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Silencing monologic teaching in ELICOS

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the Adult Silent Period in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), examining ways to combat proficiency silences from the perspective of advanced speaking bilinguals who reflected on how they 'broke their silence'. The paper argues that proficiency-oriented silence in language-learning adults can improve through repetitive speaking practice in ELICOS. The pedagogical approach needs to fit the purpose of improving proficiency. The data collection included three stages, a survey with 148 advanced level bilinguals, analyses of a publicly available YouTube video of a pre-intermediate class, and teacher interviews. Findings from bilingual students' self-reports on their early experiences in learning the English language in pre-intermediate classes showed that when the silent period in adult language learning is ignored by teachers due to their silencing monological teaching, language production is unnecessarily delayed. These students argued that their teachers emphasized the study of form above opportunities for meaning-making. The study suggests that acknowledging and addressing the silent period in adult language learners is crucial for facilitating language proficiency. Effective pedagogical strategies that prioritize repetitive speaking practice and meaningful interaction over a rigid focus on grammatical form can accelerate language production in adult learners. The findings imply that language educators in ELICOS programs should adapt their teaching methods to incorporate more communicative practices, thereby reducing the silent period and enhancing learners' speaking proficiency. The conclusion drawn from this research is that a balanced approach, which combines form-focused instruction with ample opportunities for meaning-making, can significantly improve the language acquisition process for adult learners.

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1. Introduction

The context of ELICOS in Australia and the challenges associated with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in EAL needs to be reexamined. This is a case study of EAL of adult bilingual silences in Australian ELICOS classes. The purpose of this paper is to connect SLA theories that relate to teaching and learning in EAL in the Australian and examine how CLT is understood and practiced by teachers. It also argues that CLT and the application of its principles often leads to teachers lacking a well-formed grasp of the approach to teaching English in the Australian context. The reason for selecting pre-intermediate level, is that English language proficiency of bilingual students at lower levels appears to cause adults to be more silent than at more advanced levels of English learning. Teachers often do not understand the reasons for adult student silence, Ekici (2023, p.8), for example, reported growing concern about student levels of communicative capability in EAL contexts in Australia, saying that sometimes academic staff are forced to change and adjust the delivery of course content to make it more accessible to students with weak language

skills. An overview of ELICOS (Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia. Cognitive Linguists, Language Learning and Silence in SLA is reviewed, pervading teacher attitudes to student silences, is discussed, and dilemmas facing the silent English adult student. An overview of ELICOS in Australia

ELICOS is explained by English Australia, "this acronym is used only in Australia and refers to the kind of courses of full-time study of English that can be accredited by the Australian federal government for study on a Student Visa." (English Australia, 2021). This section provides an overview of ELICOS teaching, learning and curriculum for overseas adult students studying in Australia. Learning English is a profitable global industry with Australia the third popular destination for English learning by international students (English Australia, 2021). "The English language sector (often referred to as ELICOS in Australia) is a major contributor to Australia's international education profile" (English Australia, 2021). The Australian government has also acknowledged ELICOS courses are "a significant part of Australia's international education industry" (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, 2018, p. 3). International students come to Australia to study English for a variety of reasons. "A total of 177,697 international students commenced English language programs in Australia in 2017, surpassing the previous peak year of 2016 to record a new high in the number of ELICOS students" (English Australia, 2021). Some students need to improve their English proficiency to advance their career, find work, or travel overseas. Moreover, many other students are interested in studying with an Australian education provider and are thus required to reach a prerequisite level of English proficiency to be able to enrol.

ELICOS has been defined in the ELICOS Standards document as a course of education or training that is:

- Solely or predominantly of English language instruction; and provided, or intended to be provided, to an overseas student.

The following courses as outlined in this document do not fall under ELICOS:

- English language programs provided exclusively to non-student visa holders,
- English as an additional language program or support service provided within the school sector as part of a school curriculum; and
- Foundation Programs (Australian Government, 2018, p. 3).

Indicatively, ELICOS is a full-time course, there are various ELICOS courses offered by education providers in Australia. Their aims and content vary depending on students' reasons for learning English. Table 1 is a table of the main ELICOS courses retrieved from English Australia (2021).

"ELICOS centres can be divided into two general types: those affiliated with a university and those run as private centres" (Edwards, 2018, p.7). All education providers registered for ELICOS courses in Australia are required to follow the ELICOS Standards 2018. As outlined in this document, students in ELICOS courses must attend a minimum of 20 hours of face-to-face classes per week.

1.1. Issues in ELICOS

According to the ELICOS Standards 2018, registered ELICOS providers must: "Maintain a supply of sufficient educational resources that are aimed at achieving course objectives, encourage diversity in learning activities and teaching methodologies, and are appropriately organised and regularly reviewed." In addition, ELICOS centres must provide their teachers with "reference resources that reflect contemporary knowledge of the theory and practice of TESOL, in its own facilities or through easily accessible jointly managed facilities" (Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, 2018, p. 9).

Despite these instructions and the significance of the resources, there is little consistency within the content of the curriculum on how ELICOS is to be taught. Teachers often lament that they are under-resourced in ELICOS and express an overwhelming desire that their activities and materials be in the curriculum at their centre, but only a few have succeeded (Stanley, 2017). The lack of contextual recourse can lead to monologic pedagogy silencing bilinguals and teacher confusion.

Table 1. The main ELICOS courses offered in Australia (English Australia, 2021 p.1)

Learner Goal	Course	Description
Improve general English language proficiency. Travel or do casual work in an English speaking country.	General English (GE)	Focus on developing the English language and communicative skills needed for a range of contexts. Courses can be from beginner level (A1/2 on the CEFR) to Advanced (C1/C2 CEFR).
Study in an Australian school, vocational college, or university.	Secondary/High School Preparation (S/HSP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Further Studies (EFS)	Usually based on the spoken and written English the students will need for further study.
Take an exam such as IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, Cambridge First Certificate.	Exam preparation course	Combine general skills and knowledge development plus exam orientation and practice.
Learn the spoken and written English needed for a specific context.	An English for special purposes (ESP) course such as English for Business. English for Health Professionals, English for Hospitality	Usually based on the spoken and written English the students will need for that particular context.
Teach English in school in their town country.	English for Teaching	Many types including TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and EfTC (English for Teaching Children). Most will include a practicum.
Have a short holiday and study English for a short time with a group.	Study tour	A combination of General English with sporting, social, tourist, or cultural activities.

Despite language centres and universities having the budget to provide sufficient support for adult language students, there are many problems at an institutional level. ELICOS institutions run their intensive courses as five-week blocks with both private providers and those that are attached to universities. Each intake in Australian ELICOS is, in a sense rushed, and many aspects are overlooked (Edwards, 2015). An issue with ELICOS is that even though many of these ELICOS institutions have adult students from all around the world, as ELICOS contributes significantly to the Australian economy (Australian Trade Commission, 2013), student needs are still under-researched (Edwards, 2015). Despite the importance of ELICOS serving as a bridge into university and a requirement for migration the curriculum is not regularly reviewed. In addition, based on my observation and experience, for many of these education providers, the profit of ELICOS centres is the main emphasis. Many language centres have tight budgets and do not focus on teacher professional development or research into theory and practice (Edwards, 2015).

In ELICOS settings, research into teacher's professional development has been reported as being limited by a multitude of factors. The lack of teachers building the curriculum may inadvertently have an impact on how teachers assess learner progression and their pedagogical needs. According to Edwards (2018), the "original purposes of teachers conducting research was to inform curriculum development. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of space and flexibility in some ELICOS curricula which prevents teachers from integrating their action research materials in some contexts" (p. 15).

A commonality in ELICOS centres is the divide between managers and teachers. Stanley's (2017) study found that "there is a powerful, socially imagined 'wall' that divides two cultures in the sector: the managers on the one hand, and the teachers on the other" (Stanley, 2017, p.1). Stanley (2017) refers to this as managers and teachers having two different "cultures". Stanley (2017) states that "the lived experiences and professional identities of managers in the ELICOS sector appear to be very different from the status cringe that some teachers report" (p. 4). Theory and practice should be interconnected domains in ELICOS, yet, as Edwards (2018) argues "research and teaching are viewed as separate practices, which they are in the sense of traditional research conducted by university academics" (p. 12). Yet, this lack of integration between theory and practice is not practical for teachers. As outlined above, knowledge of contemporary theory and practice is one of the key themes highlighted in the ELICOS Standards 2018.

Research questions

To address these aims, the research sought to answer the following questions:

Overarching Question:

1. When there is silence in an EAL pre-intermediate classroom, what is happening?

1.2. Literature- Approaches to EAL teaching and learning and the significance of silence for acquiring language

In ELICOS, CLT and its principles are the main approach to teaching and it is argued that teachers often do not have a well-formed grasp of the approach (Edwards, 2018). Teaching English in the Australian context, and how CLT is understood and practiced by teachers, is still not known despite its significance. Additionally, identifying gaps in the literature about learner-centredness in constructivist CLT, in EAL, needs attention. In an ideal ELICOS institution, it is widely held that teaching is student centred and the aim of CLT is to cater for this understanding, as the principles of CLT are:

- The main focus of the approach is to make the learners able to understand the intention and expression of the writers and speakers.
- It is believed that communicative functions are more important rather than linguistic structures.
- The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
- The teacher should create situations which help to promote communication.
- The teacher should teach them how language should be used in a social context.
- Teachers should give activities such as a role play which helps the learners to learn the language in a social context.
- Students should be given opportunities to listen to language as it is used in authentic communication (Adapted from Desai, 2015, p.49).

Unfortunately, the above CLT principles are acknowledged in theory, but not practiced in CLT. Teachers commonly default back to initiation-response-feedback (IRF) teachings (Edwards, 2018) due to a lack of understanding about what students really need to break their silences. The lack of teacher training can be the reason for student silences as they are not ready to respond. In CLT one of the main principles is that teachers facilitate the learning process (Desai, 2015) and prepare bilinguals for speaking by helping them break their silences through modelling and pronunciation practices. However, this is not achievable because there is little research on specific level teaching and its relation to the understanding of the silent period. If more action research were undertaken in ELICOS centres, teachers would be better equipped to understand the needs and conditions of students' communication. Because CLT is an approach and not a method, there is no particular technique for understanding how adult language learning takes place.

In his seminal work, Edward Anthony identifies three hierarchical elements: approach, method, and techniques in teaching and learning. Anthony (1963) defined approach as assumptions related to the nature of language, learning, and teaching. For Anthony, approach is axiomatic or, in other words, does not require logical explanation for, say, how and what to teach. Anthony's (1963) definition of method offers an overall plan to systematically present a language. Method, therefore, seizes upon how to teach based on an approach. Finally, technique for him is a specific activity in line with the chosen method and the approach in order to facilitate the silent period bilingual's experience in an EAL classroom. From Anthony's perspective, methods can be developed through an approach catering for the needs of bilinguals in breaking their silences in lower levels. Such methods have not yet been developed and teachers remain untrained in this area.

Teaching methods have a long history in language teaching. Such research in the 20th century was characterised by a trend for finding effective methods for language teaching (Brown, 2000). Many methods were introduced through the history of language teaching. Recently in the 21st century "the post-methods era", however, the desire for finding the perfect method for language teaching has subsided and a "complex view of language teaching which encompasses a multi-faceted understanding of the teaching and learning processes" has emerged (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 6).

In the post-methods era, we have seen a movement away from methods and toward approaches that are based on concepts and value systems (Richards, 2002). Some popular approaches are based on ideologies and values rather than research agendas (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Richards (2002) categorised different conceptions regarding language teaching. He proposed that theory-based approaches to teaching were based not on empirical research and classroom results, but on "systematic and principled thinking" (p. 22). Richards (2002) suggests that these approaches to teaching do not draw on classroom results, through pre-test and post-test, rather they rely heavily on rational arguments, leading to student confusion and silence.

Communicative language teaching (CLT), which is a popular approach around the world, is an example of a theory-based approach to language teaching. Richard's (2002) argues that CLT garnered interest as a response to the grammar-based approach to teaching in the 1960s. The foundation of this "principled approach" was to increase communicative competence among adult bilinguals based on the proponents of social theory, however "the [CLT] theory itself was considered sufficient to justify the approach" (p. 22). Currently however, this theory is widely considered to be mistaken. Clinical examinations of "domains of non-verbal communication" in social cognition theory (Suchy & Holdnack, cited in Holdnack & Drozdick, 2013) suggest that there are primary domains of non-verbal communication, "paralinguistic and situational". The first refers to communicating using signals, gestures, and facial expressions. The second, states that the "situational" only has a receptive mode. "Situational refers to one's ability to comprehend complex social situations that may involve an interaction between several people, between people and their environment, or between people and their social context. Situational communication relies on understanding social norms and the ability to detect discrepancies between expectations" (p.368) and student silences can be a detection.

Similarly, Nunan (2015) "provided a clear set of procedures for what teachers should do in the classroom and, like audiolingualism, were based on beliefs about the nature of language and the language learning process." (p. 10). He argued for using the term 'designer' to understand a variety of methods, such as Suggestopedia and the Silent Way, which developed in the 1970s and 1980s.

In current times the shift from teaching methods to pedagogical approaches has had a negative impact on teachers and adult bilinguals. In what Richards (2002) calls "diverse pedagogical approaches" that give individual understanding of teaching, he argues that "science-research-conceptions" improve our understanding of how learners experience motivation, memory, and related effectors (p.19). Richards simply concludes that optimal teaching is through the application of research of findings. He also argues that "task-based language teaching" and neurological research are interconnected and, as such, should also be applied to teaching (Brown p. 19). On the contrary, current pedagogical approaches such as "theory philosophy conceptions" have been "common-sense based on one's ideology or value system, rather than from research" (p. 21). CLT's teaching approach is a prime example "since it is based on an ideology rather than a research agenda, as are such movements as critical theory and critical pedagogy. Advocates of these movements consider it their

mission to convince teachers of the correctness of the theory, to review their teaching to see to what extent it matches their values, and to seek to incorporate the relevant principles or values into their teaching" (p. 20). In current practices teaching is viewed as a skill one is born with: you either have it or you do not. Brown posits that teacher education programmes offer teachers the foundation of academic theory and research that lets them individually develop at their own expense. This idea is supported by "Art-Craft Conceptions of Teaching, by comparison, see good teaching as something unique and personal to teachers" (p.10).

The rationalist approach can be characterised as a theory-based approach rather than empirical research. Brown (2002) argues that "systematic and principled thinking, rather than empirical investigation, is used to support the method. For example, theory-based or rationalist approaches in TESOL are CLT: an approach that is fundamentally based on assumptions.

Teachers have similarly been negatively impacted by CLT. Despite the magnitude of this far-reaching impact, very little research has been undertaken in the field of sociolinguistics which questions if and why adult language students remain silent. (Tatar, 2005), and Bao (2014) point out that silent behaviour gave way to more research on output undermining the connection of silent behaviour and language acquisition. What Bao means by this is thatnsilent behaviour has produced more research on "talk" whereas the focus should have been on silent behaviour. Consequently, in education and SLA, silent behaviour of lower-level students has not been investigated enough to ascertain the true purpose of this phenomenon in language acquisition. The CLT curriculum endorses classroom participation for lower-level adult language learning in EAL despite the students not having the required proficiency in English to do so.

Language teaching researchers have developed language learning and teaching concepts from the constructivist CLT viewpoint (Savignon, 1983): "ever since the cognitive- versus -sociocultural debate took place in various journals and at several conferences in the 1990s, many researchers in L2 learning and teaching are probably convinced that a wide gap between the two camps is unavoidable" (Hulstijn et, al., 2014, p. 365). Language teaching and learning ideologies have also had a significant effect on the success of the language learning process (Hulstijn et al., 2014). Researchers have mainly drawn upon concepts from the social constructivist Vygotsky (1978) views on current communicative pedagogy in the context of language learning being interconnected with sociocultural theory. This is through social interaction incorporating Vygotsky's (1962) zone of proximal development (ZPD) where students' interaction with peers is highly valued. CLT draws from his social learning theory, but importantly, his social constructivist view is misunderstood. Vygotsky, (1978, p. 6) suggested that as teachers scaffold student learning, students develop the capacity to articulate their ideas to one another using both inner and public speech to acquire new knowledge. This notion of inner speech is not facilitated in today's CLT.

That the concept of silence remains diverse and ambiguous in various academic fields, including linguistics and education highlights the need to examine it in greater depth through research design to better understand what adult silence is, particularly in second language acquisition (Kenny, 2011). Dekeyser's (2014) instruction on how to research in SLA, based on a range of approaches, is especially helpful here; notably in expressing the dilemma of methodologies and research design. DeKeyser (2014, p. 367), observes that:

> the association between the sociocultural approach and qualitative methodology is a mere fact, not a necessity. I see no reason why sociocultural research could not move from descriptive to explanatory to predictive, as long as the social dynamics it takes as its material object are not confounded with relativism to the point of rejecting the ideas of hypothesis testing and falsification of theory. Without such a process, there is no criterion for selecting among theories (beyond their aesthetic or political appeal), no generalizability, and no science.

The problem here is that linguistic and educational researchers need to understand that they may have a particular ideological approach applied to a particular level, based on those levels needed. For example, the grammar translation method (a concept by cognitive linguists) can be expanded to serve the proficiency needs of lower levels and expand on the language comprehension system.

1.3. Dilemmas facing the adult silent English student

There is not a clear participation technique for adult bilinguals in current CLT. In CLT, there is an understanding of the notion of 'participation' for EAL adult students as primarily being able to give the right answers to teachers' questions which are generally asked too soon in their language learning journeys (Edwards, 2018). Students who remain silent (regardless of their ability) are considered as non-participating and/or stigmatised for their silent behaviour, whereas student definitions of participation and silence are more complex and varied (Dallimore et al., 2004). Importantly, oral participation is compulsory for speaking activities at this level which are an essential aspect of CLT (Wang, 2012). Silent behaviour of students in lower levels results from under-researched pedagogy that requires a student to participate orally without gaining enough language competence, particularly in lower levels. Commonly, silent behaviours of adult students are consequences which stem from students' inadequate language production ability; this causes them to misunderstand lesson content, perhaps as a consequence of poor verbal skills and slow pace of learning (Wang, 2012). Despite this, CLT (interactive teaching approach) is the most favoured language teaching approach in EAL education. To examine why this might be, the following section begins by defining the interactive language teaching approach known as CLT. The following chapter, the Literature Review, reveals that very little research has been undertaken at this level. It further reveals that poor language teaching approaches may silence students due to their low proficiencies.

A significant review from Chaudron (1988) posits that teachers do 60% of talking in the language classroom. He argues that teacher's talk usually relates to classroom management, organisation of learning, content teaching and socialising. Chaudron observes that students are generally silent and the reason for adult student silences are largely unknown and there is no curricula to accommodate their silences. Defining 'silent behaviour' of adult students in pre-intermediate classes is complex and difficult. Tatar (2005) asserts that there is research on classroom participation which has examined how language teachers and children perceive silent behaviour in the classroom; however, they argue that there is very little research on how this behaviour is understood and perceived by adult EAL students and the impact of their silent behaviour on their language learning trajectory.

A key scholar critical in the area of silence is Bao (2014), who explores what he calls 'silence' with university students. However, his study fails to separate student silent behaviour from cultural understanding. He does not explore silent behaviour in relation to the causal relationship with CLT. Bao's (2014) work draws upon ideas and reflections of Asian students and how their learning mode is a function of a new environment, such as Australia. He insists that silent behaviour is connected to language learning but does not tie it to a language learning context as he has employed 100 random individuals from Asian backgrounds at university. Bao's findings reason that among scholars, silence is perceived to be non-productive or non-participatory (2014, p. 5). He contends that because of this problem there has been a huge amount of research that focuses on output or 'talk' (2014, p. 5). He further emphasises that teachers put a great amount of time into trying to get students to participate and talk in class discussion. Bao's study presents six case studies focused on Australian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Vietnamese perspectives on silence with university students but the focus of Bao's (2014) research is creating awareness of silence by distinguishing between silence and reticence. He claims that silence has many positive connotations and reticence, conversely, often suggests difficulty in stimulating language skills and is a barrier to communication (2014, p. 58). Bao (2014) argues that scholars of silence in the North American and Australian contexts share similar views, as silence is indicated as an absence of social phobia and the processes of critical thinking are attributes of silence. Bao does, however, argue that in the Western contexts, speaking is highly honoured, and deemed an essential agent for teaching and learning. However, Bao's (2014) findings surprisingly generated interesting results, as the majority of the students referred to silence as a significant tool for L2 processing.

According to Bao (2013), classroom tasks should involve productive use of silent behaviour. He argues that a clear "rationale related to why, how, and how long to practice silence, as well as arrangements for following up on tasks and assessing learner performance, is beneficial for adult students" (p.276). Students think that teachers misinterpret their silences as disengagement (Dallimore et al., 2004). Thus, one particular study has found that students who orally participate (McCroskey & Richmond, 1998), are more prone to speak out in class, whereas those who are silent may simply prefer not to initiate oral participation but achieve higher grades in exams (McCroskey, & Richmond,

2006). A number of studies have concluded that silent behaviour improves writing (Hubert, 2011). Conventionally silence is understood as non-participation or unwillingness and that it has been negatively interpreted (Granger, 2000). A new model of language teaching approach that incorporates active silent participation for adult language learners could be adopted. Current approaches such as CLT do not recognise learners' inability or reluctance to produce talk in pre-intermediate level classes before they have first accumulated phrases, words, and grammatical structures of the target language silently or in silent reflection. Critical to this study is the view that there should not be a 'one size fits all' approach as there needs to be a tailored teaching approach for each level that caters for students' physical, psychological, and sociocultural needs. For sociolinguistics, the cultural understanding of silence has been extensively researched, whereas the phenomenon of silence itself, as distinct from cultural perceptions, has not been taken into consideration. More recently Kamdideh & Barhesteh, (2019) have argued the importance of teachers "increasing wait time" (p.195) in order to increase adult student speaking practise in class. However, wait-time on its own could be sufficient without teachers adapting their use of the language to make meaning. It can be concluded that silence needs to be explored further to identify this.

Contrary to this, silence has been looked from different angles. Adult student silence has been explored using different terms in SLA. Some researchers have used the term 'reticence' to refer to student silence. Philips (1984) found that the major characteristic of reticent individuals was social withdrawal or avoidance due to their feelings of ineptitude towards social communicative events and public performance. To further illustrate reticence being a communicative behaviour, he stated that "people avoid communication because they believe they will lose more by talking than by remaining silent, we refer to it as reticence" (p. 52). Reticence includes two dimensions in his conceptualisation: cognitive and behavioural. In contrast, some researchers have used the 'willingness to participate' when framing silence. This study explores student silence as a cognitive phenomenon and focuses on the need for understanding at a pedagogical level. This study also draws on Krashen's input hypothesis and the concept of the silent period in particular to interpret adult bilingual silences. The conceptual framework of this study will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Kumaravadivelu (1993) noted that "teachers who are dedicated to CLT" often "fail to create opportunities for genuine communication in their classroom" (p. 221). In previous studies, Savignon (1991) reviewed CLT practices and noted that "patterns of classroom interaction provide little genuine communication between teacher and learner or, for that matter, between learner and learner" (p. 271). Despite the accolades of these scholars, there remains uncertainty around the definition and pedagogical implication of the communicative approach continues today (Ekici, 2022). And hence, students hold silent behaviours in the classroom and teachers do not know why. Thus far, one can see that there are gaps in ELICOS that need to be addressed. One such gap is that CLT is used as an umbrella approach that seeks to cover all levels in every possible circumstance. Another gap is the lack of research undertaken in ELICOS institutions. Perhaps the most glaring gap is the lack of teacher training. There needs to be a specific level of teacher training that falls under a language teaching method which understands adult's mental biological language progression in EAL and improves proficiency levels of bilinguals.

1.4. Cognitive linguists, language learning and silence in SLA

The discussion above has revealed that the social approaches to language teaching failed to account for the creative and biological nature of language (Brown, 2000; Ewing, 1972). Mentalist, approaches (also known as cognitive linguistic approaches to language acquisition), attempted to account for the innovative and creative nature of language. For cognitive linguists, language is "internal, rule-governed, and abstract" (Ewing, 1972, p. 455). According to this understanding, humans have an innate predisposition to acquire language; in other words, they are innately programmed to learn language (Chomsky, 1980; Ewing, 1972). In a second language learning context, the cognitive linguists' approach assigns more importance to student competence, rather than their performance.

One of the champions of cognitive theory was Noam Chomsky who proposed that language is only a system of rules for generating strings of words that is language (Chomsky, 1980). This viewpoint argues that unlike what behaviourists assumed, language does not involve habit-formation, reinforcement, and associations. Rather, language learning is a matter of formation of new structures and patterns based on an internalised set of generative grammar. This explains how rapidly children

acquire their first language; children are capable of learning an endless number of sentences through a finite number of grammatical rules.

Most SLA theories have looked at how children learn a language. These models are: the Monitor Model (Krashen, 1981); The Language-Processing Model (Bialystok, 1983); the Model for Attention and Processing (McLaughlin, 1987) and so on. But there is a lack of understanding of proficiency in adult language learning. Most teachers assume that students understand them, but students are mainly silent. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Krashen's (1981) monitor theory puts lower-level bilinguals' silences into perspective by stating that the language learners will go through a silent period when learning a language. The 'input hypothesis' explains the silent period. The silence is a language-developing stage usually seen in the initial language learning stage, which is referred to as a competence building stage through listening (Granger, 2004). "Adults, and children in formal language classes, are usually not allowed a silent period. They are often asked to produce very early in a second language, before they have acquired enough syntactic competence to express their ideas" (Krashen, 1982, p. 27). Following on from this, Krashen (1998 p.180) noted that learner production "is too scarce to make real contribution in linguistic competence." He believed that language learners could learn without producing the language provided the input is comprehensible.

2. Methodology

Data collection for this research involved three stages. The first stage included conducting a survey with 148 advanced level bilinguals (Phase 1, Advance speaking bilingual participants) at the University of Southern Queensland College in Australia. Phase 2 involved analyses of a publicly available YouTube video of a pre-intermediate class using Walsh's (2006) SETT Framework (see appendix A). Phase 3 is the Teacher interviews.

Table 2. Data collection summary

Stages	Instruments	Participants/tools	Information sought
Phase 1	Survey	148 advance level Bilinguals	Post feeling of silence
Phase 2	Walsh's (2006) SETT Framework	Classroom video	The features based on Walsh's SETT Framework, to locate teacher/student interactions and related key pedagogical points.
Phase 3	Interviews	Five teachers	Video stimulated teacher responses

There were 5 teacher interviews. The interviews were conducted using a publicly available video as a Video Stimulus Recall Interview (VSRI) questions so that the teachers can comment on the reasons for particular behaviours in EAL language teaching. Their feedback from the VSRIs will also allow them to comment on the class atmosphere and raise other issues. The interviews were later analysed using the SETT framework. Watching back the video-recorded class should prompt memory of their feelings and emotions which gives insights into their views on their silent period (Sturtz & Hessberg, 2012). The data collection tool of Video Stimulated Recall Interview (VSRI) is purposely chosen to gain an understanding about these students' silent periods during the initial stages of their language learning. In addition, the Walsh (2006) SETT classroom language pedagogical features check list will be used to analyse the nature of the pedagogy e.g., to gauge the extent to which CLT and the social constructivist approach is adopted. This is necessary since this approach is seen as a possible inhibitor of students' speaking., so adding to the triangulation of the data. Thematic analysis was applied to the data to the survey data. Data as in transcripts will be analysed using Nvivo to identify common themes regarding within-group of students' and teachers' explanations of silence.

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 3. Competent Bilinguals six-dimensional reticent scale compared with Soo and Goh's (2013) tertiary students

Dimensions and items	Competent Bilinguals percentage positive ratings	
	Soo and Goh (2013) (n1=78), %(f)	***Present research (n2 = 67) %(f)***
Anxiety		
1.I am nervous when talking	17.9(14)	19.74(15)
2.I feel tense when talking.	25.7(20)	17.33(13)
Delivery skills		
3.I stumble over my words.	30.8(24)	18.31(13)
4.I muddle my words.	29.5(23)	20.78(16)
Memory		
5.I forget what I want to say when talking.	37.2(29	19.71(14)
6.I lose sight of what I want to say when talking.	48.8(38)	17.33(13)
Organisation		
7.My thoughts are disorganised.	51.3(40)	14,67(11)
8.My thoughts are jumbled.	37.2(29)	17.80(13)
Timing		
9.I waited too long to say what I wanted to say.	47.4(37)	18.18(14)
10.I hesitated too long to say what I wanted to say.	43.6(34)	24.68(19)
Knowledge		
11.I am unaware of what to say.	61.6(48)	12.00(9)
12.I am unfamiliar with what to say.	71.8(56)	10.39(8)

Table 3 shows reporting of Competent Bilinguals' completed responses (respectively) to the six-dimensional reticent scale compared with Soo and Goh's (2013) tertiary students.

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was applied to test for any statistically significant differences between the two groups (two-tailed with alpha level of 0.05). The results showed the Soo and Goh (2013) EFL tertiary students majoring in English in second and third year university studies to be statistically significantly more reticent than the Competent Bilinguals who had completed their studies and were recalling their experience as beginners (U-value 17; z-score –3.29077; $p<.001$).

It would seem that the Competent Bilinguals in Soo and Goh's (2013) study reported themselves as far more likely to be anxious and reticent than the Competent Bilinguals group who were already following their various careers, being advanced English-speaking Competent Bilinguals. Moreover, Soo and Goh's (2013) group were EFL higher education students who were in the middle of studying an English major in Jordan where they would need to do well to achieve their degree and get a job related to the English major. In contrast, the group in the present study were Competent Bilinguals who had completed their studies and probably felt much more confident in retrospect since they had been using English for meaningful purposes for some time and lived in an English-speaking country. Thus, in contrast, the students' high reticence in Soo and Goh's (2013) study appears to be exacerbated by the pressure to do well in developing their English proficiency as that was their university major, upon which their job prospects depended. This study has strengthened the argument found in Soo and Goh's (2013) research as to why adult students are silent.

This study, in addition to theirs has found that, when adult students are learning a language – especially in the early stages, they have level-specific needs. The results of this study clearly show that the silent period is a level-specific biological need. If their needs in breaking their silent period is not met by pedagogical implications, then they have problems. This is an issue where the students' needs are not being met due to the teacher's approach. When the Competent Bilinguals replied 'sometimes' in a dimension, it was assumed that they had issues in breaking their silent period. The selected aspect(s) in that particular dimension on the frequency scale show the issues they experienced. On the contrary, if they answered either 'very rarely' or 'never' to the questions, they were counted as less silent or not (having any issues breaking their silent period) silent under the particular dimension.

The Competent Bilinguals' frequency ratings were calculated across the six dimensions and for the 16 statements. As seen in Table 3, in relation to delivery skills, 60, 40, and 36 Competent Bilinguals' (which is equivalent to 82.19%; 60, 51.94%; 40, and 50.7%; 36 of the surveyed Competent Bilinguals who answered this question) reported that 'very often' or 'often' they found it easier to talk in their native language, they muddled their words when talking in English, and they stumbled over their words when talking in class. The dimensions of anxiety, organisation, and timing were almost equally reported to be problematic by Competent Bilinguals when speaking in the classroom. Anxiety was found to be one of the highest contributors to EAL Competent Bilinguals silence; As mentioned earlier, over 50% of the Competent Bilinguals experienced tension and nervousness when asked to speak in English which shows that anxiety is a key contributor to Competent Bilinguals when breaking their silences at beginner levels. Competent Bilinguals responded that they felt tense when talking, and they felt very nervous when talking in English, respectively. This finding aligns with previous literature that highlights anxiety as the utmost important issue in student silence (Chalak & Baktash, 2015; Soo & Goh, 2013; Zuraidah, 2007).

The analysis of data in this study revealed that organisation and timing were the other problematic areas in breaking their silence among Competent Bilinguals. Around 50% of the advanced level Competent Bilinguals responded that they 'very often', 'often', and 'sometimes' had issues with organising their thoughts or responding in time when talking English in an EAL classroom. While the findings of this study report organisation and timing as contributing problematic factors when breaking their silence, previous studies have not acknowledged these factors as equally important. Soo and Goh (2013), for example, did not find a huge difference between agreement and disagreement responses of Competent Bilinguals' answers to their questions in these dimensions. The Competent Bilinguals in Soo and Goh's (2013) study were highly proficient, hence they did not have issues with conveying their intended meanings. The overall lowest percentage of responses were for the dimension of knowledge, even though lack of vocabulary was reported as highly important in their silences. Out of the 76 Competent Bilinguals who responded to this question, approximately three-quarters (73.68%; 56) reported lack of vocabulary as a contributing factor to their silences, which is not surprising when learning an additional language.

The answers to this research question showed that the Competent Bilinguals perceive the challenges and opportunities of their silent behaviour as a response to language pedagogies and practices implemented in adult pre-intermediate level English language classrooms in Australia. They said that there was no meaning building in class and they had to take the matter into their own hands and watch movies and listen to music to increase the importance of activities that foster social communication for meaningful purposes. So, they seemed to have broken their silence using their own abilities because not much opportunity was given to them in class. This proves the literature wrong that it should distinguish between the two epistemological views dominating in language learning, as it occurs in the initial stage of language learning to internalise language input called the silent period (Krashen, 1981). However, as mentioned previously, in education the sociocultural view believes silence happens when language learning matures and inner silent thinking occurs (Vygotsky, 1962) or alternatively, it occurs (based on the findings of this study) in the initial stage of language learning to internalise language input called the silent period (Krashen, 1981), to add support to this, this study suggest that the silent period it can be called adult language learning proficiency silence.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion this study explored that teachers really need to be empathetic when teaching at beginner levels. They need to find strategies that work with learners' abilities and that may be applied to increase learners' English, which in turn, can assist them to achieve their objectives in teaching. EAL education should provide training for in-service teachers to ensure their appropriate expertise in teaching and include funding to secure the resources they need for engaging L2 learners of English. Institutions responsible for teaching EAL need to provide the resources and regular professional development for teachers in CLT to create a rich, engaging, purposeful, dialogic, meaning-making learning environment. EAL teachers need support from their institutions and governments to ensure provision of the necessary equipment and resources to facilitate learners to break their silence when learning English. External social influences need to be understood and provide future encouragement using English to sustain the levels of English.

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