

When Silence Speaks—Communicative Silence and Its Instruction

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Silence has long been an ignored field when it comes to effective communication. Due to its early association with negativity and the pedagogical focus on lexicography and grammar, few studies explore the significance of silence in conversations. The instruction of communicative silence, as a result, is absent in an EFL course. To bridge the gap, the present study firstly examines the types and the communicative functions of silence. In addition, the research also further discusses if gender plays a role in the power that silence exerts in daily communication. Then a lesson plan is provided, in which students are expected to detect how silence is implemented in contexts with male/female addressees and what functions it is performed in those situations. It is suggested that the study can serve as an initiative for language teachers to incorporate silence into their curriculum, and in turn raise EFL learners' awareness and further develop their pragmatic competence to correctly decode or even encode the implicit messages that silence can carry.

Key words: silence, communicative functions, speaking/listening instruction