

“Silently Time is Disappearing” : An Exploration of Japanese University EFL Student Interactions in TheatreSports Games

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aims

This paper explores the lesson structure and interactional dynamics of a Japanese university English course whose principal activity was improvised drama games based on a contest format known as TheatreSports (TS). In particular it focuses on the occurrence of silence during the games and seeks to account for this in sociocultural terms. For an account of the rationale for using improvisation in general and a fuller description of the way this format has been implemented in the course discussed below the reader is referred to my previous paper (Haig, 1997).

1.2 The course

The course was a full-year semi-elective course for second year English majors at a co-educational 4-year university. Officially designated as a ‘productive course’ the focus was supposed to be on improving students’ spoken English, hence my interest in using TS. There are several versions of TS but essentially the contests involve teams of players who challenge each other to perform short scenes for which they are awarded points by a panel of judges. In the hands of skillful practitioners performing in their native language these games are often highly entertaining and, since a lot of the fun comes from making mistakes, even amateurs such as myself can enjoy them. Prior to this course I had for several years been experimenting with ways of adapting TS for use in my English classes and, despite the formidable challenge they present to Japanese students, it appeared that several groups found them both enjoyable and useful.

1.3 Research Questions

When I first had the idea for a course based on TS I was mainly concerned with what I perceived as my students’ lack of spontaneity in oral communication. Therefore when I came to investigate this course formally I had initially planned to try measuring this factor to see if I could demonstrate any improvement. However, after surveying the relevant literature I became aware of the difficulties involved in such an investigation and changed my aim accordingly to the more tractable one of gaining greater insight into what might be taking place in these unconventional lessons. As an example of action research I believe that even this small-scale classroom project has been of great value in raising my awareness of the nature of the interaction process even though at the end it inevitably opens up more questions than it answers.

By the time I began this study the course had been running for one semester and I had come to have a considerable number of reservations about its value for my students. I was particularly concerned with the possibility that I may have been sacrificing my students for the sake of no more than a vague feeling that drama might be a useful way of learning English. The questions I had were of three main kinds: about the format, about my teaching, and about the students.

Format Is TS in any sense a useful way of promoting language learning? Are some scenes more useful than others? What sort of language is produced? How much? Is such language 'real' and applicable to the future needs of the students?

Teaching How much do I interact with students and in what ways? How much talking do I do? How much Japanese do I speak? (This is something I became conscious of when comparing video recordings of my lessons with those of a colleague with whom I am cooperating in the development of the TS format. In one of the lessons I studied she used only one word of Japanese, whereas I notice that I used much more.) Is my role really that of teacher, or something more like organizer, or entertainer? How, if at all, do I correct students' English mistakes, and is this appropriate? What is the power structure of the class and does it promote what I believe to be the important principles of learner autonomy and cooperation? Am I sensitive to the cultural context of the students?

Students What do they think about the class? Do they enjoy it? Do some enjoy it more than others and if so why? What about shy students? What do they find most difficult? What criteria do the judges use in assessing performances? Do actors make good use of non-verbal communication? What cultural norms do they reflect?

2 Approach

2.1 An ethnographic paradigm

Given the wide range of potential foci for research I decided to follow van Lier's (1988) advice and approach the investigation initially in a spirit of exploration, without as far as possible any predetermined agenda, to see if I could thereby identify any significant patterns. To this end I decided to employ qualitative analysis as being the most appropriate means of gaining understanding of this kind of classroom interaction. I was particularly keen to do this because, in addition to its appropriateness to the research context, the use of an ethnographic approach reflects a significant paradigm shift for me as part of my ongoing personal evolution from my former existence as a natural scientist into an educator and social scientist.

2.2 Sources of data

The primary sources of data for this study were a questionnaire given to students at the end of the course and video and audio recordings (and transcriptions made therefrom) of one particular lesson. It is regrettable that almost no field notes were made during the lessons or even shortly afterwards save for some notes scribbled on the video cassette boxes and the contest score sheets. At the end of the course I gave students my email address and invited them to send me messages about the course but regrettably none have done so. I think on reflection I could have done this much sooner in the

course, even perhaps making it a homework assignment. On the other hand, this course makes such heavy demands on the students that as a quid pro quo for their cooperation and good faith during the lessons I had told them specifically that there would be no homework or exams.

I am indebted for some of the insights presented below to discussions and joint-viewing of our respective videos with my fellow TS-practitioner colleague Louise Heal, and to comments from certain more or less anonymous audience members at a presentation she and I gave together at the 1997 JALT conference. Finally, and above all, I would like to thank the students who embarked on the course so intrepidly and took part in the contests with such enthusiasm.

3 Questionnaire

3.1 Purpose and design

Although well aware that questionnaires are limited in what they can reveal, my intention when giving one in this class was twofold: first, to try and gain a student's eye emic perspective on the lessons and second, to see if there were ways in which I could improve the course in the future. I piloted a version of the questionnaire at the end of the first semester, on the basis of which some refinements were made, and then administered it again during the final class of the year. The main refinement was to let students write in Japanese. This was important because I felt that their limited English writing skills had previously interfered with their ability to express concretely what they thought. Likewise, I decided that the questionnaire should be anonymous. Although I did this to encourage students to be honest, this has the disadvantage that I could not correlate responses with individuals for the purpose of analysis.

3.2 Analysis of responses

Lack of space prevents a detailed examination of the responses and what follows here is therefore a selective appraisal of the most salient points.

The responses show that 28 out of the 32 respondents said their English speaking ability had improved, though of these the majority selected 'Improved a little' (16) rather than 'Improved' (10) or 'Improved much' (2). In terms of which aspect had improved the most, the four commonest answers were Confidence (11), Vocabulary (8), Spontaneity (3) and Speed (3). Only one student cited Fluency and none cited Accuracy as having improved. These results are more or less as I would have predicted, particularly the confidence-building aspect of the games, but it was surprising that vocabulary was so well rated (since it was not specifically taught) and that fluency was not mentioned more.

In answer to the first two questions, about what the students had liked in the course, the most popular answer was '*Having a chance to speak English*'. This is encouraging because one of my concerns as noted above was that students were not given enough speaking time, although I still do not think that the balance between my speaking time and theirs is quite right.

It is also, I think, significant that no student specifically mentioned having a lot of speaking opportunities in the course. This reflects the fact that most Japanese university students, even English majors, simply do not spend much time speaking English at all. As far as I am aware none

of their Japanese professors lecture in English, nor talk to students in English, and my particular group told me that they only have one other lesson per week with a native-speaker and that they mostly do listening activities with him. Among the other frequent responses were the following representative examples:

'Don't need to worry about grammar.' I am always telling students to stop being worried about grammar and it is pleasing that quite a few students agree that this is a good thing. In other contexts it may not be appropriate, but with Japanese university students who have spent so many hours at school and university pondering ever more obscure grammar problems I think it is a necessary antidote.

'Could make new friends.' For several years I had assumed that, in any particular class (after the first year at least) my students knew and were on the whole friendly with each other. I now realize that this is far from being the case and have learnt that this is quite a typical feature of Japanese society in general. Even though they take most of their lessons together throughout their four year degree, students often end up knowing only a very small but closely-knit in-group. So important is this narrowly defined group membership that the social repercussions for a student of being excluded from a group can be severe. Perhaps this is not so surprising, given that most classes are of between 40 and 60 students, but the all-embracing sense of the class as a community that I as a teacher feel is, I now realize, not at all the way most students see things. In this course the students worked in teams and naturally these were mostly composed of clusters of genuine friends, but to equal out the numbers there were some quite painful decisions that had to be made when, for example, a group of seven friends had to shed two members. Whether it is culturally appropriate to try and promote more general (perhaps Western) notions of friendship within the class I am not sure.

'The last lesson of the course.' This for me was a less happy finding. I do not think students meant *'Thank God its over'*, rather that they had enjoyed the last lesson (actually the penultimate lesson, just before the winter break) in which I had let the students form two groups and *prepare* a short skit on the theme of Christmas which they presented during the last 20 minutes of the lesson. Task-based learning theorists frequently emphasize the importance of planning. For example, Foster (1996: 134):

A task done without planning time is more likely to lead to students choosing relatively undemanding language. It also increases the chances that they will rely on readily available vocabulary rather than trawling the less easily accessed parts of their English lexicon. Students without time to plan are very much more likely to pause frequently and at length. All these effects are stronger on tasks that are cognitively more demanding, presumably because students do not have the attentional resources sufficient to deal with the difficulties of both language content and language form at the same time.

The situation Foster describes is, as we shall see, disturbingly close to what happened in the TS class I analyzed. Whereas in my more conventional general English classes I take care to

incorporate pre-tasks for this reason, the whole idea of my TS games is that students should get used to *not* preparing. Japanese students particularly tend to have a strong need to confer, plan and revise before speaking and it is precisely this which I hoped this TS course would help to overcome. I discussed this issue with the students at the start of the course (see Haig, 1997: 218) and they agreed that it was a worthwhile objective. What I hoped was that instead of preparation, task repetition would 'kick start' students' spontaneity. At first this was just a hunch but I have since found theoretical support for the utility of repetition in, for example, Bygate (1996).

Regarding the aspects of the course which students had most disliked the overwhelming and initially astonishing message was that the students had wanted me to take the class roll each week. This surprised me because students normally prefer classes where the teacher does not check attendance and, as part of my agreement with the students when we began the course I had specifically told them that because of the challenging nature of the course I did not want to coerce them to attend and that therefore a roll would not be taken. However, because the games rely on teamwork it is important for all members of a team to turn up for every lesson when they have a contest. Not surprisingly, given the above result, in their suggestions for improvements to the class, taking roll was the most frequent comment and this is definitely one of the things which I shall change in future.

3.3 Reflection on the results

After studying the responses to the questionnaire I was able to refine my focus for the subsequent analysis of one particular class. The responses of several students at the end of the course, including the one forming the title of this paper, often mentioned the problem of silence. This is an interesting area, both generally in view of the findings of Foster and Bygate and particularly in Japan, where silence is known to have particular cultural significance (Saville-Troike, 1989:146) which can lead to rule-conflict problems when speaking (Noguchi, 1987) and even writing (Dennet, 1988) English. Certainly it is an inescapable feature of my TS classes and one which seems to bear quite closely on notions of spontaneity and therefore seemed a useful aspect to study in more detail.

4 Classroom Interactions

4.1 The Classroom Situation

When at the start of doing this part of the study I was faced with a whole year's worth of almost entirely unwatched videos I had some difficulty in deciding which of the classes to choose for analysis. In fact, I finally chose the lesson held on Thursday 11th September, 1997. This was the first class following the long summer vacation and only the third full contest lesson of the course, but I noticed that I had written 'Very good!' on the video case and was interested in trying to uncover what it was that had made such a positive impression on me at the time. Whenever I have watched TS lesson videos I have been struck by how dull and uninteresting they seem: inevitably something is lost in the recording but presumably this is the price we must pay for the benefits of estrangement that it offers, one no doubt lessened if adequate field notes are taken.

The course had begun in April and for most of the first semester I had been introducing the

games and the contest format to the students. Thus in this lesson, the first of the second semester, the students all had some familiarity with the games but it was likely that their language and performance skills would be slightly rusty due to the summer break. I think that studying the interactions at this stage will provide a useful baseline for a future study to compare with contests from nearer to the end of the course.

The room was one of about twenty more or less identical classrooms in a six storey block at the university. Any such place is likely to have certain associations for the students who use it: it is not improbable that for quite a lot of my students the associations these rooms have are not entirely positive. One of the things I wanted to do in this course was to get students to question their attitudes about what a classroom is, its function and their behaviour in it. Partly for this reason and partly for practical purposes the desks and most of the chairs were all pushed to the back of the room and an acting area created at the front.

4.2 Data collection

From the start of the course I had been experimenting with variations in angle and position of the video camera to optimize its utility. I had wanted the camera to be as unobtrusive as possible and had therefore decided not to try hand-held filming. I always tried to have the camera up and running before the students arrived and initially I put it at the extreme back of the room. Week by week, however, I gradually moved it closer towards the acting area at the front. This was important because from the back of the room the microphone could not pick up the students utterances sufficiently clearly. In the particular lesson discussed below I had moved the camera up to just behind and to one side of the back row of audience chairs. I supplemented its audio recording with the use of a small cassette recorder placed on a chair in the front row of seats.

5 Data analysis

5.1 Transcription

For the purpose of transcription I first made a rough draft from the video which allowed me to identify the voices and note gestures and movements. For detailed language work I relied on the better sound quality and easier reviewing facility of the audio cassette and I made frequent further changes to the transcript during subsequent study of the video. I am aware that the resultant transcript is no more than an approximation to what actually happened during the interaction but I believe it is adequate for the points I wished to analyze. The general transcription conventions are based on van Lier (1988). In addition, learners are designated by *L_n*, the Timekeeper by T and myself by ED. The sound of the timekeeper's klaxon signalling the end of the scene is indicated by Ω, laughter is shown by x or X according to approximate volume and applause by underlining. Translations of Japanese phrases are given in brackets and preceded by ¥.

5.2 Getting an overview

An overview of the events of the lesson are shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

There are several points which emerge from this but the one of most concern to me is that

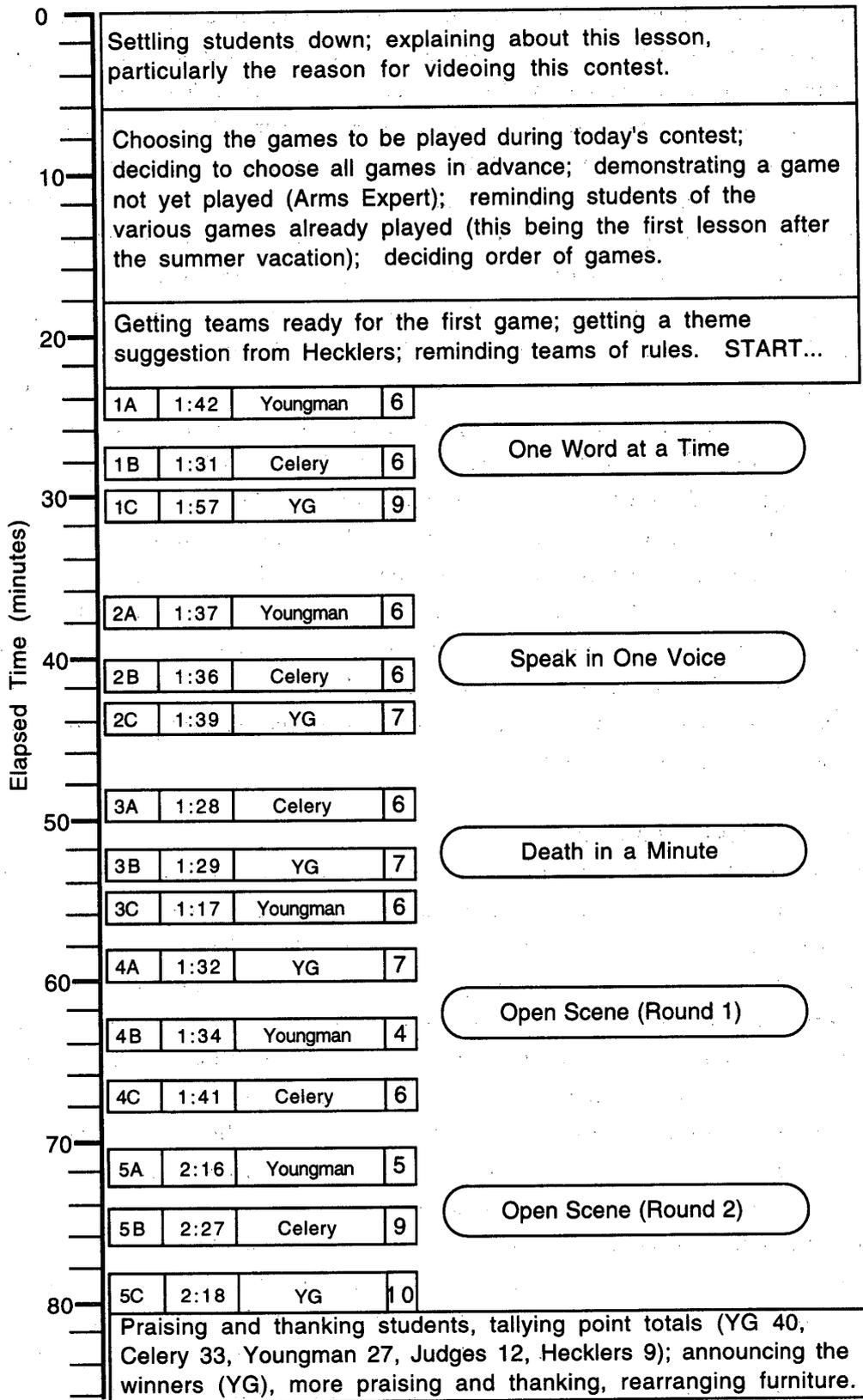


Figure 1. Overview of events during the lesson.

The numbers to the right of the team name are the points scored for each scene.

over 20 minutes elapsed before the first scene began. This period was composed of three sections: my explanation to the students of why the videoing of the lesson was particularly important (I planned to present some excerpts at the JALT conference); a protracted review of the games, including a quite irrelevant digression into the explanation of a game that we had never practiced; and the setting up of the first scene. One of the points I have noticed from a comparison with my colleague's lessons is that I tend to talk too much and in particular to over-explain things. She speaks far less, explains things just once in a slow, measured tone that commands attention, then lets the students get to work. This is something else I intend to address in the future.

Even if I do manage to reduce my talking time however it may not make a significant difference. The overview shows that there were five games played during the following hour, making fifteen scenes in total. Incidentally, each game should start with a different team but in this lesson I neglected to change the order between games 1 and 2 so unfortunately the *Youngman* team (the weakest) had to perform first, twice at the beginning of the lesson and once again at the end, whereas the *YG* team (the strongest) started once and were last three times. In total the scenes accounted for just over 26 minutes of the lesson, which with 15 players involved and even assuming (improbably) no overlap or pausing and an even distribution of turns would mean under two minutes speaking time each. Given the long silences during the scenes and the fact that the non-performing half of the class, apart from the five hecklers, need not have spoken at all, it seems that the TS contest format does not exactly maximize student talking time. I do not assume that trying to do this is necessarily always a good thing but it is at least something else that I have become aware of in the course of conducting this study.

5.3 Silence in Individual Interactions

In line with my stated aim in section 3.3 I have confined my analysis to the issue of silence, looking in particular at those over three seconds in duration. In the entire transcript of 15 scenes there are 382 turns (including the Timer's starting call and the sound of the final klaxon) of which 62 are silences of over three seconds. In the following discussion I have also limited my analysis to three scenes performed by just one of the three teams participating in this particular contest. This team, *Youngman*, which comprised one male and four female students, were the ones responsible for the longest silences in this contest and in this as in every other contest during the course their performances were rated the lowest by the various judging teams. In this sense they cannot be regarded as typical of the class as a whole but rather I have chosen them as consistently showing the clearest examples of the patterns I wished to investigate.

When analysing the occurrence of silence one must bear in mind that there are various kinds to be distinguished. In his discussion of conversational turns Levinson divides silences into gaps, lapses and (attributable) silences (1983:299) and shows how they result from a variety of breakdowns at the transition relevance place (TRP) in a turn constructional unit. Gaps are silences within a conversation; lapses represent the end of one conversation and the start of a new one, but of most significance in what follows are attributable silences which are like unfilled conversational slots. A further complication is that, as Maynard (1989:157) notes, the silence recorded on transcripts is not always what it seems. There may be inaudible back-channel fillers, uninterpretable

sounds, laughter and applause and other forms of paralanguage. This is certainly the case here and I have accordingly tried to include such factors on my transcript. By paying attention to such features, especially gaze, while reviewing the video I have wherever possible endeavoured to attribute silences to a particular player according to the players' own understanding of what is happening in the scene.

5.4 Scene Analysis

The first round of scenes were of the *One Word at a Time* game. In this game players speak in turns and may only contribute one word to the story in each turn. Together the players build up sentences and act out the story that they tell. The interesting point of this game is that the rules thus clearly determine turn allocation so it is always apparent who the next speaker should be. In the very first scene we find the most spectacular silence of the whole lesson, at turn 16, attributable to L1, which is 17 seconds long.

Scene 1A: One Word at a Time

Theme: A university student called Keiko's summer vacation

Players: all (L1 Mitsuharu; L2 Junko; L3 Mayuko;
L4 Megumi; L5 Saori)

1	T	yoi starto. (¥ get ready, start)
2	L5	she,
3	L4	(4) went
4	ED	big voice. WE:NT!
5	L3	. . . swimming school.
6	L2	after that,
7	L1	(8)
8	ED	she . she
9	L1	she. (xxx)
10	L5	(7) swim swam swim swim
11	ED	swam.
12	L5	swam.
13	L4	(15) in
14	L3	water.
15	L2	(7) she,
16	L1	(17) go.
17	ED	. went,
18	L1	went.
19	ED	. good-
20	L5	(6) beach,
21	L4	(4)
22	T	Ω

In this case, there might be a particular reason for L1's silence because he came to the class late, arriving just a few moments before the scene started, although the silence three turns previously by L4 is almost as long, and silences of similar length may be found throughout the entire transcript. Another contributory factor operating here may have been the fact that not only was L1 the only male member of the team but that he was also a relatively poor English speaker. The female members of the team were all fairly close friends and L1 had merely been allotted to the group at the start of the course to make up the numbers. As has already been noted, the composition of some of the other teams was similarly less than ideal but in this case the weakest female group 'core' seemed to have been matched with the weakest 'peripheral' male.

For the third round of the contest the game chosen was *Death in a Minute*. In this game turns are not fixed in advance and hence the turn allocation rules should operate more in accordance with normal conversation. The only rule is that at the end of a minute (actually students play for between 90 seconds and two minutes) one or more characters must 'die'. By this stage in the lesson the students have begun to warm up and in the following example the *Youngman* team is performing last after having watched the performances of the other two teams. This scene is usually performed by only four players so one team member is chosen to sit it out. It is perhaps not too surprising to note that L1 was the one chosen to stay out of this scene.

Scene 3C: Death in a Minute

Theme: Four yakuza men at the seaside

Players: L2, L3, L4, L5

- 1 T yoi staato. (¥ ready start) (*L5 and L4 enter crossing to SL and turning back to look at L2 and L3*)
- 2 L2 (8) let's swim. (xx)
- 3 L3 (4) it's hot day. . I want to swim.
- 4 L4 but I I can't swim.
- 5 L3 mmmm. I (5) let's play beach balley. (¥ volleyball)
- 6 L5 oh yes.
- 7 L3 okay.
- 8 L5 okay.
- 9 L4 (-¥-) (*they mime playing volleyball in a somewhat desultory fashion*) (XX)
- 10 (10)
- 11 L5 a big big big, nan da ke, (¥ what do you call it) big wave.
- 12 L4 oh no. (XX)
- 13 L3 . run away. run away, run away. (*mimes doing so*)
- 14 L5 (-¥-) (*runs in opposite direction, towards wave (?) and drowns*) (XXX)
- 15 L3 Saori is drown. drowning.
- 16 L5 shinu. (¥ she dies)
- 17 L3 oh she's dead. she dead, dead.
- 18 L4 dead?
- 19 L3 dead.
- 20 ED (*pre-empting klaxon, applauding*) ALR alright (~) so the er she was she was killed by the big wave so when when when . the big wave comes, you say oh run away run away wel well you didn't run away did you (*in a mock girl's voice*) OH LOOK HELLO WAVE, huh huh (*mimes drowning*) Gurrgh.

There appears to have been more rhythm to this scene and less awkward silences. As the four female students begin to work together the first two silences occur not unreasonably while they move to take up positions for the start of the scene. Likewise the longest silence, at turn 10, cannot be attributed and is therefore a lapse which may in part be accounted for by the miming of the volleyball game. Nevertheless, the impression given by the video is that the players kept hitting the imaginary ball back and forth in silence as a way of marking time until the moment came to usher in the closing death sequence. They were thus being cooperatively silent and presumably giving themselves time to think of a suitable ending to the game. The interesting point is that despite this, even when this move is eventually initiated by L5, she still relapses into a Japanese question to her teammates before completing the phrase.

The final two rounds of the contest featured so-called Open Scenes in which there are no restricting rules at all. The players are simply given a theme by the Heckler team and have to improvise a story based on it for between two and three minutes. In the following scene all members of the team are involved.

Scene 5A: Open Scene

Theme: A group of fishermen visiting Disneyland

Players: all

- 1 T yoi starto. (¥ ready start)
 2 (6) (L1, L2 slowly enter)
 3 L1 I- I want to, fishing. . where, where is, lake.
 4 L2 . . I think, there is no: lake.
 5 L1 oh.
 6 L2 it's Disneyland.
 7 (. .) (L2, L4, L5 slowly enter)
 8 L3 I want to ride, (-attractions-) . . . let's go!
 9 (13) (they move just a couple of steps forward then stop)
 10 L3 (to L4, L5) I'm looking for, Mickey Mouse.
 11 L4 Mickey Mouse?
 12 L3 I- I want to him, eh, I want to with him.
 13 (14)
 14 L4 where, whe:re is he. where is he.
 15 L3 (4) I think he, he is stay, Cinderella's castle.
 16 L5 . let's go there. (they again move a few steps forward)
 17 (5)
 18 L5 (to L4, indicating L1) that is Mickey.
 19 L4 oh.
 20 L2 let's take picture.
 21 L3 ye:s.
 22 L2 I take picture. (moves round DSL and faces them with camera)
 22 (7) (L3, L4, L5 prepare to have their photo taken but not initially with L1 - Mickey - who they point to)
 23 (XXX) (L3, L4, L5 mutter to each other)
 24 L3 (inviting L1 to join them for the photo) please. (they pose, Mickey with ears erect)
 25 L2 che:ese! (takes photo) (XXX)
 26 T Ω

Although these scenes are supposed to be performed as soon as the theme has been called out by the Hecklers there is usually up to a minute's delay as the players make quick initial decisions about roles and get into position. During this time it is sometimes possible for them to also prepare their opening exchanges. In this scene we see that L1 has been selected as first speaker and that he was able to produce a reasonably well-formed sentence. He was therefore perhaps unlucky to have his opening 'offer' nullified by L2's response. A key operating principle of TheatreSports games and of improvised drama in general is that whenever possible players should always accept each others offers, either verbal or physical, however far-fetched they may be. It is in this way that players cooperatively build on each others contributions to create successful scenes. I spent a lot of time during the early stages of the course trying to get the students used to this idea and I continued to stress it throughout the contests but it seems a surprisingly difficult thing for students to do. In this case, not only is L2's response a blunt rejection of L1's line of conversation, it is also factually untrue since Disneyland does have a lake, albeit an artificial one probably devoid of fish. The effect on L1 of this blocking of his offer may be surmised from the fact that he never offers another articulate sound for the rest of the scene. There follow two further attempts to restart the scene in the form of two offers, both by L3, in turns 8 and 10. The first of these is not taken up, perhaps as it threatened to involved too much acting, and a 13 second lapse ensues. The second eventually leads into the main sequence of the scene but not without another long (14 second) silence. The interesting thing here is that in most conversations between native-speakers such a long silence would indicate a lapse to be followed by a new topic but in this case it is merely a gap.

6 Evaluation

I used to be amazed, then agonized, then exasperated by the length of silence that Japanese students could tolerate but over the eight years I have spent teaching English in this country I have grown more or less accustomed to it. I also used to think it was a result of ignorance or lack of motivation but it seems that, as Noguchi (1987) has shown, the problem is not purely linguistic or affective but essentially sociocultural. Although there are cases where students simply cannot remember a word or generate a suitable response or are deliberately uncooperative, the problem is most fundamentally due to the wider cultural norms that are in conflict and which are *triggered* by such things as the forgetting of a vocabulary item.

It has long been claimed that, in Japan, the imperative to preserve face is more powerful than the one to maintain a conversation (eg. Samarin, 1965). The balance between these two is relative and depends on the social situation but in times of formality or stress, such as during a TS game, the threat to face is undoubtedly greater. It is also not easy for other students to come to the aid of one who is struggling because it is also face-threatening to answer a question addressed to another, particularly in front of a teacher, especially a foreign one.

If it is not possible here to resolve these complex sociocultural matters we may at least be in a position to pose some valuable question for teachers to reflect on. If silence is harmful to conversation (in broadly Western terms) is it also harmful to language learning? If practice makes perfect then does more silence means less practice? Finally, in my own case I must reflect on

whether the TS format is appropriate for my students, whether I should try raising their awareness to these norms in order to overcome them and if so how I might do this.

Although from this work it may not be appropriate to make generalizations applicable to all language learning, the exercise has had considerable contextual utility for me in terms of improving my understanding of my TS lessons and of pointing out areas for future improvement and lines of study. It has also been, I feel, quite a milestone in my own personal development. My background in natural science meant my first instinct for this project was to set up actual experiments in controlled conditions, sit down with a clipboard and stopwatch and measure students' performance. The experience of getting used to a more ethnographic way of thinking and working has been and continues to be an illuminating and a salutary one.

Finally, I think it appropriate to finish this paper on a note of authorial silence and leave the last words instead to four students from whose anonymous responses to the post-course questionnaire the following quotations were taken verbatim.

“My best developed think is that I can get strong spirit when I speak English. I can become to speak English without shame (shy). I became to hit any idea. Because spontaneity think is difficult for me yet.”

“Confidence and spontaneity become better. I become can speak without worrying about grammar.”

“I disliked what I speak to the other in English before. But now, I have a new attitude. I'll try to speak English. I have a little English speaking. But I'll try. I learned this attitude in this class.”

“Silently time is disappearing”

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