Self-perceptions of Japanese students

Japanese students’ comments obtained from interviews provided a number of explanations of their silence. However, as it has already been noted, these explanations are not completely independent from one another but rather mutually reinforcing. For example, silence may result when, as a consequence of lack of English language proficiency,
students cannot find an appropriate linguistic expression of their ideas but this can in turn affect students’ confidence and lead to inhibition about participation, which can be explained as psychological withdrawal. As for the silence due to time required for cognitive processing, if the need for thinking time is longer than that of the other students, silence can also be regarded as a result of students’ sociocultural background in which they are simply not accustomed to interact in ways considered norms in Australian university classrooms.

What we can find in these explanations is not only that the linguistic, cognitive and psychological aspects of communication appear to contribute to the silence of Japanese students, but also that different levels of social organisation should be considered in order to ascertain how silence is constructed through interaction in the classroom as well as in perceptions of individuals and groups who participate in classroom learning activities. These levels of social organisation are individual, interactive and sociocultural, and having these different levels of social organisation in perspective is beneficial in that it allows the scrutinising of the macro and micro aspects of social events as well as analysing their interrelationship. Layder (1996) lists four levels of social organisation for guiding planning, analysis and understanding in social research: self, situated activity, setting and context. In the present research, the individual can be considered as Layder’s ‘self’ level, the interactive as ‘situated activity,’ and sociocultural framing as setting and context. The setting in the present research is the institutional setting of education, but it is a part of the wider context of society and thus, since full consideration of the wider context of society is outside the scope of the present research, the educational setting is considered to be the micro-level realisation of the wider social organisation of the macro context.

These three levels of social organisation are useful in accounting for silence, as Sifianou (1997) argues that participation in social interaction is determined by ‘cultural norms,’ ‘situational norms’ and ‘individual traits’ (p. 63). Thus, silence in the classroom in relation to the linguistic aspect of communication can be explained at the level of individual lexico-grammatical proficiency, at the level of interactive proficiency which would require sociolinguistic competence to participate, and at the level of sociocultural competence which requires knowledge of and adaptation to participant structures and expected behaviour within a sociocultural framing of a particular community. Similarly, silence in relation to the cognitive aspect of communication can be explained in terms of individual intelligence and cognitive processing speed, in terms of learned speed of interaction, and in terms of socioculturally expected norms of rapidity of response. Finally,
silence in terms of the psychological aspect of communication can be explained similarly in terms of personality (for example, shyness or extroversion), in terms of risk assessment of threat to face in interaction, and in terms of socioculturally framed politeness systems.

In addition, as has been mentioned, these aspects of communication have overlapping elements. For example, language processing time is not only affected by lexico-grammatical proficiency but also by thinking speed of individuals not necessarily related to language proficiency. Perceptions of linguistic competence can also be related to both the linguistic and the psychological aspects of communication. Silence which is likely to occur due to a gap in sociocultural norms of relevance in the classroom can be considered to come from what constitutes ‘knowledge’ in cognitive terms and psychological terms. Similarly, another explanation of silence - gaps in knowledge schema - can be an overlapping element across the linguistic and cognitive aspects of communication which affect silence. Figure 4.1 summaries the explanations of silence from the point of view of the Japanese students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINGUISTIC</th>
<th>COGNITIVE</th>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL</th>
<th>(LINGUISTIC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL</td>
<td>Lexico-grammatical proficiency</td>
<td>Intelligence processing time</td>
<td>Personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Language proficiency]</td>
<td>[Knowledge]</td>
<td>[Second language anxiety]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACTIVE</td>
<td>Sociolinguistic norms of participation</td>
<td>Speed of interaction</td>
<td>Risk of threat to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIO-CULTURAL</td>
<td>Participant structures and expected behaviour</td>
<td>Social norms of rapidity of interaction</td>
<td>Orientation to politeness systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Sociocultural norms of relevance]</td>
<td>[linguistic norms of relevance]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Model of silence in the classroom derived from Japanese students’ comments

This model shows how Japanese students’ silence can be constructed at different levels of social organisation in linguistic, cognitive and psychological aspects of classroom communication. Although the model manages to show what factors are involved in the construction of silence in the classroom, it is not possible to see how much weight each of these factors bear. In other words, it is not clear which of these are more responsible than others, or regarded as more responsible than others. In interviews, linguistic proficiency was the most frequently mentioned explanation for silence by Japanese students (more than half of the Japanese students who participated in interviews), while other factors such as politeness, relevance or personality were mentioned less frequently and less directly associated with silence. In fact, international students’ comments on academic improvement given for the survey at Macquarie University (Braddock et. al 1995)
concentrated on demand for more support for their English skills, including teaching
Australian slang. Although language proficiency was ranked second in the multiple choice
questionnaire as an explanation for not asking questions in the classroom following
shyness and embarrassment, comments from Japanese students and international students
seem to suggest that international students regard their linguistic proficiency as one of the
major reasons for staying silent. It should also be noted that the questionnaire had only
three options: ‘I am too shy and embarrassed,’ ‘my English is insufficient,’ and ‘the
lecturers may be offended if they do not know how to answer the question,’ which would
not tell whether ‘embarrassment’ could include embarrassment caused by potential
exposure of one’s insufficient English or of general academic ability.

Nevertheless, Japanese students’ comments showed that sociocultural background is
also considered to be an explanation of silence, confirming findings of existing research (cf.
Chapter 2, section 2.5.3). Having been socialised into the classroom culture of Japan,
Japanese students bring different assumptions about knowledge and learning processes,
which may clash with Australian norms of learning and result in Japanese students’ silence.
Moreover, the perceptions of Japanese students indicate that there is a lack of
communication and contact between international students and local Australian students,
which suggests that international students’ interactive and sociocultural adaptation to
Australian university life may not be sufficiently achieved.

However, whether Japanese students’ silences in open discussion are considered as a
consequence of lack of language proficiency or as a consequence of cultural differences,
stereotypes are created, and what is actually happening in specific interactions may be
overlooked. There are certainly individual differences and also contextual differences in
any interaction. As we have seen in the comments of Japanese students, instances of
‘silencing’ may be found, which means that Japanese students’ silence may not only be
‘produced’ by themselves but also ‘co-constructed’ with their lecturers or peers.

The last point to be made regarding Japanese students’ explanations of their silence is
their own interpretation of these explanations. Japanese students’ comments express their
dilemma about their inability to break their silence. When they explained their silence, ‘I
cannot’ or ‘It is difficult for us’ were frequently used to indicate their inability to speak up.
This perception of inability to participate seems to be reflected in Japanese students’
compensatory strategies described in their interview comments. As presented earlier in
4.1.3.4, there were cases in which Japanese students made an arrangement for their
participation in advance. These cases seem to reflect Japanese students’ efforts to
overcome their inability in order to participate. Taking a seat near the lecturer was also
given as a strategy to make speaking less threatening compared with having to speak up to
address the lecturer from a distance. Thus, whatever the source, inability to participate can
be identified as one way to interpret Japanese students’ silence.

However, what often accompanied these expressions of inability was Japanese
students’ awareness of how norms of communicative behaviour in Australian university
classrooms differed from Japanese norms. In fact, the Japanese students interviewed were
mostly already aware of the Australian norms through their secondary education or
academic preparation programmes in Australia. Thus, even though they seem to know
what is expected from students in Australian classrooms, they ‘cannot’ break their silence,
which they perceive is due to the factors - linguistic, cognitive, psychological - presented
in the above model.

It appears, though, that inability is not the only aspect of withdrawal from participation.
Some students indicated that they do not like participating or asking questions in class,
which cannot be simply described as inability. Although Japanese students generally
expressed a positive attitude toward discussion as a learning process, they also expressed
their apprehension about being expected to participate in discussions. Thus, not only
inability but also resistance can be observed in Japanese students’ silence. Some Japanese
students told of their preference to take a seat in which they are likely to get less attention
from the lecturer or the tutor, which is an avoidance strategy. One of the Japanese students
said in an interview that she was going to skip a tutorial because it was too small, and she
would be expected speak more often than in larger classes. These strategies appear to be
used in order to avoid situations in which silence is not tolerated. In other words, with
these strategies, these Japanese students seem to resist the pressure to participate. Silence
was chosen intentionally in these cases, while silence due to inability whether it is
linguistic, cognitive or psychological, can be called unintentional (cf. Kurzon 1997).

However, whether silence is intentional or unintentional is a complicated question, as
Jaworski (1993) claims. Intentional silence can occur due to the gaps in sociocultural
norms of classroom communication as in the case when interaction may be found
irrelevant and pointless by Japanese students or when sociolinguistic norms of
participation in Australian classrooms make it hard for Japanese students to participate, but
it can also be a result of perceived inability or potential recognition of inability. In some of
the comments of Japanese students, it is possible to find that there is what could be called
‘risk assessment time,’ when students assess the risk of negative perceptions of what and
how they speak by other participants in discussions.

[46] I often hesitate like ‘Shall I speak, or not.’ While I am doing this, other people will say this and
that, so there is nothing more I can say. But it looks Aussies don’t have that kind of hesitation I
have. [30:82 F7]

As in some of the comments given earlier, if one participates, there is a risk of saying
something irrelevant, being silenced or interrupted or, if the speaker struggles, of losing the
floor or producing a long silent pause. This risk seems to be carefully assessed, and the
chance of participation can be lost because of this hesitation caused by careful assessment
but can also be dropped intentionally if the risk is found too high. Thus, this type of
withdrawal from participation can have an unintentional element as well as intentional
element. Nevertheless, as has been discussed, Japanese students seem to bring higher
criteria for relevant and acceptable speech to classroom interaction than Australian
students, which seems to create a psychological barrier of ‘I should not speak’ rather than
‘I cannot speak.’ However, for most of the Japanese students who are in their process of
adaptation to Australian education, ‘I should not speak’ gradually seems to change to ‘I
should say this’ as their awareness and exposure to Australian classroom practices develop.
This means that it is likely that sociocultural framing has a greater impact on the silence of
‘resistance’ while individual variables have more impact on the silence of ‘inability,’
leaving interactive variables in between ‘resistance’ and ‘inability.’ How these variables
and aspects of communication can be realised and interrelated in actual classroom settings
is to be discussed in chapter 5, 6 and 7 with data from the classroom case studies.

4.2 Perceptions of Japanese students from lecturers’ perspectives

In this section, Japanese students’ silence is explored from lecturers’ perspectives. The
results are mostly drawn from the lecturer questionnaire devised for the present research
and the survey study on teaching of international students conducted at Macquarie
University (Braddock et. al 1995) discussed in section 4.1 above (see also Chapter 3,
section 3.2.1.5). The first question is whether Japanese students’ self image of ‘silent
group’ is actually shared by their lecturers. The second question is, if they are perceived as
a ‘silent group,’ how the silence of Japanese students is interpreted by lecturers. Finally, by
comparing lecturers’ interpretations with the Japanese students’ explanations of their
silence, an attempt will be made to find problematic areas in silence in communication
between lecturers and Japanese students.

4.2.1 Silent image of Japanese students
The results of the survey on international students at Macquarie University (as mentioned, 83% of the respondents were from Asian countries) and the lecturer questionnaire at The University of Sydney indicated a general tendency for lecturers to perceive international students and Japanese students to be inactive in classroom participation. The Macquarie study shows that 50-60% of the lecturer respondents find international students to be quiet, silent and not actively asking questions in lectures and tutorials, while only 3% of the respondents agreed to ‘Students ask many questions.’ Table 4.5 below is adapted from the results presented in Braddock et al. (1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are interactive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are quiet</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are silent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students ask many questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students ask relatively few questions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students don’t ask any questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Staff perceptions of international students during lecture or tutorial time (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p.21 Table 22)

The responses to the lecturer questionnaire at The University of Sydney showed half of the lecturer respondents mentioning low frequency of participation or silence from Japanese students in their classes, even though, unlike the Macquarie study, they were asked open questions without revealing the focus on silence of the present research. The results of both the survey and the questionnaire suggest that teaching staff tend to find Japanese students silent. This means that the image of silent Japanese students is held by both Japanese students themselves and their lecturers. At this point, it is naive to assume that the silences described by Japanese students and lecturers are exactly the same. It is important to examine what the lecturers mean when they express their observations about the Japanese students’ silence, because ‘what,’ ‘when’ and ‘how’ silence is observed and constructed are the major concerns of this present research.

Silence in different participation structures of classroom was presented in the earlier section of 4.1.2 in this chapter, with references to pressure to talk, level of public exposure and expected amount of silence being drawn from Japanese students’ interview comments. When lecturers’ comments on Japanese students’ silence are examined in terms of participation structures, similar patterns can be found in the distribution of Japanese students’ silence. From lecturers’ points of view, Japanese students were often found to be silent in open discussions, as can be seen in a comment such as ‘Often silent when other students engage in discussion. [LQ3]’ Thus, what was found from the Japanese students’
comments regarding their silence in open discussions was confirmed in lecturers’
comments.

Lecturers also found Japanese students ‘reluctant to ask questions’ in class, which was
echoed by Japanese students themselves in their interview comments. This tendency of
reluctance to ask questions was also found in international students in general in the
Macquarie University survey, as shown in Table 4.5 above. However, the way this silence
was described by Japanese students and lecturer respondents to the questionnaire was
different in that Japanese students tend to find Australian students’ active questioning
behaviour rather marked whereas lecturers tend to find Japanese students’ reluctance to ask
questions marked, occasionally showing their surprise at the quality of their written work
or thoughtful responses when nominated to speak:

[1] Some students are quiet, and don’t speak much in class but write very good essays when they
have time to think and compose their sentences on paper. [LQ5]

[2] Sometimes they are reluctant to ask questions, but when asked for a response they are thoughtful
in their answer. [LQ8]

These comments reflect contradictory images - ‘silent’ students versus ‘thoughtful
answers’ and ‘good essays’ - as the use of the conjunction ‘but’ implies. Australian
lecturers appear to regard oral performance in class as an important criterion for academic
competence in Australian classrooms. In fact, in questionnaire responses, silence was
generally mentioned as one of the ‘problems’ of Japanese students in their classes. Thus, it
is possible that Japanese students’ silence in participation structures such as open class
discussions or teacher-centred ‘straight’ lecturing can be recognised as negatively marked
behaviour by Australian lecturers who expect students to ask questions and be interactive
in these participation structures. The underlying assumption among the lecturers is that the
more interaction there is in class, the better learning takes place. Thus, if there are silent
students, they are seen to hinder the effective learning through interaction. It should also be
noted that Japanese students seem to recognise this gap, as their comments indicated that
they often compare their behaviour with Australian students’ to assess their own academic
performance.

However, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, Japanese students regarded Australian
students’ questioning behaviour with not only surprise but also critically, even pointing out
they feel misjudged by lecturers as incompetent students because of their silence.
Therefore, it is possible that there is a gap in Japanese students’ and the lecturers’ views of
the relationship between silence and students’ academic competence.
With regard to the participation structure in which the teacher nominates a student for a response, both Japanese students and the lecturers seem to agree that Japanese students are not silent. ‘Thoughtful answers’ can be given when Japanese students are nominated, as in the comment by the lecturer given in [2] above. A personal communication with a lecturer of social work at the University of Sydney also supports this, in that Japanese students in this lecturers’ class ‘are very good, giving lots of interesting comments, and sometimes they even joke,’ but when she was asked if they initiate talk, she remembered it was always when she nominated them that they spoke. A similar story was also heard from another lecturer from the same university, who was surprised to find that a Japanese student in her class, who had never initiated speaking in class, responded in a confident manner when she was specifically directed a question.

4.2.2 Lecturers’ explanations of the silence of Japanese students

Lecturer respondents of the questionnaire at the University of Sydney provided a number of explanations for Japanese students’ silence, although the amount of information was not as large as that obtained in the Japanese student interviews. In lecturers’ comments, while there were explanations which were explicitly given to account for the silence of Japanese students, there were also comments which implicitly account for the silence. For example, some lecturers indicated one of the problems of Japanese students is lack of confidence to speak up, which suggests that lack of confidence is one of the explanations for silence. The following sections on lecturers’ explanations of the Japanese students’ silence consider both types of accounts.

4.2.2.1 Language proficiency

In the same way as Japanese students indicated, a lack of language proficiency was one of the major factors which lecturers provided as an explanation of Japanese students’ silence. However, when lack of language proficiency was mentioned, it was often accompanied by lack of confidence in language proficiency to explain why lecturers think Japanese students do not participate. Below are examples:

[3] Poor language skills lead to lack of confidence in class participation. [LQ26]

[4] They are more comfortable responding to written questions, because they are self-conscious about their verbal skills or lack of them. [LQ8]

Thus, lecturers seem to see Japanese students’ silence as a reflection of their lack of
confidence in language skills, as well as ‘poor language skills’ as a direct cause of silence. As to language proficiency itself, there are mixed opinions about it. Weak language skills of Japanese students were frequently mentioned as a problem, but on the other hand, some comments referred to Japanese students’ English skills being better than other students from Asian non-English speaking backgrounds. One of these comments actually indicates the contradictory observations of a lecturer on Japanese students:

[5] Their English is usually better than that of other Asian students and yet they have been more reluctant to converse, than, say, the Chinese students. [LQ11]

Lecturers may find the explanation of lack of confidence in language proficiency more appropriate than that of poor language proficiency itself, if they find Japanese students’ written work or responses to direct questions unexpectedly good or satisfactory. However, although there were comments indicating a positive perception of Japanese students’ English proficiency, it also must be mentioned that Japanese students’ weaknesses in spoken English was frequently mentioned as one of the problems. In most of the comments in which lack of spoken language proficiency was mentioned, it was related to silence, but in other comments, weakness in both spoken and written English skills was listed separately from the issue of silence. The lack of spoken English skills has been a frequently discussed explanation of Japanese students’ silence in existing literature (cf. Lucas 1984; Anderson 1992), and this is repeated by the questionnaire participants in the present research.

Nevertheless, when we look at overseas students in general, it is quite clear that the problem of language skills is the major concern for lecturers. In the survey study at Macquarie University (Braddock et. al 1995), 46% of the staff responded that the level of English of students from Asia-Pacific region is poor, 49% indicated ‘adequate,’ while 5% indicated ‘good,’ and 0% ‘excellent’ (see Table 4.6 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.6 Staff impressions of the level of English of students from AP region (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 18 Table 17)*

Comments from teaching staff in this survey regarding what actions they encourage international students to take for their academic success revealed that language is a serious
concern for staff respondents. In relation to improving English language skills as well as to enhancing cultural adaptation to Australian learning environment, the teaching staff encouraged international students to mix with Australian students more often.

4.2.2.2 Psychological withdrawal from communication

As it was mentioned in the section above, Japanese students’ silence was often regarded as a result of a lack of confidence in their English proficiency as well as a lack of proficiency in English itself. In Japanese students’ interview comments, lack of confidence in English proficiency was also found to be a major factor in Japanese students’ withdrawal from participation. However, there were other factors which seem to play a role in Japanese students’ silence due to lack of confidence such as relevance of ideas or of response, or students’ background knowledge and experiences related to the topics. It was found that negative self-perceptions of level of understanding of materials and subject matter, and amount of preparation for class could also lead to lack of confidence to speak up in class. These factors other than language proficiency were not mentioned by lecturers in the questionnaire, and it is possible that the role of language proficiency and lack of confidence in language may be overemphasised by teaching staff.

In the Macquarie University study, there was no specific question about lack of confidence in class participation, except for the one already presented earlier which confirmed students’ preference for asking questions after lectures to asking questions during lectures (Table 4.1). Teaching staff comments did not refer to the aspect of lack of confidence in knowledge of subject matter either.

The only related issue pointed out by the lecturers is Japanese students’ tendency to ‘seek a “right” or “wrong” answer to a question, which raises again the issue, discussed earlier, of their application of tighter criteria for appropriateness of response. If, as Japanese students’ comments suggested, ‘acceptable’ content of talk in class was limited for Japanese students, the psychological barrier to avoid losing face by saying something ‘wrong’ would be higher for them.

This returns us to the impact of sociocultural background on Japanese students’ silence, but nevertheless, it seems that factors other than English proficiency are not likely to be recognised by lecturers. For example, it might be difficult for lecturers to know that students may choose to stay silent due to the risk of asking questions which may betray their weak grasp of theories, as one of the Japanese student interviewees stated.

4.2.2.3 Norms of interaction
Although Japanese students seem to find the rapid interaction in Australian classrooms difficult to cope with, lecturers did not make reference to this aspect of communication. However, there was one comment which implied that Japanese students are found to be having difficulties in adapting to the rapidity of interaction in classroom discussions:

[6] Japanese students sometimes find it hard to adapt to the more critical, analytical, argumentative style of social science here, and to the cut and thrust of classroom discussions. [LQ34]

It seems that what was expressed as ‘bullets are shooting’ by a Japanese student can be rephrased by ‘the cut and thrust of classroom discussions’ in the lecturer’s comment above. This lecturer appears to find the rapidity of interaction and the difference in learning styles playing a role in Japanese students’ problems in classroom participation. He also mentioned that ‘their English is often better than students from other Asian non-English speaking countries.’ However, other than this lecturer, no reference was made to this sociolinguistic aspect of classroom discussion which may leave Japanese students ‘left out’ from classroom discussion and thus ‘silenced.’

4.2.2.4 Cognitive processing

No reference was made by lecturers in their questionnaire responses to the thinking speed of Japanese students in their observation of silence. Japanese students expressed their frustration of not being allowed enough time to think, but this does not seem to be recognised by Australian teaching staff. It is certainly difficult to make a clear distinction between the cognitive processing time required for formulation of language and for reaction to the content of stimulus such as a question. However, it seems that the gap in ‘reaction time’ may not be recognised by lecturers but instead may be perceived as a consequence of other factors such as lack of language proficiency, lack of confidence or cultural differences in learning styles.

Nevertheless, there still can be some space for considering how rapidly Japanese students are trained to react to stimulus in class in terms of ideas. This ‘training’ to react rapidly in terms of cognition, as well as to act rapidly in terms of turn-taking as discussed in the above section on sociolinguistic norms of interaction can be attributed to the socialisation process in students’ learning experiences in Japanese schools and in social life in Japan including the family environment. However, although lecturers do seem to recognise the impact of the sociocultural background of Japanese students on their behaviour in the classroom just as literature on international students and researchers in
multicultural classrooms does, the complexity of multicultural classrooms where participants who bring different sociocultural backgrounds meet and negotiate participation appears to be overlooked under the overarching label of ‘cultural differences.’

4.2.2.5 Influence of wider sociocultural context: gaps in educational expectations

Along with lack of language proficiency and confidence, cultural or educational background was also given as an explanation of Japanese students’ silence, as in the following comments provided in lecturer questionnaire at The University of Sydney:

[7] Often silent when other students engage in discussion. It does not always mean language difficulty, one suspects culture that expects only instruction. [LQ3]

[8] An inability to be critical of the material they learn, to question authority, and to speak to their teachers in a relaxed manner....A less authoritarian and hierarchical educational system is needed so that Japanese students can develop to the fullest extent of their developmental potential. [LQ13]

Japanese students’ comments which indicated their readiness to accept what they are told by their lecturers match these comments above by lecturers. In other words, both lecturers and Japanese students consider the sociocultural and particularly the educational background of Japanese students is one of the major explanations for their silence. In the second comment [8] above, this lecturer is referring to two types of silence which may be due to the sociocultural background of Japanese students. One is not having anything to say if students do not have any critical opinions but rather accepting what was said or found in written materials. The other is being silent about challenging lecturers who are assumed to have a higher status in the social role relationships in the classroom. Both types of silence were observed in Japanese students’ comments in interviews.

Deferece towards lecturers

In the Macquarie University survey, there was a general tendency among teaching staff to see international students as polite (see Table 4.7 below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Politeness</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Teaching staff perceptions of international students’ politeness (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995. p.20 Table 20)

The study interprets this politeness as a reflection of Asian students’ perception of academic teaching staff as ‘parental figures’ (p.20) who should be experts in everything. This tendency was reflected in a comment by a lecturer in the questionnaire at The University of Sydney:

[9] Many believe that the teacher is the sole expert/transmitter of knowledge. [LQ28]

As shown in these results, it appears that Japanese students are perceived to operate on their own sociocultural framework of behaviour of not challenging people of higher status, such as teachers at school. As a result of this, they can be silent about critical opinions and ideas. However, it does not necessarily mean that Japanese students always accept and respect what lecturers believe and tell students. Although silence can be a strategy to avoid confrontation and violation of social rules at the surface level of communication, it may not actually be a message of true acceptance and submission but instead a message of disregard at a deeper level. An example can be found in the Japanese students’ comment given earlier about the incident in which he did not disagree with the lecturer but ignored the lecturer’s advice and kept to his own approach. Therefore, it is possible that ‘polite’ behaviour of Japanese students could be misunderstood; resistance and disagreement may be hidden below the surface.

Lack of critical approach

In lecturer responses to the questionnaire, what was frequently seen in Japanese students was a lack of ‘critical approach’ to learning:

[10] ...I find that they have difficulty with adopting a critical perspective. They tend to seek a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer to a question and this is not possible from a sociological perspective. They tend to learn by rote rather than critical inquiry. This holds them back behind Australian educated students. [LQ25]

[11] Writing is reasonable. Grammar is strong. But critical thinking skills often prevent these students from achieving high grades. [LQ4]

The lack of a critical approach to learning, as already mentioned, means that Japanese students have less to say than do students who are familiar with a critical approach.
Furthermore, if students are expected to perform orally to show critical thinking skills in Australian university classrooms, not performing in this respect would be seen as inadequate by lecturers. In addition, this critical questioning can often entail showing critical attitudes to lecturers as authorities in the relevant field, and may therefore be difficult for Japanese students to perform.

Other aspects of the influence of the Japanese educational and sociocultural framework such as irrelevance of students’ individual personal background in the classroom, suggested by some students, were not specifically mentioned by lecturers. However, in the case of a lecturer (who is a Malay-Australian) who gave accounts of Asian students actively participating in class through personal communication mentioned earlier, students were given personally and culturally familiar topics in which to participate. Interestingly, the only lecturer who expressed perceptions of Japanese students which were totally different from other lecturers in the questionnaire results was the only person who did not have English as a first language. This lecturer’s first language was Chinese, although English was the strongest language. The Japanese students’ strength was described by this lecturer as follows:

[12] Open-mindedness and desire for learning, confident and independent approach to own learning, generally high level of participation in class [LQ31]

It is possible that because lecturers with Asian backgrounds share similar personal and cultural backgrounds, there may be more opportunities for Japanese students to bring up their background knowledge to be shared in class. It is also possible, on the other hand, that Anglo Australian lecturers may not be giving as many opportunities as lecturers from Asian backgrounds do for Asian overseas students to share their background knowledge.

**Relevant information in the classroom**

One of the explanations of silence given by Japanese students themselves was that when they find what is discussed pointless and leading them nowhere, they stop being engaged and stay silent. This partly can be considered as coming from the fact that the process of interactive learning itself may not be valued by Japanese students. Instead a preference may be found for an outcome or one right answer. However, there actually may be some cases where other students could be off the track and irrelevant. Silence in this latter case which may be a ‘silent’ message of ‘this discussion is going off the track, the important point we need to consider is...’ does not seem to be recognised by lecturers,
naturally because it is not ‘heard’. Rather, it is possible that this type of silence is recognised as ‘lack of critical thinking skills’ when it actually bears a ‘critical’ message about the direction of the discussion, in which case all the participants in class may be missing out on a more meaningful discussion.

However, as presented in an earlier section of this chapter, Japanese students are not necessarily slaves to their own culture. They are in fact found to be mostly on the transition to their adaptation to Australian education, becoming more and more aware of differences and what is expected in Australian classrooms. Furthermore, many seem to appreciate the academic values of Australian universities such as originality, creativity and independence in learning. Macquarie University survey results also indicated that about 60% of international students have a desire to develop critical thinking skills, and that 69% think developing their own ideas in learning is more important than reciting the given idea (Table 4.8 and 4.9 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you want to develop your ability to think critically whilst reading books/articles?</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 Student desires to develop critical thinking skills whilst reading (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 46 Table 76)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How strongly do you feel that it is important to develop your own ideas as opposed to reciting?</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very strongly</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite strongly</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9 Student attitudes toward developing own ideas as opposing to reciting (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 47 Table 78)

From the teaching staff point of view, however, these positive attitudes of international students and Japanese students toward adaptation to the framework of Australian education is not likely to be observed in their actual performance in the classroom. As lecturer respondents to The University of Sydney questionnaire and the Macquarie University survey frequently commented, lack of critical thinking skills was observed. Nearly 70% of
teaching staff respondents at Macquarie indicated that international student learning styles are different from Australian students, and moreover, more than half of the teaching staff think international students need to modify their method of learning (Table 4.10 and 4.11 below). Adaptation of attitude, then, might not guarantee adaptation in action which is to be observed in classroom performance as well as in written assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 International student learning styles differ from that of Anglo-Australian students (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 16 Table 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-respondents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11 International students should modify their methods of learning (adapted from Braddock et. al 1995 p. 24 Table 28)

In Table 4.11 above on modification of learning method, rather than interpreting the 15% ‘disagree’ and 21% ‘neutral’ based simply on judgement about the needs to modify, it may be reasonable to take into account teaching staff attempts to understand and accept international students’ backgrounds. Nevertheless, the fact that 56% feel the need for international students to modify their learning styles appears to indicate that students have to ‘perform’ their adaptation to Australian education for their academic success.

From the survey results, it is uncertain what performance is actually expected as ‘modification of learning style’, but judging from lecturers’ comments in the questionnaire, participating more actively, in other words less silence in the classroom, is certainly one of the requirements for successful academic performance in Australian university classrooms.

4.2.3 Summary

Results from the lecturer questionnaire and the Macquarie University survey were
generally consistent with the findings from interviews on how Japanese students’
perceived themselves in Australian university classrooms. From the lecturers’ point of
view, Japanese students were also found to be silent, and the silence was mostly attributed
to different educational practices in Japan and in Australia as well as lack of language
proficiency and lack of confidence in language proficiency.

However, covert messages behind the silence of Japanese students were not necessarily
recognised by lecturers. Disagreement, critical comments and jokes are not expected to be
voiced by students because they are not expected in Japanese classroom practices, but they
do exist behind the silence of Japanese students, as their interview comments indicated.
The important point here is that what is behind the silence is not always recognised but the
silence tends to be interpreted as ‘lack of critical thinking skills’ or ‘expression of
politeness.’

The other gap between the perceptions of Japanese students and lecturers is that
lecturers do not seem to notice that the silence could also be constructed through internal
organisation of intercultural classroom interaction. While the speed of talk and turn-taking
in Australian classrooms was found overwhelmingly rapid for Japanese students, lecturers
who regard it as a normal speed would not see how dazzled some Japanese students could
feel. How exactly this construction of silence through classroom interaction occurs is not
specifically described in interviews, questionnaires or surveys, but Japanese students’
comments suggested their silence is partly a result of unsuccessful negotiation of
participation. The investigation of this aspect of silence will be left to the case studies in
which video and audio recorded classroom interaction will be closely examined in
Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In any case, as the impact of educational practices in Japan seems to play a significant
role in Japanese students’ silence in Australian classrooms, it is necessary to consider the
sociocultural framing of educational practices in Japan as well as the linguistic realisation
of that framing. Hence, the next section presents educational practices in Japan including
linguistic practices in classroom settings which Japanese students coming to study in
Australia bring with them.

4.3 Educational practices in Japan

As the results of the interviews with Japanese students, the lecturer questionnaires and
the Macquarie University survey discussed in the sections above indicated, participants in those studies often attributed the silence of Japanese students to their Japanese educational background. Indeed, it has been argued by ethnographers such as Philips (1972, 1983) and Heath (1983) that when participants bring norms of interaction to the classroom which are different from expected norms, they may experience difficulties or may be found to have ‘deviant’ behaviours. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, there have been numerous claims that Japanese students’ silence in Western classrooms originates in their educational and cultural background. Therefore, it is necessary to have a close look at this ‘educational background’ in order to see how exactly it impacts on Japanese students’ participation in Australian classrooms.

In this section, the major resources I rely on are the fieldnotes and materials collected through observation of high school classes in Japan, video recorded classroom interaction data from one of these high schools, and the works of Kato (2001), Matsuda (2000), Yoneyama (1999) and Yamamoto (1997) which all discuss comparative studies of Japanese and Australian classroom cultures.

Kato (2001) studied Japanese exchange students’ experience in Australian classrooms and Australian exchange students’ experience in Japanese classrooms, using questionnaires to compare the cultures of learning in Japan and Australia. Matsuda (2000) compares teaching styles in Australian secondary schools with those in Japanese high schools, based on her classroom observations and interviews with teachers. Yoneyama (1999) conducted a survey in Japanese high schools and Australian secondary schools for a comparative study of Japanese and Australian education. The results of this survey were discussed in her book ‘The Japanese High School: silence and resistance.’ The book focuses on the controlling nature of modern and contemporary Japanese high schools and its ‘silencing’ effect on Japanese students, with numerous accounts of ‘silenced’ yet ‘resistant’ students. The anger and sufferings of Japanese students presented in Yoneyama’s book came from accounts by students who left their schools or are refusing to attend school because of the psychological and/or emotional burdens accompanying their school life. Rejection of schooling due to psychological reasons is not uncommon in Japanese high schools, and there are also cases in which students’ aversion to school caused physical symptoms such as headache or nausea. Through the ‘unheard’ voices of those Japanese students along with the survey results, Yoneyama attempts to explain how Japanese students are silenced in the education system in Japan. Yamamoto (1997) on the other hand put together her observations, questionnaire results, and students’ written comments about the silence and
self-expression of junior college students collected during her teaching career as a lecturer of Public Speaking and Communication Skills. This mixture of different approaches to and perspectives on the study of classroom cultures in Japan and in Australia ensures a balanced, holistic account of practices and assumptions.

4.3.1 ‘Culture of learning’ in Japan

4.3.1.1 The teacher-student relationship and expected roles

Generally, when the teacher-student relationship in Japan and in Australia is compared, we find a more hierarchical one in Japan and more egalitarian one in Australia. In Yoneyama’s (1999) survey study, 72% of Japanese students responded that it was never easy to discuss their personal problems with teachers, while only 22% of Australian students indicated ‘never.’ In addition, 93% of Japanese students indicated they do not feel comfortable about discussing personal problems with their teachers, whereas for 31% of Australian students, teachers are people with whom they feel they can share their personal matters. Yoneyama further gives examples of Japanese high schools being overprotective of criticism of the school using ‘layers of censorship.’ (p.69). The practice of *shido* ‘guidance’ originally described by Le Tendre (1996) as one of the key concepts reflecting Japanese teacher-student relationships is frequently referred to by Yoneyama. *Shido* implies strong control and power attached to the teacher, often exercised in the form of inspecting the personal items in students’ bags or checking excessive grooming such as the use of cosmetics. The teacher-student relationship in Japan is summarised by Yoneyama as ‘extremely teacher-centred and autocratic’ while in Australia ‘both the democratic paradigm and the autocratic paradigm co-exist with comparable strength’(p. 72).

In Kato’s study (2001), the same pattern can be found. Both Australian and Japanese exchange students thought that teacher-student relationships were more equal in Australia but more hierarchical in Japan. Australian teachers were described as ‘friendly’, ‘informal’ and ‘approachable,’ while Japanese teachers were described as ‘polite’, ‘formal’ and ‘strict.’ Australian students often found their own teachers having better rapport with students, and having better rapport with students was regarded as a good quality in a teacher. Interestingly, although Japanese students appreciated the friendly attitude of Australian teachers, they still gave credit to Japanese teachers for being good at discipline.

Some of the Japanese students in this study commented that not only psychologically but also physically teachers are higher than students are in the classroom, since usually there is a teaching platform in front of the blackboard where teachers stand while giving a
lesson. Japanese students also observed that Australian teachers often walked among students and physically stayed closer and on the same level as students.

In my own visits to Japanese high schools, in almost all the classes, teachers taught on teaching platforms from which they rarely came down to the students’ level. However, the teacher-student relationship was generally not as hierarchical and authoritarian as Yoneyama (1999) and Kato (2001) suggest. Both schools had a relatively liberated atmosphere, although the private school (hereafter JPR High School) had this to a greater degree than the public one (hereafter JPC High School). From my own experiences as a high school student and as a teacher in Japan, in most Japanese high schools, students are normally not allowed to leave the classroom during a lesson without permission. However, JPR High School allowed students to leave the classroom and come back whenever they wanted to during the class without asking permission from the teacher. Moreover, they could choose their own seats, which is also unusual in Japanese schools. The comparatively liberated policy of these schools could also be found in my informal meetings with the principals, who both accepted, without reluctance, having a researcher visit their schools to observe the classes. In this sense, these high schools have an openness and a more democratic atmosphere than most Japanese high schools and were not as tightly controlled as suggested in Yoneyama’s comments.

Generally in both schools teachers and students spoke to each other in a relaxed and informal manner. This relaxed and informal manner, however, was found more frequently outside class than during class, such as when students talk individually with teachers in the teachers’ room or in the corridors. The formality of the language used in the classroom during lessons by teachers and students varied depending on the level of rapport between the teacher and the students as well as on contextual factors such as whether the interaction occurred in a one-to-one private mode or teacher-to-class public mode. (for a detailed description of language use in Japanese classrooms, see section 4.3.2.)

In the two high schools visited in Japan, roughly two major types of teachers were observed in terms of different types of pedagogy. The proportion of the two groups was almost half and half. One group had a more authoritarian, teacher-centred, chalk-and-talk teaching style, while the other had a more interactive teaching style, and were often seen encouraging students to participate. Generally, the latter group tend to have better rapport with students, are often followed and surrounded by a small group of students before or after the class, and also interact in a less formal manner than the teachers in the former group during the class. However, whether taught by the traditional teachers or more
interactive ones, students were often found inattentive and bored, reading comics, sleeping with their heads in their arms on the desk, or having a quiet chat with classmates. In one case, a student was listening to music with his CD walkman during the class. The teacher, who was the interactive type, gently asked him to stop listening to music and asked his opinions about the issue being discussed in class. Students sleeping in class were usually ignored and not reproached. Even when interactive-type teachers encouraged students to participate, students were generally found uninterested and unmotivated, reluctantly responding to the teacher’s questions after a long pause or in short turns. Behaviour of Japanese students such as sleeping or reading comics during the class was also reported by Kato (2001) through the comments of Australian exchange students who studied in Japan. These Australian students found these behaviours of Japanese students ‘rude’ and ‘unacceptable’ (p.62) in Australian classrooms.

These ‘rude’ behaviours of Japanese students appear to invoke doubts about the ‘hierarchical’ relationship between teachers and students. Instead, the teachers’ indifference (at least on the surface) to these ‘unacceptable’ behaviours of students, as well as the students’ apparent lack of motivation to engage themselves in lessons, could be seen as ‘distance’ rather than ‘hierarchy.’ It should be noted, however, that teachers can have a lot of power over students due to the naishinsho report, ‘confidential academic and personal reports written by teachers on students’ (Yoneyama 1999: 262). This report is required by some universities as part of the assessment procedures of the entrance examination. At JPC High School, where almost 90% of the students proceed to university, student-teacher relationships can be affected by the fact that the report can influence a student’s future. In the case of JPR High School, most of the students pursue further education in special skills in technical colleges which mostly do not require naishinsho from high school. An Australian student’s comment from Kato’s (2001) study seems to describe the superficial ‘hierarchical’ relationship between teachers and students in Japan: ‘Japanese teachers and students were good at playing the role of teacher and students. They don’t behave as they are.’ (p.62) Thus, it seems that in the public sphere of the classroom, teachers and students maintain hierarchical distance as they play the ‘roles,’ but there is an ambiguity in whether the distance is based on power differences or lack of rapport.

4.3.1.2 Approaches to knowledge

The framing of teaching and learning in different education systems is often discussed
in terms of how knowledge is understood in each of these systems (cf. Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Galtung 1981; Milner & Quilty 1996). This is because the type of knowledge expected to be acquired by students shapes the way it is taught (cf. Yoneyama 1999, Milner & Quilty 1996, Ballard & Clanchy 1991, Willing 1988).

In Japanese classrooms, it seems that knowledge is assumed to be objective, isolated from the world where students live, and held by the teacher who ‘transfers’ it to students. Takeuchi (1995), although criticised partially by Yoneyama for his simplistic view on the direct causal relationship between rote-learning and examination hell, points out that ‘what is required to survive in the examination war is to learn and memorise “objective” knowledge, accessible to the masses and attainable by diligence and hard work’ (p.236, quoted in Yoneyama 1999). If only objective knowledge can be valid, it means that there is only one right answer to a question, and other ideas or options are regarded as irrelevant or wrong. In Kato’s (2001) study, Japanese students found a difference between Australian and Japanese schools in what is acceptable from students in the classroom:

The Japanese students found that Australian students raised any questions they had, however small or sometimes irrelevant they seemed. They thought teachers did not mind such questions, whereas they would be too embarrassed to raise any questions in a Japanese school, because ‘my teacher may say “Don’t you know such a basic thing?”’ or “You should know the answer”’ (p.63)

Yoneyama argues that traditional, teacher-centred pedagogy is prevalent in Japan, and this type of pedagogy ‘goes hand in hand with the objectivistic (or positivistic) view of knowledge’ (p.142). Japanese interviewees’ occasional criticisms towards Australian students’ questioning being excessive or irrelevant reported in section 4.1 in the present research can be explained by the fact that they are trained to avoid asking ‘trivial’ or ‘irrelevant’ questions. In fact, in Kato’s study, Australian students were regarded as immature by Japanese students because of their constant need to express themselves, whereas Japanese students were regarded as immature by Australian students because they do not ‘think for themselves’ or ‘express their opinions’ (p. 63).

In my observation of Japanese high school classes, there were only a few cases in which a student raised a question. Questions were almost never asked by students except for confirmation questions asked after being nominated by the teacher. What should be mentioned here, though, is that the student’s comments about a possible negative reaction of Japanese teachers quoted above from Kato’s study may not be representative of Japanese teachers. In JPR and JPC High Schools, although students asked few questions, teachers made efforts to save students’ face when they gave ‘wrong’ answers to their
questions. It may actually be the fear of losing face in front of the classmates which made the student in Kato’s study go so far as to say that her teacher may say ‘Don’t you know such a thing’, although teachers may not actually be so critical. At JPR High School, on one occasion when a student raised a question, the question was valued and addressed to the whole class, as shown below. (Except for the English classes, the transcription of classroom interaction was originally in Japanese. The English translation was done by me, and may not reflect the original lexical items due to the differences in syntactic organisation of English and Japanese. The data from JPR High School was transcribed from video-recording, but the data from JPC High School was written as notes during the observation, as recording was not allowed during the observation. Thus, data from JPR is more precise. In order to reflect the feel of the Japanese language used in context, I have translated in a way which may have produced unnatural-sounding English.)

[Excerpt 1: JPR High School Class 1 Japanese*]

1 T: What do you think the theme of Maihime, (.)
2 If you think about it, there are some. Which people who
3 read- read Maihime came up with. (0.6) And one is (0.3) I told
4 you about this a bit before, ((writes something on the board))
5 that because this is a story in year 21 in Meiji [period],
-> 6 S1: [Oh Mai] hime, isn’t it that,
7 (0.5)
8 9 T: [In Meiji]
-> 10 S1: [She ends] up dying apparently.
11 (0.4)
12 S2: What?
13 S3: What?
-> 14 S1: Flying up princess.
15 S2 Uh?
16 (0.2)
-> 17 T: I’ve got to do that too. (0.4) Maihime, what is this?
-> 18 This title what (0.5) although our talk is a bit off- off the track.
19 (0.4)
20 S1: Oh, I said something good, didn’t I?
21 (0.4)
22 T: Well Maihime, (1.2) who does that refer to?
23 S2: Elise.
24 S1: Elise. Dancer Elise.

.....

-> 25 T: We are a bit off the track but shall we talk about it. (0.3)
-> 26 Why is this title Maihime.
27 S1: Fashionable because it’s fashionable.

*Maihime literally means dancing princess. ‘Mai’ means dancing, and the verb ‘Mau’ means moving or dancing in circle, thus it also means going up in the air in a circular movement, as in ‘A leaf goes up in the air.’

In this excerpt, instead of giving a response to the teacher’s question in line 1, S1 brings up the possibility of interpreting ‘Maihime’ as a ‘princess who died and went up in the air.’
S1 suggests that Maihime implies the fate of Elise, who in his interpretation goes up in the sky (i.e. dies from psychological illness). The teacher is prompted by this comment (lines 17, 18), and although mentioning that they are ‘off the track,’ decides that they will talk about the meaning of the title (lines 25, 26).

At JPR High School, students asked only a few questions such as the one in the excerpt above which opened a new sequence. There were only two other cases of students asking a question which originated from their own interests. In other words, students rarely took the initiative in creating a new verbal exchange sequence. At JPC High School, questions of this type were not asked at all. The questions asked by students at JPC High School were confirmation questions which became a part of repair sequence (lines 2, 3) (cf. Sacks et al. 1974; Schegloff et al. 1977) within the sequence initiated by the teacher (line 1). The following excerpt illustrates this type of questioning by students:

[Excerpt 2: JPC High School Class 2 Classical Japanese]

1 T:  Number one in Two, okay, Mr. Tanabe.
2 -> S: Number one in Two?
3 -> T:  Eh? Number one in Two.
4 S:  Two.
5 T:  Right. It is two. Okay then number two, Mr. Kato.

As we can see, students rarely raise ‘new’ or ‘original’ questions in these Japanese high schools. Related to this issue of students’ questioning behaviour (or lack of it) is the issue of questioning knowledge itself. If ‘objectivistic’ knowledge is valued, knowledge is not likely to be questioned or challenged, which suggests that in Japan students are deterred from disagreeing or questioning the teacher or the materials provided. In Australian university classroom contexts, if students do not do this type of questioning, it is identified as a ‘lack of critical thinking skills,’ which was not only frequently referred to by the lecturers in their responses to the questionnaire for this present research but also found in general observations about Asian background students studying in Australia made in existing literature on international students (cf. Milner & Quilty 1996; Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Braddock et al. 1995).

Even though there appear to be a certain minority of teachers who work hard to give students opportunities to learn how they can express themselves in the classroom and ask questions more freely as shown above and as discussed by researchers such as Kubota (1999), teacher-centred pedagogy with no space for students to express their own ideas is still prevalent in Japan. Not only does it seem to block development of critical thinking but
also it is likely to exclude the relationship between the content of education and the real
world because objectivity requires Takeuchi’s ‘accessibility to the masses’ and the
subjective experiences of each individual have no relevance. Yoneyama says:

In Japanese schools where teacher-centred pedagogy is dominant, the student is discouraged
from relating knowledge to individual experience - as someone who has her/his ‘own’ views,
ideas, needs, emotions, and experiences, and mobilises these resources to interpret, modify,
analyse, create, and play with the knowledge. (p.143)

An article in Nichigō press (May 2000), a major Japanese community newspaper published
monthly in Australia, points out a difference in educational principles between Australia
and Japan. The Japanese author, who sends her children to a local Australian primary
school, describes how the theme ‘water’ is taught in different subjects, relating content to
real life outside school. For example, in a social science class, students learn how water
can get to their own city from the river. The author summarised her observations in the
primary schools as follows:

In Japan, extensive knowledge is gained from textbooks which is tested in entrance
examinations, but in Australia, rather than memorising knowledge, they tend to value the
capacity for decision-making on the basis of appropriate understanding and in relation to
application of knowledge. This is the fundamental difference in educational principles.’ (p.82
translation and italics mine)

Yoneyama (1999) argues that the ‘most profound difference’ between students in Japan
and in Australia was found in the ways responses to an open-ended questionnaire in her
survey were completed. The difference was that Japanese students mostly did not respond
to the open question except for a minority who gave a short answer, whereas Australian
students were articulate and expressive in their responses which were much longer than
those of Japanese students. The question was how they might wish to change school if they
could. Yoneyama goes on to argue that this silence of Japanese students is a reflection of
the pervasive silence in Japanese students at school:

The extremely autocratic mode of education of Japan has trained them to be receivers of the
knowledge given by teachers, not to ask questions, not to contradict or criticise teachers, and
ultimately not to think but just to listen and swallow what they are told. The silence among
Japanese students is the other side of the coin of the communication breakdown between
teachers and students. (p. 86)

Yoneyama’s view may appear extreme, but it is basically consistent with what other
sources referred to above show. There appears to be a gap in what ‘knowledge’ means in
Japan and in Australia, and this gap seems to be reflected in the different types of
pedagogy in Australian and Japanese classrooms. It should, however, be noted that a
minority of teachers in Japan is more democracy-oriented, while in Australia there seems to be a minority that is more autocracy-oriented, as my observations and Yoneyama (1999) suggest. However, what is worth noting - and it is generally acknowledged in all the resources for Japanese education referred to above - is Japanese students’ silence in the public learning space of the classroom. Yoneyama’s words seem to capture this: ‘Education in Japan is geared to silent students.’ (p.86) In the next section, the kind of behaviour which is expected from teachers and students in Japanese classrooms within the framework of ‘objectivistic’ knowledge and an autocracy-oriented system is examined, focusing on the mode of communication in the classroom.

4.3.2 Characteristics of communication in Japanese classrooms

4.3.2.1 Participation structures in Japanese classrooms

In various resources on Japanese schools, particularly comparative studies in education, it has been widely found that teacher-student classroom communication in Japanese classrooms is ‘one-way.’ In fact, these resources almost unanimously point out that there are differences in the way participation structures are distributed in Japanese schools and in Australian schools. A Japanese student in Kato’s (2001) study commented on this:

[In Australia] teacher and students create the lesson together or it’s not one-way like Japanese class. In Japan the teacher just talks to the students. (p.62)

The questionnaire results in Kato’s study are worth a close examination here, since they support the student’s comment above. In the questionnaire, students rated the frequency of different types of activities using a five-point scale (never = 1; occasionally = 2; often = 3; quite often = 4; almost in every lesson = 5). The results shown in Table 4.12 suggest that in Japanese high schools the teacher-centred lecturing style is common, while in Australia it is less frequently observed. It can also be observed from this data that Australian schools have more variety in the types of participation structures used in the classroom. There seem to be more debates, more game-type activities and more discussions, requiring student-student interactions more than teacher-centred lecturing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of activity</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gives lecture on specific topics</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.12 Types of activity in Japanese/Australian classrooms (adapted from Kato 2001: 60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Australian</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher asks questions and students answer</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher asks students for their opinions</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students lead discussions for selected topics</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students participate in game-type activities</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students participate in debates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students participate in role-plays</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students give presentations</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students ask teacher questions</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students interrupt teacher to ask questions</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students give personal opinions</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, a caution is required in interpreting the results above, as they are not based on any actual classroom interaction data but based on the students’ perceptions. Nevertheless, there are clear differences in the perceptions of Australian students and Japanese students. A paper on teaching styles in Australian secondary schools by Matsuda (2000) reports the same difference in participation structures. Participation structures in Australian classrooms were described as follows. ‘While the teacher communicates with students face-to-face as individuals, there is dynamism in the classroom interaction involving “teacher, individual, students as interactive group” and not “teacher versus student as a mass”’. (p. 74)

Similarly, Nichigō Press (January 2001) reports differences in the way communicative events are organised in classrooms in Australia and in Japan. An article on the observations of Japanese teachers who were sent to Australia by the Department of Education in Japan on a two-week program emphasised that differences in the types of pedagogy reflect ‘different forms of knowledge’ in Japanese and Australian classrooms. The paper reports on one of the visits to an Australian school by the Japanese teachers as follows:

Half of the class time was used for group discussion, with the teacher going around groups, participating in exchanges of opinions or monitoring them. In other classes, the learning through the organisation of ‘students versus students’ was also abundantly included. In Japan, there is a tendency to rely on so-called ‘teacher versus students’ style. Mr. Suzuki says ‘In Australia, the priority is on “how to organise learning activities”, whereas in Japan the priority tends to be on “the knowledge which is to be acquired as an outcome.” ... the visits to Australian schools made me reflect on many issues.’ (p.70 my translation)

Small group discussions were also frequently observed in Australia in Kato’s (2001) studies as well as in other reports on Australian schools by Nichigō Press, whereas in Japanese schools small group discussions were scarce. In JPR High School and in JPC High School, teacher-centred lecturing with occasional questions from the teacher to an individual student was dominant. In JPC High School, the only class in which students’
desks were organised in a seminar style circle was the Creative Writing class, which had only sixteen students. However, student-student interaction was not observed in this class except for the fifteen minutes of private ‘chatting’ in small groups while the students’ project works were going around the room for appreciation and evaluation. The following excerpt illustrates the pattern of interaction in this class. First, the teacher gives a cue to a student, and then the student gives a comment. Next, the teacher asks a question or gives a short comment as feedback, to which only the relevant student responds. In Excerpt 3 below, after each student’s comment, the teacher either asks a question about their work or makes a comment (lines 2, 8, 10), and then the student responds (lines 3, 9, 12). Then, the teacher says ‘hai,’ which appears to function as a boundary marker to indicate the current student’s turn is over, and as a cue to the next student to start their turn (lines 4, 13) with ‘hai’ mostly accompanied by the teacher’s eye gaze towards the next student to talk.

[Excerpt 3: JPC High School Class 1 Creative Writing]

1  F5:  Um, I wanted to become a trainer of killer whale, that’s why I wrote this.
2  T:   Can you show us one of the pages a bit?
3       ((F5 hesitantly show one of the pages to the class))
4  T :    R i g h t .  (Hai.) ((gives a cue to the next student by eye contact))
5  F6:  Um, since I was told to work on the last assignment, I wanted to work
6       on something that’s not too hard, (        ) I was thinking, (        ) it’s
7       not something I can show everyone, so I am sorry.
8  T:   You also took the photos yourself?
9  F6:  Yes.
10  T:   The front page, it’s very good. You don’t have to humble yourself so
11       much. Did you hand in first?
12  F6:  Oh, I guess second.
13  T:   Right. (Hai.)

Although students were given time to look at all other students’ work earlier in the same class, no comments were made by students about other students’ work, and no student-student interaction was observed. One could say that the prototypical teacher-centred classroom interaction of I-R-F sequence can be frequently observed here.

In another class at JPC High School, the modern Japanese class, the observed session was the first one after the winter holidays and the teacher spent the session discussing the films which students had been recommended to see during the holidays. Although the students were encouraged to contribute, no one volunteered except for a couple of students who appeared keen but received teasing from other students. As a result, the teacher nominated students one by one to elicit comments from them. They mostly spoke in a short turn in a reluctant manner. No instances of ‘public interaction’ between students were observed, although there were low-key shigo ‘private chats’ among students sitting
together throughout the session.

As seen in this class, even though there are teachers who value students’ opinions and encourage students’ participation, teacher-centred teaching in which the direction of communication is from the teacher to the students is still dominant in Japanese schools. When there is interaction between the teacher and the students, it is overwhelmingly teacher-initiated interaction in which the teacher asks a question of a student; it rarely involves student-initiated interaction or questioning. In this way, both the existing literature and the observation of Japanese classrooms for the present research indicate that total teacher-control is assumed in Japanese classrooms. However, it should be noted that the observation of classes in JPR and JPC High Schools in which a small number of teachers encouraged students to contribute suggests that students are not necessarily expected to listen to the teacher all the time. In fact, after the class observations for the present research, it was mentioned by those teachers with a more democratic orientation to teaching that the lack of responses from students was ‘a problem’. Students’ lack of motivation or interest in participation may be attributed not only to the control exercised by teachers through the teacher-centred pedagogy but also to the ‘utilitarianism and pragmatism’ needed for survival in a meritocracy which ‘persuades students to accept, tolerate and endure alienating features of school.’ (Yoneyama 1999: 146)

4.3.2.2 Speech style in the classroom

One of the features in classroom communication in Japan which can be examined to find the roles of the teacher and students is the speech style. In Japan, it is traditionally expected that students use neutral politeness forms or respectful forms - there are also other levels of politeness indicators such as humble forms - to those, such as teachers, who have higher status in the social hierarchy (cf. Loveday 1986; Moeran 1988; Foley 1997). However, in recent years, different styles have been used or mixed in different contexts of the school environment. Teachers’ speech styles vary from polite to plain, but formal instructions and delivery of content are normally given in the polite style.

Okamoto (1997) claims that an examination of classroom interaction in a Japanese primary school suggests that a polite style was used by the teacher when the speech situation was regarded as public, while a plain style was used when the speech situation was regarded as unofficial. In the former situation, the participation structure was teacher addressing the whole class, and in the latter, it was the teacher addressing an individual student or a small group of students. She further argues that when polite style is used, the
interaction is assumed to be occurring between the public roles of teacher and student, while when plain style is used, the teacher and the student(s) interact without presupposed roles of teacher and students but rather as individuals. Thus according to Okamoto, the interpersonal relationship in interaction in polite forms is that of outsiders (uchi) while the interpersonal relationship in interaction in plain forms is that of insiders (soto). (for the concept of uchi and soto in Japanese society, see Loveday 1986; Clancy 1986; Moeran 1988). In Okamoto’s study, students also shifted between polite and plain forms, and the shift was also explained in relation to how students negotiate their relationship with the teacher (i.e. uchi members or soto members) in the rapidly changing interactive context in the classroom. For example, when students directly made an appeal to the teacher about a task, which, in contrast to high schools, is still often observed in primary school classrooms, they switched from polite to plain form, trying to make it possible to persuade the teacher. When this type of appeal was rejected by the teacher, a polite style was often used.

In both JPR High School and JPC High School, teachers and students used both plain and polite styles. Generally, the style shift occurred in the same manner as explained by Okamoto’s study (1997) above. When teachers spoke to the whole class, a polite style was mostly used, while when they spoke to a student individually, the plain form was generally used. Students, on the other hand, used the plain form relatively frequently. Again consistent with Okamoto’s results, when the role of teacher as an instructor is foregrounded with the use of a polite style, students’ speech seemed to shift from plain to polite style. On a couple of occasions in one teacher’s class at JPR High School, the teacher’s attempt, using the polite style, to regain order in class failed when students did not ‘give in’ by shifting their speech style from plain to polite. In the excerpt below, polite endings are in italics, and abrupt endings are underlined.

[Excerpt 4: JPR High School Class 1 Japanese]

1  T:  Sore saigo no tokoro, saigo no tokoro desu ne.
     That is the last part, last part.
2  S1:  A kore motteru.
     Oh I’ve got it.
3  T:  Daitai yonde kitanoka ne.
     You have read it at home more or less I wonder.
     (0.3)
4       ( 0 . 3 )
5  S2:  Motteru kore.
     I’ve got this.
6  T:  Motteru? (0.4) Mottete ji yo. Agemashoo.
     You’ve got it? (0.4) You can have it. I’ll give it to you.
In line 1, the teacher is addressing the whole class using a polite ending. In line two, however, Student 1 speaks with an abrupt ending, although it is difficult to know if this was addressed to the teacher or he is only talking to himself. The teacher ignores this but she herself speaks as if talking to herself, using an abrupt ending. Then, Student 2 says ‘I’ve got this’ to the teacher using an abrupt ending. To this, the teacher responds with an abrupt ending as well. S2 politely thanks the teacher, but then uses an abrupt style to say he likes the teacher in a high-pitched joking manner. After a 1.2 second pause, the teacher then switches back to the polite style, addressing the whole class (line 8, 10). The giggling of the class after the pause and the teacher’s speech style shift suggests that the class saw S2’s statement as unsuccessful ‘purring’ since the teacher deliberately distanced herself after it.

The teacher’s use of an abrupt style was in fact commonly observed even in a public situation in which the whole class was listening to an interaction between the teacher and one of the students. However, generally, a polite style was used when the teacher talked to the whole class at boundaries in the teaching process or in a longer lecturing mode.

On the other hand, in the creative writing class at JPC High School, students did not shift from a polite style even when the teacher used the plain style to create a relaxed atmosphere and to encourage students. The possible explanation for this could be that not only was each student allocated a turn to express their opinions, but also a responsibility to speak publicly was given to each student in an explicit manner. This participation structure was pre-assigned, and the talk was supposed to be public, almost like a short speech, which means that if those motivated students in the creative writing class wanted to be heard and recognised, they had to stick to their polite style. In the following excerpt, the teacher is consistently using an abrupt style but the student (M4) mostly uses polite endings.

[Excerpt 5: JPC High School Class 1 Creative Writing]
Earlier in the same class, more relaxed, casual conversation with only the abrupt style was observed in an informal situation where students’ work was going around the class for appreciation and the teacher was talking to small groups of students:

[Excerpt 6: JPC High School Class 1 Creative Writing]

1 M2: Sensei, kurippu nakunattenndakedo.
   Teacher, my clip is missing.
2 T: E? Saisho tsuitetayo nee. Anosa, koreno dekai no dokka ni nokotte nai?
   Uh? Originally it was there um. Look, can’t you find a bigger one
   of this somewhere?
3 M4 Shiranai
   I don’t know
4 F6 Shiranai
   I don’t know

Generally, however, in relatively interactive classes in which there was a better rapport, teachers and students used plain style more frequently, while in more teacher-centred classes polite style was mostly used. The teachers with a better rapport with students tend to use plain style and may be using it to signal solidarity when it is reciprocated by students, although plain style was also used when reprimanding an individual or a group for being noisy. This latter use of plain style may be the teacher’s strategy to emphasise an individual confrontation between the teacher and an individual student (or a group) and to indicate the individual is causing a serious offence. This observation is supported by Okamoto’s (1997) findings on the use of plain style between teacher and student as implying one-to-one communication involving individuals. On the other hand, whatever their orientation to teaching, teachers signalled public and formal contexts where orderliness was desirable using polite style. However, in teacher-centred classes, students often answered the teacher’s questions in single words, and therefore the style cannot be identified, as the style is usually marked by the predicate ending. Thus, teacher-centred
classes not only show the distance between the teacher and students in the styles of language but also tend to elicit minimal length turns from students.

In this way, it is possible to see that public and private contexts, namely *uchi* and *soto* contexts, and role relationship between teachers and students are realised and negotiated by shifting communication styles in Japanese classrooms. The frequent use of the polite style by teachers can be a communicative strategy to restore or maintain order in the classroom, and if this is the case, the use of the polite style in teacher-centred classrooms could function to maintain the distance between the teacher and students. On the other hand, the students’ use of plain style in Japanese high schools can be found as a sign of rapport between the teacher and the student. What seems to have important implications for the behaviour of Japanese students in Australia is that in Japanese classrooms the language used in the ‘public’ sphere of the classroom without good rapport was characterised by polite style. As Okamoto (1997) suggests, the polite style implies the assessment of a particular stretch of interaction as ‘public’ and among ‘*soto*’ (outgroup) members. From the interview findings it seems that, Japanese students studying in Australia do not feel particularly relaxed with their lecturers and do not find solidarity with their Australian peers. In this case, then, it is likely that Japanese students in Australian classrooms exhibit an orientation towards negative politeness, which is driven by a perception of classroom interaction as part of the ‘public sphere’.

4.3.2.3 Turn-taking in the classroom

The way turn-taking is typically organised in Japanese classrooms can be best described to fit in the so-called I-R-F model (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). This model which is often seen as part of the ‘traditional’ classroom context (Drew & Heritage 1992: 15) involves a pattern in which the teacher typically initiates the sequence mostly by asking a question (I), which is responded to by a student or students (R), which in turn is followed by the teacher’s feedback (F). This pattern was found to be the most common one in Japanese classrooms; it was not only most frequently observed in the classroom in JPR High School and JPC High School, but also suggested in questionnaire results in Kato (2001) which related to the frequency of teacher questioning. One of the typically observed I-R-F sequences can be found in the excerpt below (The excerpt is based on notes taken during observation. Pause lengths are therefore estimates since pauses were not recorded in notes unless considered significant):

[Excerpt 7: JPC High School Class 2 Classical Japanese]

1  T:  Number one in Two. Okay, Mr. Tanabe?
2  TA: Number one in Two?
3  T: Eh? Number one in Two.
4  TA: Two.
5  T: Right. It’s Two. Okay then, number two. Mr. Kato.
6  (silent pause: about 25 seconds)
As can be seen, students rarely initiate interactive sequences. In the excerpt above, the class is working on exercises in a handout, which in fact seem to be shaping the type of interaction. In fact it was only when the class was checking answers for exercises in a handout or in the textbook that a substantial amount of teacher-student interaction was likely to occur in Japanese high schools. It was also observed that these handouts tend to have multiple choice questions or ‘what’ type questions, which would invoke the I-R-F interaction sequence when checking the answers.

Although teachers still asked questions even when the class was not working on exercises on paper, interaction was always initiated by the teacher. The teacher was always the initiator of sequences, restricting the type of turn to be produced by students, and having the right to close the sequence or open a new sequence. This pattern of interaction suggests that the teacher exercises power and control over students, and this does seem to be the case to a certain degree. However, in some cases such as Excerpt 8 below, teachers, particularly those who frequently encourage students to participate and share their ideas, often attempt to get students to expand their responses in the third position instead of closing the sequence with an evaluative move such as ‘Okay’ or ‘All right’.

[Excerpt 8: JPC High School Class 4 Modern Japanese]
In this excerpt, the teacher invites a student to talk about the film *Batoru Rowaiyaru* (‘Battle Royal’) in line 4 and 5, which was responded to with ‘I was moved.’ In line 7, the teacher acknowledges the response by repeating it, and then asks a more specific question ‘Did you find it repulsive?’ to elicit further comments from the same student. The same attempt by the teacher can be found in line 12, after the student produced a single-word response ‘Scary’ in line 11, and a longer response of two sentences was elicited. Thus, the interaction pattern in this excerpt is different from I-R-F in that it is Initiation-Response-Acknowledgement plus Expansion initiator. The teacher’s expansion initiator turns seem to be successful in eliciting further responses from the students, but the students’ responses are still kept at a minimum turn length of no more than one turn constructional unit (TCU), which is a minimal unit to construct a turn (Sacks et al. 1974). As the teacher mentioned in line 4 and 5, the film was controversial because of its violent yet significant social and political message. Thus, the teacher may have aimed to have students think about this controversial aspect by talking about the film. However, the unelaborated responses of the students gave her no other option but to keep asking questions, gradually getting to the point of the discussion. The teacher asks the students about their reactions to the film, and the responses are short and unelaborated (lines 4 to 13). In line 14, the teacher then asks the student about the social impact of the film (‘Do you think there is a possibility that people may imitate this?’), to which Matsuda answers directly, without elaboration. Without asking the reason for Matsuda’s response, the teacher then moves on to Morikawa who had given short responses earlier and asks ‘How about you, Ms. Morikawa?’.

However, Morikawa does not seem to have been attending to the earlier interaction between the teacher and Matsuda (lines 14 and 15), as she asks a confirmation question with ‘Um?’ which obliged the teacher to repeat her question. As can be seen in this excerpt, the teacher does not always wish to take control of the interaction but at times may have to keep asking questions in order to elicit comments from students if they do not elaborate their comments or attend to ongoing interaction. A few other characteristics of turn-taking in Japanese classrooms can be found in the excerpt above. One of them has already been mentioned, which is the length of turns produced by students. Not only in the classes from which these excerpts were taken, but also in most other classes, students’
turns were short, typically consisting of one word or phrase. Students generally do not hold
the floor for more than one TCU, even though there is no threat of other students trying to
take the floor at a possible completion point. This tendency among Japanese students was
also observed by Ross (1998) and Young & Halleck (1998) in their studies of oral English
proficiency interviews conducted with Japanese interviewees. They argue that Japanese
interviewees do not feel a need for elaboration, as it is desirable not to say more than
necessary, and also as it is desirable not to go into disclosure of anything to do with
personal matters. The ‘minimalism’ in students’ responses to the teacher’s questions in
Japanese classrooms may also reflect this tendency to keep responses minimal and non-
personal in relatively formal settings where there is a questioner and answers.

This is related to the fact that there is almost no instance of simultaneous talk at the
point of turn transition. In Australian classroom interaction, on the other hand,
simultaneous talk at that point is frequently observed and considered normal, while in
Japanese classroom interaction it appears almost non-existent. The scarcity of
simultaneous talk in Japanese classrooms can also be explained by the strong tendency for
students not to interact among themselves publicly in the classroom.

On the other side of the coin is the frequency of silent pauses between turns. One of the
extreme cases is the long silence in Excerpt 7 above (Class 2, Classical Japanese at JPC
High School), where the teacher waited for about twenty five seconds before the
nominated student responded. In some cases, in particular in English classes, students
stayed silent when nominated until the teacher was obliged to nominate another student.
One English teacher at JPC High School explained after observation of class how she
sometimes has to keep providing clues and support to a nominated student in order to elicit
responses, because otherwise students simply say ‘I don’t know’ even without thinking
about the question to avoid giving answers or speaking any further. There are a couple of
examples which illustrate this type of interaction.

[Excerpt 9: JPC High School Class 2 Classical Japanese]

1 T: Next, B. Who shall I (     ), Mr. (     ).
2 (pause - around 0.8)
3 S: I don’t know.
4 (pause - around 1.0)
5 T: Are you looking at the back [of the handout] ? What is the modern
6 translation of ‘hitono soshiri’?
7 (pause - around 1.5)
8 S: I don’t know.
9 T: Why don’t you look for the relevant part in the translation and
10 read it ?
Similar behaviour of students in Japanese schools was reported by an Australian student in Kato’s (2001) study:

When asked questions during the class, they [Japanese students] often said ‘I don’t know’ even if they knew the answer, consulted other students before speaking up, or remained silent until the teacher ‘gave up’ and moved on to another student. (p.62)

This observation is consistent with what was found at JPR High School and JPC High School, except that at JPR and JPC there were teachers who used strategies such as expansion-initiating questions, rephrasing questions or providing clues to make sure that responses could be elicited. It was also observed that when questions were directed to the whole class, generally there was no response, and teachers tended to incorporate the silent pause into their own turn, producing another question or even more typically answering the questions by themselves. The excerpts below are examples of this:

[Excerpt 11: JPC High School Class 5 Modern Japanese]

1 T: It says “resolution”. What “resolution” do you think is it?  
2 (pause - around 2.0)  
3 T: Yes, ( ) K’s resolution, What resolution is it?
T: I think this has a lot of meanings. ((T explains))
What do you think, everyone?

T: Okay, it’s time [to finish the class]. This “resolution” is very important.

Those questions, however, were not asked with a strong rising intonation with the teacher’s eye gaze and posture directly addressing the students. Thus it was ambiguous whether the questions were actually addressed to students who were expected to respond, or they were a part of the teacher’s explanations. However, the silent pauses may be an indication of the teacher’s expectation of responses from students. One possible interpretation is that the teacher is used to receiving no response from the students and therefore his manner of questioning may reflect an anticipation of no response. In fact, in other classes questions to the whole class were often met with silence. In the English class below, although the questions were asked in a manner which seemed to expect responses from the students, long silent pauses persisted.

[Excerpt 12: JPC High School Class 3 English]

G writes on the board: ‘Happy New Year’ and has students repeat. Then, writes dates around Christmas and New Year time on the blackboard.

G: Does anyone know special names for these dates?
2 (pause - around 10.0)
3 G: Special names for these dates?
4 (pause - around 5.0)
5 G: Christmas Day. How about this day? ((pointing to one of the dates))
6 (pause - around 5.0)
7 G: New Year’s Eve. How about this day?
8 G: New Year’s Day.

As can be seen above, it seems that turn-taking in Japanese classrooms has different characteristics from that in Australian classrooms in that in Japanese classroom interaction there is significantly less simultaneous talk, fewer sequences initiated by students, less competition for the floor, shorter turn length, and longer and more frequent silent pauses than in Australian classrooms.

4.3.2.4 Written and spoken modes of communication in the classroom

One of the characteristics of classroom practices in Japanese schools is that there is a strong tendency towards using the written mode of communication in learning. Yamamoto (1997) explains that education in spoken language has been devalued since there was a concern that ‘[Students] cannot read or write any more, though they became talkative,’ (p. 59, my translation). The holistic development of four communication skills was
questioned, although it was encouraged in Japan first during the Meiji restoration in 1868, and then under the occupation of the American military after the World War II. As a former secondary school teacher and currently a two-year junior college lecturer, Yamamoto argues:

[T]eachers did not listen to students’ opinions and left the students in chit-chats. ... it may be this lack of opportunity to develop an intelligent sense of rational talk different from everyday chit-chat which made the basis for private chit-chat in lecture theatres as well as silence in public situations after they proceed to university. (1997: p. 59-60, translation mine)

Yamamoto (1997) conducted a survey of 126 university students in Japan, asking ‘Why do university students tend to remain silent and not speak up in a public place?’ after introducing part of an essay on the silence of Japanese university students in university lectures written by a university lecturer who taught both in the US and in Japan. Ten percent of respondents indicated that they ‘have not received any education of spoken language skills’. One of the students went as far as accusing the ‘meritocratic education,’ pointing out that it is unfair that students are compared with American students and blamed for being silent because the difference is due to the education each group has received. This student had actually spent a few years of primary school in the US and had experiences in interactive classrooms in the US. Yamamoto’s own ‘Communication Skills’ class in 1988 which aimed to develop ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ skills in public communicative situations could not cater for the large number of students which it attracted. This appears to be an indication of students’ awareness of their lack of education in speaking skills.

Turning to the mode of communication observed in classroom practices in Japan, in both JPR High School and JPC High School, reliance on learning through the written mode of communication could be observed. At JPR High School, most of the teachers made extensive use of the blackboard. Writing on the blackboard was usually done in a manner in which lecture handouts are made, summarising important points with underlining or coloured chalk to illustrate the hierarchy of concepts being taught.

What was written on the blackboard by the teacher was then copied by students into their notebooks. It appeared that students gave priority to copying what was on the blackboard rather than responding or listening to the teacher, since those who were found sleeping, reading comics or chatting would occasionally stop these activities to copy so that they would not miss anything on the blackboard. Teachers also stopped talking occasionally and waited a few minutes in silence for students to finish copying. Emphasis
on the written mode and routinised ‘copying’ from the blackboard can be found in the excerpt below:

[Excerpt 13: JPR High School Class 2 Japanese History]

1 T: And then next, (3.5) in the textbook that first part there are many foreign issues. So let’s have a quick look at these. (1.3)

2

3 Uh:m, (2.4) Is it all right to rub this out?

4 (0.3)

5 ((a student raises her hand to signal ‘not yet’))

6 T: Not yet?

7 (16) ((students take notes, the teacher looks at their notes, walking among them to see if they have written.))

8

9 T: Have you copied properly?

10 S: (I’m hungry)

11 T: Hungry?

12 S: It’s growling.

13 T: It’s growling? (0.8) You’ve copied now?

14 S?:

15 T: Then I can rub it out up to here right. I’ll rub this out okay?

16 ((the teacher slowly rubs out what is on the blackboard.))

17 T: I was really exhausted last week but I am fine this week. (From here, the teacher looks at his notes on the teacher’s desk, and writes summary on the board, without saying anything. Occasionally checking the notes, he keeps writing the summary without speaking. This goes on for 4 minutes and 12 seconds. Students copy the summary, some chatting to their friends.))

In the history class above, the teacher gave a lecture type class following the summary written on the blackboard. When the teacher talked, he looked at the blackboard, occasionally pointing at key words, and at his notes and textbook. Hence, the teacher’s eye gaze was directed at the blackboard or at the notes more often than at the students, and this physical positioning of the teacher and the students also contributes to the strong focus of attention on written language in the classroom and in return to significantly less attention being given to spoken language.

Furthermore, in the World History class at JPR High School, the teacher gave an instruction to the students regarding the layout of blackboard writing saying ‘You might want to leave space for two or three lines here, because I will come back to this point later.’ The teacher’s care in producing well organised blackboard writing can also be found in a comment such as ‘There’s not enough space here, you know I cannot write below this, so I had to use two lines.’ Writing is also used to draw attention to important concepts as well as to acknowledge students’ responses. For example, the World History class teacher highlights important concepts, using the contrast between the written and spoken language. In the excerpt below, in line 1, the teacher provides the important concept of ‘Butsuzoo’ first in writing and then in speaking. By ‘what is important is,’ the teacher signals the
students that he is giving them an important piece of information, and at this stage the teacher temporarily shifts from speaking to a written mode of communication, though the word ‘Butsuzoo’ is spoken after he writes it. Further, in line 9, the teacher announces that the answer is coming, but instead of saying it he writes it on the board (line 10).

[Excerpt 14: JPR High School Class 3 World History]

1 T: And what is important is, (writes ‘Butsuzoo’) Butsuzoo ‘figure of Buddha’.

2 And, originally Mr. Tsukishima, Butsuzoo, to worship god figure, where do you think it started?

3 ST: Eh?

4 T: Then I’ll make it easier. This Butsuzoo is in fact Silk Road, right

5 Buddhism is what originated in India. The creating of Butsuzoo came from a country from over there through the Silk Road.

6 Creation of sculpture of god came from Greece through the Silk Road to India.

7 Where the sculpture arrived in India, people said, ‘Let’s make Butsuzoo,’ and started to make Butsuzoo. This famous area is, this you may have heard before.

8 ((the teacher writes ‘Gandaara’ on the board))

9 S3: Gandaara.

10 T: Mm. The place called Gandaara. ...

Similarly, in the Japanese class and in the English class at JPR High School, students’ responses were often acknowledged by writing the correct responses on the board before or at the same time as the verbal comments were made. This in fact suggests that the students do not necessarily have to pay attention to the spoken language to grasp the main points or important things to remember for the exam but only need to copy what is written on the board. In some cases this ‘obsession’ with note-making was due to the fact that students were required to submit their notebooks to the teacher for assessment. The inclusion of notebooks for assessment may be related to the fact that often what teachers write on the board is what students have to study, and moreover, memorise for the exams.

Similar observations are made by Matsuda (2000) of Japanese schools, where ‘many students copy the writing on the blackboard precisely the same way in details such as colours, lines and grids’ (p. 446, my translation). It has also been reported that students underline some parts of the textbook as instructed by the teacher. Matsuda suggests that these activities are reflections of a concept of knowledge regarded as what is already established and not negotiable as well as reflections of the expected attitude of students to accept one correct answer from the teacher.

At JPC High School, teachers used handouts more often than spending time writing on the blackboard. This may be because at JPC High School, there is pressure to teach all
required content to prepare students for the university entrance examination, while at JPR High School such pressure is irrelevant as most students go to technical colleges after graduation. The handouts in JPC High School classes usually had multiple-choice exercises, gap-filling exercises, summaries of the content, and open questions which seemed to serve as pre-exam exercises. Some of the exercises were for homework, and the answers were checked in the next class. What is worth mentioning here is that the reliance on written materials was strong when teacher-student interaction occurred. Most teacher-student interaction occurred on the basis of the written exercises in classes where handouts were used. Because of this, questions such as ‘what is written there?’ or ‘where is it written?’ were common. The reliance on the written materials could also be seen in the fact that exercises on the handouts tended to require searching for the relevant item(s) in the written text provided. Questions such as ‘what is meant by xxx?’ or ‘what does xxx refer to?’ were often found in handouts.

At JPR High School, where training for the entrance exam is not necessary, questions and exercises which students worked on were of a more open-ended type. With regard to the mode of communication, the written mode was still more prevalent. In the Modern Japanese class, for example, there was a task for students to write a short passage on a topic provided by the teacher. One of the two tasks was ‘Write your thoughts about the description of the scenery in p. 154 line 15 to p. 155 line two “In the attic on the fourth floor... looked like it was at the mercy of the wind.”’ The second one was ‘Write the feeling of Toyotaroo [the protagonist in the story] in his words after he responded “I accept with honour”’. Students’ written responses to these tasks in short paragraphs were made into a collection of ten model paragraphs by the teacher as a handout and reviewed at the beginning of the class. Some of the students’ writing, without the names of the writer, was read by the teacher to the class. The task required creativity, imagination, and the expression of a personal reaction to the story. These ten paragraphs seemed unexpectedly articulate, personal and expressive compared to what is produced in the spoken mode of communication in the classroom.

[Excerpt 15: A sample of writing by a student in JPR High School (my translation)]

Although this is her favourite spot, it hangs heavy in her mind when she thinks about the reality. She would not take a step into the room as it represents her troubled mind itself. This scene has a very impressive expression, but it does not work to use these beautiful expressions because it simply shows the fact that Toyotaroo is so weak and hopeless that he makes the situation more and more difficult himself. After all, I think it comes to the vulnerable heart of Toyotaroo. As I am a vulnerable person myself, I get irritated when I read this part. I feel, ‘This hopeless man!’
It is possible to describe this series of activities as ‘pseudo-spoken through writing’, as students’ own words are communicated through their writing to the teacher, who reads it out to the class. The same teacher also assigns each student to take turns to prepare a task for paragraph writing each lesson. The student in charge writes the task on the blackboard at the end of the class, and other students copy it and then respond in their paragraph writing. Thus, ‘heavy’ communicative tasks are done through writing, with the teacher as a mediator who takes the burden of the spoken mode of communication in the classroom. What is worth noting here is that this more personal writing might have been supported by the mode of communication (written and not face-to-face spoken) as well as by the preservation of the anonymity of the writers. Indeed, the strategy of eliciting self-expression used in this Japanese class was effective in that it avoided the risk for students of losing face or of being regarded as lacking modesty.

As shown above, it seems fair to suggest that the written mode of communication is the basis of classroom activities in Japanese schools. As shown by Kato (2001), Australian classrooms seem to have more activities such as discussions, debates and presentations which require the spoken mode of communication. This finding is consistent with the findings of Matsuda (2000) as well as with reports in Nichigō Press. It may not be a coincidence that Japanese students found the Australian teaching approach, with its greater emphasis on the spoken mode of communication, somehow ‘unstructured and less informative,’ while Australian students found that there was not much learning in Japanese classrooms because there was not enough spoken interaction. Japanese students would expect to have something ‘written’ which would be regarded as an outcome of learning and proof of knowledge provided in the classroom. Indeed, it seems that the focus on the spoken mode of learning in Australia may imply that ‘knowledge’ is something which is gained through interaction between self and the outside world, while the focus on the written mode of learning in Japan may imply that ‘knowledge’ is what is gained by receiving and accepting non-negotiable answers. In addition, as the example of the written tasks in the Modern Japanese class indicates, the written mode of communication may be used in Japan to do what might be done in the spoken mode in Australia.

The emphasis and reliance on the written mode of communication in Japanese schools may be considered one explanation for the observations of Australian lecturers in the present research who mentioned that Japanese students could surprise them by producing well-written assignments despite their inactivity in classroom interaction. It also may be an explanation for the account by Japanese students who were interviewed in Australia for the
present research that they are more confident about writing tasks than spoken activities. Some even mentioned that they can be better in written assignments since they ‘do not miss the point.’

In addition to this emphasis on the written mode of communication, the priority given to the ‘written end product’ and the de-prioritising of understanding through spoken interaction in Japanese classrooms can also explain the tendency of Japanese students in Australia to disengage themselves from discussions if they do not see where the discussion is heading.

4.3.2.5 Content of speech in the Japanese classroom

It appears that there are differences in Japanese and in Australian classrooms in the type of content which is communicated through speech in the classroom. First of all, critical or contradictory comments or disagreements are rarely found in Japanese classrooms, since knowledge in Japanese education tends to be an objective knowledge which can be transferred from the teacher to students who rote-learn it, as discussed in the section above (4.3.1.2). Since there is no space for critical thinking, exchanging different opinions or challenging already-established knowledge, those attitudes or thoughts will not be expressed in students’ speech in the classroom.

In my observation of Japanese high school classes, there were almost no signs of students’ expression of critical attitudes. Students did not raise any issues regarding content, but the lessons were also structured so that critical attitudes were not required or expected. Teachers rarely asked ‘why’ questions or questions such as ‘what do you think’ to elicit students’ opinions in these schools. Instead, ‘what,’ ‘where,’ ‘who’ questions which normally required no more than one phrase or even a one word answer were most frequently observed. The scarcity of ‘why’ questions compared with factual questions including ones such as ‘where is it written in the textbook/handout’ in Japanese classrooms is also mentioned in Matsuda (2000). For example, in Japanese classes at JPR High School and JPC High School, it is common to find questions regarding referential issues, such as ‘Who found out all the ‘circumstances’ from the beginning to the end?’ (from JPR High School, Japanese Class) or ‘K’s dilemma is here. This question is often asked in the test. Here, what does that refer to?’ (from JPC High School, Japanese Class). Although questions about reasons for characters’ actions and thoughts were also asked, the answers were assumed to be already known to the students from the previous class or to be found in written materials as in the following excerpt:
These questions are asked to check the ‘correct’ understanding and interpretation of the text materials, and reflect the focus of teaching in Japanese schools where knowledge is presented by the teacher and then transferred to students. In the following excerpt, it is possible to see how the teacher guides students through questioning to the ‘correct’ understanding of the theme.
In this exchange, the teacher asks the students about the relationship between the characters, narrator and the author of the story. First, the teacher asks who tells the story (line 1), and then tells the students who the storyteller wants to talk about (line 5 to 7). At this point (line 9), S1 asks ‘Ah but why did he call it Maihime?’, to which no response was given by the teacher. Instead, the teacher writes her point which is that the focus for the storyteller is Elise. The teacher gives an explanation for this, but then S1 brings up his doubts about it in line 14. This comment was interrupted by the teacher’s new question about the author which picked up on S1’s comment. This is her next point, and this can be found in her writing move in line 16. The question was responded to by three students, and the point was completed on the board in line 21. Thus, what can be observed here is the teacher’s adherence to her agenda achieved by asking questions leading to her points, which are to be written in a summary on the board. Although the teacher has a good rapport with the students and her class is interactive, the pattern of questioning and writing as illustrated above suggests that students’ explorations of their own personal reaction and ideas have little space in the face of the teacher’s agenda, at least in the classroom.

One other aspect of the above exchange which is worth noting is that towards the end the student (S1) challenges the teacher for not providing them with one right answer(lines 26, 29, 33). Although students may want to explore their own thoughts, they also seem to feel the need for a ‘correct’ answer.

There was one class in JPC High School in which a few critical comments were made in response to some of the teacher’s comments, although the students’ responses were of minimum length (for minimal turn length, see section 4.3.2.3). This teacher was observed to have a better rapport with students than other teachers, encouraging students to participate and appreciating students’ comments including critical comments. She often asked questions which would encourage students to explain what they thought and why. Students’ talk, however, was mostly unenthusiastic and far from articulate, producing no more than one short sentence (as found in Excerpt 7 and 8 in section 4.3.2.3). There were a couple of students who were articulate in this class, but when they spoke, they were teased and not seriously attended to by other students, as we can see below:

[Excerpt 18: JPC High School Class4 Modern Japanese]

Class is talking about some young people distracting the procedure of coming-of-age ceremony held nationally on the 15th of January every year by bringing in alcohol or crackers, or making noise.

1 T: Ms. Kitano.
2 K: Better to listen when it’s time to listen.
While Kitano (line 2) and Hotta (line 4) responded in a dry and unconcerned manner in short sentences, Okada took a longer turn, stating his opinion in an assertive and serious manner. However, Okada was not taken seriously by other students (line 9 and 10), and moreover, the teacher did not refer to Okada’s comment and instead nominated another student who actually teased Okada (line 11). It seems that the teacher nominated the student who teased Okada to regain order in class instead of expanding or acknowledging Okada’s comment.

In another class in JPC High School, the creative writing class as an optional subject, students were each given a chance to comment on their own work as well as that of others. There was a tendency to make a humble or even negative comment about their own work such as 'My work is rather corner-cutting (tenuki).’ Even though the students were encouraged to comment on their classmates’ work, they did not refer to it except for a couple of general comments such as ‘This class has a lot of good poets’ or ‘I was impressed with everyone’s work.’ No critical comment or comment referring to a specific aspect of other students’ work was made.

When the teacher in charge of this creative writing class was interviewed, he mentioned an incident earlier in the year in which one of the students in this group came to him after class to tell him that the class had become uninteresting, because one particular student always received praise even though the same pattern was used recurrently in his work. The student said that she could not say this in class, but the teacher encouraged her to do so, and this made her feel more comfortable and gain confidence. The challenged student changed his style of work in the next task. The teacher indicated that a conscious effort made throughout the year to guide students to move from comments such as ‘I thought his work was very good’ to those such as ‘That was a bit monotonous.’ Furthermore, the teacher, in his six years of teaching the creative writing class, has found that towards the end of each year, students seem to develop an attitude in which they attempt to say ‘something different’ from others in the discussion.

The teacher of the creative writing class consciously worked on awareness-raising in
expressing ideas in spoken language, which he stated usually takes between one to two terms (one term in Japanese high schools is usually three months). Even so, although the teacher had seen a development in students’ critical thinking and attitudes, during the observed session of the creative writing class, no student made critical or probing comments about another’s work. Moreover, the expression of critical attitudes, which implies asserting one’s position, is rarely seen, and instead, the opposite, an expression of appreciation and acceptance as well as depreciating one’s own work seems to be common. It seems that there is a clash between appearing modest and expression of critical attitudes, which deters students from asserting oneself and speaking critically in front of their peers.

As mentioned before, in Australian education, although it is a recent phenomenon, emphasis is on development of critical thinking skills (Matsuda 2000). It is assumed in Australian classrooms that knowledge presented through materials or by teachers can be challenged, explored and reconstructed through interaction (Milner & Quilty 1996; Ballard & Clanchy 1991). Students’ orientations to critical thinking and expression of critical attitudes are salient if they are educated in an education system in which critical thinking skills have been emphasised, whereas if they are trained to accept and believe that their teachers present the absolute and true ‘knowledge,’ it is likely that they face difficulties in adapting to the Australian education system (Milner & Quilty 1996; Ballard & Clanchy 1991). A clear indication of the emphasis on critical thinking skills in Australian university education can also be found in one of the web pages from the University of Sydney Institute of Teaching and Learning: ‘the university places a high priority on critical thinking, problem-solving and autonomy by the students.’ Where expressing critical attitudes is encouraged and practised as in Australia, Japanese students may be found silent in that respect, coming from a background in which educational practices do not encourage critical thinking.

Moreover, the verbal expression of reasoning processes and describing how one arrived at one’s thoughts and ideas appear to be limited in Japanese classrooms compared to Australian classrooms. According to Matsuda (2000), in Australian classrooms, students are often asked to verbalise the process of inferring in cause-effect style explanation, whereas in Japanese classrooms, this process of inference does not seem to be valued but instead a top-down way of understanding is assumed in learning.

Although there were a couple of cases in the present research in which students were encouraged to verbally express their opinions, students’ talk did not expand to a logical justification of their opinions. In the excerpt below, it is possible to see how students’ talk
is not well connected but incoherent, and their comments are based on impressionistic views or transitory emotional reactions.

[Excerpt 19: JPR High School Class 4 Japanese]
(The teacher asked students what was the incident that affected them during the holidays. One student mentions the destructive behaviour of 20 year olds who attended coming-of-age ceremonies held in communities nation-wide on the 15th of January.)

1 T: Tell me what yours was, Ms. Maeda.
2 (pause about 3 seconds)
3 M: Seijinshiki ‘coming-of-age ceremony’
4 T: Right. Comment please.
5 M: Well I was surprised when I saw it on TV.
6 T: Why?
7 M: There were people who were pulling crackers, you know.
8 T: Surprised. Do you know their psychology?
9 S: They just want to attract attention, with big (        ).
10 M: Those people who do those things, even if they are enjoying, there are people with good motivation, so I don’t know.
12 T: You are going to attend the ceremony in three years time. What would you do if you are in that situation? Ms. Kimura, what did you think about those people?
14 K: They don’t really have to come.
15 T: Do you understand why they do such as thing?
16 K: To attract attention.
17 T: Mr. Ishida, how about you? You are listening to music, but take your earphones off.
19 I: What’s wrong with that. They are having fun. Let us drink.
20 T: Mr. Ishida, if you were in that situation, would you do that?
21 Other students: He’d do it.
22 ((class laugh))

It seems that in this class, the teacher was more successful than other teachers in eliciting students’ personal opinions. However, the interaction shows that students are unfamiliar with cause-effect discourse structure or with presenting a view using logical and objective reasoning. This appears to result in the teacher’s questions such as ‘Why?’ (line 6) and ‘Do you understand why...?’ (line13). It is not only within each students’ turn but also in the interactive sequence involving the teacher and the students’ turns that construction of coherent and logical discussion do not seem to be achieved. In line 7, one student (M) responds to the teacher’s question in line 9, but the student in the next turn (M in line 10, 11) says she does not understand the psychology of offenders at the ceremony because there are those who attend with good motivation, which does not really make sense. Moreover, even though S responded coherently to the teacher’s question, the point of M’s utterance as a response to the teacher’s question ‘Do you know ... ? ‘ is ‘I don’t know.’ Without pursuing the question further, the teacher attempts to draw the attention of the students to their own ceremony in three years time, and then goes back to the students’ reactions to the offence. (line 12, 13). Kimura answers the question, expressing her
personal reaction, ‘They don’t really have to come,’ (line 14) but she does not explain why she feels that way. Furthermore, instead of exploring or expanding on this comment which expresses the student’s personal reaction, the teacher goes back to her earlier question to another student in line 8 and asks a similar question ‘Do you understand why they do such a thing?’ which shifts the discourse away from Kimura’s comment but back to objective analysis of the offender’s behaviour. As a result, Kimura repeats S’s response in line 9 abruptly. The teacher then leaves it there and picks on the student who was listening to the music (lines 17, 18). Thus, although students’ comments are elicited on the same issue, they are not asked to provide grounds for their comments. The stretch of interaction is also fragmented with small exchanges between the teacher and a student without strong logical connection. This may also be to do with the de-emphasis of spoken interaction as a learning process in Japanese classrooms, as students do not seem to attend to either other students’ talk or the teacher’s seriously enough to achieve cohesion. The teacher seems to be the only participant who struggles to keep on track. However, the teacher herself seems to be unaware of the lack of ‘logical reasoning’, as she tends to jump from student to student as soon as a personal reaction is obtained. Indeed, Yamamoto (1997) argues that language education in Japan has put emphasis on ‘understanding emotion,’ and on the necessity and importance of ‘communicating logically’, (p.66) but it seems only the former is attended to here.

The last aspect of the content of speech in Japanese classroom communication is to do with the relevance of classroom knowledge to the personal world and experiences of students outside the classroom. For example, in Yamamoto’s study (1997), junior college students expressed their initial reluctance to express themselves personally in their communication skills course, although at the end of their training, they not only became less reticent about talking about themselves but also became aware of a development of an objective attitude to expressing themselves. Additionally, in the classes observed at JPR High School and JPC High School, the content which students were working on was rarely treated as applicable or relevant to the students’ selves or to their life outside the classroom. Similarly, Matsuda (2000) suggests that in Japanese schools interaction between knowledge and the student’s inner self does not seem to be a part of learning process as appears to be the case in Australia.

A comparison between Australian and Japanese schools’ approaches to interpretation of literary work illustrates this point clearly. Australian schools would often encourage students to apply what was taught in the classroom to their own experiences in the outside
world, as illustrated in the assignment for Contemporary English for Year Twelve, on the theme of Peace and War. This assignment was obtained from a student who was a Year Twelve student in Sydney in the year 2000, and I was tutoring him at that time:

[Excerpt 20: English Assignment 2000 (Peace and War)]

Collect eight different pieces of supplementary material from a variety of sources (print media, radio, television, poetry, song, film, novel short story etc.)
You must present two pieces of material for each of the four main aspects of the Contemporary Issue: Peace and War.

For each provide:
1. Type of source
2. Name of source
3. Author, playwright, producer, poet etc.
4. Title
5. Date:
7. Summary of the material
8. Links to the text
9. Knowledge you have gained about Peace and War from this material
10. What is the material saying about Peace and War in Contemporary Australian society?

This task requires students to personalise the theme and the content learned in the classroom. Items such as 8, 9, 10 above particularly would require students to think about the relevance of what they learn in the classroom for the world they live in as well as for themselves as a member of a community. As well as this task, the teacher in charge of this unit of study asked students to give a short speech on one of the materials used for the written assignment above. As Matsuda (2000) observes, in Australian education, interaction between the content of classes and students’ inner self seems to be a part of classroom discourse.

In contrast, in Japanese education, interpretation of literary materials generally does not go beyond the text itself. Thus, commonly observed questions require students to find the relevant sections in the written text which explain the meaning or the referent of key words or concepts.

[Excerpt 21: JPR High School Class 5 Modern Japanese Extract from a handout]

‘Kokoro’ by Soseki Natsume Handout 6
1. Write the reading of the following Kanji.
2. Give the meanings of these words.
3. What does ‘Stopping that’ (p. 170 top 14) refer to?
4. Regarding K’s ‘resolution’ (p. 170 bottom 5), what ‘resolution’ did ‘I’ think it was?

In this way, although this class is more interactive than other teacher-centred classes, the main interactional goal seemed to be to gain a clear understanding of who did what and who felt what in the story, as the teacher checks the meaning of difficult words and
concepts. The teacher’s intention of immersing the students in the world of this story to enhance their understanding and appreciation of it was clearly observed with the way she involved students in frequent questioning and written tasks. A task was given on the day of the observation at the end of the class for which students were to write a ‘personal profile’ of the protagonist of the story, which is another indication that the teacher was trying to have them internalise their understanding of the story. However, neither writing nor spoken interaction reached beyond the text itself. Students were not explicitly asked to express where they stood in their personal reaction to the story or to apply their understandings to their own lives. Students were basically guided by the teacher to gain the ‘correct’ understanding of the text, which Milner & Quilty (1996) describe as one of the characteristics of classroom practices in Asian countries.

At JPC High School, there were occasions where students were given opportunities to express their personal opinions and ideas more explicitly. However, students were reluctant to talk about themselves even when they were given the opportunity, often speaking in a modest way or in short sentences. As already mentioned, those who asserted their own stance were teased by other students, as on one occasion with ‘All right, that’s enough.’ Hence, overall, activities which would involve application or personalisation of abstract concepts or information given during the class were not observed.

Milner & Quilty (1996) explain that in Australia, students are invited to express their personal reactions and responses to the materials for their classes. They go on to compare this with Asian educational systems as follows:

Australian teachers say they prize intelligence in argument and in the expression of complex, novel, personal responses to experience. These abilities in Asian educational systems, however, often indicate negative qualities such as hostility, a lack of respect for superiors, and an ignorance of the proper educative models (p.98).

The absence of expressions of personal responses by students to class materials and content observed in Japanese high schools can be explained as a result of beliefs about irrelevance of personal responses in the Japanese education system. What needs careful attention here, however, is that the irrelevance is not felt unanimously. As observed in JPC High School, there was a minority of students who volunteered to express their personal responses or to expose themselves as individuals in the classroom. However, they were a minority, and in some cases what they said was not taken seriously by other students. As Yoneyama (1999) argues, in the worst cases, the minority of students who want their personal voices to be heard end up dropping out of school. Therefore, whether it is done
consciously or unconsciously, there seems to be an element of silencing the voices of students as individuals in Japanese classroom practices.

4.3.3 Summary: Japanese classroom culture and silence

From the above examination of Japanese classroom culture through the existing studies and literature, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Japanese education produces ‘silent’ students (Yoneyama 1999). The social distance between the teacher and students, and emphasis placed on objective knowledge are closely tied to a pattern of communication in Japanese classrooms where students are expected to accept what the teacher gives them as non-negotiable knowledge and to behave as a member of a group rather than as an individual.

The participation structures which are common in Japanese classrooms give students few opportunities to verbally interact with one another. This is reinforced by the pattern of turn-taking which does not require monitoring of or even paying attention to other parties’ talk. Although factual questions are asked by the teacher to check students’ understanding or to test their memory, problem-solving processes and logical reasoning in understanding the content are not vocalised in the public sphere of the classroom. In fact, not only in the public sphere but in the education system itself, there is little space for linguistic realisation of students’ own thinking, understanding and interpretation of the content materials. Where there is space for students to engage themselves in creative language use in learning, it often takes the form of a written mode of communication.

The strong emphasis on the written mode of communication does seem to be of great significance in the Japanese education system. The blackboard plays an important, or even a central role in the delivery of classes in which teachers summarise the main points on the board neatly, occasionally allowing long silences while students copy into their notebooks. In some cases, notebooks are checked by the teachers as a part of the assessment, while in other cases, handouts with a summary of the main points are valued by students more than anything else and, indeed, students rely heavily on these for exam preparation. These factors suggest that there is a general tendency for written language to be given priority over spoken language. Classroom interaction is typically fragmentary and even incoherent, particularly when it involves students who generally pay more attention to written language than spoken language in their learning processes. This is not difficult to imagine if students are likely to be driven by their pragmatism to pass exams (cf. Yoneyama 1999) which only require rote-learning and focus on written language.
The low emphasis on spoken interaction in the classroom also seems to be reflected in turn-taking patterns. Students rarely initiate interaction sequences or overlap other talk, but instead tend to take the ‘minimalist’ approach. Long silent pauses are not uncommon, although most teachers seem to find it a problem.

The types of silence which can be observed in Japanese classrooms do not seem to include silence which is a sign of ‘bad attitudes’ as depicted in Gilmore (1985) to be ‘sulking silence.’ Rather, the types of silence in Japanese classrooms seem to represent a wide range of passive attitudes, from oppression or resignation, (cf. Yoneyama 1999), submission, acceptance (cf. Milner & Quilty 1993; Ballard & Clanchy 1993) to lack of interest. Unlike Gilmore’s ‘sulking silence,’ the silence of Japanese students in Japanese classrooms may be ‘unmarked.’

As summarised above, the existing research in Japanese classroom culture as well as the findings from the observations at JPR High School and JPC High School in Japan suggest that students are not expected to be voluble and articulate in Japanese classrooms. However, at JPR High School and JPC High School, there are teachers who made attempts to involve students in coherent spoken interaction to help and enhance their understanding of the content materials. Moreover, these teachers tend to have a relaxed approach and better rapport with students. How successful they are, however, remains in question. It seems that although attempts are made to put more emphasis on the role of spoken interaction in teaching and learning processes, students seem to have little awareness or systematic training of speaking in the ‘public’ classroom situation.

Students’ reluctance to speak ‘publicly’ in class observed at JPR High School and JPC High School and reported by Kato (2001) seems to be in sharp contrast with the ease and spontaneity with which students at these two high schools were observed to be conversing with teachers in situations outside the framework of ‘lessons.’ Furthermore, although Yoneyama (1999) reports highly hierarchical teacher-student relationships along with the strict control over student life in Japan by Japanese high schools, teachers and the local educational committee, students in Kato’s study (2001) and in the present study were found to be reading comics, sleeping or having private chats during classes whether the teacher was aware of these behaviours or not. As mentioned earlier, this can be interpreted to suggest that teacher-student relationships are not only hierarchical but also distant, reflected in most cases in lack of rapport or even a communication breakdown, especially within the ‘public’ sphere of the classroom ‘lessons’.

Silence in Japanese classrooms is a part of classroom culture which is accepted as
unmarked. Thus, as discussed above, when a ‘marked’ attempt to use spoken interaction as a resource for learning is made, difficulties are experienced both by the teacher and the students. The nature of the teacher-student relationship and the approach to knowledge in Japanese high schools seems to not only reinforce, but also to be reinforced by, the classroom discourse patterns in which students play a passive role or do not engage themselves.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

As we have seen in the first section of this chapter (4.1), the silence of Japanese students involves a wide range of phenomena such as complete non-participation in discussion, being silenced by interruption, or not speaking about a specific issue. It was also suggested that silence needs to be analysed keeping different participation structures in mind, as pressure to speak varies in each type of participation structure.

Using these understandings of silence, the ways in which Japanese students are perceived ‘silent’ in Australian classroom settings was explored, based on student interviews and lecturer questionnaires, complemented by observations in Japanese high schools along with a number of Australian-Japanese comparative studies of classroom practices.

The perception of ‘silent’ Japanese students exists both among Japanese students and Australian lecturers, confirming common views on Asian students being inactive in classroom participation in Western universities (Liu 2000, 2002; Jones 1999; Milner & Quilty 1996; Braddock et al. 1995; Ballard & Clanchy 1991). However, in the present research, various aspects and causes of silence emerged through the interviews with Japanese students and comments from lecturers in the questionnaire. The silence of Japanese students can be discussed at three levels of language use: the lexico-grammatical linguistic level, the sociolinguistic level and the sociocultural assumptions level.

At the lexico-grammatical linguistic level, competence in manipulating spoken English as well as in listening to native-speaker Australian peers’ English was found likely to deter Japanese students from participation. This aspect was perceived by both Japanese students and Australian lecturers, although to what degree this factor affects the participation of Japanese students is not certain, as language proficiency is strongly related to confidence to speak up in class which was also found to play an important role in participation.

At the sociolinguistic level of language use, factors such as level of politeness, norms of participation (i.e. when to speak, when not to), rate of speech and turn-taking practices
seem to be affecting the silence of Japanese students. Although this aspect of silence has not been discussed extensively in preceding research, Japanese students frequently expressed that they are overwhelmed by the ‘bullets shooting’ in discussions in Australian classrooms. This aspect was not recognised by lecturers as intensely as by Japanese students. In fact, although EAP programmes and university learning centres provide training in discussion skills, until overseas students join mainstream classrooms they usually do not have opportunities to interact with native speakers in classroom discussion. This leaves overseas students in frustration and despair, when they cannot find the way to join discussions as they are ‘not used to’ the communicative style used by local native-speaker Australian peer students in Australian classrooms. In this respect, it was mentioned by both Japanese students and Australian lecturers that socialising between Australian students and Japanese students (and overseas students in general) needs to be facilitated so that they can familiarise themselves with different communicative styles and linguistic repertoires.

Finally, a wider level of language use was discussed in an attempt to explain Japanese students’ silence. Both Japanese students and Australian lecturers accounted for the silence of Japanese students in relation to sociocultural assumptions underlying classroom practices in Japanese high schools. Speaking in the classroom seemed to be regarded as ‘official’ and ‘formal’ by Japanese students while Australian lecturers expected a less ‘formal’ manner of speaking as well as less ‘hesitation’ in speaking. This gap was found to be one of the reasons which makes Japanese students a ‘silent’ group. The perception of classroom interaction as ‘public’ and ‘formal’ was found in Japanese high school classrooms.

Japanese students in Australia also revealed in their interviews that they do not care to participate if they do not see the point of discussion or if they ‘already know the answer.’ This suggests that Japanese students may see less value in the spoken mode of communication as a learning process but put strong emphasis on a written ‘final product’ which they expect to ‘learn.’ Australian students’ enthusiasm in classroom discussion is often alien to Japanese students, although they enjoy the interactive classroom. However, peer students’ talk can be regarded as not beneficial, as one Japanese student’s message in a web discussion page for course participants illustrates:

Students’ views and ideas are useful but only a part of the class. Personally speaking, I come here to ‘learn’ about this topic of linguistics from [lecturer in charge]. I paid $1500 for this class.
This view was reflected in the typical behaviour of Japanese students in Japanese high schools, where students do not pay attention to other students’ talk and do not interact over the class content. Moreover, a pedagogy which puts a strong emphasis on the written mode of communication in learning seems to encourage students to rely on written materials and ignore spoken interaction in the classroom.

As frequently mentioned by Australian lecturers, critical thinking does not seem to be encouraged in Japanese schooling, but it was also indicated that expression of critical attitudes seemed to be avoided even if students were given opportunities. This may also be a factor in Japanese students’ silence. Both Japanese students and Australian lecturers explained that the knowledge held by the teacher or presented in the course materials is neither challenged nor negotiated by Japanese students, and this attitude to knowledge also seems to affect the way Japanese students behave in the classroom. Objectivistic knowledge was found to be the kind of knowledge underlying teaching approaches in Japanese high schools. In this way, sociocultural assumptions underlying classroom practices in Japanese high schools can also explain the silence of Japanese students in intercultural encounters in Australian university classrooms.

At this point, it is possible to claim that the silence of Japanese students can be explained if linguistic competence and sociocultural background of Japanese students and Australian students are compared. However, Japanese students studying in Australia are not Japanese students studying in Japan, and most of the participants in the present research have already spent a substantial amount of time (at least more than 1.5 years, average 4.2 years) in Australia. They are constantly being socialised into Australian classroom culture, and they have motivation to learn, as was almost unanimously expressed in their interviews. The acculturation process must be affecting the way Japanese students behave in the classroom day by day, and changes may have or may actually be occurring as they are socialised into Australian university life. The accounts provided by Japanese students themselves and by Australian lecturers about the silence of Japanese students then have to be verified against the actual performances observed in real classroom settings. As Gumperz (1982) claims, it is often a culture-specific signalling mechanism (in Gumperz’ terms, ‘contextualisation cues’) and cultural assumptions which participants use unconsciously that can cause intercultural misunderstanding and stereotyping. Hence, the way the silence of Japanese students, or the perception of Japanese students’ silence, is created in actual contact situations in Australian classrooms.
is worth investigating. Presenting the analysis of what exactly contributes to the silence of Japanese students and how they are perceived as a ‘silent’ group in actual interactive situations of classroom will be the main aim of the next chapter.